

MATHEMATICAL INSTITUTE

Guidance for mentors of graduate research students

Research staff and faculty members are encouraged to act as mentors to graduate research students.

(Emeriti and senior graduate students are also encouraged to act as mentors, if they feel able to do so.)

The aim of the mentoring relationship is to support the student's career and personal development. A more experienced person (the mentor) assists the student (the mentee) in developing specific skills and knowledge that will enhance their career and/or personal growth.

The mentor's role is intended to be distinct from, and to complement, that of the supervisor. Mentors are not expected to be directly involved in the student's work in any way.

We encourage each student to find a mentor by the end of their first year here, and Research Groups are asked to support students in finding mentors.

See overleaf for further guidance on the roles of mentor and mentee.

For more information:

- see <https://www.maths.ox.ac.uk/members/students/postgraduate-courses/doctor-philosophy/mentoring>
- or contact catherine.goodwin@maths.ox.ac.uk.

The mentor's role includes:

- Managing the framework of the mentoring sessions, while encouraging the mentee to take responsibility for the content
- Clarifying that the sessions are confidential, and agreeing any other ground rules
- Taking appropriate approaches such as robustly challenging a mentee who is not sufficiently focussed or sympathising in the event of bad experiences while encouraging the mentee to take ownership and respond appropriately
- Helping the mentee to see the bigger and longer term picture if he or she is concerned only about the present and the short term future
- Helping a mentee to reframe how he or she views something, or to consider a different perspective

The mentee's role includes:

- In control of the agenda, taking responsibility for his or her development, rather than expecting 'quick fixes' from a mentor
- Committed, for example to attending planned sessions, taking the actions planned with the mentor
- Prepared to be challenged when the mentor feels that this, rather than perhaps sympathy, will be of benefit
- Professional in the relationship with the mentor, for example being punctual, respecting agreed ground rules, and talking openly and honestly with the mentor.

Mentors and mentees should determine between themselves the manner and frequency of their contacts, and this will vary. As a guide, it is usually found that face-to-face meetings are well suited to the mentoring relationship, and that it might be helpful to hold these at least monthly, establishing a draft schedule at the beginning.

Either party should feel able to end the mentoring relationship at any time for any reason. It may come to a natural end, in which case, the process can be closed by reviewing and celebrating the progress and achievements made, and considering how the mentee is going to continue to work on their development.

Students are asked to keep catherine.goodwin@maths.ox.ac.uk informed of who their mentor is.

For further guidance see '[Mentoring in practice: advice for mentors and mentees](#)'.