

MANCHESTER GOLD

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MENTEES - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I am really nervous about contacting my mentor. Any tips?

There's no need to be intimidated by the thoughts of meeting with someone who has more professional experience than you. Remember that, once upon a time, they were first-time job hunters and know how overwhelming it can feel. This is exactly why they have volunteered and are looking forward to receiving a call or an email. Plan and practice what you're going to say, and make a list of your key objectives. If you feel like a shot of confidence, don't hesitate to contact the Manchester Gold team by telephone: 0161 275 2828 or mentoring@manchester.ac.uk

What if my mentor does not like me or I don't get on with my mentor?

Mentoring is very much based on the individuals involved. All mentors are volunteers and take part because they want to. They are interested in helping you to achieve your career aspirations. We have had very few experiences of mentors and mentees not getting on. It is also useful to note that learning how to work towards a common goal with someone who isn't the kind of person you might choose to mix socially with is actually what working life is all about. The most frequent problem we encounter is a breakdown in communication. It is the responsibility of mentees to lead in arrangements. If you encounter difficulties in contacting your mentor, please let the Manchester Gold team know immediately.

What if my mentor is not doing the actual job I want to do?

We strive to match mentees and mentors according to their expectations and on the basis of their application forms. However, the match may not always be perfect – your mentor may work in the industry you want to enter, but not doing the job you want to do. In these cases you simply need to be flexible - your mentor can support you in your job search and provide you with much of the advice and help you need. The fact you have been selected onto Manchester Gold and have a mentor to help you focus on writing CVs, preparing for interviews etc is an opportunity you should make the most of.

What if I decide that I don't want a career in my mentor's work area, should I end the relationship?

Firstly, don't worry. Helping you to clarify your career goals is one of the main objectives of Manchester Gold and you have saved yourself a lot of time in the long run by deciding what you don't want to do! Be honest with your mentor, let them know you no longer want to enter their industry and then think about the relationship more broadly. It may be that your mentor can introduce you to other contacts, and they will certainly be able to help you with preparing for interviews, networking and applying for jobs. All that we ask is that you don't suddenly stop contacting your mentor or us; if you do decide you would prefer to end the relationship, you need to let us all know.

If I am experiencing problems contacting my mentor, what should I do?

If your mentor is not responding to your emails, try and telephone them. If that does not work, contact the main office of your mentor's organisation; it may be that they are on holiday or involved in a project. If you still cannot get in touch, contact the Manchester Gold team.

Remember, getting in contact with your mentor can be difficult as they are busy people but they are waiting for you to get in touch and want to help. Get in contact with your mentor as soon as possible after the induction to maximise the available time.

I am a final year student and when I started the programme I didn't think I would be so busy but now I have lots of exams and coursework. I am struggling to find the time.

Time management is a skill you need to perfect in order to be successful in the work place, as you may be involved in several projects and prioritising is crucial. Now is the perfect time to develop that skill, and a solid example you can talk about at interview. The time commitment for Manchester Gold is approximately 15 - 20 hours so it should not detract from your studies at all. In fact, past mentees have cited that having a mentor helped them focus on getting a job whilst their friends concentrated purely on academic work and left job hunting until summer.

My mentor is not based in Manchester, when will I see him/her?

Although it would be ideal to have a mentor based in the North West, unfortunately this is not always the case, especially with specific industries such as investment banking, law and advertising. Equally we have many mentors based overseas which enables us to provide mentoring opportunities to International students looking to return home. We have conducted research into how mentors and mentees communicate. Whilst face to face contact is important, most mentoring relationships are conducted primarily over email with additional telephone and Skype contact. It should therefore not be detrimental to the value of your relationship if you are unable to meet your mentor in person.

Some mentors, although not based in Manchester, will have occasion to visit - whether through work connections, friends or family. Therefore you may be able to meet with them at some point during your relationship. We may also have managed to match you with a mentor close to your home so you can meet during vacations. Please note that we are unable to fund travel expenses through Manchester Gold.

I don't want to apply to the organisation my mentor works for – is that a problem?

The simple answer is NO. Do show an interest in your mentor's organisation and try to find out about their career path, but if you don't want to work for their organisation that is fine. It may be that your mentor is working in the industry you want to work in and has contacts in other organisations they can introduce you to.

Just be honest with your mentor – this is key to establishing rapport and trust. Your mentor is there to support you through your career choices – they have been through the very same process you are now going through and just want to help.

I have already applied to the organisation, my mentor works for, is this ok?

Of course. Your mentor can help you prepare for interviews and assessment centres and provide you with lots of insider knowledge about the company, which will give you a competitive edge above other candidates. If you are not successful at getting to the interview stage, your mentor can provide you with feedback and help you to develop your techniques and employability.

I don't know what to talk about with my mentor?

University life, career aspirations, your mentor's career to date, organisational and industry changes, skills and competencies needed, further qualifications, company culture, prospects, day-to-day working life, your skills portfolio, CVs, interview techniques, assessment centres, the transition from being a student to professional life... You have lots to talk about really.

What should I wear if I'm meeting my mentor?

It's not a job interview but you want to make a good impression. The exact attire will obviously depend on whether you're going for investment banking or graphic design, but in general try to look smart or at least smart/causal. However, the meetings are informal so use your judgement. If in doubt ask your mentor – it shows initiative.

Where should the meetings take place?

We do ask mentors to try and have at least one meeting with you at their place of work. Mentors are encouraged to show you around their offices and introduce you to colleagues. This will help you to get a sense of the company culture. Subsequent meetings should take place at mutually convenient places, but do think about appropriateness: your room in halls or a loud bar are not conducive to mentoring, whereas Christie's Bistro, for example, is relaxed but quiet.

If you are meeting your mentor in Manchester, please note that we do have some rooms available at Crawford House for you to book. Please contact us by telephone: 0161 275 2828, or via email: mentoring@manchester.ac.uk

What if I decide I don't want to continue with the programme?

Let the Manchester Gold team know ASAP. Before you sign the statement of commitment, please think carefully and ensure you will commit to the programme. Your mentor has allocated time to commit to you. If you want to drop out, please contact us immediately so we can offer another student the opportunity to benefit from having a mentor.

Can I ask my mentor for work experience or a job?

Your mentors are under no obligation to offer you work experience and this is made clear to them before they register to Manchester Gold. However, if your mentor is in the position to arrange some opportunities, most will be willing to do so. In the past, mentees have secured graduate positions, internships, work shadowing and part-time work via their mentors. It may not be through your mentor's organisation directly but may be through tapping into their networks.

By showing your initiative and drive, you could gain some invaluable experience.

I am a student with a disability; can I get the information in alternative formats?

If you need alternative formats, please get in touch with one of the Manchester Gold Team with your request.