



Physics

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Physics Mentorship Program

Mentor Handbook

Welcome

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the Physics Mentorship Program. As a mentor, you will have the opportunity to get acquainted with an undergraduate student in the Physics program at the University of Toronto and be a source of information and advice as they transition from the classroom to the workforce.

Every effort has been made to match you with the best possible students. Once we finalize the matches, it will be the student's responsibility to make contact with you and to keep us informed of their progress.

We would be delighted to hear from you at any time as the program moves forward. If you have any questions, comments or feedback, please let us know. We are greatly appreciative of your willingness to take part in this program and we hope you enjoy the experience.

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Physics Mentorship Program Handbook for Mentors

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Physics Mentorship Program

3rd and 4th year undergraduate students in Physics Major, Specialist and Joint Specialist programs at the University of Toronto St. George Campus are encouraged to join this valuable program as the advice and help of a mentor can be of great benefit as Physics students prepare to make their way into the working world or move into graduate work. Likewise, mentors have the chance to find out about the current crop of students, and discover more about the hottest and emerging research areas at the Department.



Section #1: Introduction

Mentorship at U of T

Anecdotal and statistical evidence show that while the academic experience of University of Toronto students is consistently strong, the co-curricular and support experience is much more varied. Engagement of students in the life of the university beyond the classroom can be limited, particularly for those that are not living in residences.

A unique advantage of the U of T student experience is our large size within which is contained a range of smaller communities, each of which has access to a critical mass of top faculty and staff. We also have innumerable resources in the communities around us. We must use these resources to ensure that every student has the opportunity for a well-rounded experience at the university and in the communities of which we are a part. We will also continue to take an active interest in students' careers and development while at the university.

Key areas have been identified by many divisions that relate to enriching the student experience both within and beyond the classroom. Among these are: enhancement of the experience of community for students; provision of resources for skills development; and provision of opportunities for community engagement.

The connection of our student community with our alumni community is of fundamental importance, not only in fulfilling the objectives stated above, but also to lay the foundation for a sustainable pattern of interaction between the university's past, present and future students.

A Guide to Mentoring Students

What do we mean by mentoring?

Mentoring is about supporting people to help them develop more effectively. Mentoring occurs when two individuals decide to work together to achieve specific outcomes for skills growth and development. One individual has the skill, knowledge and experience that the other individual needs to acquire.

Mentoring can help students prepare for life after university. It creates an environment to develop and practice important skills needed for the workplace. It allows them to ask questions, to better understand their career choices and gives them a practical and realistic picture of the working world. It helps these students create their network of contacts with individuals in their area of interest.

Ideal candidates for mentoring are students who are interested in a mentoring relationship that allows them to commit time to self-assessment of their skills and career ambitions. The mentoring relationship will allow them to create a plan of action to help them achieve their goals.

What kind of activities do mentors do?

Possible mentoring activities include:

- Conduct a goal setting session to identify areas that you will work on together
- Provide the student with advice concerning career choices, job applications and the interview process
- Review your student's resume and give comments
- Refer the student to professional colleagues for informational interviews
- Arrange a meeting for the student to be introduced to an important contact in your field — make suggestions prior to this meeting regarding possible topics of conversation — a debrief session is often helpful afterwards
- Pass on topical articles and books for comment
- Support by email or by phone on specific issues raised by the student

An ideal mentor is:

- An influential professional with advanced experience and knowledge
- Respected in their field and organization
- Prepared to make a commitment to nurturing and supporting the student's development
- Willing to share their wisdom
- Skilled at listening and provides supportive guidance and constructive feedback
- Available; keeps in contact

- Confidential; treats all dealings and discussions in confidence

What are the benefits?

Benefits to you, the mentor, are many:

- The satisfaction of knowing you are helping the student understand the unfamiliar and often daunting world they will face after graduation
- Heightened profile as an active supporter of your community
- Valuable practice to help develop your coaching and leadership skills
- Heightened self-awareness
- The pleasure of giving back

Benefits to the student include:

- Access to wisdom and expertise
- Opportunities for self-assessment
- A personalized career-development plan
- Greater understanding of current business practices
- Introduction to business networks and related supports
- Exposure to the business environment
- Job search strategies
- Advice, moral support, encouragement

Section #2: Program Format

Expectations for Participants

It will be the student's responsibility to initiate contact with his or her mentor. Once a mutually agreeable appointment time has been secured, there should also be some preliminary discussion or informal agenda for the appointment, so that both the student and mentor may adequately prepare.

A note on appropriate meeting places: we encourage mentors and students to select a venue that is accessible to both parties during regular business hours; this can be at a coffee shop, on campus, at the mentor's office, etc. We advise against scheduling meetings at either person's home, or during the evening hours.

The goal of these contacts is to provide students with some insights about the "real world" especially as it pertains to seeking employment upon graduation. No doubt they will have many questions about everything from interview skills to corporate culture and even about your own university experience.

You will likely find that the topics raised by students will range from the very broad to more practical; a sample list of some of the most common questions can be found near the end of this handbook for your reference.

We hope that this will be a meaningful experience for both you and your student, where you can feel that you have helped them, and they can feel optimistic and excited about their future beyond U of T.

Technical/Housekeeping Rules

Confidentiality

All mentors and student mentees are responsible for identifying and observing areas of confidentiality, including personal, contact, employment and/or academic information.

Professionalism

One of the core objectives of this program is to get students into the habit of initiating professional, efficient and timely business-style correspondence. They will look to you to set the tone for acceptable levels of professionalism – please feel free to exercise your judgement, and by all means go ahead and respond in the manner with which you are most comfortable, but do bear in mind that for the students, learning the conventions of acceptable professional interaction is crucial. This applies to electronic, written, telephone and face-to-face communication.

Withdrawal from Program

If either you or your student feels that the mentor/student relationship is not benefiting either party, please contact the Physics Mentorship Office.

Evaluation

In the spring, you will be asked to complete a short program evaluation to provide feedback and suggestions. Results will be used to improve the program for subsequent years.

Section #3: Resources

Referrals for Counselling and Assistance

If your student requires counselling for issues beyond the scope of this mentorship program, you may remind them of the resources that are available to them at the University:

1. **Academic Counselling**

Academic Success Centre: <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/asc>

2. **Career Counselling**

Career Centre: <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/cc>

3. **General Health Counselling, Personal counselling and psychotherapy, Assault counselling**

Health and Wellness Centre: <https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/hwc>

4. **Disability Assistance**

Accessibility Services Office: <http://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as>

Additional Items

A few ideas to keep in mind as discussion topics or other initiatives

- What types of skills and competencies are employers looking for in new hires?
- The importance of additional training/degree(s) for entry into your line of work
- Preparing for the transition from student life to the workforce
- Finding out about his or her interests and hobbies
- Asking about courses, extra-curricular and part-time work of the student
- Offer to critique their resume; any suggestions you can provide would be most welcome
- Introduce the student to colleagues or associates who may have work experience and/or background that is of interest to the student
- E-mail an article that might be of interest to your student

Testimonials from past mentors

- “Mentoring someone is so important.”
- “Mentoring a seriously bright and interesting student was a joy.”
- “Make a personal connection with the undergraduates. Feels good to be helpful.”
- “I enjoyed getting to know my mentee and hearing about each step of the graduate application process from his perspective. I was glad of the opportunity to share my experiences.”
- “Although I am not in Toronto, I enjoyed my skype conversations with my mentee.”
- “Thanks for offering this great program and thanks for letting me be a part of it!”
- “I enjoy the experience; specifically, being helpful, sharing my experiences, and encouraging students by letting them know that they have something to offer.”
- “Learned about current challenges today's students face, how to consult and provide advice to students, risk management.”
- “I really enjoyed talking with my mentee to get to know her and learn about her plans for the future. It was exciting to talk with her after her first paper was accepted. It is important to me to support younger scientists as I have been supported by those more senior than me.”

Timeline

September

Alumni and students will be notified of one another's name and contact information. At this point, students will be directed to initiate contact with their mentor, by e-mail, to introduce themselves. This should take place before the launch event. A formal invitation for the launch event will be sent to you in late-September.

*** The launch event will most likely be virtual this year due to COVID-19. .**

October through March

Participate in (minimum 4) meetings with students; it will be the student's responsibility to take the initiative in arranging these meetings. Ideally, one of these three contacts should be in the form of a visit to your workplace, and include a brief tour of the worksite, wherever possible. If you are located in a different geographical location than your mentee, and face to face meetings are not possible, you may use online methods of communication such as Skype or email to connect with your mentee. *** Due to COVID-19 all meetings can be virtual until face to face meetings are safe and possible again.**

January

Attend an optional mid-year event to meet other mentors and mentees.

March

Attend the Physics Mentorship Program closing event at U of T. This event will take place in the evening and will be a final chance for students to thank their mentors and network.

April

Complete a program evaluation form; this will be very helpful in our continued efforts to improve the program.

If you have any questions, please e-mail:

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