

SBS-EMCRA Inter-Departmental Mentoring Scheme for Level A/B Research Fellows

Rationale & Structure

Aim: To establish cross-departmental relationships between junior and senior academic staff in SBS, leading to improved career development/support and collaboration within the School.

Rationale: There is a vacuum within SBS for career development support for SBS Level A and B postdoctoral staff, with the most well-known program, the MDHS Faculty Mentoring Program, oversubscribed each year, or providing focused support for staff at Level C and above. The SBS-EMCRA mentoring scheme, aims to be in line with the goals of SBS-EMCRA to foster a collaborative culture between the Departments of the School of Biomedical Sciences (SBS) within the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences (MDHS), The University of Melbourne (UoM).

Structure:

This scheme will be coordinated by the SBS-EMCRA Development Committee, with support from the SBS Research Committee.

1) Participation

- Mentees will respond to an expression of interest (EOI) survey circulated to the School via EMCRA and Head of School email channels. EOI survey will be open for a period of 3 weeks.
- Selected mentors, Level C and above, will be formally invited by the SBS-EMCRA Development Committee to participate in the program. Mentors may be drawn from those with Honorary Appointments with the School. Administrative support from SBS is requested.

a) Expression of Interest Survey

Name:

Department:

Level:

Years at UoM:

What do your mentoring goals relate to? (choose one, noting overlap is expected)

1. *Work/life balance*
(eg. time management, stress management, managing career-breaks)
2. *Career planning/developing research independence*
(eg. promotion, grant writing, strategic planning, job applications)
3. *Professional skills*
(eg. teaching, publishing, public speaking/presenting, networking, leadership)
4. *Laboratory/people management*
(eg. recruitment, financial planning, supervising/managing others, conflict resolution)

Is there anyone who would not be appropriate as your mentor? (eg. conflict of interest, current or former supervisor/lab head, competing research interests, known personality/ideology clash etc). Name only. This information will remain confidential.

2) Matching

- Mentee-Mentor matching will be performed by members of the SBS-EMCRA Development Committee; with the aim that each Department is to be represented on this committee and that mentorship pairs will be cross-departmental. Cross-departmental matching has 2 aims: i. to foster cross-department culture within SBS and ii. to expose both the mentor and mentee to other research disciplines, broadening their perspective. *Note: ARC and NHMRC schemes are becoming more generalist in how they are being assessed.* If required, support may be drawn from members of the SBS Research Committee during the matching process.

- Mentorship pairs will be notified by email. It is an expectation that the mentee will drive the relationship and be responsible for setting goals and initiating the first and subsequent sessions.
- It is acknowledged that not all pairs will 'click' and there may exist personality clashes which detract from the experience but cannot be foreseen. If this is the case, the mentee or mentor may choose to formally end the relationship by notifying EMCRA. However, due to limited resources, they will not be rematched in the same matching round.

Measures described in 1) and 2) are in place to promote active and productive participation from both mentees and mentors, and to prevent mentorship becoming an additional administrative burden for already over-busy academics at all levels.

3) Mentoring Sessions

- This is an informal program, with frequency, duration and type of session to be negotiated by the mentee with the mentor. It is an expectation that the mentee will drive the relationship, having set specific goals for the mentoring program.
- As a guide, it is recommended that there will be at least 3 mentoring sessions over a period of 9 months (ie. pairs will interact every 12 weeks). Gaps in between mentoring sessions are expected during busy periods (eg. end of year, peak grant writing, start of teaching etc). Sessions may also be more frequent if agreed by both parties.

4) Evaluation

- EMCRA will distribute an evaluation survey twice during a 9-month period
- Aim of evaluation is to gain insight into the progress of mentorship pairs and evaluate the benefit of the scheme

5) Code of Conduct & Grievance Procedures

- Mentees and mentors are expected to adhere to the University of Melbourne's Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policies (<https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1328>)

Additional Documents:

1. Etiquette
2. Guide for Mentees
3. Guide for Mentors

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Etiquette

For both Mentees and Mentors

- Agree on how to schedule mentoring sessions, including frequency and duration and how you will communicate
- Attend mentoring sessions and follow up with action items
- Be professional, respectful and observe confidentiality
- Be punctual and provide advance warning of changes where possible
- Respond to communication in a timely manner

Suggestions for the First Session

- Introduce yourselves; include both personal and professional experiences, career paths and ambitions
- Agree on how you would like to communicate and the number of sessions you can both commit to
- Advise of any known upcoming periods of absence
- Discuss what you both would like to get out of the relationship and set goals
- Agree on action items to be completed before the next session

SBS-EMCRA Inter-Departmental Mentoring Scheme for Level A/B Research Fellows

Guide for Mentees

Your Role

As the mentee, your role is to drive the mentoring relationship. This requires setting clear and specific goals that you want to achieve and, more importantly, that your mentor has relevant insight and knowledge on.

These goals need not be restricted to research, and, depending on the mentor, can include academic teaching, or moving into industry. The interdepartmental nature of this mentoring scheme has been implemented in order to allow open communication of goals to a party independent of your department and lab. Hence, the key is to communicate these goals clearly to your mentor so that they can give you the right advice from the outset.

Expectations for you as a mentee

- Communicate with your mentor; be clear on your needs
- Have an ability to reflect on personal limitations and accept critique
- Come to each session prepared with an agenda
- Provide feedback to your mentor so that they can improve, but also know when they are doing it right
- Do not expect your mentor to have all the solutions
- Recognize that your mentor is a volunteer with an already busy schedule; easy on the emails
- Commitment to the mentoring program; you get back what you put in
- Discuss etiquette for inter-meeting contact
- Keep track of actionable items between meetings and follow them up

Before Your First Mentoring Session

- Solidify in your mind a short-term and a long-term goal for your career
- Be prepared to be open about your successes and your setbacks
- List some opening questions for your mentor relevant to your aspirations; how did they get to their current position? What do they wish they knew when they were an ECR that they know now?
- Be ready to organize the next meetup with them, have possible dates in mind
- Bring along current CV in appropriate grant format for review

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Guide for Mentors

Your role (what is a mentor?)

The role of a mentor is to use the experience and knowledge you have gained during your career to both support and challenge your mentee in a way that promotes and fosters their career development and goals.

This may be achieved in different ways; however common themes are that a good mentor 'listens more, talks less' and 'asks the right/challenging questions' and empowers their mentee to solve their own problems.

What's in it for you (why be a mentor)?

1. **Pay-it-forward:** Reflect on your own career -- has there been someone that has helped you succeed? Supported you in a tough situation? Made you look at the tough situation differently? If so, consider this an opportunity to pay it forward.
2. **Self-interest:** The academic research environment has and is continuing to change rapidly. As an established senior academic, you may be more removed from the modern day-to-day challenges of the junior academic staff you supervise, and the newly established group leaders you work alongside. Mentoring can provide you with acute insight, and reduce the 'echo-chamber' phenomenon, resulting better leadership outcomes for you in your own role.

Expectations for you as a mentor

- Listen to your mentee
- Challenge your mentee's preconceived conceptions and assumptions of themselves and their career
- Help your mentee to find their own solutions to problems and encourage their confidence in making career choices
- Be open to sharing your own experiences and stories
- Uphold confidentiality
- Remember, mentoring is a discussion between two colleagues, not a dictatorial relationship

Advice for getting started

- Ask open-ended questions and take time to get to know each other
- Set mutually agreeably goals
- Consider other activities eg. CV check, job shadowing, 'sitting in' on a meeting