

NC State Graduate English Peer Mentor Program – Mentee Guide

The mission of the NC State Graduate English Mentoring Program is twofold:

1. To develop mentoring skills and leadership capacity within graduate students [Mentors] and
2. To facilitate the formation of a social-support system, trusting professional relationships, and a sense of inclusion and community for incoming 1st year graduate students [Mentees].

IMPORTANT: *The NC State Graduate English Mentor Program is NOT a job placement program. Mentors will not be expected to open doors to specific jobs (or any job) for their Mentees.*

The NC State Graduate English Mentor Program matches English graduate students with second-year graduate students who have established at least a year of graduate studies under the English department. The program is designed to give students access to an experienced individual to turn to for guidance, advice, direction, and to help students broaden their professional networks, enhance their graduate experience, and prepare for and acquire insights into the job search process. The official program will conclude at the end of the academic school year as each year will bring a new cohort of students and graduate exiting seniors.

The Mentoring Relationship

The Mentor Program affords both Mentors and Mentees the opportunity to develop a dynamic relationship from which both participants benefit. The ideal mentoring relationship is one that exceeds fact-finding that delves into personal knowledge and experience.

Students who participate in the Mentoring Program will gain valuable insight to their prospective industry through a one-on-one mentorship with a current professional.

You should have a clear idea of what you want to achieve through the mentor program, and are encouraged to discuss these expectations with your mentor. During your first meeting, you should both set your expectations for the coming year. Clear and consistent communication is the key!

If it becomes clear at the first meeting that the expectations of the mentor and your needs do not align, please notify the Graduate Services Coordinator and we will do our best to re-assign you.

Structure and Time Commitment

Each mentor and mentee must complete an application form in order to participate in the program. The information will hold students to responsible for confidentiality between the two partners and meeting expectations of the program.

Mentors and Mentees are expected to meet face-to-face a minimum of five times during the school year (August-May). Engagement beyond the five required meetings will be established by the Mentor and Mentee. It is important that both parties have a clear understanding of the expectations.

Each participant must be committed to the program in order to create the atmosphere necessary for success. Attendance and participation for a full year is expected. If a mentee fails to complete the required commitments, they will be disqualified from further participation and any future programs.

Matching Process

The Director of Graduate Programs and Graduate Services Coordinator will randomly pair mentors and mentees together by concentration. Matches will be based on availability and career goals/ interest of the students. The number of students accepted into the program is not guaranteed, and is dependent upon Mentor registration.

Requirements for Mentees:

- Must be an English graduate program student (MA, MFA, or MSTC) with less than 18 credit hours towards their graduate degree. To be considered for the Mentor Program, a student must be in good academic standing. Please note, the Mentor is not responsible for keeping a student in good academic standing. Any issue or concern in relation to academic standing must be communicated and resolved with his/her academic advisor or the Director of Graduate Program.
- Commit to the time and communication requirements mutually agreed upon in your Mentor Program Pledge. At a minimum, there should be at least five face-to-face meetings per academic year.
- It is expected that as the mentee, you will take the lead in communicating with your mentor. Having a professional mentor is a valuable opportunity. Demonstrate your appreciation for your mentor's time and energy by demonstrating that building the relationship is important to you. Follow up with your mentor frequently and initiate those face-to-face meetings by suggesting activities, times and places.
- Attend the annual faculty-student social during orientation day.
- Complete program surveys at various intervals throughout the year.

Tips for Mentees

1. **Initiate.** In order to sustain the mentoring relationship, take the initiative to ask your mentor a question, to let him or her know your educational and professional interests and objectives, and to ask about his/her own experiences.
2. **Honor Your Commitment.** Your mentor probably has a very demanding job. He or she has volunteered to take on the added responsibility of mentoring. Please be appreciative of your mentor's time and investment; respond in a timely manner to your mentor's questions and comments. If you don't have the time to respond at length, send a short message letting this person know you will be in contact when you have the opportunity.
3. **Help Your Mentor Help You.** Tell your mentor how she/he can be most helpful to you.
4. **Expect Support, Not Miracles.** You can expect a certain level of support and advice from a mentor, but he or she cannot solve your problems for you. Perhaps the most valuable quality a mentor can offer is an alternative point of view. A mentor can put the situation in perspective, offer feedback, serve as a sounding board, and identify others whose brain you might pick or activities you can engage in or small ways you can position your work to meet your goals as well as resources that may be helpful to you.
5. **Communicate Clearly.** Initiate contact with your mentor if you have questions or would like to discuss something. Identify your needs and communicate them as clearly as possible to your mentor. It may be helpful to put some focused energy into organizing your thoughts and concerns before talking to your mentor, so that time is spent wisely.
6. **Be Teachable.** Be willing to learn new things, obtain another perspective, and be responsive to suggestions and constructive criticism.
7. **Keep Up Your End.** Work hard at being a good mentee.
8. **Follow Through.** When you decide to act on your mentor's suggestions, act in a timely manner and then report back to him or her.
9. **Look Ahead at Your Calendar.** Are there any days you know that you'll be offline or ultra-busy? If so... let the other person know, so that if the mentor doesn't hear from you, she or he knows it's because you're away or you're swamped.
10. **Correct Misunderstandings When They Happen.** Get in touch with your mentor before a concern becomes a problem.

Reasonable Expectations for Mentors and Mentees

Mentors and mentees typically enter their relationships with assumed expectations of each other. At times, some can experience disappointment because expectations weren't met or even discussed. To prevent this and help you with your planning, the table below lists some common, reasonable expectations. In many cases, the expectations are similar or the same. A mentoring relationship is a partnership, with both people showing respect and support for each other.

Discuss these expectations early in your mentoring partnership. You may want to add another expectation the two of you identify.

MENTORS	MENTEES
Meet as often as your schedules permit.	Meet as often as your schedules permit.
Provide help by answering questions. Serve as a learning broker, and be a sounding board for issues relating to the mentee's career goals and development. Talk about skills mentee could acquire to add value.	Take initiative to drive the relationship and be responsible for your own career development and planning. Ask questions.
Discuss eliciting getting feedback and help mentee look for information on impact he/she is having.	Focus and be interested in getting feedback and measuring how you are perceived.
Provide suggestions and advice on goals and activities that lead to effective and rewarding work. Tell stories about how others made their way that might be relevant to the mentee.	Ask for suggestions and advice early in the relationship. When advice is given, listen to the mentor, apply at least some of their ideas, and let him or her know the results.
Be a catalyst for mentee developing his/her own network. Point to others he/she might reach out to and engage.	Elicit Mentor's advice on developing other informal mentoring relationships
Keep any commitments made.	Keep any commitments made.
Work out any minor concerns about the relationship.	Work out any minor concerns about the relationship.

Unreasonable Expectations for Mentors and Mentees

There are some common unrealistic expectations of mentors that can cause irritation and disappointment on both sides. As a general guideline, the mentor should not be expected to:

- Provide the mentee with personal introductions to other people unless they're comfortable doing so.
- Spend more time on the relationship than he or she is able to give.
- Take the lead in the relationship, setting up every meeting or driving the mentee's career development.
- Continue the relationship beyond the agreed-upon time period.

Specific Tips for Mentees

These practical strategies can help mentees build a relationship with their mentors:

- Remember that you own your development, your mentor doesn't. It's up to you to identify objectives as well as keep the relationship focused and moving forward.
- Use active listening skills in discussions with your mentor.
- Be prepared to ask for specific advice on your skill set, ideas, plans and goals. The more specific you are, the easier it will be for your mentor to respond.
- Be complete yet succinct in your comments and explanations.
- Make it easy for your mentor to give you honest, specific feedback. Ask for it early in your relationship.

If you have any questions or concerns along the way, please contact the Graduate Services Coordinator, Jenny Tiet at 919.515.4106 or graduate-english@ncsu.edu.