

MENTEE GUIDE

The Stirling Network connects you to alumni around the world, working in every sector, who may be able to help you by sharing their experience and insights.

University of Stirling alumni understand you. You share the bond that comes with being part of this institution, making them more amenable to your approach. All members of The Stirling Network have voluntarily signed up for the site and mentors can adjust their profile to show the types of help they are willing to provide.

When looking for a mentor, click on the drop down menu for Mentoring on the left-hand side of The Stirling Network main Feed page and then select the 'Find a mentor' option. You can feel confident that the mentors suggested for you have already expressed their willingness to be a mentor, which makes it easier for you to ask them. You can also look through the other members on the Network to find your own mentor, checking their profiles to see if they are willing to be a mentor before making your approach.

The alumni members of The Stirling Network can provide you with valuable guidance and assist in your career development. Their real world insights give you the knowledge to set yourself apart from the rest of the graduate market, and move your understanding of your chosen field from study to reality.

Joining The Stirling Network is easy – the site can connect to your LinkedIn account to quickly populate your profile, or you can register by email. Remember – this is how you are presenting yourself as a professional, so think about how you would like to be perceived by industry contacts when completing your profile.

Site features

The Stirling Network is a customisable platform, so you can tailor it to suit your needs. We suggest you start by joining one or two groups. The groups feature allows you to share the latest research, engage in discussions with like-minded members, and connect with established alumni in your chosen field.

So what is mentoring?

Mentoring is where individuals share their experience and knowledge through one-to-one relationships to enable mentees to benefit from the insights gained through the failures and successes of others'. Every mentoring relationship is unique, with successful mentorship being an enjoyable and valuable experience for both parties.

Mentee benefits:

- Gain insights, help and knowledge from an established professional in your chosen field
- Identify areas of strength and weakness in your professional practice
- Access networks that are tough to break into without someone to open the door
- Build business to business contacts to help your business or organisation develop
- Sharpen your career focus – does the reality meet your expectations? This can confirm or correct your career path

- Engage with a supportive mentor within a safe space to discuss ideas and face constructive challenge
- Receive critical feedback to improve your skills in the employment market
- Personal as well as professional growth – improve your social skills, communication and confidence by interacting with people outside your current network
- Create the right impression by learning what impresses your target field by speaking to the established professionals already working in it

Finding your mentor:

The Stirling Network is home to alumni professionals in every sector and throughout the world. If you are prepared to engage seriously in this relationship, you'll find the benefits are invaluable – many successful individuals have given their mentors significant credit for their achievements.

1. **Complete your profile.** This is a prospective mentor's first impression of you, so make sure it represents you in the best way. Including a photo helps build the person-to-person connection.
2. **Think about the mentor you need.** For example, you may be looking for general information about starting out in your career and establishing networks, or you may be looking for a conversation with a highly experienced person in your specific employment sector or a part of the world you're interested in.
3. **Use the search tools on The Stirling Network** to find the mentor you are looking for.
4. **Think about what you're looking to achieve.** Your mentor will greatly appreciate a focused approach. You should prepare for every communication with your mentor and make sure you know what you'd like to talk about.

The relationship:

You've found your perfect match, now what? First of all, establish some parameters and expectations that suit both you and your mentor. Will this be an informal mentoring relationship, or is a more structured, formal arrangement with regularly scheduled check-ins better suited to your needs? Do you want to communicate through email, over the phone, or meet up face-to-face over coffee?

The alumni who have offered to provide guidance and support through the platform are open to connecting with you, so reach out to them! If you are unsure about how to approach alumni or are having difficulty finding a suitable mentor, please get in touch with the alumni team via alumni@stir.ac.uk for assistance.

Mentee responsibilities:

The members of The Stirling Network who have indicated they are willing to help are open to connecting with you and have invaluable insights to offer. However, this relationship will only work if you hold up your end of the bargain. As a mentee, we ask that you:

- **Are receptive to feedback:** learning how to handle constructive criticism is a valuable part of the journey
- **Engage in a professional manner:** as you transition from study to your chosen field, think about how you want your professional persona to be perceived.
- **Take the initiative:** don't expect your mentor to hold your hand, but instead to be a sounding board for you when approached.

Conversation starters?

For this journey to be successful, it's vital that you build a relationship with your mentor – but this can seem a daunting task! To get started, try some of these conversation prompts:

- Careers:
 - What was your career path?
 - What skills do you find that recent graduates tend to lack?
 - What would impress you?
 - What are the most and least enjoyable parts of your role?
 - How do you handle criticism?
 - What is your approach to dealing with difficult situations?
 - What professional remit are you responsible for in your job?
 - What countries or territories do you have experience of working in?

- Personal:
 - How do you stay motivated?
 - Who inspires you?
 - Have any books influenced your approach?
 - What are you most proud of?
 - What, if anything, would you have done differently if you were doing that/starting that tomorrow?

Like all relationships, sometimes this partnership won't work out – and that's okay. There is value in learning how and when to identify that a relationship isn't working for you, and how to handle that. Remember – you might find yourself sitting across from a former mentor on an interview panel or be employed by them one day, and they'll remember how you conduct yourself. If your styles or goals are incompatible, you can find another mentor – but please thank your mentor for their time and explain the situation.

Things to remember:

Be honest! Make it clear what you would like to gain from the relationship and how it's working for you.

Be proactive! Your mentor is investing their valuable time in you because they believe you're worth it, make the most of it and don't make them chase you.

Be involved! Mentoring is a two way process, your mentor isn't there to lecture you. Be curious, be inquisitive, and be engaged – not only will you both gain more from this process, the relationship will grow organically.

Be enthusiastic! Effective mentoring, in whatever form it takes, should be an enjoyable, educational and worthwhile relationship for both mentor and mentee. If you put in the effort, you'll get the right help when you need it, which could make all the difference to you or your organisation, and insights that you'll benefit from throughout your career and life.

The alumni team is here to support you with any questions you have about The Stirling Network so please do reach out to us via alumni@stir.ac.uk.