

## MENTORING FAQs

The mentoring programme that we run is part of the **Aspiring Professionals Programme**, which aims to provide practical support to high-achieving young people from low-income backgrounds to help them reach the profession of their choice.

Students start on the APP when they are 16/17 and in their first year of A-levels. We work intensively with them for a year and continue to keep in touch with them and offer them support throughout university until they are in their first professional role.

Other elements of the programme include internships, university application support and skills development.

### 1. How do we select our students?

Students apply to the programme through our website in their first year of A-levels. We promote the programme through teachers, visits to schools and SMF ambassadors who joined the APP in a previous cohort.

To be eligible for the programme students must:

- a) Have achieved 5 As at GCSE/5 Standard Grades at Credit Level (Scotland)\*

**AND**

Be predicted at least ABB at A Level / ABBB in Highers (Scotland) / International Bachelorette Equivalent - and also fill the subject criteria for the career sector they are interested in.

- b) **EITHER**

Be eligible for free school meals

**OR**

Be the first generation in their family to attend university in the UK **AND** Attend a school where over 30% of pupils are eligible for free school meals **OR** where 20% or more students are eligible for free school meals if the school is outside London.

The students express an interest in one of our 11 sectors: Accountancy, Architecture, Banking and Finance, Business, Engineering, Law, Media & Communications, Medicine, Politics, Science or Technology. There is also a No Preference strand for those who are still exploring their potential career interests.

They answer a number of questions on their application form and we also ask for a teacher reference.

\*If the student attends a school where less than 50% of students achieved 5 A\*-C grades GCSE grades in 2013, the grade requirements are 4 As at GCSE / 4 Standard Grades (Scotland)

## **2. How do we match students with mentors?**

Each mentor is matched with one student interested in their sector.

We match mentoring pairs primarily on sector and career preference. As far as we can, we also match based on location to make it easier for mentors to meet their mentees.

Before the mentoring begins you will receive a questionnaire asking for information about your career and any preferences to aid us with the matching process.

## **3. What commitment do we ask of mentors?**

We ask for a commitment of 15-30 minutes per week for a year. You can stay in touch after the end of the year if both of you would like to, but this is not compulsory. 15-30 minutes is meant to represent about one email exchange per week. This may vary according to the time of year: for instance, if you are particularly busy at work or if your mentee has exams the emails may be less frequent, but while the student is writing their personal statement they are likely to contact you more frequently.

## **4. Is it all email-based?**

The commitment you are making is to correspond with your mentee by email. However, you can also meet up with your mentee and we encourage this as a supplement to the emails as it can help build rapport and for you to get to know each other.

We organise 6-8 meet-ups throughout the year. These have previously been held in a central London location, but in light of our newly established Manchester office we hope to host regional mentoring meet-ups in the future. These are held as drop-in sessions and are supervised by us. You can also meet up independently so long as you let us know the details with enough time for us to get parental consent.

## **5. What support does the SMF offer?**

At the beginning of the mentoring you will receive a pack containing:

- Information about the programme and mentoring
- Our safeguarding policy
- Tips for E-mentoring
- Information about our secure website and how to use it.

Every month you will receive 'Mentoring Monthly' by email which contains SMF news, information about what is coming up in the academic year, tips for successful mentoring, topics for conversation and an activity to do with your mentee.

If you experience any problems with the mentoring you can always contact the E-mentoring Coordinator on 0207 183 1189 or [mentors@socialmobility.org.uk](mailto:mentors@socialmobility.org.uk).

## **6. What do mentors and mentees talk about?**

We are not prescriptive regarding what you talk to your mentee about, as we think that all mentoring relationships are different based on the individuals in question.

However, as mentioned above, we will send you a 'Mentoring Monthly' newsletter containing suggested conversation topics that are dependent on the time of year. The first half tends to focus on career choice, i.e. talking about your career and path into it as well as establishing the groundwork for making an informed decision. In the summer, when students are undertaking their internships, we ask you to talk about making an impression and getting the most out of the placement. The autumn term tends to focus on university applications, from personal statements to interview help.

## **7. What else can mentors do to help APP students?**

We are always very grateful for any support mentors can provide us in securing internships, or by offering their mentee the opportunity to go into the workplace informally. In particular, we would like mentors to try to facilitate a day or half a day of shadowing for their mentee, as this can be very beneficial. We are flexible in our approach and if mentors have any ideas for things that they feel would benefit their mentee we do our best to accommodate them.

Other opportunities will arise throughout the year. For instance, we run a personal statement checking service for students on our programme for which we ask the support of mentors, as well as careers talks and skills development sessions. Mentors will be emailed about these opportunities near the time.

If you have any questions, please contact [mentors@socialmobility.org.uk](mailto:mentors@socialmobility.org.uk), or read more about us at [www.socialmobility.org.uk](http://www.socialmobility.org.uk).

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