

Case Study of Early Career Academics' Mentoring Scheme

I arrived in St Andrews having moved from Canada to pursue research in Computer Science from July 2013. I aspired to build my academic profile and gain an international presence in my field. Since the early days of adjusting to a new work environment and to changes in my personal life were challenging, I decided to join the mentoring scheme which was advertised by email to the research staff.

My intention of joining the mentoring scheme was to come in contact with a senior academic outside my line management who could critique my CV, direct my energies to do right things for building my profile, encourage me when fellowship and funding applications were rejected, and challenge my style of thinking while approaching problems. Thankfully, the mentor assigned by the scheme was more than these.

My mentor and I decided to initially meet once a month. The meetings were arranged by emails and I chose to meet him in his office. Before attending my first meeting my mentor had carefully gone through my homepage and had read my CV. This was the starting point of our discussion during the first meeting and I had obtained insight into presenting a CV to a broader science audience which immensely helped my subsequent funding applications. During the course of my mentorship I obtained funding equivalent to £100,000 from multiple sources, not to mention the numerous proposals that were refused to be funded.

My mentor's interest in the progress of my career was evident when I received emails whether my funding or job applications were successful. I had hoped within myself selfishly that my mentor could get me a lectureship, which was not one of the intended aims of the scheme. Ironically, I was offered a lectureship at another institution during this time and I decided to not take up the offer. The advice I obtained from my mentor while deciding to turn down the offer was valuable and I do not regret that decision.

As our mentoring relationship progressed I appreciated my mentors' ability in bringing the best out of me. In due course, I learnt that my mentor had become a friend. We shared notes on family life, real estate and exotic conference trips now in a cafe. During one lunchtime break I was even introduced to my mentors' colleagues. Our time in the gym sometimes overlapped and that initiated conversations on how things were progressing.

Overall, this was a rewarding experience for me and I believe it was a satisfying experience for my mentor. This experience had gone beyond my expectations and I am thankful for a mentor and a friend in this senior colleague who takes a special interest in my career and well-being.

Blesson Varghese - Mentee

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University of St Andrews – Early Career Academics' Mentoring Scheme

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