IES Mentoring Scheme

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is the development of a professionally supportive relationship between two individuals. The term 'mentoring' can cover a broad spectrum of activities such as moral support and guidance, coaching, skills development, and buddy-like systems. The 'mentor' will be an individual with lived or worked experience in a particular area, a strong set of skills, or special training that they can use to impart knowledge and advise the 'mentee', who will typically be looking for guidance in a specific area. Although mentoring is driven by a mentee's goals, the relationship is designed to be mutually beneficial. In return, the mentor can obtain fresh perspectives on current problems or projects, as well as build on their leadership and communication skills. Both individuals also gain valuable networking opportunities.

Why do mentoring through the IES?

We operate a professional mentoring system that allows both mentees and mentors to get exactly what they need from a mentoring relationship. Our mentoring platform allows users to build bespoke profiles outlining mentees' key goals and mentors' expertise. These profiles are then used to algorithmically match mentors and mentees, ensuring you are matched with the right mentor. The built-in additional resources ensure that mentors are sufficiently equipped to offer the support and guidance under each of our mentoring streams, and that our mentees know what to expect and how to make the most of their mentoring relationship.

At the IES, we want our mentoring system to provide the best support to help you advance your career, whatever stage that may be. This is why we have developed a series of mentoring streams that mirror your professional level and look to give you support that isn't available in many traditional mentoring partnerships.

Whether you are a recent graduate beginning your career in the world of environmental sciences, a professional looking to change jobs within the sector, a member looking to achieve your Chartership, or a senior manager looking for fresh perspectives on a problem, the IES will have a mentoring stream for you.

Mentoring Streams

All mentoring relationships are different Schd are designed to be flexible to meet your support needs and the expertise of your mentor. The streams below are intended to provide a broad focus for your mentoring, enabling you to identify and work towards your own goals within it. Our mentoring streams largely fall under two categories: goal-orientated and general mentoring. The goal-orientated streams are designed to support you working towards achieving REnvTech, REnvP, CEnv, CSci, or Fellow Membership of the IES. General mentoring will support you in getting into the sector, changing your career, or working towards professional development.

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Goal-orientated mentoring

These streams are designed to provide mentees seeking a professional registration or Fellow Membership of the IES with additional support and guidance from a member who has the required experience.

Achieving REnvTech / REnvP

Candidates seeking either of these registrations can receive support and guidance from an experienced member who has already achieved that registration themselves or is very familiar with the process and requirements.

Mentoring can help you work out which registration is best suited to your experience and career development, with mentors able to provide a range of support, helping to ensure that you are a well-prepared candidate.

Typical areas for mentoring:
- Determining the suitable assessment route (report or interview) for REnvP
- Understanding how to frame your experience within the competencies framework
- Preparing the long-form CV
- Receiving feedback on your written report or practice interviews

Achieving Chartership

For prospective Chartership applicants, you will be matched with a mentor who has achieved your desired Chartership (CEnv or CSci) and is likely working in a similar field to you.

This mentoring stream is designed for Chartership candidates who have already started the application process or have been through one round of assessments already. We highly recommend that candidates attend a 'CEnv in a Day' or 'CSci Accelerated' workshop before entering into a mentoring partnership, as the workshops provide a high level of support and guidance.

Typical areas for mentoring:
- Mock report assessment
- Undertaking practice PRIs
- Evidencing the competencies sufficiently
- Support in clear communication and presentation of skills
- Identifying appropriate CPD and developing a CPD plan

Achieving Fellowship

Full Members looking to achieve IES Fellowship will be connected with a current Fellow and will be able to access support on the Fellowship application process, including feedback on your application form. Fellowship is for Members who have achieved distinction in the environmental sciences profession. More information about the Fellowship application can be found here.

General mentoring

The streams below are designed to provide support around your professional development, whether it is entering the workforce or considering your journey to Chartership, these streams will help you advance your career.

Graduate / Into work mentoring

Designed for newly graduated or soon-to-graduate students, this mentoring stream will connect you with an experienced environmental science professional who can help you kickstart your career and achieve your career aspirations.

This stream will be flexible to suit the experience and education of mentees and the usual requirements of the desired field/sector. Mentors can provide support and guidance in a number of areas, helping mentees to develop key employability skills to support their entry to the sector.

Typical areas for mentoring:
- Insight into the environmental sector
- Increased awareness of day-to-day roles
- Advice on where to find suitable jobs
- How to build your professional network
- Feedback on job applications
- Preparing for interviews
- Identifying potential career paths

Returning to work/career change mentoring

Have you recently taken a career break or are considering a career change in the sector? Mentors that may have had similar experiences will share their knowledge and expertise to provide insight into the types of roles available, support through job applications and help you develop key skills necessary for re-entering the workforce or for changing your career path.

Members will have a variety of reasons for having a break in their career or seeking to make a career change and this mentoring is designed to be flexible to meet members' needs.

Typical areas for mentoring:
- Insight into a different specialism
- Managing new priorities and navigating a different work-life balance
- Support with job applications
- How to frame your career break or change on your CV
- Interview practice
- Gaining appropriate skills and CPD

Professional development / gaining confidence

IES members are committed to ongoing CPD, however sometimes this can be challenging without additional support. This stream is designed to be flexible for the mentee's situation, whether it is identifying areas for future development and building a bespoke CPD plan or responding to a particular challenge or task at work. Mentors can also provide insight into the technical and 'soft' skills crucial for working in the sector and help you to develop these to ensure you are a confident and competent environmental practitioner.

Typical areas for mentoring:
- Reflecting on skills and building a plan for further professional development
- Advice for tackling a specific challenge
- Developing 'soft' skills, such as project management and conflict resolution

Journey to Chartership

This stream is designed for Early Career Professionals interested in learning more about becoming a Chartered Environmentalist and/or Chartered Scientist and hoping to begin their journey towards achieving their Chartership within the next couple of years. Candidates who are ready to apply for their Chartership should use the 'Achieving Chartership' stream.

Mentors will be able to guide you on which Chartership is a good fit for your experience and career goals, outline key skills and experience for you to work towards, and motivate you to stay on track to achieve Chartership in the future.

Typical areas for mentoring:
- Determining which Chartership to pursue
- Guidance on the experience necessary to meet the requirements for Chartership and how to pursue that experience
- Motivation and support to stay on track

Peer to Peer Coaching

Through Peer Coaching you can help your peers work through challenges in an empowered way, whilst developing your own leadership capabilities in the process. Coaching is designed to be a reciprocal process where you are matched with a professional at a similar level of seniority where you can both work through career-related challenges using the tested peer coaching principles of active listening and open questioning. You can find out more about Peer coaching here.

Reverse Mentoring

Gain a fresh perspective on your work through reverse mentoring and bounce your ideas off a more junior professional. This will allow you to learn new skills, challenge established thinking and empower younger workers to share their expertise and ideas. Experienced professionals seeking reverse mentoring should set up a 'mentee' profile on the platform, and earlier career professional willing to partake in reverse mentoring should create a 'mentor' profile. These are separate from your existing mentor/mentee profiles and will not interfere with your other mentoring relationships.

Using the platform

Here is some additional guidance for using the new mentoring platform:

1. Setting up your account

You will need your IES membership number to set up your account, so please log in to your Members' Area on the IES website and click on 'Your Details' to access your membership number.

The email address that mentors sign up with will be visible to the mentees whose requests they accept, so ensure that this is an email address you are happy to be shared.

2. Creating your profile

When creating your profile, the first stage is to select 'Mentee' or 'Mentor'. One account can have both a mentor and mentee profile, if you wish. For most of the streams, it is straightforward to identify whether you are the mentee or mentor. However, Reverse Mentoring or Peer to Peer coaching are a little more complex. For Reverse Mentoring, the experienced professional should sign up as a mentee and the more junior professional as the mentor, indicating through the profile options which stream you are signing up for. For Peer to Peer coaching, we recommend setting up both a mentee and mentor profile to maximise the matches available.

The information supplied in your profile will affect how you are matched to an appropriate mentor or mentee. In order to make the matching process as effective as possible, as a mentee you should be selective about the fields and sectors that you choose, and as a mentor, only select the areas that you feel confident giving guidance about.

The last stage of the profile is to detail what you are looking to get out of mentoring, or what you are able to offer as a mentor. This is your first opportunity to communicate with your potential mentor or mentee, so it is important to be clear about the areas of support you are looking for or expertise you have. You can use the 'typical areas for mentoring' above for inspiration.

3. Getting matches

As a mentee, once you have completed your profile you will be shown a list of prospective mentors. The top profiles will be the closest matches to the information you have submitted. If the matches aren't quite right, you can amend your profile or the search criteria in order to identify appropriate mentors. When you identify a mentor that you would like to be matched with, simply send them a request! You can have up to 3 active mentoring relationships at any one time. When you receive notification that your request has been accepted, the onus is on you as the mentee to instigate the relationship, whether through the in-platform messaging tool or by emailing them.

As a mentor, after you have established your profile, mentees will be able to request your support. When a mentee sends you a request, you will receive an email and a link to review their profile to determine if it would be an appropriate match and if you would like to accept. If you accept, the mentee can then access your email address and should instigate the first contact.

4. Your mentoring relationship

The online platform is designed to support you throughout your whole mentoring process, from setting goals at the start through to concluding the relationship. There are tools available within the platform to help identify the mentees strengths and areas for development, to establish the goals of the relationship, and to reflect on your progress. The first step is to review and agree to the IES Mentoring Agreement together. You can keep revisiting these tools throughout your relationship and can use the Progress Tracker on the Agreement document to keep track of your conversations.

5. Concluding the relationship

Once you have achieved the goals set out at the start of your relationship, you can choose to end your relationship or identify new goals to continue your mentoring journey. If you choose to continue your mentoring off the platform, please ensure that you mark your relationship as complete.

How to make the most of your mentoring?

Mentoring, like any relationship, will work at its best when both mentor and mentee are proactively engaged in the process. In order to make the most of your mentorship, here are a few tips from the IES team:

Set goals. While successful mentoring relationships often include an affinity between participants, it's important to remember that the aim is to function as a catalyst for the achievement or acceleration of the goals aligned with the mentoring stream. The mentee should be setting clear, measurable, time-bound goals; the mentor should help sense check those goals and provide a check-in to keep mentees on track. The mentee should proactively establish key areas to focus on and should take the lead in contacting the mentor. The platform has tools built into it to help you identify and record your goals.

Book your next mentor session together. It's important to establish a timeframe that works well for both participants, that allows for other aspects of life to be in balance, whilst being realistic for the goals set out. Importantly, ensure you have booked your next meeting in before the end of your current session and do your best to stick to that time – this ensures the mentorship relationship does not fall by the wayside during busy periods. If possible, keep your mentoring sessions regular, to the same time on the same day of the week for consistency and ease.

Share failures as well as successes. It is tempting to focus on our wins, either as exemplars of how to achieve similar career success or as a sense of proving your worth. Whilst successes should be celebrated, it is important to remember that failure is just as much a part of learning. Some of the best career lessons occur when we get it wrong. Mentors that share their failures demonstrate to the mentee that their journey is not linear; there will be ups and downs but great success can still be achieved. Mentees that share their failures offer an opportunity for the mentor to get to know the mentee more and understand areas to help focus on for improvement, either as skills, through experiences or building on knowledge. It also demonstrates the value of resilience and persistence when facing challenges and is how the best leaders self-reflect and audit their own actions to support improvement.

Be open and approachable. It's important that both mentor and mentee alike feel that the mentoring relationship is valuable. The mentor should feel comfortable being honest with their mentee, holding them to account with regards to their goals whilst maintaining a kind and supportive nature. Mentees in return should be hardworking and enthusiastic for the opportunities within the mentoring relationship, whilst respecting the guidance and time they are being given. Empathy, honesty, approachability and openness are strong skills for both mentors and mentees to hone.

If it's not working, be honest. Whilst the algorithms will match mentors and mentees up in the best way possible, occasionally a mentoring relationship just might not fit as well as we hope. That's okay! We encourage all mentors and mentees to discuss their mentoring relationship first to find ways of overcoming any obstacles, but if there are concerns that the mentoring relationship is not going to work, the IES team can help offer solutions or look at rematching.

If you have any questions about the Mentoring Scheme or would like additional support, please contact Rhiannon Humphreys on rhiannon@the-ies.org.