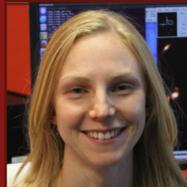


MENTORING PROGRAMME

Oxford Women in Physics Society



Introduction

The Oxford Women in Physics Society has developed a mentoring programme to support the career development of women in the Physics Department. At each successive career level, the proportion of women decreases. It is our hope that through the mentoring programme we can support women and encourage them to continue in physics, by providing personalised contact to target individual concerns and goals.

Anyone may choose to become a mentor or mentee. In addition, we automatically pair first year undergraduate women in physics with a woman in their second or third year. In every case, a mentee will be paired with a mentor at a later stage of their career. For example, a DPhil candidate may mentor an undergraduate or a postdoctoral research may mentor a DPhil candidate. A postdoc could in turn be mentored by a member of permanent staff.



Being a mentor

First and foremost, a mentor is going to be friendly, approachable, and easy to talk to. They will support the development of their mentee by providing insight and guidance - as they will be further through their career than their mentee, they will be able to share their experiences. The mentor should be open to discussing the mentee's personal challenges, and should take care not to have any particular biases or vested interests.

It will be the mentor's responsibility to set the framework and structure for the mentoring sessions, though it will be up to the mentee to decide upon the content of the meetings. The mentor is expected to take an open approach to the mentee's discussion and encourage the mentee to respond suitably.

In order for the mentee to be open and honest, it is important for the mentor to gain their trust and provide an environment where they feel able to have a free and open discussion. Most importantly, the mentor must take an interest in the mentee's progress if both the mentor and mentee are to benefit.



Being a mentee

Anyone stands to benefit from being a mentee - getting to know a more senior woman in physics will be interesting. A mentee may feel they could benefit from support or advice relating to their career development or may just wish to meet another woman in physics. At any rate, a mentee needs to be open to suggestions and advice from their mentor, and should be prepared to take responsibility for their development. It is useful for the mentee to have thought about what they want from the mentoring. This will help in choosing a mentor and getting the most out of the sessions.

A mentee should be willing to take responsibility and be in control of the agenda of the mentoring sessions. To make the most of mentoring, it is important to ask questions as well as listening to answers. Perhaps the most important tenet though is open-mindedness on the part of the mentee - a willingness to heed advice and consider making changes.

The mentee should be committed to attending planned sessions and taking any action planned with the mentor between meetings. It is expected that the mentee should maintain a professional relationship with the mentor, for example by being punctual to all meetings, respecting any established 'ground rules' and talking openly and honestly.



Benefits

... of being a mentor

Being a mentor can be a very rewarding experience as you can support another person's development by sharing your own experiences and advice. The benefits include:

Develop listening and communication skills

Improved leadership qualities and self-confidence

Recognition of your skills and experience

Experience of being a mentor

The opportunity to make a real difference to others

... of being a mentee

Being a mentee gives you the chance to discuss your career, development and problems with someone with more experience. The benefits include:

Practical advice, encouragement and support

Learning from the experience of other physicists

Increased confidence and self-esteem

Gaining insight into the next stage of your career

Development of self-awareness

Joining the scheme

... as a mentor

To become a mentor, all you need to do is send a short profile and photo of yourself to the Oxford Women in Physics email account: womeninphysics@physics.ox.ac.uk. Your profile and picture will be placed on our private mentoring database from which potential mentees are able to choose their mentors. Only those in the mentoring scheme are able to access this database.

... as a mentee

To sign up to be a mentee, contact the mentoring coordinator by emailing womeninphysics@physics.ox.ac.uk. They will send you login information so that you can access profiles of potential mentors on the mentoring database. Choose your top three potential mentors and email your selection to the mentoring coordinator along with a short profile of yourself. Remember to include what you are looking for from a mentor as this will help us to pair people effectively. We will then contact you with a suggested mentor.

... as a first year undergraduate

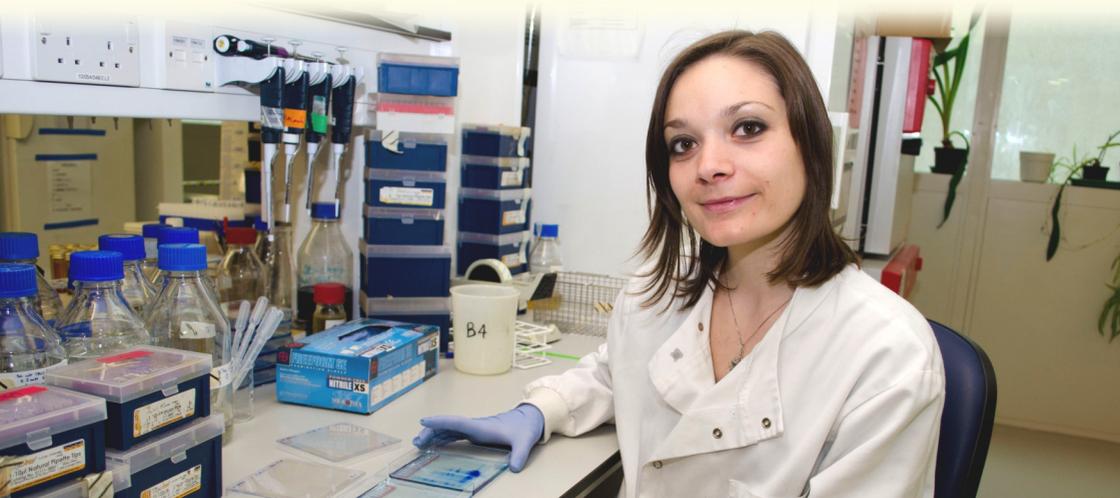
At the start of the first term, we automatically assign a mentor to every first year undergraduate woman in physics. This will usually be a woman in physics in their second year, or may be a third year. Where possible, we match physics and philosophy students together.

What to expect

Once you have applied to be a mentor or mentee, we will try to match people according to their requirements and preferences. First the mentor will be sent the profile of their potential mentee. If they agree to mentor that person, we will put both parties in touch so that they can arrange their first meeting.

It will be up to the mentor and mentee to find a time that suits them both. You can also decide how often you meet, though we recommend at least one session per term. You may feel you want your sessions to occur in neutral places such as the common room or canteen.

Throughout the year, we will hold various events in support of the mentoring programme. We will collect feedback at the end of the year by asking you to fill in a short questionnaire. If you have any other feedback, comments or suggestions throughout the year, you can contact us at any time by emailing womeninphysics@physics.ox.ac.uk



FAQs

What if I don't like my mentor / mentee?

If for some reason the relationship between mentor and mentee is no longer working, and doesn't look recoverable, send us an email. We will reassign the mentee to a new mentor.

What if I no longer have time to be a mentor?

If you find that you no longer have the time to commit to your mentee, then that's OK. It will be better for everyone in the long run for you to realise that! If this is the case, email us. We will inform your mentee, and reassign them as they choose.

Is this for me?

Probably, yes! All kinds of women in physics are part of the mentoring programme. You don't have to feel like you are struggling or particularly in need of help - everyone stands to gain by meeting someone new and learning from their experiences.

