Student Guide

First in My Family Mentoring Program

School of Economics

Contact:
Zoe Morrison
Executive Officer
Room 371, Merewether Building H04
E: zoe.morrison@sydney.edu.au
T: 02 9351 3324
About the FIMF Mentoring Program

Being first in your family to attend university is a great achievement and a source of pride. As part of our support for students who are first in family, we offer the First in My Family mentoring program. The mentoring program offers an opportunity for students like yourself to access professional guidance regarding your future direction and career planning. Teaming up with our alumni will offer you the opportunity to seek advice on what kinds of careers you can have with a degree in economics, as well as advice on skill development, CV’s, interview skills and what can be expected from working in the professional world.

By choosing to study at the School of Economics, you will one day join a prominent and successful group of alumni who have gone on to become leaders in their field. Our alumni bring with them a richness of experience and knowledge. By partnering with them through the First in My Family mentoring program, they are able to help inspire and contribute towards the development of new leaders in economics.

How the Program Works

Students who successfully apply to the program are paired with our alumni mentors based on their future goals, experience, interests and their reasons as to why they need a mentor.

Our mentors have been selected from our alumni based on their life and work experience and come from across a number of industry sectors. All of our mentors have an economics background from university can show you where a degree in economics can take you.

The program starts in May and runs through to October – it is expected that you will commit to the program for the full five months. During this time, mentors and mentees are expected to meet at least once a month. You will also have the chance to meet other alumni, mentors and mentees to network and learn from each other through other School events.

This guide contains information to help with some of the activities you will be expected to complete as part of the program, such as attending a briefing session before the program starts and reflective journaling. Throughout the program, you can always email or knock on our door if you have questions or concerns.

Program Activities

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applications open</td>
<td>Monday 13 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Applications close</td>
<td>Wednesday 21 March</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mentee and Mentor pairings released</td>
<td>Thursday 19 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student briefing session</td>
<td>Monday 23 April</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program launch event</td>
<td>Wednesday 2 May</td>
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<td>Mentoring Agreement due</td>
<td>Friday 11 May</td>
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<tr>
<td>First reflective journal entry due</td>
<td>Thursday 26 July</td>
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<td>Mid-program check in</td>
<td>July - August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Networking event</td>
<td>Mid-August</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second reflective journal entry due</td>
<td>Thursday 4 October</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graduation</td>
<td>Tuesday 16 October</td>
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Student Briefing

An overall briefing about the program and will allow you to learn more about the expectations of the program as well as more information on program activities like the reflective journal and meeting with your mentor. We will also cover important skills such as how
Program Launch Event
An opportunity for mentors and mentees to meet for the first time. You will get a chance to introduce yourself and have a chat about what you both hope to achieve by being involved in the program. The goal-setting exercise we do in the student briefing will really help here. You will also get a chance to meet other first in family mentees and mentors in the program.

Meeting with your Mentor
You are expected to meet with your mentor at least once a month – you can meet more often if you and your mentor have availability to do so. You will be expected to contact your mentor and initiate the setting up of meetings at a venue that is convenient for both of you.

This guide contains some areas that may be helpful to get the conversation started but are no means prescriptive. In order to get the best from mentoring, you need to understand what it is that you want out of it. Do you want to know what careers are open to you? Or are you looking for guidance around what skills you need and how to develop them?

We suggest that in your first meeting, you spend some time getting to know your mentor. Find out more about their life and work experiences, how did they get to where they are? Your mentor will also be interested in you so reflect on how your own story and aspirations fits with their bio and achievements. Remember, it is a conversation, not an interview.

Reflective Journals
Reflection is an important part of the mentoring program. You will be expect to submit two entries during the program as outlined in the dates above.

Your reflective journal is a chance to note down key information such as advice from your mentor, resources and contacts. Reflective journals are not a description of events but more a reflective analysis of your thoughts and responses to your experiences during the program. What are your key take outs? What would you like explore further in your next meeting? Why did you react the way that you did? What experiences have caused you to have that thought? Be honest and open – the only person reading your reflections is the program coordinator.

We will provide advice around writing a reflective journal and some examples at your briefing session. You can also find more information by searching online. Your entries will be submitted via the First in my Family Canvas site.

Mid-program Catch-up
During July and August, you will be required to attend a one-on-one catch-up with the program coordinator to check in and discuss your progress in the program. It’s also an opportunity for you to ask any questions or discuss any concerns you may have.

An online poll will be used for you to indicate your availability. Your mid-program catch-up is a mandatory activity.
The Mentoring Relationship

Our mentors have been selected based on their life and work experience and also on their motivation to share their journey with our students. Our mentors understand the difference that a mentoring relationship can have in positively influencing the future direction of our students, most having being mentored themselves during their career.

It’s important for you and your mentor to set expectations with each other as to what you both hope to gain through the process and what your mentor can offer in terms of time and advice. Below are some guideline to what the relationship between mentor and mentee can bring.

The role of the mentor

The role of the mentor is to inspire students to think about the range of work options available to them during and at the end of your degree. The mentor will share their knowledge and experience to equip their mentee to meet challenges they face in starting and developing their career.

Responsibilities include assisting the student to:

- formulate or articulate their career goals, and strategies for achieving them
- understand the professional work environment
- identify some of the keys to starting your career and progression through an organisation
- understand the importance of networks, how to develop them and how they work
- learn through constructive feedback
- maintain confidentiality (professional and personal).

The role of the mentee

You should be clear about what you hope to achieve i.e. seek career advice. Be open to new opportunities and have a willingness to learn from your mentor. Your mentors time and experience is valuable and that there may be occasions when they are not immediately available.

Your responsibilities include:

- being proactive with your mentor – you are the driver of the relationship
- accepting responsibility for your own goals, decisions and actions
- completing agreed tasks and actively participating in program activities
- appreciating the professional and personal commitments of mentors and being flexible with their availability
- maintaining confidentiality (personal and professional). If in doubt, ask them first before sharing
- keeping your appointments with your mentor and providing plenty of notice if arrangements have to be postponed or cancelled
- maintaining contact with the Schools Executive Officer throughout the program
- completing journal entries after each meeting, and submitting two entries by the outlined deadlines.
Possible Discussion Topics

The themes below are given to help inspire possible topics of conversation with your mentor. They are in no way the only things that you talk about. They can help you get the conversation started or help you both chart your mentoring journey.

Discussion one – Getting to know each other
1. Your story up to now – how did you come to study economics at the University of Sydney? What are your best achievements so far?
2. What have you been doing so far and how does this align with your ‘dream job’?
3. What are your majors and why did you choose them? What are your favourite subjects?
4. How did you mentor come to be in the position they are in now? Their career path, subjects at university, skills, extracurricular activities, decision making, opportunities etc.
5. What are their values and how do they align with their career to date?

Discussion two – What are your career options?
1. What is your dream job? How did you arrive at that possible career?
2. How has your mentor explored their career options in the past – what work, what didn’t?
3. What was your mentor’s dream job when they were at university?
4. How did your mentor explore the options open to them and what’s the best way to research the job market?
5. What is the best way to build networks?

Things you may want to reflect on:
• Research the market and chat about what options you found
• What can you take on board from your mentor’s response? Is your ‘dream job’ still your dream job?
• How does the mentor’s dream job expectations when in university compare with where they are now or their career path?

Discussion three – Gaining experience and skills
1. What things are you currently doing outside of class to build your experience and skills needed to start your career?
2. What transferable skills do you have and how can you use these in various roles?
3. Ask your mentor about their own experience – identifying skill gaps and how they filled those gaps.
4. How did they know they needed to develop certain skills?
5. What is their next professional/personal development step?

Things to consider:
• Read up on your mentor – their career path to date, their qualifications and their personal pursuits such as sitting on executive boards or volunteering. Be prepared when you discuss this topic.

Discussion four – Getting the job
1. Talk about your own experience in job hunting or applying for voluntary or paid positions – how did you find the position, how did you apply, what went well, what went less well?
2. What has been your mentor’s own experience of the recruitment process? How did they prepare?
3. Discuss the mentor’s CV and how they designed it, what they included, how they tailored it to what a recruiter would want to see.
4. How have recruiters, contacts/network and LinkedIn helped with their career?
5. How did they deal with rejection during the recruitment process?
Discussion five – The professional environment
1. What are your experiences in the workplace – positive and negative?
2. What are your networks and how would you like to start building them or improve them?
3. How did the mentor build their personal brand – managing around and up and how to connect everything they’ve learn to take on new roles.
4. How did the mentor build their networks?

Things you may want to consider:
• Research what “personal brand” is and what it means to you
• What does your personal brand look like?
• How do you think you should act in the professional world? How does that reflect with the mentors experience since starting their career?
• How would you have dealt with something that went wrong in the office such as conflict or strategic changes? How did your mentor react?

Reflective Journals

As part of the program, we ask you to keep a reflective journal, completed after each visit with your mentor. They aren’t assessed but they are integral to getting the best experience possible from the program. Your journal isn’t just a chance for you to note down key outtakes from your meeting, it also helps build important graduate qualities like critical thinking and thought analysis skills.

What is a reflective journal?
A reflective journal is very personal, so there is no right or wrong way to write your journal. It should be a very honest and personally developing activity. When you write your journal, you may interpret events or experiences differently to others or react differently than others do. – That’s okay, it is a personal reflection.

Your entries should be around 600 words in length. The quality comes in what you write not how much.

There are 4 main criteria that a reflective journal entry should contain:

1. **Situation:** What happened?
2. **Affect:** What was its impact on you personally?
3. **Interpretation:** What did you learn from the experience?
4. **Decision:** What did you decide you would do differently should the situation arise again? How would you apply the learnings? What has changed (your thinking, your assumptions, your skills etc.) What are your action items to continue developing in this area?