



## WACH Peer Mentorship Program Overview

Peer mentorship is a mutually beneficial relationship between students. No special training or skills are necessary; mentors simply need lived experience that is relevant to the mentee, and to commit to sharing that experience in useful ways. However, we would also like to provide some training and structure to ensure mentors and mentees can have an effective and partnership.

### **Eligibility**

Mentees: Incoming/first year MSc and PhD students (required)

Mentors: MSc and PhD students who have been in the WACH (or RDS) program for more than 1 year

### **Intake/matching process**

Mentors and mentees provide information about their goals and preferences (using intake form). The program will match and introduce mentees and mentors.

Where a match is not possible or ideal, the program may reach out to students in similar programs, request a mentor through the Faculty of Medicine peer mentorship program, or arrange small group mentorship instead.

Mentors and mentees will be introduced at the peer mentorship orientation in September, or when they begin their program in January or May.

If a mentor or mentee wishes to terminate the partnership, they should contact the WACH program, and we will attempt to identify an alternative mentor.

### **Expectations**

Mentors and mentees are expected to:

1. Attend the peer mentorship orientation, and complete the confidentiality and mentorship agreements.
2. Meet at least 2 times for 30 minutes, from September to April (ideally at least once per term). If starting in January or May, this timeline would be the mentee's first two terms instead.
3. Attend at least one workshop or WACH social event together.
4. Provide feedback for program evaluation.

Additionally, mentors are encouraged to attend the Faculty of Medicine mentorship workshop, which introduces mentoring skills and focuses on inclusivity.

### **The WACH program will provide:**

1. Email templates for introduction
2. Peer mentorship orientation and in-person introduction event
3. Mentorship program guidelines and forms



4. Workshops and/or social events, and recommendations for workshops and events hosted by other groups, to attend together
5. Small budget to defray costs of meetings (ex. coffee gift card)

## Program Objectives

Beginning your graduate studies can be a challenging time. We hope that you will connect with peers in the WACH program through coursework and other activities, but also recognize that it can be difficult to find a sense of belonging when students conduct research in different areas, and sometimes at different sites. Peer mentorship offers a low-pressure space for learning from senior students, giving and receiving support, and promoting a sense of community.

### **We hope that the peer mentorship will provide benefits for both mentees and mentors:**

- Promote wellbeing
- Improve academic and career outcomes
- Expand networks and strengthen engagement and the WACH student experience

### **Mentees will be able to:**

- Connect with students with diverse skill sets from other research labs/teams.
- Feel supported in the transition from undergraduate to graduate studies, or from previous studies or work to a doctoral program.
- Share experiences in developing research skills, and learn from a fellow student's challenges and achievements.
- Set and refine short- and long-term academic and professional goals.
- Explore and gain clarity on academic and professional goals.

### **Mentors will be able to:**

- Build leadership, mentorship, and interpersonal communication skills.
- Contribute to the academic community by supporting peers.
- Provide guidance, support, and advice to new students by sharing your own experiences.
- Contribute to building competencies in leader, advocate, collaborator, and communicator roles.



## What is Mentorship?

Our definition of mentoring is “a purposeful and personal relationship in which a mentor provides guidance, feedback and wisdom to facilitate the growth and development of the mentee”. The mentee takes active responsibility for their own learning and development, and the mentor serves as facilitator of that growth.

### **Mentoring is ...**

- A relationship in which the mentee takes active responsibility for their learning and development, and the mentor serves as facilitator of that growth;
- Built on the history, experience, and knowledge of both partners;
- A relationship in which the mentor facilitates the mentee's growth and development by asking thoughtful, thought-provoking questions; and
- A mutually beneficial relationship in which the mentor and mentee share insights, knowledge, and experience.

### **Mentoring is not ...**

- A relationship in which the mentee passively receives instruction from the mentor;
- A relationship in which the mentor tries to mold the mentee into a version of themselves; or
- A relationship in which the mentor solves the mentee's problems or gives them all of the answers.

### **Establishing Relationships**

We consider the relationship aspect a large part of this program and the first task will be to establish a relationship. To do this we recommend that you meet at least 2 times (for ~30 min) during the course of the program, but the actual frequency and type of meetings will be up to mentee and mentor to decide.

This program uses a formal structure (orientation, suggested workshops/events) to support the formation of relationships that participants might not have been comfortable initiating informally. However, each mentoring pair will define most aspects of their relationship, including the frequency and location/format of meetings, and the desired learning outcomes for the mentee.

### **A mentor should:**

- Help the mentee navigate the transition to graduate school or a doctoral degree by sharing their experience and pointing the mentee towards valuable resources.
- Help to refine concrete short- and long-term academic and professional goals.
- Recommend learning and development opportunities.
- Listen actively and without judgement, and communicate clearly.
- Model best practices, values, and culture within women+ and children's health sciences, including challenging aspects.
- Recognize strengths and areas for development for your mentee.



- Provide constructive feedback.
- Establish personal and professional boundaries.
- Discuss preferred communication mode for mentees to approach you outside of scheduled meetings in case they have any quick questions or concerns.
- Encourage a mentee who is struggling to seek support from the WACH program, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, UBC, or health services.
- Respect confidentiality and privacy of your mentee.

**A mentor should not:**

- Provide tutoring or counseling.
- Directly participate in a mentee's job search.
- Serve as the primary resource for the completion of the Individual Development Plan (IDP). (Although a mentor may point the mentee towards opportunities to build skills or competencies identified in the IDP, this document should be completed with the student's supervisor and supervisory committee.)
- Feel responsible for solving all the mentee's problems.

**A mentee should:**

- Initiate scheduling meetings with their mentor, and 'set agenda' of topics/questions/issues they would like to discuss.
- Set concrete short- and long-term academic and professional goals, and reflect on progress made towards these goals.
- Share strengths and accomplishments, as well as mistakes and areas for improvement.
- Be respectful of the mentor's time.
- Respect the mentor's preferred method and frequency of communication outside of meetings for quick questions.
- Be open to suggestions, feedback, and advice.
- Recognize when external supports from the WACH program, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies, UBC, or health services will aid in resolving their concerns or issues.
- Respect confidentiality and privacy of your mentor.

**Possible topics for mentorship conversations:**

- Transition to graduate school
- Student life at UBC, on the Oak St campus, and in Vancouver
- Academic/research background and interests
- Career exploration and work experiences
- Navigating scholarship applications
- Cultural norms and academic bureaucracy



- Building professional and academic networks
- Work-life integration
- Student-supervisor relationships
- Time management

*Not all topics will be covered in every meeting!*

## Program Support

### Suggested Activities

Below is a non-exhaustive list of workshops/events mentors and mentees could attend together, and suggestions for free/inexpensive activities around Vancouver.

### Workshops/events

- [Graduate Pathways for Success](#) workshops and events
- BCCHRI, WHRI, and other seminars or rounds of interest
- [Faculty of Medicine mentorship](#) workshops
- [BioTAP Teaching Assistant](#) training sessions
- WACH Social Organization events – stay tuned!

### Activities

- Local hikes – Stanley Park, Grouse Mountain (Grouse Grind), Pacific Spirit Park, Lighthouse Park, Capilano River Regional Park/Cleveland Dam, Lynn Loop/Lynn Canyon, Burnaby Mountain, and Quarry Rock offer a variety of difficulty levels, and all accessible by public transit.
- Explore Granville Island
- Vancouver Art Gallery – Admission by donation, 5-8pm, Tuesdays
- Museum of Anthropology – Admission free for UBC students
- H.R. MacMillan Space Center
- Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Park Chinese garden
- Take the Seabus to North Vancouver and explore the Lonsdale Quay
- Visit one of Vancouver's beaches
- Cafes and restaurants with board games: <https://dailyhive.com/vancouver/board-games-restaurants-vancouver>
- Visit a cat café

### Guidelines for meeting safely and respectfully

- Hold meetings in a public space.
- Be respectful of each other's time (be punctual for meetings, and give notice if a meeting needs to be canceled or rescheduled).



- Use your first meeting to establish boundaries (topics that are out of bounds) and share restrictions (ex. vegetarian diet).
- Choose activities that both mentor and mentee are comfortable participating in.
- Do not hesitate to contact the WACH program for guidance or support if you encounter problems.

### Experiencing problems with your mentor/mentee?

We care about your mentorship experience and want to make sure that you are in a respectful and amicable mentee-mentor relationship. If you are a mentee or a mentor who is experiencing challenges with your match, the WACH program is here to help. Any concerns that you have that you wish to discuss will be treated confidentially. Please email Natalie Twohey at [wach.program@ubc.ca](mailto:wach.program@ubc.ca) to discuss.

## Additional Resources

**Inclusivity in the Learning Environment for Research Groups** (Office of Faculty Developmental & Educational Support): <https://rise.articulate.com/share/RzblhBhqqUGAmawKXiFhVWoNLDXZ35Jd#/>

**Faculty of Medicine GPE Peer Mentorship Training:** The Faculty of Medicine GPE Office will be facilitating a series of professional development workshops focused on transferrable mentorship skills. These optional workshops are open to graduate students and postdocs across the Faculty of Medicine, in any mentorship program.

- For mentors: The Power of Peer Mentorship (workshop and Canvas course)
- For mentees: Making the Most of Mentorship (workshop)
- For both mentors and mentees, workshops throughout the year may include:
  - Active Listening & Asking Excellent Questions
  - Resilience & Self-Care for Mentors
  - Models of Mentorship: Digging Deeper
  - Mentorship Across Cultures
  - Transitions in Mentorship

## Additional Mentoring Opportunities

- Faculty of Medicine (Graduate & Postdoctoral Education) Peer Mentorship Program: <https://grad-postdoc.med.ubc.ca/current-students/student-wellbeing/peer-mentorship-program/>
- BCCHRI Mentorship Program: <https://hub.bcchr.ca/display/BMP/BCCHR+Mentorship+Program>



- IBPOC Wellness Mentors: <https://students.ubc.ca/health/wellness-centre/ibpoc-wellness-mentors>
- UBC GSS x SUS (Graduate Student Society x Science Undergraduate Society) Mentorship Program: <https://sus.ubc.ca/mentorship/>
- Women in Science and Engineering (WiSE) Mentoring Program: <https://wie.engineering.ubc.ca/events/wise/>
- YWCA High School Mentorship: <https://ywcavan.org/programs/mentorship/high-school-mentorship>

**Sources:**

[OBGYN Mentorship Program](#)

[IOP/IOGS Peer Mentorship Program](#)

[Rehabilitation Sciences Mentorship Program](#)

[Graduate and Postdoctoral Education Peer Mentorship Program, Faculty of Medicine](#)