



The African  
Academy of Sciences

# Effective distance mentoring arrangements

**Distance mentoring allows for matching of mentees with mentors from diverse institutional settings, disciplines and cultures. It will widen your perspectives on career and life as you learn from individuals beyond your institutional setting and cultural context.**

The AAS mentors and mentees will primarily interact virtually and will have a chance to physically meet at least once a year. This kind of distance mentoring allows for better time management but also enriches mentorship by enabling diversity in interactions and collaborations across countries, institutions and cultures.

At your first meeting, you will want to first build rapport with your partner. Choose an approach that allows you to share your purpose and value system, such as illustrating your life story, sharing a book that has inspired you, or highlighting key events or people that have shaped who you are today.

Secondly, establish a framework for communication by discussing these questions: -

- **What media will you use – Phone? Email? Skype? Instant messaging? Or a combination?**
- **When will you use it, and for what aspects of the mentoring?**
- **How frequent will you communicate? e.g. monthly email updates from the mentee**
- **How and when will you provide constructive feedback to each other?**



Photo: ©The AAS

Below are some communication options you may choose from. You are free to explore others.

Method	Pros	Cons
<b>All methods</b>	Make long-distance mentoring possible	Lack of face-to-face contact: it may take longer to build rapport and establish an effective mentoring relationship Distractions from the mentee or mentor's direct environment can mean sessions are cut short Poor communication and lack of face-to-face contact create difficulties with long-distance arrangements
<b>Email</b>	Good for different time zones Good for short exchanges and practical information Good for reflection, as some time can be spent thinking over responses	Lack of verbal clues and body language It may be harder to build rapport and trust (especially if used from the outset) Confidentiality issues from email content Technical difficulties e.g. Email can be rerouted into a spam folder Delay in receiving responses
<b>Telephone &amp; other call options</b>	Verbal clues can be picked up (these do require concentration, and it's advisable to confirm them) It's possible to infer emotions Some free options available e.g. WhatsApp	Lack of body language and facial expression Confidentiality: who can hear the call
<b>Skype &amp; other video options</b>	Best option for distance mentoring due to similarities with a face-to-face meeting Most are free and easy to use	Technical problems can 'cut off' conversations
<b>Short messaging services</b>	Good for short and quick conversations Some free options available – WhatsApp	Lack of verbal clues and body language Confidentiality issues

Visit <https://www.aasciences.ac.ke/mentorship-scheme> to find out more  
or email [mentoring@aasciences.ac.ke](mailto:mentoring@aasciences.ac.ke)

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