



The African
Academy of Sciences

Mentors' Guide

The AAS Mentorship Scheme aims at building the capacity of experienced professionals to offer guidance and support to Africa-based early and mid-career scientists who can eventually become outstanding science leaders on the continent. An AAS mentor is an experienced professional and with demonstrated interest in working with early career scientists.

Mentors' Guide

You should be prepared and willing to invest your time and skills into developing another scientist to advance in their career profile and want to help him/her achieve success, share your own experiences, and challenge the mentee in a constructive manner.

You are required to communicate regularly with the mentee, have patience, and respect their ideas and culture.

As you get involved in the mentoring relationship, you will have the opportunity to reflect on your own development and may develop and apply new skills such as listening, questioning, facilitating, empathising, analysing, rapport building and so forth.

Importantly, mentoring should enable you to enhance the mentee's contribution to the development of research and innovation in Africa.

Some of the areas (and not limited to these) that a mentee might require support and guidance include core research and development activities (discovery, development, and delivery); critical thinking and setting research objectives; research design and methodology; translational science pathways; regulatory affairs; strategy development (personal and project based); project management skills (budgeting, setting milestones, & resource needs); leadership and ethics; soft skills development (writing, presentation, and negotiations); among many others.

Enrolment and eligibility criteria

AAS Mentors are drawn from The AAS Fellowship schemes, grantees, and partner institutions. We require

our mentors to have interest and demonstrated experience in the fields that they wish to offer support on to the mentees.

Demonstrated experience means that you have been actively involved in a certain field for a substantive period resulting in tangible deliverables such as conducting high quality research and publishing findings in peer reviewed journals; written, won and managed grants from major donors; effectively communicated your research; developed innovations from your research; been involved in policy-making; acted as an editor/reviewer on major journals; holding leadership positions; and membership to international networks, among many others.

You don't always have to be at the top of your career ladder, but you should have demonstrated experience in the area that you wish to support the mentee. For instance, a mentor supporting a mentee in grant writing should have written, won, and managed past grants.

As prior experience in mentoring is not a mandatory requirement, all enrolled mentors will be trained.

Matching

You will be matched with a mentee if their priority mentoring needs match with one or more of your strengths or attributes. A matching matrix will also ensure that matching accounts for among other things, the synergy between your strengths and mentees' needs; any shared interests; and alignment of purpose and values.

Other considerations will include stated preferences for gender, parental status, working languages, and field of expertise.

Mentoring Agreement

On your first meeting with the mentee, you shall discuss and agree on the mentoring goals, modes of communication, and the timeframe for the mentoring relationship. These will be recorded in the Mentoring Agreement, signed by both parties, and shared with The AAS Mentoring Coordinators.

Mentor-Mentee Meetings

This being a virtual mentorship scheme, you will agree on the most suitable channels for your regular communication such as emails, phone calls, video conferencing etc. An annual mentorship retreat of mentors and mentees will incorporate other mentoring options such as peer mentoring, mentoring circles, coaching and masterclasses.

Mentoring Timeframe

For our learning and evaluation purposes, we shall track the mentoring relationship from the sixth month for up to two years. After this, you may choose to either continue with the relationship on an informal basis or transition to mentor another scientist.

Transitioning from a mentoring relationship

You have the liberty to end the relationship once the mentoring goals have been met or when you feel the relationship is not benefitting both parties. A transition may also occur when one of you decides to change their mentoring goals. Under such circumstances, agree with your mentee, inform the Mentoring Coordinators and participate in an evaluation of the mentoring relationship.

Evaluating The AAS Mentorship Scheme

You will assess the progress of your mentoring relationship and report to the Mentoring Coordinators every six months. Internal and external evaluation of the mentorship scheme shall be conducted each year.

Contact person

In case of any questions or concerns with the mentoring relationship, the first point of contact will be The AAS Mentoring Coordinators via mentoring@aasciences.ac.ke.

Mentors Do's and Don'ts

DO'S	DON'TS
1. LISTEN	1. CRITICIZE
2. Commit to set aside time for the mentoring relationship and honour all appointments.	2. Try to give advice on everything.
3. Ensure that you and your mentee agree on the agenda of each meeting.	3. Encourage mentees to be totally dependent upon you.
4. Invite the mentee to activities relevant to their mentoring needs.	4. Provide your personal history, problems, animosities, successes, failures, etc., unless they are constructive contributions.
5. Respond to emails from your mentee within three days of receipt or as soon as possible.	5. Be too busy when the mentee needs your counsel and support.
6. Notify your mentee when you expect to be on break for a longer period.	
7. Keep information that your mentee has shared with you confidential.	
8. Establish open and honest communication and a forum for ideas exchange.	
9. Foster creativity and independence.	
10. Help build self-confidence and offer encouragement.	
11. Provide honest and timely feedback to your mentee.	
12. Provide opportunities for the mentee to talk about concerns and ask questions.	
13. If something concerning the mentee needs to be discussed with others, it should first be discussed within the context of the mentoring relationship.	
14. Discuss with the mentee on transitioning from the relationship if it's no longer working for you.	

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

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