

Schmidt Science Fellows Peer-support Scheme – Guidelines for Peer-mentors and Peer-mentees

These guidelines are not contractual and may be amended from time to time.

Purpose of the Peer-support Scheme

The Schmidt Science Fellows peer-support scheme aims to connect each member of a new cohort with an experienced Fellow from a previous cohort to provide a contact point for informal questions and guidance about being a Schmidt Science Fellow, a sounding board for ideas about Placement, starting a new project, and a way to access expertise and knowledge across the Fellows community.

The scheme is a crucial way in which we aim to bring new Fellows fully into our Fellowship community, to accelerate their progress as Fellows and scientists by drawing on the experience and knowledge of experienced Fellows, and to help them maximize their opportunities from the Fellowship Year. By sharing experience across cohorts, we aim to deepen our community of Fellows and to catalyze relationships whereby both Peer-mentors and Peer-mentees gain mutual benefit, insights, and fellowship.

The Program will match Peer-mentors and Peer-mentees using a sign-up process that identifies areas of Peer-mentor expertise and knowledge and Peer-mentees' interests. The Program will provide training and support for Peer-mentors to undertake the mentoring process effectively. Peer-mentors are required to have attended a live or recorded briefing and training session before holding their first meeting with a Peer-mentee.

Interactions and contact

Peer-mentors are expected to initiate interactions with their Peer-mentees and to hold two meetings (telephone or videocall) before the end of September and a further meeting before the end of the calendar year. Further meetings should be scheduled based on the needs and interests of the Peer-Mentee and should be scheduled by mutual agreement.

The relationship between Peer-mentors and Peer-mentees is expected to be informal and relaxed, with meetings being a conversation between peers. However, being a Peer-mentor is a responsibility and one Peer-mentors are asked to take seriously. If Peer-mentors need to adjust the parameters of a Peer-support relationship (e.g. due to illness, change in workload or circumstances) they should seek to discuss this with their Peer-mentee. If a Peer-mentor feels unable to continue to provide the level of mentoring their Peer-mentee requires they should contact Matt Goode to discuss the most appropriate course of action.

Peer-mentor/mentee matches should only continue for as long as they are useful for the Peer-mentee. If a Peer-mentee feels they are not receiving the level of support they expect they should discuss this with their Peer-mentor in the first instance. If it is not possible to align expectations then the Peer-mentee should contact Matt Goode.

Scope of Peer-support

Peer-support discussions may cover any topics that the Peer-mentee finds useful and valuable to maximize their engagement with their Fellowship experience. This may include: Placement considerations, managing lab and PI relationships, assessing opportunities, overcoming setbacks, interacting with the Program, future career development, moving cities and countries, and work-life balance.

The value of the Peer-support scheme is the recent proximity of the Peer-mentors to the experiences the new Fellows are having. Any advice from the Peer-mentors is expected to draw on relevant personal experience rather than professional training. Peer-support scheme conversations are expected to be relaxed and informal. Peer-mentees should not expect Peer-mentors to provide a professionally qualified level of support and should contact Fellowship Support or their Academic Council Mentor should alternative support be needed.

Each Peer-mentee will continue to work with their allocated Academic Council Mentor for formal Program mentoring. Peer-mentees should also continue to access Program Fellowship Support for advice, counselling, and support services. Peer-support does not replace this in any way.

Fellows should refer to the Fellows' Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy for further information about the expectations on our staff, Academic Council members, and Fellows, the support available, and how to access it.

Confidentiality

Peer-mentor/mentee discussions should be considered confidential unless the Peer-mentor and Peer-mentees gives the other express permission for the content of discussions to be shared or one of the exceptions below applies.

Expectations around confidentiality should be discussed at an initial Peer-support meeting. The exceptions to this requirement are:

- If any of the circumstances described in the “Escalation of Concerns” section below apply. Concerns in these categories override considerations of confidentiality.
- Where the matters discussed as part of the conversation are manifestly made public by the Peer-mentee (in respect of matters shared by the Peer-mentee) or by the Peer-mentor (in respect of matters shared by the Peer-mentor) or by another route other than by the actions of the Peer-mentor or Peer-mentee respectively.
- Reporting of broad, high-level categories of topics discussed for the purposes of Program evaluation of the Peer-support scheme. This reporting will be on an anonymous and/or aggregated basis only, without names or other identifying details of any individual unless expressly consented to by that person.

Peer-mentors must not use any scientific information or intellectual property shared in good faith by a Peer-mentee for personal or professional gain. Peer-mentors will only share this information

further in accordance with the express wishes of the Peer-mentee and in any event in line with the intellectual property policies applicable to Fellows. The same principles apply to Peer-mentees in respect of scientific information or intellectual property shared in good faith by a Peer-mentor.

Peer-mentees should expect broad support but respect that their Peer-mentor will have their own project work they may not be able to discuss in detail.

Escalation of concerns regarding Peer-mentees by Peer-mentors

In the event that a Peer-mentor is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a Peer-mentee to the point that they believe the immediate health or personal safety of the Peer-mentee or others is at risk, they should report this to Fellowship Support staff and the Program Executive Director. Program staff may then decide to contact a Fellow's emergency contact, local emergency services, or alert the placement PI as appropriate if they feel this is necessary and in the Fellow's best interests. The Fellow will be informed about the actions taken unless Program staff believe that doing so would put them at greater risk.

Preventing harassment and unacceptable behavior

In the event that a Peer-mentor is informed by a Peer-mentee of discrimination or harassment affecting or involving their Peer-mentee they should support and encourage their Peer-mentee to report it in accordance with the reporting mechanisms outlined in the Terms or Principles of Fellowship.

All participants in the Peer-support scheme must continue to abide by the requirements of the Terms or Principles of Fellowship signed at the time of their Selection. This includes provisions to protect both Peer-mentors and Peer-mentees from harassment and discrimination. In the event that either a Peer-mentor or Peer-mentee feels subject to harassment or unacceptable behavior by their Peer-mentee or Peer-mentor respectively then they should report this in accordance with the reporting mechanisms outlined in the Terms or Principles of Fellowship.

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