



SBME's Career Accelerator

WELCOME MENTEES!

On behalf of the School of Biomedical Engineering, welcome to SBME's Career Accelerator! We believe you'll benefit from this experience as you gain valuable insights into potential career pathways and build your professional network.

This guidebook¹ was created to support you develop a meaningful mentorship experience. In this guide you'll find information on:

1. Program Overview
2. Expectations
3. Individual Development Plan
4. Plan Development, Refinement & Implementation
5. Evaluation
6. Resources

1. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Launched in partnership with STEMCELL Technologies and Advice to a Scientist in 2022, SBME's Career Accelerator offers mentorship opportunities for our graduate students as they identify possible career options and learn how to transition into those careers following training. The program seeks to support you as you build your professional network, explore career pathways, and develop communication and leadership skills.

2.0 EXPECTATIONS

In SBME's Career Accelerator, mentees are encouraged to take an active role in driving their mentorship experience. A successful mentorship relies on clear communication, proactive engagement, and a strong commitment to personal and professional growth²:

MANAGE THE RELATIONSHIP: Mentees are equally responsible for building rapport with their mentors. Be proactive in scheduling meetings, setting agendas, and following up on action items. Taking the lead on logistics ensures that the mentorship is consistent and productive. For each meeting, aim to set a clear agenda that includes discussion points, goals, and any specific areas where you need advice or feedback.

SET CLEAR GOALS: Work with your mentor to create SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals that align with your career aspirations. Regularly review these goals and identify barriers

¹ The content for this guidebook was adapted from CIHR's IDP Resource Website: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50516.html>

² Expectations adapted from Faculty of Medicine's [Mentoring Framework](#)



that may be preventing progress. Share both successes and challenges with your mentor, as this will help refine your approach and maintain focus.

BE CLEAR ABOUT OBJECTIVES: Clearly articulate your objectives for the mentorship. Whether seeking career guidance, industry insights, or skill development, communicate your evolving goals to your mentor. Establish a timeline for these objectives and invite reflections from your mentor to track progress over time.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES PROVIDED BY THE MENTOR: Mentors can open doors to new opportunities—whether through networking, professional engagements, or insights into related fields. Actively seek opportunities to meet other professionals, attend relevant events, and participate in discussions that can expand your network and perspective.

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN DEVELOPMENT: Your mentor can guide and support you, but ultimately, you are responsible for your career path. Make decisions based on the advice and feedback provided, but remember that it is up to you to take actionable steps toward achieving your goals.

SEEK INFORMATION AND BE CURIOUS: Come prepared to each meeting with questions and topics to discuss. Seek your mentor's insights and feedback, and remain open to suggestions. The more curious and engaged you are, the more valuable your mentorship experience will be.

MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY: Your discussions with your mentor should remain confidential. This ensures trust and openness, allowing both parties to discuss career challenges, opportunities, and feedback freely.

2.2 TIME COMMITMENTS

Students are required to commit to one 30-45 minute meeting every month during the program's cycle (December to April). We encourage virtual meetings to increase accessibility, but pairs are welcome to meet in person. To maximize the mentorship experience, each meeting should have a specific focus to ensure progress and engagement.

Meeting Structure and Suggested Focus

Meeting 1: Introduction and Goal Setting

- Discuss your Individual Development Plan (IDP) and set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) goals.
- Explore your mentor's career journey and insights into how they navigated key challenges.

Preparation: Come prepared with your draft IDP and key goals you'd like to discuss.

Meeting 2: Progress Check-In and Barriers

- Review your progress since the first meeting. Discuss any barriers or challenges you've encountered.
- Refine your goals based on feedback and identify any new skill gaps.

Preparation: Reflect on your progress, and identify areas where you need additional guidance.

Meeting 3: Skill Development Focus



- Seek feedback from your mentor on specific skills, such as communication, leadership, or technical abilities.
- Work together to create an action plan for further developing these skills over the coming months.

Preparation: Identify the key skills you wish to improve and ask your mentor for concrete feedback.

Meeting 4: Networking and External Engagements

- Explore networking opportunities and how to build your professional network.
- Ask your mentor to introduce you to others in their network or suggest industry events to attend.

Preparation: Come with questions about how to build stronger connections within your field and ask for introductions where possible.

Meeting 5: Career Trajectory and Future Planning

- Reflect on the progress made during the program and discuss your long-term career trajectory.
- Seek advice on future career steps, roles, or further educational opportunities.

Preparation: Prepare a list of career-related questions and thoughts on your next steps.

Mid-Cycle Review

A mandatory mid-cycle review will take place around February or March. This meeting is an opportunity for mentors and mentees to take stock of progress, review the IDP, and recalibrate goals if necessary. This will ensure the program remains dynamic and aligned with the mentee's evolving needs.

Focus Areas for Mid-Cycle Review:

- Assess whether your current goals are still relevant and achievable.
- Identify any new barriers or opportunities that have arisen since the last check-in.
- Adjust your action plan to account for these changes.

2.2 PROGRAM TIMELINE

Month	Milestone	Focus Areas & Actions
October	Mentee Recruitment & Matching	Mentees are selected and paired with mentors based on career goals and alignment of interests
November	Orientation and Program Kick-off Event	Mentees attend the orientation session, preparing for their first mentor meeting.
December-January	1 st Meeting: Discuss IDP and Set Goals	Discuss career goals, set SMART goals, and identify key skill gaps.
February	Mid-Point Review	Check progress on goals, adjust the IDP as necessary, and seek feedback on both technical and soft skills.
April	Mentee Self-Evaluation	Mentees complete their self-evaluation, review IDP outcomes, and finalize discussions with mentors.



May 12th	Final Report and Survey Due	Mentees submit a final report and complete the program evaluation survey.
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3. INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

SBME's Career Accelerator used an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to identify mentors and match students. An IDP is a tool that supports trainees prepare for the career of their choice by establishing career goals and identifying skill gaps. Through the IDP, mentors are matched with students whose career goals are a good fit.

Through the initial IDP, students will have the opportunity for self-evaluation and reflection, and together with their mentor, will develop an action plan to track goals and progress. The IDP will also serve as a communication tool, enabling both parties to set expectations and training outcomes.

Your IDP is a living document—don't be afraid to revise it as you progress through the program. Your career goals may evolve, and your IDP should evolve with them

For more information about IDP's, [please visit CIHR's IDP Resource website.](#)

3.2 GOAL SETTING

The first meeting with your mentor is a key step in building a strong and meaningful relationship. This meeting will be used to discuss your Individual Development Plan (IDP), but more importantly, it's an opportunity to learn from your mentor's experience and develop a shared understanding of your goals.

Key Objectives for the First Meeting:

- 1. Understand Your Mentor's Career Journey:** Use this meeting to get to know your mentor's professional path and how they've navigated their career. Learning about their experiences can help you draw parallels to your own career goals and challenges.
 - Example Question: "Can you tell me about your career journey and any pivotal moments that shaped your path?"
 - Example Question: "What's one piece of advice you wish you had received early in your career?"
- 2. Gain Insights into Challenges and Growth:** Explore how your mentor has faced and overcome challenges in their career. This can help you gain new perspectives on how to handle your own professional barriers.
 - Example Question: "What were some of the biggest challenges you encountered in your career, and how did you overcome them?"
 - Example Question: "How do you continue to grow and develop professionally?"
- 3. Seek Guidance on Building Networks:** Your mentor can help you expand your professional network and connect with individuals who may provide additional career insights or opportunities.

- Example Question: “Who were some of the key people who helped shape your career, and how did you build those relationships?”
 - Example Question: “How can I start building stronger connections within my field?”
4. **Learn About Mentorship Experiences:** Ask your mentor how they have benefited from mentorship in their career and what they find valuable in a mentoring relationship. This can help set the tone for your own mentorship journey.
- Example Question: “Have you had mentors throughout your career, and how did they help you?”
 - Example Question: “What do you think makes for a successful mentor-mentee relationship?”
5. **Understand How to Navigate Uncertainty:** Careers are rarely linear, and it’s important to learn how to navigate changes and uncertainties from someone who has experienced them.
- Example Question: “How have you navigated uncertainty or unexpected opportunities in your career?”
 - Example Question: “What advice would you give for handling unexpected career changes?”

Actionable Steps:

After this discussion, you and your mentor will refine the goals and objectives outlined in your IDP. Be sure to create SMART goals—Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound—to ensure clarity and focus.

Use the content and reflections from Steps 1, 2, and 3 of the IDP process to develop concrete plans for implementation. These plans will guide your quarterly check-ins, where you will assess progress, adjust your goals, and celebrate successes. At the end of the program, you will reflect on your outcomes and evaluate success based on the goals outlined in the IDP (Step 6).

CIHR’s IDP Template

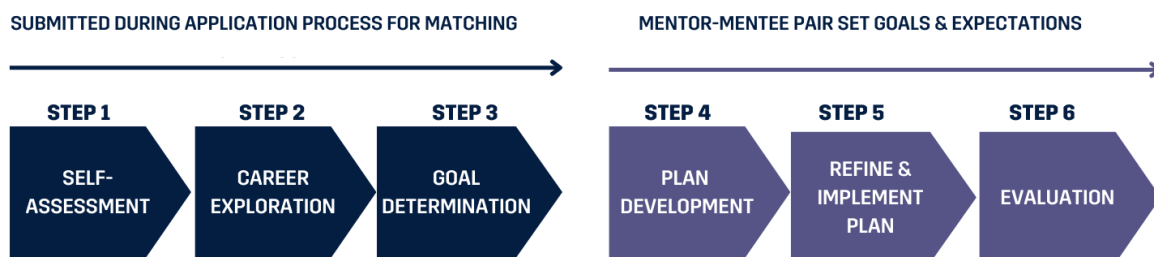


Figure 1

4. PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Insights from the IDP in Steps 1, 2, and 3, and your initial discussion can be used to prepare a plan. Ensure that both goals and objectives are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound). The questions in Figure 2 can support the mentee-mentor pair outline a plan of action that is effective, precise and

measurable.

Questions for mentee-mentor pairs to outline a plan of action:

For Mentee	For Mentor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does my action plan define how I will reach my goals (as well as the objectives within each goal)? Are the components of my action plan SMART: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific? Measurable? Achievable? Relevant? Time-bound? What will work best for me in my environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicit step-by-step plan? A higher level plan? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has my trainee written goals and objectives that are SMART? Are they challenging but attainable? Are the timelines realistic? How can I support my trainee? How can I facilitate skills development? How can I encourage success in achieving their goals? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What mentorship can I provide? What access to resources or experiences can I facilitate? (e.g. opportunities to make presentations) Who in my network can help my trainee?

Figure 2

4. PLAN REFINEMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

Plan refinement involves a discussion between the mentor and mentee about the student, their IDP and the goals and objectives outlined in the IDP, with the aim to improve it. The IDP is a living document and can be revised multiple times as required. Review and revision are essential to implementing an effective IDP. As this discussion moves the IDP from the development phase to the implementation phase, the conversation can assure that expectations are clear, the goals and objectives are SMART and that the student and mentor have a shared understanding of the plan and are committed to the plan.

IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING

One or two weeks prior to your meeting:

1. Trainee will provide a copy of their IDP for review and prepare questions for their mentor.
2. Mentors can use the template IDP plan refinement & implementation sections (Steps 4 & 5) to provide insights, and any useful resource and/or network that can help refine the plan.

The questions in Figure 3 can support the plan refinement and implementation of the mentee's IDP.

Questions to support the plan refinement and implementation of the mentee's IDP:

For Mentee	For Mentor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What insights does my mentor(s) have? How can I leverage my mentor(s) to identify and facilitate opportunities to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on my review of my trainee's IDP, can I bring forward any insights?

<p>develop skills, acquire experiences and expand my network?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I use my IDP and related discussions about it to support my progress toward my career goals, noting that the IDP is a living document and may evolve as I develop? • How will my mentor(s) and I use my IDP to track my progress? How often will we meet? • Do my mentor(s) and I both agree on my IDP? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What am I able to commit to in order to best support my trainee and facilitate the implementation of their plan? • How can I encourage my trainee? How can I manage expectations and increase their confidence to reach their goals that may evolve as they develop? • How will my trainee and I use the IDP to track progress? How often will we meet? • Do my trainee and I both agree on this IDP?
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Figure 3

5. EVALUATION

At the end of the program, mentors and mentees will review the IDP, reflect on outcomes and evaluate success based on the goals laid out in the IDP. Mentees will be asked to complete a final report (max 500 words), to reflect on their experiences and discuss how the program contributed to their research and career goals. In addition, the mentee-mentor pair will be asked to fill out a program evaluation survey. Survey results will help organizers evaluate and improve the mentorship program.

Final Report Guidelines

- Please reflect on your mentorship experience and how this Program contributed to your research and career goals
- Please reflect on your goals & action plan, then reflect on your outcomes and evaluate success based on your IDP
- Max 500 words – please email directly to Danielle.walker@ubc.ca by **May 12th, 2026**

Survey

Please fill out the program evaluation survey by **May 12th, 2026**:

https://ubc.ca1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_0AH7c5ue3Co1O8S

6. MENTORSHIP RESOURCES & SUPPORT

1. CIHR'S IDP Training Modules and Resources

These modules have been developed for trainees and mentors

- Module 1: Introduction to IDPs (8 min.)



- Benefits of IDPs for Trainees
 - Benefits of IDPs for Mentors
 - Benefits of IDPs for Canadian Economy
 - Module 2: Trainee Role (15 min.)
 - IDP Learning Objectives Worksheet
 - Module 3: Mentor Role (8 min.)
2. UBC Centre for Student Involvement and Careers Mentor Handbook
 3. Health & Wellness: <https://students.ubc.ca/health>