Mentor Guidelines

Thank you for agreeing to be a mentor with GEMS! Mentors provide support for mentees who are preparing applications for graduate programs and fellowship applications. These application processes can be daunting for mentees to navigate, particularly if it’s their first time or if they are not familiar with the academic system. As a mentor, we hope that you can draw on your own experience (or that of your cohort) to help guide students through these applications.

Getting Started

1. **Introduce yourself.** When you receive your match, please reach out to your mentee and help set-up your first meeting. We have provided a mentor-mentee agreement form for you to fill out together during the first meeting. This can be used to establish a mutual understanding of the commitment and specify modes of communication and response times.

2. **Set mutual expectations of time and work commitments at your first meeting.** We have provided a meeting and application tracker to map out deliverable timelines and set meeting frequencies and times. We suggest ending each meeting with set dates for the next meeting.

3. **Listen to the needs of your mentee.** Each mentee will be at a different stage in this process. Try to understand what they are looking for in this mentoring program. Is it general guidance for the application process? Feedback on draft statements? Do they know where they want to apply? Mentorship means taking an interest in the specific professional development needs of your mentee.

Mentoring Logistics

1. **Set goals and expectations early.** Mentees have been instructed to come to meetings with questions/goals prepared in advance. Once you understand your mentee’s goals, make a plan together to accomplish them.

2. **Have regular meetings.** We suggest having regular meetings with your mentee throughout the semester. Early on, these meetings may be filling out
worksheets and brainstorming, but, as deadlines approach, include deliverables for the next meeting. For example, if an applicant is working on an NSF GRFP application, the specific deliverable might be: by next week’s meeting, have an outline of the Graduate Research Plan Statement drafted.

3. **Create a meeting agenda.** Use our [meeting and application tracker](#) to keep track of meeting agendas so you come prepared to discuss specific deliverables. Mentees have been instructed to prepare questions and goals in advance of meetings as well. If they are having a difficult time with this, please work with them to create agendas together.

**Mentoring Approach**

1. **Be understanding.** This is difficult and new territory for many students. Meet your mentee where they are at, not where you were at this stage, or where you think they should be.

2. **Be adaptable.** We encourage you to set expectations and goals with your mentees early on, but things will change. Your mentee undoubtedly has a life and career outside these applications. When unexpected shifts or hurdles arise, help your mentee decide on a new set of goals and move forward.

3. **Be approachable.** Try to get to know your mentee as a human, and be a human yourself. Ask why they want to apply to graduate programs, and share with them why you wanted to be a mentor. Be open with your past mistakes and failures. Congratulate them on their successes and be understanding if there are disappointments.

4. **Reach out to us if it’s not a fit.** If there is a mismatch between your time availability, expertise, or experience and what your mentee is looking for, let us know. We can always try to find a better match.