

Alumni Buddy System

Explanation document 2024/2025



The Alumni Buddy System (ABS) is an initiative by the CSA-EUR Alumni Committee designed to cultivate enriching relationships between alumni and current active members. The program's purpose is to create a nurturing and fun environment where both parties can learn from each other, offering guidance in areas like **career development, hobbies, and personal growth**.

How It Works

Alumni and active members are paired based on shared interests indicated in the registration form. The nature of the relationship can vary; *alumni often act as mentors due to their experience, but the relationship can also be reciprocal, allowing both participants to be mentor and mentee*. Regular meetings are encouraged, ideally weekly or every two weeks. Together you can talk about what goals you have, things you'd like to learn, but also get to know each other better personally to maintain a strong and healthy relationship. The extent to which this is done, and preferred, is up to you. Try to meet in person as well, as that will strengthen the relationship and give it a more personal bond (e.g. perform a shared hobby, interest together).

Timeline

The ABS is structured in rounds, each lasting six weeks. Registration for Round 1 starts **around the end of October**, followed by a Kick-Off Event where buddies can meet. Feedback is collected at the end of each round to refine the system for future participants. Below you can see the timeline table for the ABS.

What?	When? (2025)
Start registration Round 2	29 January
End registration Round 2	21 February
Round 2 ABS	1 March - 12 April (6 weeks)

Roles and Expectations

For Mentees, the program offers a chance to work towards personal and professional goals with the guidance of someone more experienced. Mentees gain an accountability partner, an expanded network, and a support system for achieving their objectives.

For Mentors, (alumni) mentors can enhance their leadership skills, gain new perspectives, build confidence, and give back to the CSA-EUR community while also expanding their network.

It is expected that both parties are supportive, honest, and consistent in their interactions, maintaining open communication and working together to resolve any issues that arise. Importantly, as mentioned previously, the mentor/mentee role can be taken by both alumni and active members, or by any of the two as long as both parties can come to an agreement where values are provided for each.

Support from the Alumni Committee

Support from the Alumni Committee comes in three parts, events, communication and feedback.

Events: The Committee organizes an introductory Kick-Off Event where buddies can meet and break the ice through games and activities. If successful, similar events will be held for subsequent rounds.

Communication: A WhatsApp group or community is set up for all participants to share updates, ask for advice, and organize bonding activities with other pairs. This will be maintained by the Alumni Committee

Feedback: After each round, a survey is distributed to gather feedback and improve the ABS. Participants can also contact the Committee directly with any concerns or suggestions throughout the program.

Flexibility and Adaptability

The ABS allows for flexibility in how mentoring is approached, whether through structured coaching or informal mentoring, based on the needs and preferences of each pair. The program encourages participants to set clear goals, establish a meeting structure, and adapt their approach as they progress.

Additional Resources

The program document provides examples of meeting structures, potential discussion topics, and ways to break down goals into actionable steps. While not exhaustive, these resources offer a starting point for participants to explore further on their own.

The ABS is voluntary and intended for those genuinely interested in a meaningful exchange of knowledge and support. By participating, alumni and active members have the opportunity to build lasting connections, gain new skills, and potentially make lifelong friends.

Appendices

Appendix I: Example ABS Meeting Structure

This is an example of the meeting structure buddies can use when partaking in ABS. The example is for one round of ABS with fixed weekly meetings.

General tips:

- Come prepared to meetings: ex. go over the agenda in advance and prepare questions.
- Send the agenda 24-48h beforehand.
- Maintain a strict eye on the time. Meeting duration can vary. 1 hour to 1,5 hour can be used as a starting point and adjusted as needed.

Meeting	When (2024)	Purpose	Agenda
Meeting #1	22 November	- Get to know each other -Discuss goals ¹ -Discuss plan	Start: discuss if anything should be added to the meeting points - 5 min Decide how to maintain contact with each other and collaborate in the ABS - 20min Get to know each other - 20 min Specify goal(s) to achieve - 20 min Specify a plan to achieve the goal(s) - 20 min Closing: plan next meeting - 5 min
Meeting #2	29 November	-Discuss first steps taken -Reflect ² and decide on follow-up steps	Start: discuss if anything should be added to the meeting points - 5 min Discuss steps taken - 20min Reflect on the steps taken - 30 min Discuss if the goal and/or plan should be adjusted and how - 20 min Closing: plan next meeting - 5 min
Meeting #3	6 December	-Plan an activity (or more!) together to bond (ex. gaming, sports, eat together)	Start: discuss if anything should be added to the meeting points - 5 min Discuss steps taken - 20min Reflect on the steps taken - 30 min

¹ Start with the end goal in mind and break it down into small actionable sub-goals. Be reasonable with what is feasible given the timeframe and the goal itself.

² We suggest using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (similar to the STARR method, but with emotion).

Additional info can be found here:

1) <https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/media/MyCumbria/Documents/ReflectiveCycleGibbs.pdf>

2) <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflectors-toolkit/reflecting-on-experience/gibbs-reflective-cycle>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss steps taken -Reflect and decide on follow-up steps 	<p>Discuss if the goal and/or plan should be adjusted and how - 10 min</p> <p>Plan a bonding together - 20 min</p> <p>Closing: plan next meeting - 5 min</p>
Meeting #4	13 December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Hold bonding together -Discuss steps taken -Reflect and decide on follow-up steps -Discuss current collaboration 	<p>Start: discuss if anything should be added to the meeting points - 5 min</p> <p>Discuss steps taken - 20min</p> <p>Reflect on the steps taken - 30 min</p> <p>Discuss if the goal and/or plan should be adjusted and how - 10 min</p> <p>Decide if the way contact is maintained and you collaborate is still satisfactory for the ABS - 10 min</p> <p>Discuss previous bonding and maybe plan next bondings - 10 min</p> <p>Closing: plan next meeting - 5 min</p>
Meeting #5	20 December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss steps taken -Reflect and decide on follow-up steps 	<p>Start: discuss if anything should be added to the meeting points - 5 min</p> <p>Discuss steps taken - 20min</p> <p>Reflect on the steps taken - 30 min</p> <p>Discuss previous bonding and maybe plan next bondings - 10 min</p> <p>Closing: plan next meeting - 5 min</p>
Meeting #6	27 December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Discuss steps taken -Reflect and decide on follow-up steps -Decide if you want to maintain the collaboration 	<p>Start: discuss if anything should be added to the meeting points - 5 min</p> <p>Discuss steps taken - 15min</p> <p>Reflect on the steps taken - 20 min</p> <p>Reflect on your collaboration together - 30m</p> <p>Decide on if you want to continue collaborating together and how - 20m</p> <p>Closing: plan possible next meeting, thank each other - 5 min</p>
Meeting #...	As the two of you wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Continue your shared learning journey 	

Appendix II: Meeting and Buddy styles

It is important to at the beginning establish what your buddy wants to get out of the sessions.

- Does your buddy want to learn specific skills?
- Does your buddy want more knowledge about a certain field?
- How does your buddy want to develop him/herself?
- How does your buddy envision the sessions?

Be sure to determine **the goals of the buddy out of the first session**. Based on that, discuss with your buddy what would be a pleasant structure for both of you for the following sessions.

Mentoring and coaching are two different forms of guiding an individual to personal development. Based on your background and what your buddy is interested in, you could take a more coaching-based or mentor-based approach. Or even a mix of both! See below the key differences between coaching and mentoring.

	Coaching	Mentoring
Structure	Traditionally more <i>structured</i> , with regularly scheduled meetings, like weekly, bi-weekly or monthly.	Generally meetings tend to be more <i>informal</i> , on an as-needed basis required by the mentee.
Expertise	Coaches are hired for their <i>expertise</i> in a given area, one in which the trainee desires improvement. Examples: Presentation skills, leadership, interpersonal communication, sales.	Within organization mentoring programs, mentors have more <i>seniority and expertise</i> in a specific area than mentees. The mentee learns from and is inspired by the mentor's experience.

Agenda	The coaching agenda is <i>co-created by the coach and the trainee</i> in order to meet the specific needs of the trainee.	The mentoring agenda is <i>set by the mentee</i> . The mentor supports that agenda.
Questioning	Unlike mentoring, coaching is non-directive which means that it is about posing the right questions, providing the space, trust and confidence for the individual being coached to consider how they can achieve more, reach their objectives and find capabilities within themselves.	In the mentoring relationship, <i>the mentee is more likely to ask more questions</i> , tapping into the mentor's expertise.
Outcome	Outcome from a coaching agreement is <i>specific and measurable</i> , showing signs of improvement or positive change in the desired performance area.	Outcome from a mentoring relationship can shift and change over time. There is less interest in specific, measurable results or changed behavior and <i>more interest in the overall development of the mentee</i> .

Ask your buddy to also come prepared to the sessions with any topics he may want to discuss or ask you. Don't forget, this should also be something fun! It is encouraged to also talk about some casual and light things, about how your days went; to also lighten up the mood! Important: be sure to make clear agreements on the non-disclosure of personal information. This way, both parties feel a safe environment during and outside of the sessions.

We could provide you with more background information about mentoring and coaching, but in the end this won't necessarily be of better quality than what is on the internet. There may even be better sources or descriptions out there than what is written in this document.

Note that this is not a complete guide to mentoring and coaching, but more a little push on how you can get started. We suggest you look for more information on the topics of coaching and mentoring yourself. You can find plenty of information on the internet!

Potential General Questions:

- If you could learn any new professional skill (it doesn't have to be related to your current role or industry), what would it be?
- What is it that you really want to be and do?
- What are you doing really well that is helping you get there?
- What are you not doing well that is preventing you from getting there?
- What will you do differently tomorrow to meet those challenges?
- How can I help / where do you need the most help?
- What do you expect from me?

Potential Career Path Questions:

- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- Where do you ultimately want to end up in your career (role, title, income, etc.)?
- What made you look into this role? How does it align with your long-term plan?
- Are you happy in your current environment/roles?
- What is your dream job, or do you feel you've achieved it?

Leadership topics

- How are you adjusting to your new role?
- Do you have any reservations about your responsibilities?
- What methods are you using to communicate effectively with your team?
- What are three words you'd use to describe your leadership style?

Long- and short-term goal topics

- What goals do you want to achieve within the next month?
- What quantitative goals do you want to achieve within six months?
- How do you measure your success?
- What other roles would you be interested in within a company?

Appendix III: Examples of improving by breaking down goals.

This template can serve as an example for breaking down goals. For instance, your major goal is to get better at giving presentations. Your sub-goals could relate to appearance (look and feel confident), content, tone, preparation and practicing beforehand for others.

Free Personal Development Plan (PDP) Example Template



What are my big goals?	Which goals need to happen first?	When do I want to achieve this?	What obstacles might get in my way?	How can I improve my chances of meeting my goal?	Where can I go for support?	Review: How am I doing?
Saving a deposit:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set aside 10% of my wage each month in an interest account that I cannot touch. 2. Set a goal for how much I want to save and figure out how long it will take to get you there. 	I want to have a £X,000 deposit by the age of 27.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not putting money into account. • Unexpected bills such as my car breaking down. • Choosing an interest account that is unsuitable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a bank account that I cannot access until 27. • Create a standing order that transfers money on payday. • Speak to an advisor at the bank to get best account for saving a deposit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bank. • Financial advisors. • Parents • Friends who've gone through the process. 	
Completing a PhD:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Learn about the PhD application process. 2. Find a suitable university and supervisor. 3. Look at funding routes. 4. Create and submit my PhD application. 5. Work on my academic CV by publishing a paper in my chosen field and attending conferences.. 6. Networking with academics (online and at conferences). 	I would like to have found a funded PhD place by the end of 2018.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing out on PhD funding. • Lack of motivation. • Lack of knowledge or out of date knowledge. • A bad CV or application. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up RSS feed and email alerts to notify me about new PhDs. • Keep focused on topic and continue to read around subject to keep up to date. • Read guides on how to apply and get advice on academic CV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lecturers. • Careers advisors. • Websites like findaphd.co.uk and jobs.ac.uk. • University staff. 	