

# Te Apārangi Early Career Researcher Forum

## Speed mentoring session guide.

In 2017, Royal Society Te Apārangi released [mentoring guidelines for researchers](#) in Aotearoa New Zealand. To raise awareness of these guidelines and the importance of mentoring in growing successful academic careers (for both parties), and to facilitate the initiation of mentoring relationships, the Royal Society Te Apārangi Early Career Researcher Forum Committee proposes running “Speed Mentoring” sessions during Aotearoa New Zealand conferences.

These sessions should allow tēina mentees to meet a wide range of potential tuākana mentors from across Aotearoa New Zealand from broadly similar disciplines in an open and relaxed environment, ideally paving the way for further interactions if both teina mentee and tuakana mentor agree. It should be emphasised that attending this session does not entail a fixed commitment to enter a mentoring relationship.

This approach was taken because of the lower transactional and financial costs of running these sessions on occasions when the participants are already co-located. Additionally, there is typically a high proportion of early career researchers at Aotearoa New Zealand meetings due to the lower cost of attending compared to overseas meetings.

Below are listed some guidelines to assist the conference organising committee in running such a session. [Members of the Royal Society Te Apārangi Early Career Researcher Forum Committee](#) are happy to assist in the organisation, but due to limited operating funds, are unlikely to be able to be present unless they are already attending the conference.

### Beforehand:

- Advertise session to potential mentees *and* mentors (e.g. on the conference website, and in mailouts about the conference). You may wish to include a link to the Royal Society Te Apārangi mentoring guidelines. Potential phrasing for the advertisement might be:

#### **Royal Society Te Apārangi mentoring session**

The Royal Society Te Apārangi will be running a teina mentee – tuakana mentor “speed dating” session during the lunch break on DATE (lunch will be provided). This will entail a relaxed, semi-structured opportunity for potential mentors and mentees to meet one another and make useful connections. If you are an early career researcher or student looking for a mentor, or a more experienced researcher interested in being a mentor, this is for you!

- Ask participants to sign up during registration (to estimate catering and space required – adjust room booking and lunch provisions if necessary).
- Encourage participants to think about why they want a tuakana mentor, or why they are interested in becoming a tuakana mentor, and what they hope to get out of the relationship.
- Organise location/book room – ideally with little/no furniture, or else chairs able to be arranged into pairs.
- Organise provision of lunch – ideally arrange for regular conference catering to be provided within

the same room. Note that the Royal Society Te Apārangi Early Career Researcher Forum Committee does not have funds available to cover catering.

- Ask participants to bring a supply of business cards if they have them.
- Print sufficient copies of the attached form for the participants to have one each.
- Optional: print and cut up sufficient copies of the attached conversation starters.
- Purchase/supply sufficient pens for each participant.
- Purchase/obtain some sort of noise-making device, such as a bell or a toy that makes (loud) squeaks.

## During the conference:

- Advertise session to potential mentees *and* mentors (e.g. during introductory session, with slides up during breaks, etc.) to encourage late signups and remind those who have registered.

## At the start of the session:

- Allow participants to get their lunch and eat while you introduce the session.
- Ensure participants are wearing their conference badges/lanyards and their names are visible.
- Hand out a copy of the attached form and a pen to each participant, and if you are using them, the conversation starters.
- If there are chairs, set them up into pairs in a line or circle facing one another.
- Open the meeting with a brief overview of the goals of the event, based on the Overview section of this document (and see below).
- Ask the potential mentees to take a seat on one side of the line or circle, and the potential tuakana mentors to take a seat on the other side of the line or circle of chairs. If there are no chairs, arrange the two groups into two lines or circles, facing one another.
- Explain that each pair will have 3 minutes to introduce themselves and discuss why they want a tuakana mentor/ or want to be a tuakana mentor, and their mutual interests. The conversation starters provide a possible way to open the conversation. They will then have 1 minute to note down each other's names, contact details and any other notes. Participants may also wish to tick or cross the right-most box depending on whether they would be interested in progressing the relationship further. When the bell rings, those in the mentee line move along one place and the process starts again.
- At the end of the session, thank the participants for taking part, and encourage them to continue their conversations during the remaining tea, coffee or meal breaks, poster sessions, etc.

## Introduction

At the start of the session, introduce the session. Something along the lines of the below is a good way to start:

“Finding a good mentor can be valuable and productive for everyone concerned. We know that the early career landscape comes with its own set of very unique challenges, and this the journey can at times feel isolating and stressful.

Being able to talk to someone who’s already walked that journey can be invaluable.

Most importantly in a mentor, that person’s job is to give you informed but impartial advice. A mentor is NOT a current supervisor or collaborator. So the aim of the mentor is not to help you with your experimental design or your data analysis.

Their role is to help you on your journey, and to give you guidance that will help your career progression and job prospects.

Importantly, a mentor can help you build your professional network, by facilitating contacts and meetings with other people who might be able to work with you or help you take that next step in your journey.

It’s hard to stress enough how important large professional networks are, especially in the sciences where opportunities and collaborations are largely word of mouth.

The Royal Society Early Career Researcher Forum has recently published a guide called Mentoring in the Aotearoa New Zealand Research Environment. It’s a comprehensive document that described mentoring, provides advice on how to find a mentor, what you should expect from that relationship, and how to manage it. It’s also useful for mentors to read, so that we can be better prepared to be effective mentors.

So the first part of that document, how to find a mentor, is where we come in today. We’re really excited to be able to facilitate this session and provide so many ECRs with the opportunity to engage with potential mentors.”

\*\*\*Here’s where the facilitator would talk through how the session will work\*\*\*

## If there are more mentees than mentors:

Consider running a 'wave'-based session.

Each mentor would be seated, and the mentees would be split into two groups (and given a coloured sticky label to wear). The first wave will get the first block of time with the mentors, who will all be seated. The unseated second wave of mentees will be encouraged to talk amongst themselves while they wait their turn. After the first block of time, the seated mentees will switch with the standing mentees, so in essence the mentees will alternate their time between the mentors and their fellow mentees. It will be important to stress that not every mentee will get to speak to every mentor.

We believe it is best to avoid grouping mentors and mentees in the case of mismatched numbers of participants - group dynamics can often mean that more quiet mentees don't get what they need from the meeting.