

Melbourne Medical School

EMCA Mentoring Program 2026

Welcome Pack



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

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Welcome

Thank you for being part of the Melbourne Medical School's Early to Mid-Career Academic (EMCA) Mentoring Program in 2026!

This Mentoring Program was initiated by the EMCA Advisory Committee and is developed and delivered by the MMS Research Support team, with guidance from the Committee.

Whether you are participating as a Mentor, a Mentee, or both, we hope the Program offers a meaningful opportunity to connect with others, reflect on your academic journey, and share experiences in a supportive and flexible environment.

The Program builds on insights from previous years and brings together a diverse group of academics. We're excited to see how this year's Program contributes to a supportive mentoring culture within the Melbourne Medical School (MMS).

Warm regards,

The EMCA Mentoring Program Team

About the Program

The EMCA Mentoring Program supports Early and Mid-Career Academics (EMCAs) across the MMS by connecting them with Mentors for supportive, career-focused conversations.

The Program fosters reflection, encouragement and shared learning. This might mean navigating uncertainty, building confidence, exploring leadership or planning your next steps. Mentees do not need to view their Mentor as a “future version” of themselves. The value of mentoring lies in honest conversation, fresh perspectives, and learning from others’ experiences.

Mentoring relationships in this Program are flexible, relationship based, and Mentee-led. Most mentoring partnerships are one-to-one or small groups with one Mentor and two Mentees. Where possible, matches span departments to support cross-disciplinary perspectives. Mentoring groups are encouraged to decide how and when to meet in a way that works for them. There is no single model for success and each experience will be different.

Alongside mentoring, the Program also includes optional professional development sessions and informal opportunities for peer connection, such as being matched with one or more other Mentees who may be navigating similar challenges.

If you have questions or concerns at any point, please contact the MMS Research Support team at mms-research@unimelb.edu.au. We’re here to help.

Timeline: Key Dates

Dates are indicative and may vary slightly. Participants will be notified of any changes.

March	Mentor-Mentee matches confirmed and mentoring begins
Late March	Online launch event
April - December	Ongoing mentoring meetings
Early May & August	Program check-ins
April - November	Professional development sessions
November	Feedback and evaluation survey open
December	Final survey collected Program concludes

Your Mentoring Journey

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Getting Started

- Reach out to your mentor to arrange your first meeting
 - Use the first meeting to introduce yourselves and decide how and when you'll meet
 - See 'The First Step' section for more details
 - A *First Meeting Conversation Guide* is also included to support your first conversation.
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Continue Your Mentoring Conversations

- Most groups meet every four to six weeks, but the format and frequency are up to you and your Mentor
 - Conversations can focus on goals, challenges, developments, or reflections
 - The format is flexible so you can adapt as you go
 - An optional *Mentoring Conversation Worksheet* is included in this pack to help you reflect on your meetings and prepare for the next one.
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Professional Development and Connection

- Look out for peer connection opportunities
 - Professional development sessions will run between April and November.
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Check-In and Feedback

- You'll receive brief check-in emails during the Program
 - Final feedback will be collected in November to January
 - You can contact the MMS Research Support Team at any time: mms-research@unimelb.edu.au.
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Supporting Tools

To help you get the most out of your mentoring experience, two tools are included in this pack:

1. **First Meeting Conversation Guide:** Use this to plan and structure your first conversation, set expectations, and build trust from the start
2. **Mentoring Conversation Worksheet:** Use this to reflect after each meeting and prepare for the next one. It can support continuity and help track your progress over time.

Expectations and Responsibilities

To support positive and effective mentoring relationships, we ask all participants to engage thoughtfully and communicate openly throughout the Program.

For Mentees

Mentees are expected to take an active role in the mentoring relationship. This includes:

- Initiating contact and coordinating meetings
- Coming to meetings prepared, with a clear sense of what you'd like to focus on or explore, while remaining open to the perspectives and insights your Mentor may bring.
The Mentoring Conversation Worksheet included in this pack can be used as a guide to help you clarify focus areas and prepare for conversations.
- Communicating openly if circumstances change or if the mentoring relationship is not working as hoped.

If a Mentee no longer wishes to engage in the Program, or feels that their mentoring match is not suitable, we ask that they let their Mentor or the Program team know, rather than disengaging without notice. You are not required to provide an explanation if you do not wish to.

For Mentors

Mentors are asked to make reasonable efforts to meet with their Mentee(s) when the Mentee is actively engaging, and to offer perspective and guidance based on experience.

We recognise that not all mentoring relationships progress as expected. If a Mentor is having difficulty engaging with a Mentee, or if the relationship does not seem to be working, they are encouraged to let the MMS Research Support team know so we can follow up or provide support.

Mentoring Boundaries and Support

Mentoring conversations may sometimes include personal or wellbeing-related issues, particularly where these affect work or career decisions. Conversations can also be emotional at times, as career challenges are often closely tied to personal experiences and feelings. This is a normal part of reflective mentoring conversations, and Mentors are encouraged to listen respectfully and acknowledge these experiences, while being mindful of appropriate boundaries. Mentors are not expected to act as counsellors or clinicians.

If issues arise that feel beyond the scope of mentoring, Mentors may suggest appropriate University support services and are welcome to contact the MMS Research Support team for guidance. Mentors may suggest or point Mentees to appropriate University support services, such as the University of Melbourne's [Counselling and Psychological Services](#).

Understanding Mentoring

The EMCA Mentoring Program is grounded in the University of Melbourne Researcher Development Unit's (RDU) *Recommendations for Researcher Mentoring at Melbourne*. The RDU describes mentoring as a developmental relationship built on mutual learning, respect, and trust.

Mentoring in this Program is intended to be reflective and supportive. Mentors offer insight, advice and encouragement, while Mentees remain responsible for their own decisions and progress.

This is a developmental approach. Both Mentors and Mentees bring valuable perspectives, and both can learn and grow through the relationship. Each mentoring conversation is shaped by the goals, context and preferences of the people involved.

Mentoring is not the same as Supervision, Sponsorship, or Coaching

Mentoring is sometimes confused with other roles that support academic development. While all can be valuable, they serve different purposes. This Program focuses on mentoring as a reflective space for growth, not supervision, assessment or direct career advancement. Understanding these distinctions will help you get the most out of your mentoring conversations.

Sponsorship

What it is: Sponsorship occurs when someone uses their position or networks to support your advancement. A sponsor might recommend you for a role, nominate you for a committee, or publicly endorse your work. Sponsorship can be powerful, especially when it comes from someone with visibility or influence.

How mentoring is different: Mentoring is not based on advocacy or influence. It supports growth through reflection and conversation. Some mentoring relationships may lead to sponsorship over time, but this is not expected or required in this Program.

Supervision

What it is: Supervision is a formal relationship where someone is responsible for your performance and progress. A supervisor provides direction, monitors outcomes, and may be required to assess or report on your performance.

How mentoring is different: Mentoring does not involve formal oversight or evaluation. It offers a confidential space for open discussion, learning and exploration, without the pressures of assessment or performance review.

Coaching

What it is: Coaching is a structured relationship focused on skill development, behavioural change or goals. It is often short term and outcome based and may involve formal accountability.

How mentoring is different: Mentoring is broader in scope. It supports reflection, insight and longer-term development. Some mentoring conversations may include coaching-style elements, but the emphasis is not on fixing problems. It is on supporting self-direction.

The First Step

This Program is flexible by design, but your first meeting is an important opportunity to build trust and shape your mentoring relationship.

We've included tools to support your early conversations. These are not mandatory, but it's helpful to start with a shared understanding of purpose and expectations.

Making Contact

Mentees are responsible for making first contact to arrange the first and subsequent meetings with their Mentor and, if relevant, the other Mentee in their group. You would have received contact details for your mentoring group by email.

- Send a brief introductory email to your Mentor (and paired Mentee, if relevant) and suggest a few potential times for your first meeting
- If your match includes another Mentee, decide together how you'd like to meet (for example, together or individually)
- Meet online, in person, or in whatever format works best for everyone.

Your First Meeting

We recommend using the first meeting to:

- Introduce yourselves and your current roles
- Talk about what each person is hoping to get from the Program
- Discuss how and when you will meet
- Clarify communication preferences and any access needs.

Refer to the *First Meeting Conversation Guide* included in this pack for suggested prompts and questions. The *Mentoring Conversation Worksheet* can be used before and or after meetings, including after your first meeting, to reflect on what was discussed and prepare for your next conversation.

Tips for Mentees

- Take time to reflect on your goals and what kind of support you need
- Come prepared to share your interests, experiences, or challenges
- Be curious, open, and ready to listen as well as talk
- Be clear about what you're comfortable sharing
- Follow up if you need to reschedule or clarify expectations.

Tips for Mentors

- Ask questions to understand your Mentee's goals and context
- Share experiences when appropriate, but avoid giving prescriptive advice
- Be honest about your availability and boundaries
- Consider how your own experiences might be useful, and where to hold back
- Support reflection and exploration, rather than trying to "solve" things.

Additional Information

Evaluation and Feedback

Your feedback helps shape and strengthen this Program for future participants.

- A short evaluation survey will be sent in December, when the Program concludes
- You are also welcome to share feedback at any time, either anonymously or directly
- If you have any concerns about your mentoring arrangement, please contact the MMS Research Support Team.

Safety, Inclusion and Wellbeing

This Program is committed to creating respectful, inclusive, and safe mentoring relationships. We encourage all participants to raise any concerns early. You do not need to wait for a formal check-in.

If something is not working in your mentoring arrangement or you need support, please contact the MMS Research Support Team: mms-research@unimelb.edu.au. We are here to help.

Policies and Procedures

Participants are expected to adhere to the University of Melbourne's policies and procedures:

- [Privacy Policy](#)
- [Appropriate Workplace Behaviour Policy](#)
- [Health and Safety](#).

References and Resources

- Melbourne Medical School (2026). [MMS EMCA Mentoring Program 2025 – Impact Report](#). *
- Melbourne Medical School (2025). [MMS EMCA Mentoring Program 2024 – Impact Report](#). *
- Research Development Unit (2023). [Recommendations for Researcher Mentoring at Melbourne](#). *
- de Vries, J (2023). [Career mentoring and sponsorship: A resource for academics and graduate researchers](#).
- Parker, P, Kram, KE, Hall, DT (2014). [Peer coaching: An untapped resource for development](#). *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 13(4), 487-503.

This pack draws on materials developed by the University of Melbourne's Researcher Development Unit.

* Requires UniMelb credentials.

Contact Information

Email mms-research@unimelb.edu.au

Website medicine.unimelb.edu.au/research/emca-mentoring-program