



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

**FACULTY OF
GRADUATE STUDIES**

BIPOC GRADUATE STUDENT MENTORING ACADEMY HANDBOOK



[BIPOC Mentoring Academy Website](#)

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Contents

1. Welcome to the BIPOC Mentoring Academy	3
2. Introduction	3
3. Program Objectives	3
4. Eligibility	4
5. Program Period	4
6. Matching Process	4
7. Guidelines on Mentoring	5
7.1 Roles & Responsibilities of the Mentor	5
7.2 Roles & Responsibilities of the Mentee	6
7.3 Rights of Mentor	6
7.4 Rights of Mentee	6
7.5 As Mentors & Mentees you must NOT	6
7.6 Roles & Responsibilities of the BIPOC Mentoring Academy	7
7.7 Grievance Procedure	7
8. Program participation	7
8.1 Mentor-Mentee Meetings	7
8.2 Professional Development Sessions	8
8.3 Surveys	8
8.4 Events	8
8.5 Program Event Calendar	8
9. Program Commitment	9
10. How to Apply	9
11. Our Stakeholders	9
12. Useful Resources	10
13. Program Office Contact	11

1 Welcome to BIPOC Mentoring Academy

Welcome to the BIPOC Mentoring Academy! Dear Mentees, we're excited to have you join us and hope this experience will support your academic and professional growth. Our goal is to provide you with learning opportunities, meaningful mentorship, and a space to build lasting connections with peers, Mentors, and guest speakers. To our Mentors, thank you for volunteering your time and expertise to support our Mentees. Your guidance, encouragement, and lived experiences are invaluable to their learning journey.

This program was created to address the systemic barriers that BIPOC graduate students often face in their academic journey. Through mentoring, networking, and professional development, we aim to support our Mentees' aspirations and create a sense of belonging within the university.

This handbook will help you understand the program and how to get the most from your participation as a Mentor or Mentee.

2 Introduction

Launched in 2022 by a group of BIPOC faculty, staff, and students at Dalhousie, the Academy was made possible through funding from multiple faculties for a three-year pilot program and aimed at supporting the success of BIPOC graduate students through mentorship, community building, and tailored career support.

With approximately 1,000 self-identified BIPOC graduate students at Dalhousie, the need for a program that reflects their lived experiences is clear. This initiative connects students with Mentors—faculty, staff, alumni, and professionals—who share similar racial ethnicity and backgrounds as the students they mentor, helping Mentees navigate both academic and professional spaces.

The Academy is a key part of Dalhousie's anti-racism efforts and aims to close the gap in representation, build intercultural connections, and support a more inclusive academic environment.

3 Program Objectives

The BIPOC Mentoring Academy provides a structured, university-supported approach to mentoring and career development, including support for non-academic career paths through connections with professionals in various fields.

Our goal is to:

- Build safe, inclusive spaces and community for BIPOC graduate students.
- Connect Mentees with Mentors who share similar lived experiences.
- Promote intercultural competence, social and academic engagement, and networking.
- Encourage the sharing of transferable skills for professional development.
- Support BIPOC students in identifying and working toward personal and professional goals.

- Foster leadership by empowering students to become future Mentors.
- Support those at the intersections of multiple equity-deserving identities.
- Center and respond to the voices of BIPOC students in shaping the program.

While all BIPOC students are welcome, we prioritize support for Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian graduate students, in alignment with Dalhousie's institutional priorities.

4 Eligibility

To be eligible to be a Mentee, you must

- Self-identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or a Person of Color (BIPOC)
- Be currently enrolled in any graduate or professional program at Dalhousie University

The program currently does not support undergraduate students to participate as Mentees in the program.

To be eligible to be a Mentor, you must

- Self-identify as Black, Indigenous, and/or a Person of Color (BIPOC)
- Be a full/part-time working or retired professional or Elder.
- Have some mentoring experience (preferred but not mandatory)

Full-time Dalhousie staff and faculty members who are pursuing part-time graduate or professional studies for career development or as adult learners as well as Post-Doctoral Fellows, Non-Academic Instructors and recent Dalhousie graduates with sufficient work and lived experience are eligible to sign up as Mentors in the program.

Current undergraduate and graduate students, as well as recent graduates, are not eligible to participate as Mentors in the program.

5 Program Period

This is an eight-month program, running from October until May each year. However, Mentees and Mentors are encouraged to continue their mentoring relationship with mutual agreement, post-program completion for as long as they wish.

6 Matching Process

The matching process is coordinated by the Mentoring Academy's Program Coordinator using information provided in the application forms. Preferred characteristics and priorities identified by Mentees are considered to create meaningful Mentor-Mentee pairings.

Matches are made based on the information and criteria in the applications and following the Mentee's

selection from a shortlist of potential Mentors. Considerations may include:

- Shared language, culture, heritage, nationality, or identity
- Type of support requested.
- Preferred professional or academic affiliation.
- Mentoring needs and goals
- Any other additional information provided by the Mentee.

Although we shall do our best to share a list of Mentors with Mentees to choose from and match you with a Mentor that meets your specifications and preferences, we cannot guarantee matching you with a Mentor of your preferred choice or same social identity as yours. However, we do our utmost to ensure that the match is most suitable for both Mentor and Mentee. If a Mentee has already coordinated a match with a Mentor, they can let the Program Office know. Participants shall receive an email introduction with their assigned pair, including contact information. **Following the introduction, Mentees shall initiate contact with their assigned Mentors within five business days.** As the relationship develops, Mentors and Mentees are encouraged to exchange more details about their experiences and expectations to strengthen their connection.

7 Guidelines on Mentoring

7.1 Mentor: Being a Mentor provides an excellent opportunity to share your knowledge and expertise, increase networking and self-reflection. A Mentor must commit to the role and always maintain professional communication with their Mentee.

7.2 Mentee: Being a Mentee provides an opportunity for receiving guidance and support, networking, skills development, and expanded perspectives. A Mentee must be receptive and respectful to the Mentoring experience and open to feedback from the Mentor.

7.3 Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentor:

- Identify and share resources for Mentee's academic and professional success.
- Encourage ongoing reflection on program participation.
- Engage in meaningful conversations and actively contribute.
- Advocate for the Mentee's needs and interests
- Foster a safe and confidential environment.
- Be respectful, approachable, non-judgmental.
- Offer encouragement and constructive feedback.
- Provide guidance on Mentee's professional development goals.
- Assist in developing/improving Mentee skills in specific areas.
- Help navigate university life.
- Expand Mentee's network through connections in the field.
- Support Mentee by arranging an alternative solution when unable to fulfill certain aspects

of Mentoring relationship.

- Acknowledge the potential to learn from the Mentee.

7.4 Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentee:

- Schedule and maintain regular meetings with Mentor.
- Maintain confidentiality of discussions.
- Collaborate with Mentor to establish clear academic and professional development goals.
- Identify needs and barriers to achieving goals.
- Actively seek assistance from the Mentor when needed.
- Take ownership of personal career development.
- Show respect, appreciation, and openness to feedback.
- Understand that the Mentor may have other commitments that could affect availability.
- Engage thoughtfully and openly with Mentor's advice.
- Share knowledge, experience, and provide constructive feedback to the Mentor.

7.5 Mentors can expect to

- Have their advice and feedback given thoughtful consideration by Mentees.
- Request to conclude the mentoring relationship, with valid reasons shared with the Program Coordinator (e.g., lack of engagement or effort from the Mentee)
- Access guidance and support from the Program Office regarding their mentoring experience

7.6 Mentees can expect to

- Have clear understanding of the expectations within the mentoring relationship.
- Receive support from their Mentor in setting and working toward their goals.
- Request a new Mentor, with valid reasons provided by the Program Coordinator, if the change can be accommodated.
- Decline advice that they believe to be inappropriate, unethical, or unlawful.
- Access guidance and support from the Program Office regarding their mentoring experience

7.7 As a Mentee and a Mentor, you must NOT

- Provide or seek illegal or unlawful advice or engagement.
- Provide or seek illicit favors either monetary or otherwise for personal gain.
- Encourage or support acts of violence, terrorism, or hate speech.
- Advocate or engage in any form of discrimination or harassment based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or any other protected characteristic.
- Encourage or facilitate any form of academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism or cheating.

7.8 Roles and responsibilities of the BIPOC Mentoring Academy Office:

The BIPOC Mentoring Academy has certain responsibilities in supporting the Mentees and the Mentors and maintaining mentoring relationships in the program. The Program Coordinator shall, on behalf of the Mentoring Academy, fulfil the following responsibilities:

- Recruit Mentors and Mentees to participate in the program.
- Match Mentor/Mentees based on information provided in the application form.
- Follow grievance process in resolving conflicts, if any, between the Mentor and Mentee
- Organize regular check-ins with Mentors and Mentees
- Support the Mentorship process and troubleshoot any issues or concerns.
- Plan, execute, and coordinate program workshops and events.
- Elicit feedback and create a report following the completion of the program.
- Provide information on the various resources available within and outside of the university to participants.

[* Useful Resources](#)

7.9 Grievance Procedure:

If a Mentee or Mentor has a concern or complaint during the program; the following steps should be followed to register their concern:

- Start here- Write an email to the [Program Coordinator](#) and [Program Supervisor](#)
- Then write to [Dr. Valerie Chappe](#), PhD Associate Dean (Students & Postdocs)- FGS
- Lastly write to [Dean of Faculty of Graduate Studies](#)

If grievance cannot be resolved by the Program Coordinator or the Program Supervisor, the Mentor or Mentee may submit a written statement to the Associate Dean and then to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies. The Dean will address the matter in accordance with Dalhousie University's Appeals and Grievance Policies. Please note that Dalhousie University operates under a comprehensive set of policies, procedures, and guidelines that apply to all members of the university community and visitors. Dalhousie's policies, procedures, and guidelines are developed, reviewed, and modified on an ongoing basis. Participants are encouraged to familiarize themselves with these policies and procedures [here](#).

8 Program Participation

8.1 Mentor-Mentee meetings: The Mentorship Program is Mentee-driven. Mentees are responsible for initiating communication by coordinating convenient meeting times and methods with their Mentor. Mentors and Mentees are encouraged to meet at least once a month for thirty minutes to an hour (or longer if required and if schedules allow) at a mutually convenient time and place. In advance of the mentoring meeting, Mentees should prepare an agenda with conversation topics and/or questions to maximize the full

benefit of the meeting. This can be a concise list of discussion points to help guide the conversation. Before this meeting, the Mentees should email the agenda to the Mentor so that they have adequate time to prepare. Discussion topics can include goal setting, career planning, decision making, work/life balance, opportunities, and academic challenges etc. Mentees are encouraged to be flexible to accommodate the Mentor's schedule. Meetings can be in person (preferred) or virtual, with webcams on. Mentees should be respectful of their Mentor's time by being punctual, responsive, and prepared.

8.2 Professional Development Sessions: A key goal of the BIPOC Mentoring Program is to support the growth of BIPOC graduate students through professional development (PD) sessions focused on soft skills and career readiness. These sessions, held virtually or in person, help Mentees navigate challenges beyond academia. Mentees are strongly encouraged to attend and take advantage of these valuable learning opportunities.

8.3 Surveys: Feedback helps us improve the program and better support participants. Mentors and Mentees are encouraged to complete surveys when requested. Your input is valued and may be used to enhance future cohorts, for promotional materials, and in program reports.

8.4 Events: To support BIPOC graduate and professional program students, our program will host regular networking events to foster Mentor-Mentee connections, build community, and promote a sense of belonging. These events offer a safer, inclusive space for skill-building, support, and professional growth.

8.5 Program event calendar: Please note that the events are planned based on participant feedback and speaker availability. The table below is intended to provide an overview of how engagement typically unfolds throughout the program and may evolve over time.

<i>October:</i>	Program Orientation (new cohort) Program Kick-off Questionnaire	<i>February:</i>	Professional Development Workshop Community Building Event
<i>November:</i>	Professional Development Workshop Community Building Event	<i>March:</i>	Professional Development Workshop Community Building Event
<i>December:</i>	Holiday Socials	<i>April:</i>	Professional Development Workshop Community Building Event
<i>January:</i>	Professional Development Session Mid-Program Review Survey Community Building Event	<i>May:</i>	Program Wrap-Up Celebrations Program End Review Survey

9 Program Commitment

The program commitment is typically between 12-15 hours over an 8-month timeframe. However, each Mentee will have differing levels of meeting needs. We suggest an open conversation regarding your capacity at your first meeting.

Once matched, Mentees and Mentors are encouraged to meet at least once a month, either virtually or in person—throughout the duration of the program. Both are also strongly encouraged to take part in the workshops and events organized by the program, which may be held in hybrid or in-person formats, and to provide ongoing feedback to the Program Coordinator, as requested.

10 How to Apply

If you would like to become a Mentor or Mentee, please fill out the application on the links below or visit our website [here](#) for more information:

[Apply to become a Mentee.](#)

[Apply to become a Mentor.](#)

11 Our Stakeholders

The BIPOC Mentoring Academy is committed to serving our main stakeholders, i.e., all BIPOC graduate and professional program students across Dalhousie University. From its inception, the Academy has been developed by a team of faculty, staff, and students, who represent several faculties and administrative units.

This project was funded for a three-year pilot program from 2022-23 until 2024-25 by the below-mentioned faculties and units who saw value in the development of a collaborative interprofessional mentoring program for BIPOC graduate and professional program students and for improving the culture and professional development opportunities for students from these communities studying at Dalhousie University. The fourth year of the program is funded jointly by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Dalhousie University's Strategic Initiative Funds.

Faculty of Graduate Studies	Faculty of Engineering
Faculty of Science	Faculty of Agriculture
Faculty of Architecture and Planning	Faculty of Health
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences	Faculty of Computer Science
Faculty of Medicine	Faculty of Management
Dal Libraries	Faculty of Law
Office of the Vice President Research and Innovation	Faculty of Dentistry

12 Useful Resources

Mentor / Mentee icebreaker: Icebreaker questions and activities are invaluable tools for building a strong mentoring relationship during initial meetings. They help break the ice, create a comfortable and friendly atmosphere, and facilitate open communication between the Mentor and Mentee. Download the [icebreaker questionnaire and activities](#)

Below are additional resources on wellbeing, mental health, professional development, career exploration, counselling etc. which might be useful. Both the Mentees and Mentors are encouraged to refer to these resources.

Dalhousie University resources:

- https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/health-and-wellness.html
- <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/prep.html>
- https://studentvip.ca/frmPage.aspx?school_page_id=9da284b9-003b-44fc-877f-489f1e8c4461
- <https://www.dal.ca/faculty/gradstudies/current-students/professional-development.html>
- https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/student-success-centre.html
- https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/career-and-leadership/job-resources-services/Resources/career-resources-for-graduate-students.html
- <http://www.dags.ca/>
- <https://www.dal.ca/GradPD>
- [New Indigenous student center opens on Dal's Sexton Campus - Dal News - Dalhousie University](#)
- <https://www.dal.ca/dept/vpei/community-engagement/african-nova-scotian-community-engagement.html>
- <https://www.dal.ca/dept/vpei/community-engagement/indigenous-community-engagement.html>
- <https://www.dsu.ca/african-nova-scotian-black-students>
- <https://www.dsu.ca/mikmaq-indigenous-students>
- https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/international-centre/new-students.html
- <https://www.dal.ca/about/mission-vision-values/equity-diversity-inclusion-and-accessibility/about-office-equity-inclusion/human-rights-and-equity-services.html>
- <https://www.dal.ca/dept/vpei/hres/sexualized-violence/purple-folder.html>
- [https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/campuslife/Yellow%20Folder_August%20%202021_3%20\(1\).pdf](https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/campuslife/Yellow%20Folder_August%20%202021_3%20(1).pdf)
- <https://www.dal.ca/dept/vpei/edia/be-counted/glossary.html>

Other resources:

- <https://www.halifaxpubliclibraries.ca/>
- <https://isans.ca/home/>
- <https://ymcahfx.ca/>
- <https://good2talk.ca/>

Community resources:

- [Canada Government](#)
- [Delmore Buddy Day Institute](#)
- [Black Cultural Centre of Nova Scotia](#)
- [Africville Museum](#)
- [Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre](#)
- <https://beta.novascotia.ca/government/african-nova-scotian-affairs>
- <https://lightupbahc.com/>

Mentees can also reach out to their own communities or religious centers for information and assistance.

Reports:

- Report from the Committee on Aboriginal and Black/African Canadian Student Access and Retention: <https://www.dal.ca/news/2015/11/26/dal-report-considers-how-to-improve-aboriginal-and-black-african.html>
- A Dalhousie in which everyone belongs: Diversity and Inclusiveness initiative released action report: HTTPs [which-everyone-belongs---diversity-and-inclusive.html](https://www.dal.ca/dept/ldp/findings.html)
- The Lord Dalhousie Scholarly Panel on Slavery and Race: <https://www.dal.ca/dept/ldp/findings.html>

13 Program Office Contact

If you have questions about any of the material in this handbook or any aspect of the BIPOC Mentoring Program, please direct your enquiries to:

Shirin Shaikh (she/her)

Program Coordinator - BIPOC Graduate Student Mentoring Academy

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