



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

FACULTY OF
GRADUATE STUDIES

BIPOC GRADUATE STUDENT MENTORING ACADEMY
HANDBOOK



[**BIPOC Mentoring Academy Website**](#)

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1 Welcome to BIPOC Mentoring Academy

We welcome you and wish you a fulfilling and enriching learning experience during your time in the program. Our goal is to provide you with a wealth of knowledge and training that shall benefit your career. Moreover, we hope that through this Mentoring program, you shall forge valuable connections with your fellow graduate students, Mentors, facilitators and speakers, which shall enhance your overall experience and success in your Mentoring activities.

At the BIPOC Mentoring Academy, we are committed to addressing the barriers created by systemic racism that often hinder students from reaching their full potential. We aim to offer professional development opportunities and networking events specifically designed to support the aspirations of graduate students who identify as Black, Indigenous and/or a Person of Colour (BIPOC). This program fills a gap that is not adequately addressed elsewhere within the university. Our primary objective is to serve as a central platform connecting graduate students with Mentors who share similar backgrounds and experiences.

Browse through the following pages to familiarize yourself with the BIPOC Mentoring Program. This guide shall serve as a valuable resource for both Mentees and Mentors who wish to participate in the program.

2 Introduction

Beginning in 2022, the Faculty of Graduate Studies along with the support of other Dalhousie Faculties and Units, hosted a new Mentoring program to support the professional development of our BIPOC graduate students. Initiated by a cross-disciplinary Executive Committee consisting of faculty, staff and students from the BIPOC community, this program addresses barriers due to systemic racism that limits students from reaching their full potential. It offers tailored guidance, support, professional development opportunities and networking events dedicated to supporting the aspirations of BIPOC graduate students. The program will play a central role in connecting graduate students with Mentors who are experts in their fields and who share their racial or ethnic background. This initiative emerged from the voices of Dalhousie graduate students and aligns with the university's anti-racism efforts. There are approximately 550 self-identified BIPOC graduate students at Dalhousie who can benefit from this program. Mentorship is crucial for professional growth, and the program recognizes the value of shared experiences and perspectives. Our goal is to have a Mentor for every Mentee, a one-to-one match.

The program addresses the limited representation of BIPOC individuals at Dalhousie by establishing a platform and providing an opportunity for our graduate students to engage with BIPOC Mentors, explore intercultural connections, make friends, receive support, and prepare them for future careers as they navigate their social and academic transition within and outside the university. The program aims to create a supportive and inclusive environment, bridging the gap caused by underrepresentation. By providing opportunities for growth, the program contributes to a more diverse, equitable, and successful academic and professional landscape.

3 Program Objectives

This consistent, university-sanctioned framework for graduate student Mentoring and professional development aims to support the Mentees towards their careers. This includes support towards careers outside of academia by non-faculty BIPOC Mentors (e.g., administrators, industry experts, and community members at large).

The BIPOC Mentoring Academy aims to:

- Contribute to Dalhousie University's strategic objective of creating safe spaces and fostering a sense of community by connecting students with other students and professionals from BIPOC communities.
- Facilitate communication and relationships between BIPOC graduate students and Mentors of colour.
- Promote and increase intercultural competency, social and academic engagements and networking with peers.
- Foster the bilateral exchange of transferable skills to augment professional development.
- Empower BIPOC graduate students to become Mentors to future graduate students.
- Listen to the voices of BIPOC graduate students and adapt the activities of the Academy to best support them.
- Help BIPOC students identify personal and professional goals and offer learning and Mentoring opportunities and support them towards achieving these goals.
- Provide additional supports for graduate students who walk at the intersection of multiple equity deserving populations.

Dalhousie University recognizes the importance of efforts in prioritizing Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian students. The BIPOC Mentoring Academy maintains a similar emphasis in engaging and supporting Indigenous and Black graduate students, while also providing similar assistance to all people of color. Its goal is to celebrate diversity, amplify marginalized voices, and offer support towards intersectional issues.

4 Eligibility

To be eligible to be a Mentee, you must:

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

To be eligible to be a Mentor, you must:

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

5 Program Period

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

6 Matching Process

The matching process is facilitated by the Mentoring Academy's Program Coordinator and shall be approved by the Executive Committee members. The information provided in the application form is used to pair mentors and mentees based on the characteristics chosen. Certain demographics requested by the mentee are prioritized and shared with the mentor during the matching process. It is encouraged that mentors and mentees share more details with each other as their mentoring relationship develops.

Mentees shall be matched with Mentors based on a combination of information provided in the application forms such as:

- Self-Identification
- Preferences for shared language, culture, heritage, nationality, or identity
- Type of support
- Preference for affiliation
- Needs and Mentoring goals identified in the applications
- Any other additional information provided by the Mentee

Although we shall do our best to match you with a Mentor that meets your specifications and preferences, we cannot guarantee matching you with a Mentor with the 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.

Mentees shall receive an email introduction with their assigned Mentor including contact information. Following the introduction, Mentees shall initiate contact with their assigned Mentors within five business days.

7 Guidelines on Mentoring

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.

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.

7.1 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 contribute actively.
- 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's 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.

7.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the Mentee:

- Schedule and maintain regular appointments with Mentor
- Maintain confidentiality of discussions.
- Collaborate with Mentor to establish clear academic and professional development goals.
- Identify needs and barriers to goal achievement.
- 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, experiences, and provide constructive feedback to the Mentor.

7.3 Rights of the Mentor

- To expect Mentees to give serious and considered attention to their advice concerning what they regard as essential changes to achieve their goals
- To be allowed to terminate the Mentoring relation when they can offer convincing reasons to the Program Coordinator that the Mentee does not heed advice and ignores recommendations, or if the Mentee is not putting forth a reasonable effort
- To have access to the Program Office for guidance and support on the Mentoring relationship

7.4 Rights of the Mentee

- To have a clear understanding of what is expected in the Mentoring relationship
- To choose a goal and expect help from their Mentor in establishing those goals
- To be allowed to have a new Mentor when they can offer convincing reasons to the Program Coordinator for the change and the change can be reasonably accommodated by the Program Office.
- To not follow the Mentor's advice if they feel it is illegal or unlawful
- To have access to the Program Office for guidance and support on the Mentoring relationship

7.5 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

7.6 Roles and responsibilities of the BIPOC Mentoring Academy:

The BIPOC Mentoring Academy has certain responsibilities in supporting the Mentees and the Mentors and maintaining Mentoring relation in the program.

The Program Coordinator shall, on behalf of the Mentoring Academy, fulfil the below responsibilities

- Recruit Mentors and Mentees to participate in the program
- Match Mentor/Mentees based on application data
- Resolve conflicts, if any, between the Mentor and Mentee
- Complete monthly check-ins with Mentor/Mentee pairs
- 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 for professional development programs

7.7 Grievance Procedure

A Mentee or Mentor with a grievance or complain must proceed in the following sequence:

- Program Coordinator
- Program Team Lead(s)
- Program Executive Committee
- Dean of Faculty of Graduate Studies

If the grievance cannot be resolved by the Program Coordinator or the Program Team Lead(s), the Mentee or Mentor shall then submit a written statement to the Program Executive Committee, who shall meet with the Mentee or Mentor regarding the grievance. If a mutually satisfactory resolution cannot be reached by the Program Executive Committee, the matter shall be adjudicated to the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies who may deal with the matter as per Appeals/Grievance policies of the Dalhousie University.

8 Program Committee

The governance structure of the BIPOC Mentoring Academy includes an Executive Committee composed of Dalhousie Staff, Faculty, and Graduate students who represent Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour communities. This committee places special emphasis on the African Nova Scotian and Mi'kmaw communities. Additionally, the Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies shall serve as ex-officio, non-voting member.

The Executive Committees primary responsibilities towards the program shall be as follows:

- Providing guidance, feedback and direction on the program's vision, goals, and strategies.
- Proposing and discussing ideas for program improvement and growth.
- Reviewing program policies and procedures and ensuring compliance with legal and ethical standards.
- Actively participating in decision-making of the program initiatives, budget allocation, and resources management.

- Being aware of the program's performance and effectiveness.
- Helping to identify potential funding sources and connections to raise funds or acquire resources for the program.
- Representing the program, fostering relationships with stakeholders, partners, and collaborators.
- Serve as program ambassadors by promoting the program's mission and advocating for its importance within the community.

Please refer to the [Terms of Reference for the Executive Committee](#).

9 Program Participation

9.1 Mentor- Mentee meetings:

The Mentorship Program is **Mentee-driven**. Mentees are responsible to maintain all communications. Mentees must coordinate convenient meeting times and method with their Mentor. Mentors and Mentees are encouraged to meet at least once a month. The duration of the meeting should be between thirty minutes to an hour (or longer if required and if schedules allow) and should be held 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 short list of discussion points to help guide the conversation. Before this meeting, Mentees should email the agenda to the Mentor so that they have time to prepare. Discussion topics can include goal setting, career planning, decision making, work/life balance, opportunities and challenges of the profession etc. Mentees are encouraged to be flexible to accommodate the Mentor's schedule. In-person meetings are more effective and recommended. However, both parties can choose to meet virtually on Microsoft Teams, Zoom, FaceTime, Google Hangouts, or any other video conferencing platforms. Mentees and Mentors are expected to have their webcams on for virtual "face-to- face" meetings. Mentees must be respectful of their Mentor's time, ensuring they are on time for meetings and responding to emails/phone calls in a timely fashion.

9.2 Professional Development Sessions:

One of the primary objective of the BIPOC Mentoring program is to provide learning opportunities that support the aspirations of BIPOC graduate students. These professional development (PD) sessions aim to equip our Mentees with the necessary tools and skills as they transition into the professional world post completion of their education. While they may have faced challenges in the academic realm the professional world presents its own unique obstacles. To address this, we focus on various soft skills to empower our Mentees and help them navigate the professional landscape more effectively. For the BIPOC Mentoring program, some months, preferably alternate months in the program are designated as professional development months. Specific session details shall be shared by the Program Coordinator well in advance, ensuring Mentees can participate and benefit from these valuable sessions. It is strongly recommended for the Mentees to participate in the Professional Development sessions during the program tenure, which shall be held virtually or in-person.

9.3 Surveys:

Surveys and feedbacks are essential tools to continuously enhance the program and ensure it meets the needs of our participants. We encourage both Mentors and Mentees to provide ongoing feedback to the Program Coordinator when requested. Your input is highly valued as it offers valuable insights into the program's effectiveness and areas where enhancements can be made to deliver an even better experience for our participants. Therefore, we kindly request that both Mentors and Mentees take the time to complete the surveys when requested. The feedback provided will be used to improve the program for future cohorts, for promotional purposes and may be included in the program reports.

9.4 Events:

To address the need for networking opportunities and safe spaces for BIPOC graduate students, our program will organize monthly networking events. These events aim to foster meaningful connections between Mentors and Mentees and create a strong social and professional network. By facilitating these networking events, we aim to build a supportive community on campus that promotes a sense of belonging and encourages the exchange of transferable skills. Our goal is to provide a safe and inclusive environment where BIPOC graduate students can thrive, access valuable opportunities, and receive support for their growth.

9.5 Program event calendar:

September:	Program Promotion	February:	Mentor – Mentee Networking Event
October:	Program Orientation (new cohort)	March:	Professional Development Session Mentor – Mentee Networking Event Three-month program survey
November:	Professional Development Session Mentor–Mentee Networking Event	April:	Mentor – Mentee Networking Event
December:	Mentor – Mentee Networking Event Three-month program survey	May:	Program Wrap Up
January:	Professional Development Session Mentor–Mentee Networking Event		

10 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 of your time availability at your first meeting.

Once matched, Mentees and Mentors must meet at least **once a month** (virtually or in person) for the duration of the program. Mentees are strongly encouraged to participate in the professional development sessions arranged by the program, which shall be held either virtually or in-person. Both Mentors and Mentees must be willing to participate in the networking events organized by the Academy and provide ongoing feedback to the Program Coordinator, as and when requested.

11 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.](#)

12 Our Stakeholders

The BIPOC Mentoring Academy is committed to serving our main stakeholder i.e., all BIPOC graduate 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 is funded by the below mentioned faculties and units who see value in the development of a collaborative interprofessional Mentoring program for BIPOC graduate students and for improving the culture and professional development opportunities for students from these communities studying at Dalhousie University.

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

13 Useful Resources

Mentor / Mentee icebreaker: Icebreaker questions and activities are invaluable tools for building a strong Mentoring relationship during the 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>
- <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/dept/vpei/hres/sexualized-violence/purple-folder.html>
- [https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/campuslife/Yellow%20Folder_August%208%202021_3%20\(1\).pdf](https://cdn.dal.ca/content/dam/dalhousie/pdf/campuslife/Yellow%20Folder_August%208%202021_3%20(1).pdf)
- <https://www.dal.ca/dept/vpei/edia/be-counted/glossary.html>
- <https://dalu.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/shw/SiteAssets/SitePages/Home/Mental-Health-Resources-One-Pagers-Jan-2023.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=hXAvKl>
- https://dalu.sharepoint.com/:b:/r/sites/shw/SiteAssets/SitePages/blue-folder/2022_Dec_Blue-Folder_Dal_PRINT--1-.pdf?csf=1&web=1&e=4sp5Ph

Other resources:

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

The Mentees can also reach out to their own community 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://www.dal.ca/news/2015/03/05/-a-dalhousie-in-which-everyone-belongs---diversity-and-inclusive.html>
- The Lord Dalhousie Scholarly Panel on Slavery and Race: <https://www.dal.ca/dept/ldp/findings.html>

14 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)

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