

**2023-2024**

**GEMS Mentor Match  
Program Handbook**



# GEMS

Geoscience Education  
& Mentorship Support

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## Program Overview

The GEMS program was started in 2021 to create a mentorship structure for undergraduates interested in applying to graduate school and for fellowships. The primary piece of our program is matching undergraduates with mentors, who are senior grad students, postdocs, and faculty. We also aim to provide mentors and mentees with resources on our website.

## Program Structure

The GEMS program consists of two tracks that mentees may apply to depending on their current stage in the graduate school application process. Mentors may indicate in their mentor application that they are willing to support students on one or both tracks.

### Ruby Track: for individuals interested in going to graduate school in the future

Mentees are undergraduate students or recent graduates interested in going to graduate school in the future but not applying to graduate school during the current cycle. Support offered by mentors may include: general advice on graduate school application process and timeline, guidance in career planning and professional development, and advice on preparing for graduate school.

### Sapphire Track: for individuals who are currently applying to graduate programs

Mentees are undergraduate students, recent graduates, returning students, or current graduate students applying to graduate school during the current cycle (2023-2024). Support offered by mentors may include: guidance throughout the graduate school application process, help setting and meeting personal deadlines for deliverables, general feedback and editing of application materials.

All participants in GEMS will have access to GEMS resources on the program website and the GEMS Discord community, including channels for connecting with other mentees and mentors, learning about fellowship opportunities, and attending discussions with peer mentoring pods.



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## Timeline

Applications for prospective GEMS mentors and mentees open at the beginning of August. There are two matching rounds with staggered cutoff dates (see the 2023-2024 schedule below). After assigning your match, the GEMS team will send out periodic check-ins with mentors and mentees, so please monitor your email for GEMS announcements. These check-ins will allow us to address any matching issues, and your reflections and suggestions help us improve the program.

For students who applied for the Ruby Track, please note that you are welcome to apply to the Sapphire Track in a future year for additional mentoring.

<b>Round 1</b>	<b>Date</b>
Applications Close	August 18, 2023
Initial Self-Assessment (Google Form)	August 25, 2023
Match Notification	September 1, 2023
Orientation Session	September 5, 2023
Check-In (Google Form)	~2 weeks after matching
<b>Round 2</b>	
Applications Close	October 1, 2023
Initial Self-Assessment (Google Form)	October 6, 2023
Match Notification	October 13, 2023
Orientation Session	October 17, 2023
Check-In (Google Form)	~2 weeks after matching
<b>Both Rounds</b>	
Final Self-Assessment (Google Form)	February 2024
Survey on program acceptances (Google Form)	April 2024



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## Getting Help

Email the GEMS team with any questions or concerns at [geo.mentorship@gmail.com](mailto:geo.mentorship@gmail.com).

## The GEMS Discord Server

The GEMS steering committee maintains an invite-only Discord server, which is open to all mentors and mentees. This server is a space for the GEMS community to discuss mentoring, graduate school and fellowship applications, and other topics relevant to the program.

## Peer Mentoring Pods

The GEMS Discord Server will also host smaller “peer mentoring pods” to create a space for mentees to connect. These pods are organized broadly based on research interests. Mentees must elect to join a pod in their GEMS application to be placed into one. Pods will be hosted by a leadership committee made up of mentees who indicated interest in a leadership role on their program application, though leadership roles can, at the pod’s discretion, alternate once the pod is established.

Once placed into a pod it is up to the members to decide how they want to use the space. The pod, with the help of the leader, will organize events, discussions, or other opportunities based on input from the pod members. We hope mentees use this space to share their experiences and advice or as an opportunity to create both professional and friendly connections. **Take inventory of everyone’s experience and learn from one another!** This is a rare opportunity to connect with others outside of your school who are on similar pathways and/or at similar places in life.

Here are a few ideas for how to use the pods:

- Leaders organize Zoom meetings to discuss topics related to:
  - **Graduate admissions** (how to select a program, what materials you need to apply, etc.)
  - **Personal development** (how do I get better at writing, how do you stay motivated to accomplish short- and long-term goals, what are my goals)



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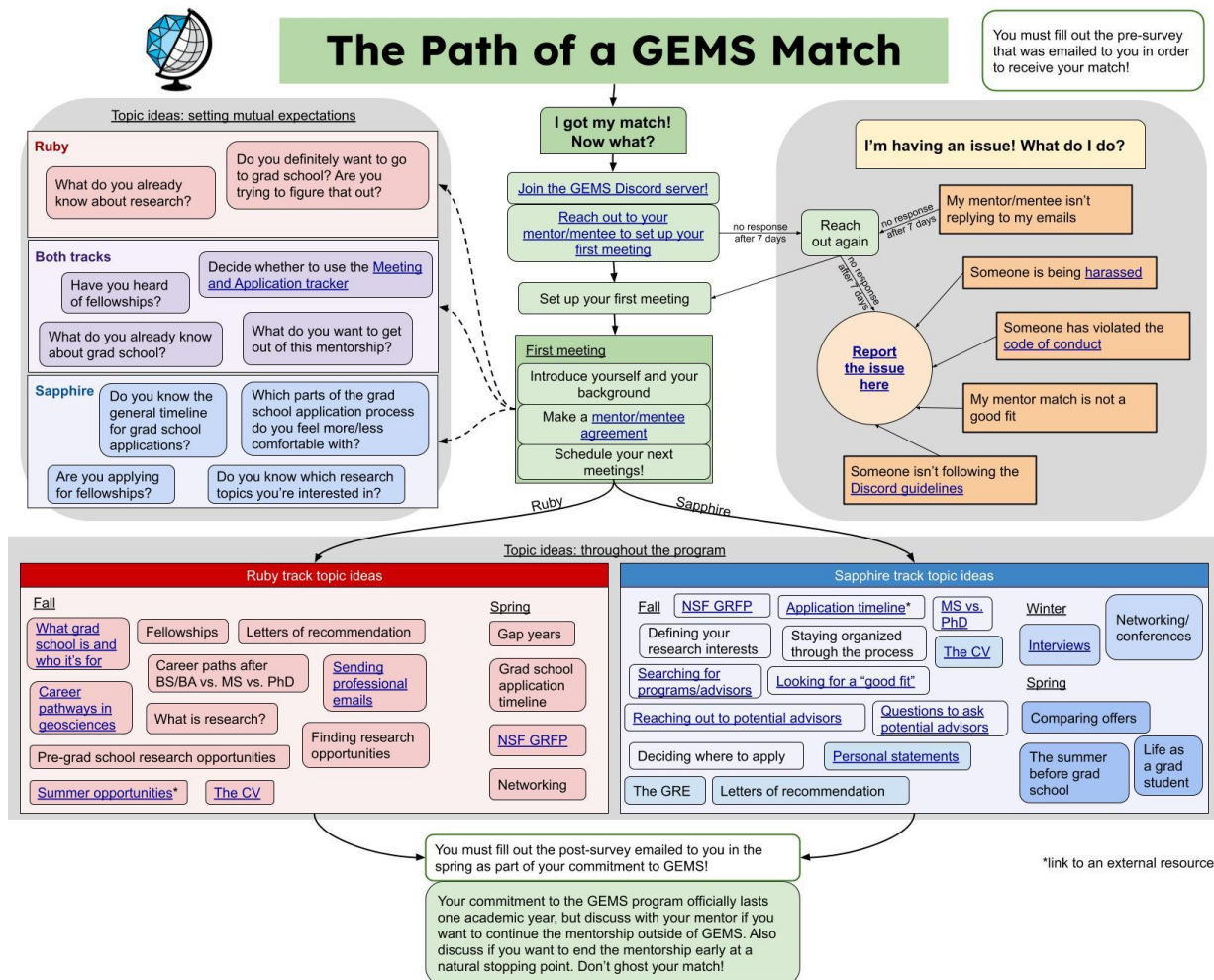
- **Professional development** (what is a CV, how do I get involved in research, summer job ideas, what should I do after I graduate, etc.)
  - Organize regular coffee/tea socials to check-in
  - Have working sessions on Zoom
  - Host group editing sessions for personal statements, CVs, etc.



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## Flow Chart: The Path of a GEMS Match ([linked version here](#))





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## Mentor Guidelines

Thank you for agreeing to be a mentor with GEMS! Mentors provide support for mentees who are interested in graduate school in the future and/or are currently preparing applications for graduate programs and fellowship applications. These application processes can be daunting for mentees to navigate, particularly if it's their first time or if they are not familiar with the academic system. As a mentor, we hope that you can draw on your own experience (or that of your cohort) to help guide students.

## Getting Started

1. **Introduce yourself.** When you receive your match, please reach out to your mentee and help set up your first meeting. We have provided a [mentor-mentee agreement form](#) for you to fill out together during the first meeting. This can be used to establish a mutual understanding of the commitment and specify modes of communication and response times.
2. **Set mutual expectations of time and work commitments at your first meeting.** We have provided a [meeting and application tracker](#) for both Sapphire and Ruby tracks to map out timelines and set meeting frequencies and times. It also includes potential icebreaker questions for starting meetings and getting to know each other better! We suggest ending each meeting with set dates for the next meeting.
3. **Listen to the needs of your mentee.** Each mentee will be at a different stage in this process. Try to understand what they are looking for in this mentoring program. Is it general guidance for the application process? Feedback on draft statements? Do they know where they want to apply? Mentorship means taking an interest in your mentee's specific professional development needs.





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## Mentoring Logistics

1. **Set goals and expectations early.** Mentees have been instructed to attend meetings with questions/goals prepared in advance. Once you understand your mentee's goals, make a plan together to accomplish them.
2. **Have regular meetings.** We suggest having regular meetings with your mentee throughout the semester. Early on, these meetings may be filling out worksheets and brainstorming, but, as deadlines approach, include deliverables for the next meeting, if appropriate. For example, if an applicant is working on an NSF GRFP application, the specific deliverable might be: by next week's meeting, have an outline of the Graduate Research Plan Statement drafted.
3. **Create a meeting agenda.** Use our [meeting and application tracker](#) to keep track of meeting agendas, so you come prepared to discuss specific deliverables. Mentees have been instructed to prepare questions and goals in advance of meetings as well. If they are struggling with this, please work with them to create agendas together.

## Mentoring Approach

1. **Be understanding.** This is difficult and new territory for many students. Meet your mentee where they are at, not where you were at this stage, or where you think they should be.
2. **Be adaptable.** We encourage you to set expectations and goals with your mentees early on, but things **will** change. Your mentee undoubtedly has a life and career outside these applications. When unexpected shifts or hurdles arise, help your mentee decide on a new set of goals and move forward.
3. **Be approachable.** Try to get to know your mentee as a human, and be a human yourself. Ask why they want to apply to graduate programs and share with them why you wanted to be a mentor. Be open with your past mistakes and



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failures. Congratulate them on their successes and be understanding if there are disappointments.

Reach out to us if it's not a fit. If there is a mismatch between your time availability, expertise, or experience and what your mentee is looking for, let us know. We can always try to find a better match. You can email the GEMS team with any questions or concerns at [geo.mentorship@gmail.com](mailto:geo.mentorship@gmail.com).

## Mentee Guidelines

Mentors can provide incredibly useful support and guidance for navigating graduate school and fellowship applications. It is equally important that you take some time and consider your role in the mentoring relationship before meeting. Below are some guidelines and tips for you to consider to get the most out of this mentoring program.

### Getting Started

1. **Introduce yourself.** When you receive your match, please reach out to your mentor and help set up your first meeting. We have provided a [mentor-mentee agreement form](#) for you to fill out together during the first meeting. This will help you and your mentor establish a mutual understanding of the commitment and specify modes of communication and response times.
2. **Set mutual expectations of time and work commitments at your first meeting.** We have provided a [meeting and application tracker](#) for both Sapphire and Ruby tracks to map out timelines and set meeting frequencies and times. It also includes potential icebreaker questions for starting meetings and getting to know each other better!
3. **Track, manage, and set action items.** Before each meeting, consider what your goals are for the meeting and establish deliverables together. This is important because your interactions with your mentor are strictly virtual. The graduate school meeting planner and application trackers (linked above) will help keep both mentees and mentors on track. These also are useful ways to map out



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longer-term goals; for example, if you know your application is due in December, you can back out deadlines for your deliverable (ex., personal statement) and associated edits to work cohesively with the final deadline.

## General Tips

1. **Realize that your mentor does not know everything.** They have volunteered their time because they value your professional development. We recognize that this process may be entirely new to you (this is precisely why we created GEMS!). We find that mentoring relationships are best viewed as networks (see [here to fill out your own!](#)) - with nodes that you can grow and nurture as you move along in your professional and personal development pathways. You can think of your mentor as filling one node of a complex network map; they will not have answers to all of your questions.

**Role models**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Safe Space**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Emotional support**  
ie. friends, family, others

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**You**

**Substantive Feedback**  
ie. colleagues, editors

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Intellectual Community**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Professional development**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_



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- 2. Plan ahead and set goals.** It's important that you plan ahead. You have the opportunity to interact and learn from someone who has been through the entire process before! Leverage this time and come prepared with your personal goals and questions. Please know that your mentor is not responsible for finding programs or fellowships for you, writing your applications, etc. You should think about what kind of help you want (feedback on a specific fellowship application) and what types of questions you have.
- 3. Be understanding and follow through.** Recognize that your mentor is human, and clear communication is important. With that said, if you feel that your mentor is not effective or the 'right' fit for your needs, then please reach out to us, and we will do our best to match you with someone else.



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## Code of Conduct

This code of conduct governs the environment of the Geoscience Education & Mentorship Support (GEMS) mentor-mentee match program and discord server. We believe that articulating our values and obligations to one another reinforces respect among the participants, and having a code provides us with clear avenues to correct our culture should it ever stray from that course. To our mentors and mentees, we commit to enforcing and evolving this code as our program grows.

## Scope

The contents of this code of conduct apply to interactions between mentors, mentees, and GEMS members, including email exchanges, social media, Discord, Zoom meetings, and any other contact method within the mentor-mentee match program.

## Values

We want our program to be a fun, constructive, and safe space for all members. We value inclusivity within our program because we believe we have an obligation to work toward broadening participation in the geosciences.

## Expected Behavior

Treat your match with respect. Adopt habits that are inclusive and constructive for your mentor-mentee relationship: document meetings and pay attention to time zones when scheduling events/meetings.

Be understanding of your match, proactively, and responsively. This program is built on the goodwill of each other to improve our community, and many volunteer their time to work towards this goal.

Be open. It's okay to ask for help and feedback from each other. Don't succumb to impostor syndrome. You belong here, you and your ideas are valued.

Be humane. Be polite and friendly in all forms of communication, especially remote, where opportunities for misunderstanding are greater.



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Maintain confidentiality. Respect the privacy of your match, and do not share any information that was shared with you in confidence.

## **Unacceptable Behaviors**

Our program is committed to providing a welcoming and safe environment for people of all races, gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, physical abilities, physical appearances, socioeconomic backgrounds, life experiences, nationalities, ages, religions, and beliefs. Discrimination and harassment are expressly prohibited in our program. Harassment may include, but is not limited to, intimidation; stalking; unwanted recording or photography; inappropriate physical contact; use of sexual or discriminatory imagery, comments, or jokes; intentional or repeated misgendering; sexist, racist, ableist, or otherwise discriminatory or derogatory language; and unwelcome sexual attention. To provide such an environment, we commit to being considerate in our language use. Any behavior or language which is unwelcoming is also not allowed. Violations of this code can result in removal from the program.

## **Reporting a Problem**

Contact the GEMS team. We will help you navigate the situation in a way that you are most comfortable with.

## **Committing to Improvement**

We understand that nobody is perfect. It is expected that all of us, regardless of our backgrounds, will fail to live up to our high standards. What matters isn't having a perfect track record, but owning up to your mistakes and making a clear and persistent effort to improve. If you are approached as having (consciously or otherwise) acted in a way that might make anyone in the program feel unwelcome, refrain from being defensive; remember that if someone calls you out, it likely took a great deal of courage for them to do so. The best way to respect that courage is to acknowledge your mistake, apologize, and move on—with a renewed commitment to do better.

Adapted from the [Vox Code of Conduct](#)



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## Harassment

We want this to be a useful, pleasant, and harassment-free space for everyone, regardless of gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, or religion. We do not tolerate harassment of community members in any form.

Harassment includes:

- Offensive comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, mental illness, neuro(a)typicality, physical appearance, body size, race, or religion
- Unwelcome comments regarding a person's lifestyle choices and practices, including those related to food, health, parenting, drugs, and employment.
- Deliberate misgendering or use of 'dead' or rejected names
- Gratuitous or off-topic sexual images or behavior in spaces where they're not appropriate
- Simulated physical contact (e.g. textual descriptions like "hug" or "backrub") without consent or after a request to stop.
- Threats of violence
- Incitement of violence towards any individual, including encouraging a person to commit suicide or to engage in self-harm
- Deliberate intimidation
- Sustained disruption of discussion
- Unwelcome sexual attention
- Continued one-on-one communication after requests to cease
- Publication of non-harassing private communication

## Reporting Harassment

If you are being harassed, you notice someone else being harassed, or you have any other concerns, please contact the admins at [geo.mentorship@gmail.com](mailto:geo.mentorship@gmail.com). We will respond as promptly as we can. We will not name harassment victims without their affirmative consent.



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Members asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately, and repeated or egregious harassing behavior will lead to removal from the Discord server and the GEMS program. Any disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the program, will be taken as deemed appropriate by the GEMS steering committee and Discord server moderators.

## **Confidentiality**

Some channels in this server are private and may contain sensitive information. Please keep what's said in private channels confidential, unless you have the affirmative consent of the speaker(s). Please be mindful that anything said in this server remains private only so long as community members honor the confidentiality of the space. It is also important to note that things you say here may at some point become public.

## **Credits and License**

This code of conduct is based on Annalee Flower Horne's [Sample Slack Code of Conduct](#), which is in turn based on Geek Feminism's [Community Anti-Harassment Policy](#). We have adapted the Sample Slack Code of Conduct for our own use under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License](#).