



Ocean Country Partnership Programme Scholarships

Mentors for a Virtual Postgraduate Student Training Programme

Terms of Reference

Introduction to the programme

The Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) is seeking recognised post-doctoral academic researchers to support an international cohort of marine-science focused postgraduate students participating in an online training programme, funded by the UK government's Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP), delivered between August 2024 and April 2025.

This training programme will run alongside, and in addition to, the scholars' postgraduate studies and will focus on professional development. It will provide a cohort-based virtual and applied training, with three modules, each running for 6-8 weeks, focusing on the following topics:

Module 1: Effectively engaging with policy and practice – tools and strategies for impact. *August-October 2024.*

Module 2: Creating knowledge together: successfully engaging communities in marine research. *October-December 2024.*

Module 3: Writing winning PhD and postdoc proposals. *February-April 2025.*

These modules, supported by training providers INASP (International Network for Advancing Science and Policy), are designed to develop skills that will aid the scholars' professional development. Part of the training will see the scholars team up in small groups from different institutions and countries, aligned to a particular research theme, to conduct group-based applied learning activities. Through this, the programme will also build a network of like-minded individuals from diverse contexts and backgrounds.

The first cohort of approximately 100 Scholars from the following countries - Sri Lanka, Mozambique, Senegal, Ghana, South Pacific, India, Bangladesh, Belize and the Maldives - will participate in the virtual training via an online platform.

The programme will strengthen the capacity of OCP-funded scholars to engage in world-class research and innovation that has the potential to influence policy and support local communities in relation to marine pollution, sustainable seafood, and marine biodiversity.

Core activities of each module of the training programme

- Onboarding event to introduce participants and facilitators, provide an overview of tools and platforms and confirm learning outcomes and module outline.

- Reflective activities where the students consider their background experience/interests and how they apply to their chosen modules.
- Participants will be divided into groups based on time zones, research area and gender balance and a mentor will be assigned to each group.
- Virtual workshops led by content experts covering module content.
- Asynchronous group activities such as developing content for target audiences.
- Asynchronous individual activities such as writing a draft proposal.
- Check-in/Q&A sessions for students to have discussions with facilitators and experts and stay on track with learning.
- Capstone sessions at the end of each module for groups to present back.

The role of mentors

We are seeking to recruit mentors on a voluntary basis for this programme. You will be assigned as a mentor to one group of approximately 4-6 students and will be responsible for guiding them along the process of conducting their applied learning activity, providing advice as necessary and feedback on written outputs. We would ask each mentor to volunteer for at least one of the three modules, and do welcome participation in all three.

Specific aims of the role include:

- To establish contact with the assigned students in your group, and encourage them to engage in communication and collaboration on group tasks.
- Attending online check-ins with the group.
- To provide encouragement and constructive feedback on work produced for the programme.
- To provide new perspectives and encourage discussions.
- To guide the students and keep them on track throughout the programme.
- In some cases, we may ask mentors to support facilitation of group break-outs during online training sessions, if availability allows.

All of the course content and communication will take place virtually. We expect the time commitment to be between 5-7 hours per module; depending on how involved you would want to be. At minimum we would expect you to join at least 3 online asynchronous meetings and provide feedback on the written output(s) of the assigned student group.

All mentors will also need to attend a briefing session delivered by the ACU which will outline the details of the training programme, what the training covers and what the role of a mentor is.

Experience needed

- PhD holder or researcher with an equivalent level of experience and competence.
- Substantial original research experience (in a marine-science related field is desirable).
- Experience in the Module focus area the mentor is proposing to support (policy influence; community engagement; proposal writing).
- Experience of supervising and/or mentoring postgraduate students.
- Experience of working in a low-and/or-middle-income country (LMIC) context.

- Language proficiency in English, French, and/or Portuguese.

Suggested activities

Activity	Details
Attending at least 3 online group meetings	The students should be setting up group meetings, and we would expect mentors to attend if invited to help facilitate discussions and answer questions. This will also be the setting in which feedback can be provided on outputs and/or written feedback can be discussed.
Feedback on outputs	To provide written and/or verbal feedback on the outputs the students produce such as draft proposals; a strategy for developing policy and practice; science-based educational research for a community group.
General support	To answer any questions students may have, to keep them on course with the Modules and to report any lack of communication/participation to the ACU.

Eligibility

In order to be eligible for this post, you must be an employee of a registered organisation or registered as self-employed. ACU reserves the right to request evidence of employment status, if appropriate and necessary to do so.

At ACU, we do not just accept difference — we celebrate it, we support it, and we thrive on it for the benefit of our employees, our services, and our community. ACU is proud to be an equal opportunity workplace and encourages applications from all individuals regardless of age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief and marriage and civil partnerships.

How to register interest in being a mentor

To register your interest in being a mentor under this scheme, complete the following [sign-up form](#) (clicking this link will take you to a log-in page. If you do not already have an account you will need to create one). The ACU will contact you in July to confirm participation.

Benefits of participating as a mentor

1. Support your professional development through gaining experience and track record of mentoring postgraduate students in an international setting and contributing to a high-profile international education programme.
2. Participate in and develop international collaborations.
3. Opportunity to network internationally with other recognised and established researchers in the field.