



Mentoring Handbook

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Welcome to the Pathways to Practice Mentoring Scheme

Welcome to the University of Nottingham School of Law's <u>Pathways to Practice</u> <u>Mentoring Scheme</u>. We are incredibly excited to have you join our mentoring community, whether you are a dedicated legal professional sharing your expertise or an ambitious student ready to learn and grow. The scheme is supported by the University's Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO) who are grateful for the support of alumni and other professional contacts who make this all possible.

This scheme is a cornerstone of our commitment to bridging the gap between academic study and professional practice. As one previous student mentee put it, "this is the kind of mentorship that not only clarifies the path forward, but also makes people feel more confident walking it".

To our mentors: thank you for dedicating your time to helping shape the next generation of legal professionals. Your guidance, insight and support will make a profound difference in a student's journey, helping them navigate the complexities of the legal world and help prepare them for the future.

To our student mentees: this is your opportunity to gain real-world insights, develop key professional skills and build a relationship with someone who has walked the path you are on. We encourage you to be proactive, ask questions, and make the most of this incredible opportunity.

This handbook is designed to provide you with essential information, practical advice and helpful resources to ensure your mentoring relationship is productive and rewarding.

We wish all scheme participants the very best and hope you find this experience both meaningful and inspiring.

Sincerely,

The University of Nottingham School of Law

Outcomes: Pathways to Practice Mentoring Scheme

The School of Law understands that the path to becoming a qualified solicitor or barrister is both demanding and highly competitive. This mentoring scheme aims to support students by pairing them with experienced legal professionals for five months of virtual mentoring, with optional work experience opportunities offered where possible (in line with mentor preferences). Key outcomes for participants are as follows:

Outcomes (for students):

- Unlock potential, create early professional networks and gain real-world insights from legal professionals across UoN's global alumni community and beyond
- · Boost career confidence and readiness
- Promote social mobility and inclusivity in the legal profession
- Inspire the next generation of legal professionals

Outcomes (for mentors):

- · Develop and enhance mentoring skills
- Reflect on practice and develop new professional perspectives
- Reconnection with the University of Nottingham (for alumni), providing a growing community of supporters for the School of Law and the wider university
- Expand professional networks via fellow mentors and burgeoning mentee talent

How it works:

Mentoring will primarily take place online via video calls from late November to the end of April. A minimum of **three one-hour** meetings is required during this period. With the support of the School of Law, in-person or virtual work experience activities may also be arranged at the mentor's discretion. *Guidance on how to record work* experience is provided on page 14. More information on key dates here.

Feedback and Monitoring:

Students will be asked to rate their career confidence levels at the start and end of the scheme via a short questionnaire. During the scheme itself, the School of Law will monitor mentor/mentee pairings to ensure the scheme is progressing effectively for all involved. All parties will be sent in advance a "Code of Conduct" to ensure expectations are understood before they meet (<u>Appendix 1</u> and <u>Appendix 2</u>).

An evaluation form will be sent to all participants at the end of the scheme to gather feedback and to ensure the continuous improvement of the scheme.

Understanding Mentoring

At its core, mentoring is a powerful and collaborative relationship where the mentor provides guidance, advice and encouragement to the mentee. Mentors do this by sharing their professional knowledge and experiences with their mentees, helping them to achieve personal or professional growth.

The mentoring relationship is primarily focused on enabling the mentee to:

- Build self-confidence and a sense of belief in their own potential
- Identify their own development needs and goals
- Develop their skills, knowledge and capabilities
- Progress in their professional life/career

The mentor acts as a motivator for self-discovery and reflection, giving the mentee time to make their own decisions. Not only has mentoring been recognised as an impactful way to learn a variety of personal and professional skills, but it is also considered as one of the oldest forms of experienced influence in the world.

Rethinking Mentoring: What It's Not

Mentoring is not about telling the mentee to "do it the way I did it". Instead, it's about motivating and empowering the mentee to identify their own challenges and set their own goals. The aim is to help them find their own solutions while respecting that their path may be different from the mentor's.

Additionally, mentoring is **not**:

- A Tutor/Student relationship that focuses on producing academic outcomes
- An Instructor/Trainee relationship focusing solely on learning skills to perform a specific function
- Having someone to do your work for you
- An indefinite relationship

Mentoring is also very different from other forms of support, such as coaching. Where coaching often focuses on specific short-term goals, mentoring centres around a longer-term relationship that takes a holistic view of a mentee's development.

Mentors are not expected to have all the answers for every question and should encourage the mentee to come up with their own solutions. If specialised support is required, a mentor may help the mentee access it by signposting them to relevant resources.

Roles and Responsibilities

In any mentoring partnership, both the mentor and the mentee share responsibility for its success. While their roles and responsibilities are different, they are equally important. Before the relationship begins, it's crucial that both individuals are comfortable with the roles they are taking on.

Role of the Mentor is to:	The Mentee is required to:
Actively Listen to their Mentee	Actively Listen to their Mentor
Use questions to elicit facts from their mentee(s)	Clarify their understanding when given advice by the mentor
Give advice on career development	Reflect on themselves
Offer supportive challenge and address current issues	Lead the relationship by scheduling meetings, maintaining a record of agreed tasks and goals
Be willing to share experience, knowledge and expertise	Take ownership of decisions to maximise the mentoring relationship
Offer motivation and encouragement	Take responsibility for their own development
Offer different perspectives	Be prepared to step out of their comfort zone and consider new ways of doing things/new perspectives
Use personal experiences when appropriate	Change assumptions and share thinking
Recognise and celebrate achievements	Be honest and transparent when sharing information with their mentor

As a Mentor, you can support your Mentee by:

- Providing insights into your work and career path
- Offering advice to help them think critically about their career path and make informed decisions
- Identify areas for personal and skills-based development
- Encouraging self-reflection
- Improving their self-confidence

As a Mentee, you should:

- Take charge of the mentoring relationship, and make decisions, by guiding the mentor on the direction you wish to take
- Communicate effectively by being clear and honest with your mentor from the outset
- Ask questions whenever you don't fully understand a concept or piece of advice you have been provided
- Act upon advice and guidance given to you in a timely manner
- Accept different perspectives

Student Guidance for Your First Meeting

Before Your First Meeting:

In preparation for the first mentoring meeting, the student mentee should reach out to their mentor to introduce themselves and establish a point of contact. Together, both parties should **agree on a time, date, and platform** to conduct their first mentoring session. A meeting invite will then be sent by either the mentor or the mentee, based on what has been agreed in this first email exchange.

In advance of the first mentoring session, the mentee should reflect on **their goals** for the relationship - exploring what they want to achieve and what are their key challenges. The mentee should draft their goals using the <u>SMART Framework (page</u> 9) and be ready to discuss them with their mentor during the first mentoring meeting.

During Your First Meeting - The Mentoring Contract:

Setting clear ground rules at the beginning of a mentoring relationship is essential for its success. This is often done by creating a "mentoring contract". When you first meet, you should discuss and agree on several key points to ensure the relationship is productive and comfortable for both parties. An example mentoring contract can be found on page 18 (Appendix 3).

Here are some examples contracting questions you can use to help you build your "mentoring contract":

- What are the core goals both parties want to achieve from the mentoring relationship?
- What is the mentor responsible for? (referring back to Page 5)
- What is the mentee responsible for? (referring back to Page 5)
- What are the boundaries of confidentiality in our mentoring relationship?
- How long are our mentoring sessions likely to last?
- What are the boundaries of confidentiality and privacy going to be in our mentoring relationship?
- Where are we going to meet for our mentoring meetings?
- What is the best way to handle communication between our meetings?
- How should we handle it if we need to cancel or reschedule a meeting?
- How should we handle it if we disagree on an approach or opinion?
- How are we going to record key outcomes and learning?
- How will we know if this relationship is successful?
- How often should we review our progress to make sure the mentoring is effective?

Progressing Your First Meeting:

In addition to handling practical details, the first mentoring conversation is crucial for building a strong relationship and establishing a mutual understanding of what each person hopes to gain and contribute.

The example questions on this page can help you "break the ice", get to know each other, and start a positive conversation towards building a solid foundation for an effective mentoring relationship:

Getting to Know Each Other

- What can you tell me about yourself to help me understand you better?
- What do you want to get out of this mentoring relationship?
- What knowledge, skills, or experiences do you hope to gain?
- What do you need from me as your mentor?

Career Aspirations and Goals

- What is your primary motivation for pursuing a career in law?
- What area of law are you most interested in, and why?
- What are your long-term career goals (e.g. becoming a partner, specialising in a specific field, working in-house)?

Skills and Development

- What skills do you feel are your greatest strengths for a legal career (e.g. research, writing, public speaking)?
- What skills do you believe you need to develop further?
- How do you learn best, and what kind of support do you need to improve these skills?
- What has been your most significant learning experience during your legal studies?

Understanding the Legal Profession

- What do you perceive as the biggest challenges of working in the legal profession
- What aspects of a legal professional's daily life do you want to understand better?
- What do you think is the best way for me to provide you with insights into my work and career path?
- How can I best help you with practical tips on job search strategies and networking?

Future Focused Questions

- Looking ahead five years, what does success look like to you?
- What kind of impact do you want to have on the world through your work?
- What do you think will be the biggest changes in the legal profession in the next decade?
- How can you prepare for those changes now?

Setting SMART Goals

To ensure you make the most of your mentoring sessions, it is important that you set clear goals for what you would like to achieve from the mentoring relationship. This in turn makes the guidance you receive from your mentor more effective and targeted. This can be done by using **SMART goals**. "SMART" is an acronym for a framework that helps define and track goals:

(S)pecific

Goals should be clear and well-defined, rather than vague. Instead of "I want to improve my legal skills," a specific goal would be "I want to improve my public speaking skills for a corporate law environment."

(M)easurable

Goals should have tangible criteria for success. This allows both you and your mentor to track progress. For example, "I want to attend two public speaking law workshops by the end of the academic semester."

(A)chieveable

Goals should be realistic and attainable within the given timeframe and considering the resources you have available. It's about setting a challenging, but not impossible goal!

(R)elevant

Goals should align with your broader career aspirations and personal development. One relevant goal might be "To understand the day-to-day role of a legal professional to inform my career choices."

(T)ime-based

Goals must have a clear deadline. This creates a sense of urgency and provides a finish line to work towards. For example, "I will attend 2 assessment centre preparation events by the end of March"

When writing your SMART goals, be concise while including all relevant information. Remember to approach this with a positive mindset, as these goals are designed to guide you towards success.

If you are struggling to write SMART goals for your mentoring meetings, you can use the <u>template provided on page 19.</u>

Having Productive Conversations: The Grow Model

The **GROW model** is a simple framework designed to help a mentee to identify their goals, understand their current situation, explore possible solutions, and commit to a plan of action. Using this model ensures that discussions are focused on the mentee's development.

GROW is a four-step framework that can provide a clear structure for mentoring sessions and conversations:



G - Goals

The first step is to establish a clear goal that the mentee wants to eventually achieve. This could be a professional skill the mentee wants to develop or a specific challenge they want to overcome. A mentee can define their goals in clear way by using the SMART framework mentioned previously (page 9).

R - Reality

Next, the mentee should be able to describe their current "reality". The mentor's role here is to ask open-ended questions to help the mentee gain a deeper understanding of their current situation, including challenges and available resources. For example, "how far away is the mentee from their goal?"

O - Options

The mentee should explore a wide range of possible solutions or paths forward with their mentor. The focus is on creativity and exploring all ideas without judgment. Once ideas have been put forward, these should be evaluated, and a final decision arrived at.

W - Will

The final step turns these ideas into a concrete plan. The mentee commits to a specific course of action, outlining what they will do, by when, and what support they may need. This ensures that the conversation leads to tangible progress.

The GROW model is particularly effective for mentoring because it aligns with the core principles of empowerment and self-reliance. It provides several key benefits:

- Fosters deeper critical thinking and creates structure for each meeting
- Ensures accountability for the mentee's own progress
- Empowers the mentee, building their confidence and developing problemsolving skills

The Practice of Active Listening

Active listening is more than just hearing words; it's the deliberate practice of fully concentrating on a speaker to understand both their message and the emotions behind it. This skill requires you to be fully present, paying close attention to verbal and non-verbal cues. It is crucial for building trust and empathy in a mentoring relationship.

Key Aspects of Active Listening:

1. Paying Attention

A foundational aspect of active listening is giving your undivided attention to the speaker. This means intentionally setting aside internal and external distractions, such as phones, other tasks, or your own thoughts to focus entirely on the person speaking. **Find a quiet, distraction-free space for all conversations**.

2. Listening to Understand

Deactivating judgmental responses is another core aspect of active listening. You must set aside your own assumptions, biases, and personal filters to create a safe space for the speaker. This involves listening with the intent to understand, rather than to argue or immediately offer a solution.

3. Providing Feedback

Active listening is a two-way process and by providing feedback you can demonstrate your engagement and understanding of the conversation. You can achieve this by restating what the speaker said in your own words to confirm comprehension, asking clarifying questions to encourage them to elaborate to show you are following along.

4. Responding Appropriately

Responding appropriately is the final step in active listening, requiring a thoughtful and respectful approach. Your response should be honest but offered only after you have fully listened and understood the message. It should also convey that you value the speaker's perspective, even if you don't fully agree.

Non-Verbal Communication:

In a mentoring relationship, non-verbal communication is a powerful tool in mentoring, as it often has a greater impact than words alone. Non-verbal communication refers to the signals we send to others without using words, such as through our facial expressions, gestures, and body posture.

By paying close attention to your body language, you can build trust and improve discussions. Maintaining eye contact and providing non-verbal cues like nodding all demonstrate genuine interest and strengthen the professional relationship.

Barriers to Effective Active Listening:

Awareness of the barriers to active listening is crucial for any mentoring relationship. By understanding these obstacles, mentors and mentees can work collaboratively to overcome them. Common Barriers include:

- **Internal Distractions** This includes things like your own thoughts wandering, worrying about other tasks, or mentally preparing your response instead of fully absorbing what the speaker is saying.
- **External Distractions** These are environmental factors, such as a noisy room, phone notifications, or other people interrupting.
- **Emotional Barriers** When emotions like anxiety, frustration, or defensiveness are present, they can cloud your judgment and make it difficult to listen with an open mind.
- Filter Listening Only hearing the parts of a conversation that align with your own beliefs or experiences and ignoring the rest.
- **Communication Gaps** Using jargon, slang, or overly technical language that the listener may not understand.

The Art of Questioning: The "Funnel Technique"

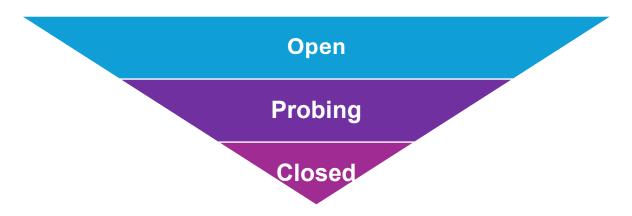
Effective questioning is a powerful skill during the mentoring process. For mentors, it can help to understand a mentee's situation better, while for mentee's, it can empower them to explore their own experiences and plan for the future.

Questions can have a variety of functions such as:

- To gain information
- To direct the discussion
- To move the discussion forward
- To check understanding
- To challenge views
- To identify alternative suggestions

A great way to master the art of asking questions is by using the **funnel technique**. This technique is a questioning method that begins with broad, open-ended questions and gradually narrows the focus to more specific, closed-ended questions. This creates a natural flow in the conversation, building trust and rapport while

ensuring that a broad topic is eventually narrowed down to a clear, actionable outcome



Question Types	Examples
Open – Aimed at encouraging a detailed response that prompts thought and reflection.	What initially drew you to study law? What skills do you feel you need to develop further for a legal career
Probing – Goes deeper than the surface of the initial answer and brings out more detail.	Can you tell me more about that specific influence why you chose law? What steps have you already taken to improve in that area?
Closed – Designed to clarify, commit to something or confirm understanding.	My understanding is that is that right? Have you decided on a specific area of law you want to practice

Recording Work Experience Opportunities

Whilst the virtual mentoring sessions provided via this scheme represents the "core offer" to students, any opportunities for meaningful work experience opportunities are most welcome. We understand not all mentors can offer work experience, however, for those who can we thank you in advance.

Work experience is an invaluable part of professional development, especially with regards to the legal profession. Not only does it allow for a mentee to develop their skills, but it also provides practical insights that complement their academic studies, allowing the application of theoretical knowledge in a real-world setting.

If you are a mentee who is fortunate to be offered work experience by your mentor, to make the most of the experience, **it's essential to keep a record**. This will be an invaluable resource when you're updating your CV, writing cover letters, or preparing for interviews.

Create Your Work Experience Log:

While we understand that you may have your own way that you wish to record any work experience opportunities, we have provided this <u>example work experience log</u> (Appendix 5).

Additionally, please get in touch with your scheme coordinator contact listed below if you plan on offering/undertaking any form of work experience.

Staff Contacts for Mentees and Mentors

If you require further help and information at any stage of the mentoring scheme, please contact your corresponding scheme coordinator via the following emails:

Student (Mentee) Staff Contact

Ashley Johnson-Wardle, Senior Operations Officer (Student Engagement and Experience), School of Law – <u>ashley.johnson-wardle@nottingham.ac.uk</u>

Professional Mentor Staff Contact

Wayne Crawford, Faculty Alumni Engagement Manager, Development & Alumni Relations Office - wayne.crawford1@nottingham.ac.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Student Mentee Code of Conduct

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to establish clear guidelines and expectations for student participation in the School of Law Pathways to Practice Mentoring Scheme, ensuring a respectful, ethical, and productive mentoring environment.

Professionalism and Accountability:

- Respect: Treat mentors, fellow mentees, and all scheme coordinators with dignity and respect
- **Timeliness:** Attend meetings or work experience opportunities on time. Complying with agreed deadlines is an important part of professionalism. You will notify your mentor or scheme coordinators if you encounter scheduling conflicts within an appropriate time frame
- Professional Behaviour: Conduct yourself in a manner that reflects the
 values of the School of Law and University of Nottingham. You will dress
 professionally and appropriately for meetings while maintaining a professional
 demeanour when participating on the scheme

Communication:

- Effective Communication: Always engage in clear and respectful communication with your mentor and scheme coordinators
- Confidentiality: Respect the confidentiality of discussions and any sensitive information shared with you. Do not share sensitive information without permission
- Responsiveness: Reply to communications from your mentor and scheme coordinators in a timely and professional manner

Commitment to the Scheme:

- Active Participation: Attend all scheduled mentoring sessions or mandatory scheme events and demonstrate your commitment to the mentoring relationship by coming prepared to meetings with questions, insights and topics to explore
- **Goal Setting:** Collaborate with your mentor to set clear, achievable goals for your mentoring. Regularly review and adjust these goals during the scheme as needed to stay aligned with your personal and professional development

Feedback and Reflection:

- **Constructive Feedback**: Be open to receiving feedback from your mentor. Use it as an opportunity for growth and improvement
- Self-Reflection: Regularly reflect on your experiences and consider how you can apply lessons learned as part of your personal and professional development

Compliance and Consequences:

Students who do not adhere to the Pathways to Practice Mentoring Scheme Code of Conduct may be subject to:

- A formal discussion with the scheme coordinators to address concerns.
- Temporary suspension from the mentoring scheme
- Removal from the scheme for repeated or serious breaches of expected standards of behaviour

Appendix 2 - Professional Mentor Code of Conduct

As a Mentor on the Pathways to Practice Mentoring Scheme you agree:

- To maintain regular contact with the student mentee(s) you are matched with by email or video call for the duration of the relationship
- To inform your Pathways to Practice Mentor Lead as soon as possible if:
 - You and your student agree that they have met their objectives and wish to end the relationship early
 - > You wish to withdraw from the programme
 - There is a problem you cannot resolve
- To provide brief feedback to the Pathways to Practice Team during the support period (you will receive occasional check-in emails) and at the end of the programme via a feedback survey
- To attend the online "Welcome Event" with mentors and mentees if possible (or watch the recording if you are unable to attend due to work or time zones)
- To support your matched student in the establishment of their career-related goals and in the attainment of these goals
- To treat as confidential all information that your matched student(s) chooses to share. Working in confidence with a student means not revealing information to any other person except:
 - ➤ To discuss an aspect of your practice or an issue in the relationship in a confidential conversation with the Pathways to Practice team, which may require you to share context from the mentoring relationship
 - ➤ If you believe that your matched student(s) is at risk of causing harm to themselves or to another person, and referral to a third-party is required

Appendix 3 – Example Mentoring Contract

For Discussion	Comments/Notes
Confidentiality Parties agree not to disclose what is discussed during mentoring meetings unless with approval.	
Contact Arrangements Discuss how you will contact each other, establish any 'no-contact' times and set expectations for realistic response times.	
Meeting Logistics Agree when, where and how long you will meet.	
Meeting Arrangements Agree how meetings will be structured. Will an agenda be agreed in advance or will a flexible approach be adopted. Agree if meetings and actions will be recorded.	
Goals and Objectives Agree on common goals that will drive the mentoring relationship. Discuss expectations and address any issues.	
Feedback Agree on how you want to receive and give feedback.	
Privacy Agree if any topics are beyond the scope of discussion.	
Review Discuss how the mentoring relationship will be reviewed as you progress.	

Appendix 4 – Template for Writing a SMART Goal

The SMART goal framework is a tool designed to help you determine if your goals are realistic and to set a clear deadline for their completion. When you write your goals using this framework, you should use concise language while still including all the necessary information. The purpose of these goals is to help you succeed, so it is important to maintain a positive outlook as you define them.

Initial Goal (Write the goal you have in mind):			
Specific (What do you want to accomplish? Who needs to be included? When do you want to do this? Why is this a goal?)			
Measurable (How can you measure progress and know if you've successfully met your goal?):			
Achievable (Do you have the skills required to achieve the goal? If not, can you obtain them? What is the motivation for this goal?):			
Relevant (Why am I setting this goal now? Is it aligned with my overall objectives?)			
Time-based (What's the deadline and is it realistic?):			

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Appendix 5 – Work Experience Daily Log (Template)
Name of Company/firm I am attending:
Mentor Name:
Date of work experience:
What did I do today?
What did I do today that I am most proud of?
What did I learn about my work experience provider?
What did I learn about myself today?
Trinat ara Froatin about myoon today.
What did I learn about how others work? What skills did they need to have to
do their job?
21

How would I add what I have achieved today to my CV or LinkedIn profile?		

Appendix 6 – Solicitor and Barrister Careers: Essential Information

All student participants on this scheme should familiarise themselves with the following careers resources **BEFORE** their first meeting with their mentor. We have also provided links to the University's Careers and Employability Service.

Having a basic understanding of the various pathways into solicitors and/or barrister careers will ensure that you come into your mentoring sessions prepared:

Solicitor Pathway Links and Resources:

- How to become a Solicitor Comprehensive Guide https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/career-advice/becoming-a-solicitor/
- Becoming a Solicitor https://www.sra.org.uk/become-solicitor/
- Solicitors Regulation Authority https://sqe.sra.org.uk/SQEHomePage
- What is the LPC? https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/law/what-legal-practice-course-and-do-i-need-take-it
- What is the SQE? https://sqe.sra.org.uk/about-sqe/what-is-the-sqe
- How the SQE works https://sqe.sra.org.uk/about-sqe/what-is-the-sqe/how-the-sqe-works
- Support for Law Students https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/career-advice/law-students/
- 7 Skills for a Successful Law Career https://www.prospects.ac.uk/jobs-and-work-experience/job-sectors/law-sector/7-skills-for-a-successful-law-career

Barrister Pathway Links and Resources:

- Becoming a Barrister https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/becoming-a-barrister.html
- Overview of how to become a Barrister https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk/training-qualification/becoming-a-barrister.html
- The Bar Council https://www.barcouncil.org.uk/
- The Bar Standards Board https://www.barstandardsboard.org.uk
- What can I do to help myself become a Barrister? https://www.icca.ac.uk/how-to-become-a-barrister/what-can-i-do-to-help-myself-become-a-barrister/

- Bar courses: a student's guide to barrister training 2025/26 https://www.lawcareers.net/Explore/Features/12082025-Bar-courses-a-students-guide-to-barrister-training-202526
- Top skills you need to be a Barrister https://targetjobs.co.uk/careers-advice/law/top-skills-you-need-be-barrister

University Careers and Wellbeing Support Links:

All students also have access to the University's award-winning **Careers and Employability Service** (CES). CES regularly run events, careers fairs, work
experience programmes and much more so make sure to arrange a 1:1 appointment
with a careers advisor or visit the links below for more information:

- University of Nottingham Careers Team -https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/
- Careers Events Calendar https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/careers/students/events/index.aspx

Other Useful Links:

Wellbeing Support -

https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/wellbeing/student-wellbeing.aspx

Disability Support Services -

https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/servicedetails/disability-support-services.aspx