T&T Academic Sponsorship Agreement

Purpose of this agreement

This agreement lays out the agreed objectives, roles and responsibilities within the sponsorship partnership formed by the sponsoring academic and the sponsored student. This agreement is intended as a guide for both parties, against which progress can be measured. As such, it should be drafted collaboratively so that the benefits of the partnership can be maximised.

Before committing to the partnership, please ensure you can meet the expectations set out in the scheme overview.

Academic sponsorship at Essex

The sponsorship programme at University of Essex aims to develop research and professional skills, networks, and knowledge of opportunities among UK domiciled Black PGR students, encouraging and enabling informed career choices in academic and other fields.

Sponsorship is a student-led reciprocal partnership, building on the principles of mentoring. Sponsors may find themselves undertaking mentoring activity during the partnership, however, the intention of the scheme is to provide a more enhanced experienced through proactive engagement in signposting opportunities, sharing networks, providing advice and thus harnessing the benefit of a sponsorship approach wherever possible.

With agreement, sponsors will leverage their social and career capital to seek development and progression opportunities for the participant. The role of the sponsor is unique for each partnership, but it could include opening doors, creating opportunities for exposure, and actively advocating on behalf of the programme participant in spaces that they may not have access to.

The partnership is guided by this sponsorship agreement. The sponsorship arrangement focuses on achieving agreed goals and development opportunities for the student and the sponsor, based on a principle of partnership, bringing benefits to both parties. These might include the opportunity to share, knowledge, insights, technical skills and cultural experience, or provide access to new/wider networks.

More details on the nature of sponsorship, the operation of the scheme and example activities are set out in the scheme overview.
Areas to consider

Some topics to discuss and agree on at the start of your sponsorship relationship are outlined below:

- Understanding of the roles, availability, responsibilities and commitments of both parties during the sponsorship period
- Understanding of aspirations for the partnership, realities, routes and barriers to achievement
- Areas of active support sought and what is realistically achievable
- Understanding of the opportunities for development available through this relationship
- Understanding of the expectations on the sponsored student of positive engagement in the programme and the opportunities offered
- Understanding the reputational investment of the sponsor in actively promoting the sponsored student
- Understanding the importance of maintaining a positive reputation as a sponsored student
- Topics and goals you are both happy to explore
- Any potential conflicts of interest or information you are not comfortable sharing
- Approach to disclosure and discussion around personal issues or challenges

Practical arrangements:

- When and where you will meet, for how long and at what intervals
- How you will communicate (and availability to do so) between meetings, ensuring an understanding of the level of support that can be offered
- Recording and reviewing of your progress on the Black Researchers' Hub
- Any stipulations or preferences regarding the giving and receiving of feedback
- Where to go for help and advice
Sponsorship partnership objectives

Please refer to the examples of activity set out in the scheme outline. Remember this is a reciprocal partnership that seeks to bring benefits to both parties.

This sponsorship relationship seeks to achieve:

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Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary. These goals can be reviewed and amended whenever needed, with agreement from both parties.

Confidentiality

By signing this document, both parties agree to observe mutual confidentiality, including the content and nature of your discussions. However, the university’s safeguarding policy applies, and any indication of a risk of harm to the student or others will be reported. Equally, if either party agree that any issues raised cannot be appropriately managed or dealt with through the sponsorship relationship, a referral to a third party may be necessary.

Feedback on progress and meeting notes will be recorded within the Black Researchers’ Hub.

Cancellation

If either party wishes to change a sponsorship meeting, at least 24 hours’ notice should be given. Please also email brh@essex.ac.uk to inform us of this decision. In the case of an emergency, contact will be made as soon as possible.

Length and scope of agreement

This agreement is limited to a twelve-month period during which you will meet a minimum of five times. Additional support and guidance, which will be agreed between
sponsor and student, is available depending on the requirements of the activities / objectives outlined above.

Please read the statements below, and sign and date to confirm your acceptance

Expectations of sponsor activity

Specific goals, activities and expectations of the partnership are defined above. As a guide the following applies to all sponsorship arrangements:

Sponsors are expected to:

▪ Attend a minimum of five scheduled sessions throughout the year and actively engage with the participant.
▪ Provide support and guidance to the participant regarding identified aims and in areas such as research, career goals, and academic progress.
▪ Identify or create suitable opportunities for the participant that support the agreed goals of the partnership – see ‘Professional Opportunities’ below.
▪ Facilitate the participant's transition into the academic community and relevant networks.
▪ Seek out and assist in accessing professional development opportunities.
▪ Offer constructive feedback and support the participant in their academic and professional development.
▪ Submit periodic reports/notes on the progress and achievements of the sponsored students.
▪ Take part in any evaluation activities required.

Expectations on students being sponsored:

Specific goals, activities and expectations of the partnership are defined above. As a guide the following applies to all sponsorship arrangements:

Students in the sponsorship scheme are expected to:

▪ Be willing to lead the sponsorship partnership – establishing aspirations and goals for the period of sponsorship and taking responsibility for progress and academic / professional development.
▪ Attend five scheduled sessions throughout the year and actively engage with their sponsor.
▪ Maintain open communication with the sponsor and provide updates on their progress, challenges, and achievements.
▪ Be open to and actively consider any sponsorship, development or networking opportunities identified and positively engage with those that are appropriate.
▪ Make the most of the sponsorship opportunity, demonstrating a strong work ethic, and staying focused on their educational and career goals.
- Be open to sharing skills, knowledge and experience with a sponsor in order to support their interests / research etc.
- Represent the University of Essex in a positive way.
- Maintain open communication with sponsors, updating on progress, challenges, and seeking guidance when required.
- Accept, consider, and act on critical feedback from the sponsor.
- Provide periodic reports on progress, showcasing achievements.
- Take part in any evaluation activities required.

The sponsorship period is for one year. Sponsors and students are expected to meet five times in this period and maintain appropriate contact throughout.

Sponsored student: …………………………………………………………………………………
Date: ………………………………………………………………………………………………

Sponsor: ……………………………………………………………………………………………
Date: ………………………………………………………………………………………………