

SOLAS Mentorship Programme

Terms of Reference

1. Motivation

The SOLAS Mentorship Programme responds to a strong demand from Early Career Scientists (ECS), expressed during multiple SOLAS activities, including the SOLAS Summer School 2023 and the Early Career Scientist Days at the SOLAS Open Science Conferences (2022, 2024).

While motivated by ECS needs, the programme is designed to be mutually beneficial, fostering meaningful engagement between early-career and senior scientists, strengthening the SOLAS community, and supporting the goals of SOLAS 3.0.

2. Programme Objectives

The mentorship programme aims to:

- Support skill development beyond what is typically available within a single research group or institution
- Provide career guidance and professional development
- Foster cross-disciplinary exchange aligned with SOLAS 3.0 science themes
- Build long-term professional networks and collaborations within the SOLAS community
- Strengthen links between ECS activities, SOLAS events, and the broader SOLAS community
- Provide a supportive space for ECS to discuss challenges related to professional identity, confidence, work–life balance, and navigating uncertainty in academic and non-academic career paths
- Encourage well-being, resilience, and a sense of belonging within the SOLAS community

3. Programme Structure

3.1. Mentorship Approach

The programme combines:

- Thematic group mentoring
- Peer-group interactions among mentees
- Skill-oriented resources and activities
- It is not intended to replace formal academic supervision, but rather to complement it by providing broader perspectives, guidance, and community support.

The programme is organized around SOLAS 3.0 science themes and runs over 12 months, divided into three four-month terms. This structure reflects the four core

programme activities detailed below, with approximately one activity scheduled per month. Terms are used solely to organize activities and reporting; mentors and mentees are expected to participate for the full year.

Each term includes four core activities (one per month):

- **Mentor–mentee group meeting**
 - Meetings are intended to be supportive, inclusive, and confidential. They focus on discussion, guidance, and shared challenges related to the theme, rather than individual supervision, and are intended to provide a supportive and confidential environment for open conversation about both scientific and personal-professional experiences. Mentors can hold one-to-one conversations with mentees when appropriate to discuss specific questions or topics.
- **Mentee peer-group meeting**
 - Mentees' meetings are intended for an exclusive space for peer exchange, mutual support, and reflection related to the theme
- **Skill-development webinar**
 - Focused on technical, methodological, or career-related skills
 - Linked to SOLAS 3.0 themes
- **“How-To ABC” guides**
 - Living documents developed within the programme
 - Used as discussion material in group meetings

3.2. Duration and Continuity

Groups are intended to remain together for one year, allowing for the development of trust and long-term mentoring relationships. This aims to ensure the development of trust and long-term mentoring relationships as career stages and needs evolve.

3.3. Conflict of Interest

To promote open discussion and avoid conflicts of interest, mentees will not be assigned to mentor groups that include mentors from the same institution, whenever possible.

3.4. Code of Conduct

All participants are expected to engage respectfully and professionally, fostering an inclusive, supportive, and harassment-free environment in line with SOLAS Code of Conduct (<https://www.solas-int.org/about/code-of-conduct.html>).

4. Commitments

The programme follows a term-based structure (four months per term), running over 12 months.

Mentor Commitment

Mentors are expected to:

- Participate in the thematic mentor-mentee online group meetings
- Each mentor will work with a small group of up to 5 mentees.
- Have one-to-one conversations with mentees when needed to discuss particular questions or professional topics.
- Be available to respond to mentee questions by email approximately once per month
- Contribute to webinars and/or provide feedback on How-To guides

Estimated time commitment:

- Approximately 4-6 hours per term, depending on level of involvement.
- The programme is designed to ensure meaningful engagement without overburdening mentors.

Benefits of Being a Mentor

- Contribute directly to the development of the next generation of SOLAS scientists
- Strengthen cross-generational and cross-institutions connections and collaborations
- Gain visibility within SOLAS capacity development and community-building activities

Mentee Commitment

Mentees are expected to:

- Actively participate in all four core activities per term (one per month):
 - One mentor-mentee individual meeting (≈2hs)?
 - One mentor-mentee group meeting (2hs)
 - One peer-group meeting among mentees within the same thematic group (≈2hs)
 - Participation in three online skill-development webinars (≈2hs)
 - Receipt and discussion of one “How-To” guide. (≈1hs)
- Engage respectfully with mentors and peers
- Prepare for meetings by reviewing shared materials
- Communicate proactively if unable to attend a scheduled activity

To ensure a meaningful experience for all participants, mentees are expected to engage actively in the programme and attend at least 75% of scheduled activities. Repeated absences without prior communication or valid justification may result in mentees being asked to step out of the programme, in order to allow opportunities for others.

Estimated time commitment:

- Approximately 8–10 hours per term.

Benefits of Being a Mentee

- Gain complementary knowledge and skills beyond those available at the home institute and supervisor
- Receive scientific, professional, and career-related support
- Become more closely involved in the SOLAS community
- Gain of confidence and emotional support

5. Eligibility

Mentors

We welcome mentors who:

- Are engaged with the SOLAS community (through research, leadership, working groups, or past SOLAS activities)
- Have expertise aligned with one or more SOLAS 3.0 science themes
- Are interested in supporting ECS through mentoring, skill sharing, and community building
- Mentors from diverse geographical regions, career paths, career stages, including early-career scientists, and disciplinary backgrounds are strongly encouraged to sign up.
- Mentors will be at least one career level above mentees (e.g., PhD students can only mentor MSc students).

Mentees

For this first edition, the mentorship programme is open exclusively to participants of the SOLAS Summer School 2026, which includes MSc and PhD students, postdoctoral researchers, and early career scientists from a wide range of disciplines, regions, and career paths within the SOLAS community. This initial cohort will serve as a pilot group, with the intention to broaden eligibility in future programme cycles.

6. Feedback & Programme Evaluation

The programme will be evaluated through:

- Short feedback surveys at the end of each term
- Informal check-ins with mentors and mentees
- A final survey about the whole experience
- A comprehensive evaluation will be conducted at the end of the first year to assess outcomes, workload, and structure, and to inform future programme cycles.

7. Tentative Schedule

SOLAS Mentorship Programme - Timeline (2026-2027)

Pilot structure across the first 12-month mentorship cycle

