

FOR MENTEES

CONFLUX

INTRODUCTION.

Mentoring has always been an important part of education and career development. In Conflux, we believe that mentoring is an amazing tool for personal, professional and academic growth. It is a way to connect and create value for students, universities, alumni and companies in the industry through personal relations.

This guide is for you, a mentee in the Conflux mentorship program. We are happy to welcome you to the fifth round of the mentorship program, where we have gathered and matched 130 mentors and 130 mentees across different engineering and technical backgrounds.

The program is run by dedicated voluntary students from engineering universities in Denmark, all with one common shared goal: To facilitate learning between students and professionals.

What to expect

In this guide, you will find information on how to get the best possible output and experience from your mentoring process. Through interviews, papers and a number of different books, we have gathered some key observations in making a mentoring program successful. The conclusion is that there is a lot you can do yourself to increase the chances of learning and making the experience valuable.

To be a mentee is not just about showing up to a meeting or three and waiting for your mentor to show you the way. It is a commitment that requires effort and work. In return, it might have a great impact on your future life and career. The more work you put in, whether it is before, during or after the mentorship program, the more you will get out of it.

With this guide, we will give you the best possible starting point for a meaningful and impactful program.

CONTENT.

This material is divided into eight different parts.



1. Program and Network



2. The Mentoring Role



3. Challenges and Pitfalls



4. Preparation



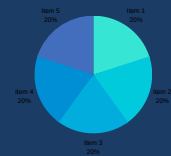
5. The First Meeting



6. Meetings in Between



7. Final Meeting



8. Evaluation

We recommend that you read the entire guide before the kick-off and try to run through all of the reflection exercises. After the kick-off event, the guide is intended to be revisited depending on where you are in the program.

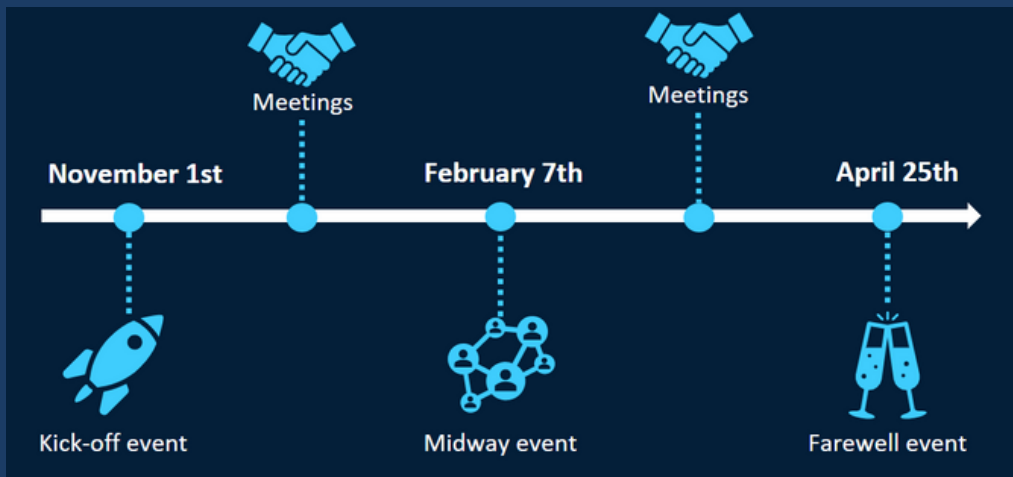
We hope that you enjoy reading this material.

Sincerely,

The Conflux Team

THE CONFLUX PROGRAM & NETWORK.

The essence of the mentorship program is in the relationship between you and your mentor. Our job here at Conflux is to make sure that we have the right setting in place for that to happen. That is why we have decided to invite all participants in the program to attend three events: A kick-off event, a mid-way event and a final event.



The kick-off

The most important event of the program is the kick-off event. At the kick-off, you will meet your mentor for the first time. It will be in an informal setting and we will provide you with tools to start off your relationship. Besides getting the chance to introduce yourselves to one another, the event will consist of:



Inspiration from guest speakers from the industry who will talk about their own experiences of having and being a mentor, as well as mentee



Talks and workshops to be done together with your mentee



Dinner, drinks, and networking with the other participants in the program

The kick-off event will touch on a lot of topics addressed in this material, which is why we recommend that you use this as a preparation for it.

THE CONFLUX PROGRAM & NETWORK.

The mid-way and final event

During the course of the program, we will reveal more information about **the mid-way event in February and the final event in the end of April**. These events are intended to keep you and your mentee on track and ensure that you reflect on progress, challenges, and learnings both during and at the end of the program. They will also focus more on the networking aspect between participants.

Number of meetings

We recommend that you and your mentor schedule at 4 - 6 meetings during the course of the program. This is also the average number of meetings for former participants and corresponds to about one meeting a month. Sometimes, fewer meetings are sufficient for both parties - sometimes, you might want to meet even more. This is entirely up to the two of you to decide.



The Conflux Network

During the program, we will try to connect you with each other online. Being part of the program is not only about your relationship with your mentor. It is also about expanding your network among other students and professionals, and that is why our events will always include time to for you invest in building new relations. As part of the Conflux network, you will also be added to a LinkedIn or Teams group with all participating mentors and mentees, so you can reach out to the people you meet.

THE COMMITTED MENTEE.

As part of the program, we expect that you are a committed mentee. This increases the likelihood of a good experience for both you and your mentor. The committed mentee knows that a mentoring relation requires work and focus. It is your job to ensure that you talk about areas and topics that are important to you, and that the meetings progress well. The committed mentee wants to develop, and dares to open up sufficiently to talk about things that really matter. However, you must also be able to challenge their mentor in a good way, so you discuss what is important for you. A committed mentee has the following competencies:



LISTEN ACTIVELY

Be open-minded, curious and listen. When you talk to your mentor, you can be challenged on your opinions and attitude towards different areas. A committed mentee listens to the mentor with an open mind - even though you might not completely agree on everything. Listening actively is part of the groundwork for ensuring that both parties gain something from the meetings. Be open to challenges, unconventional questions and angles, and listen to criticism, stories and advice.



KEEP AGREEMENTS.

If you agree that you should read a book or take a personality test before the next meeting, it is important that you actually keep that promise. Otherwise you might send a bad message that could have a negative impact on your relationship with your mentor.



SET LEARNING GOALS.

When starting out your relationship with your mentor, it is important that you have a rough idea of what you want to gain from your relationship, and be committed to set goals for what you want to get out of the relationship.



BE PREPARED.

A meeting is not just about the meeting itself. It is also about the preparation you put in for it. The committed mentee makes sure that there is an agenda in place before attending a mentor meeting. They reflect and write down notes before the meeting, and revisits notes from the past meetings in preparation for the next.



COMMUNICATE CLEARLY.

A committed mentee takes initiative to meet, and to determine which challenges or topics you want to discuss. You might risk that your mentor is trying to help you solve a problem that is not important to you, if you do not make your problem clear.



BE FLEXIBLE.

Both you and your mentor might be busy with a lot of exciting things. A committed mentee tries to ensure that meetings are actually held. For instance, by being open to going to the mentor's office or workshop, so that the mentor's transportation time is minimized.

Ultimately, you as a mentee have the responsibility for your own learning and benefits. You cannot expect your mentor to do all the work.

CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS.

It is hard to avoid challenges or pitfalls in some mentoring relationships. Luckily, most of the mentoring stories in the program have a good ending. But being aware that challenges can arise is important so we can deal with them in a respectful manner.

This section will explore what we find to be the most common reasons for mentoring relationships not working or experiencing setbacks, and what we can do to either avoid these issues becoming a big deal - or, alternatively, making sure we end off things in a good way.

Not prioritising meetings

It can easily be demotivating if your mentor keeps showing up late or is postponing meetings. If you do the same, this might also derail your relationship. This is one of the most common pitfalls in mentoring relationship - and is one of the easiest to solve. After all, it is a matter of prioritization and logistics, and not about the match itself.

If you experience that your mentor has not been reaching out to you lately, hasn't answered your emails or simply missed a meeting - make sure to take the initiative and reach out to them again. This is more often caused by being busy during deadlines at work than a lack of interest. But if this problem persists once you have a more established connection, then it might be necessary to discuss this upfront.

Personality issues

Sometimes, issues arise between a mentor and mentee due to personality issues. Maybe you are simply very different in how you like to communicate. The best way to handle it is to be honest about it. If you are open about it with your mentor, you might be able to discuss what you can do to make it through, set new expectations and still gain something from the match. If it feels like a big deal for both you, and you feel like it is best to end things, this is also completely okay.

Different expectations

Perhaps you signed up to the program with the sole focus of getting a student job, while your mentor signed up to guide on general career paths. This happens once in a while, and is not necessarily a bad thing, if you feel like you can still gain something from welcoming a different guidance than you expected.

CHALLENGES AND PITFALLS.

A helping hand

Resolving issues in a mentoring relationship can be intimidating, and it is not always easy to bring up one of the above issues with your mentor. If you are encountering an issue with your mentor - maybe he or she is not prioritizing your meetings, and you are either not comfortable confronting them yourself or it has simply not worked - **then please reach out to Lasse from the Conflux team:**



Lasse Møller

lasses@conflux.dk

+ 45 40 35 81 52

We are able help you out in a number of different ways. As a neutral party, we can facilitate contact to your mentor and help figure out what has gone wrong. For us, it is crucial that issues are resolved and not ignored.

If it is a fundamental issue on a personal level it is sometimes the right solution to end the relationship. This process is often difficult; which is why we can also help facilitate the separation between you and your mentor to minimize disappointments for both parties. Agreeing that things don't work out is more constructive than ignoring the issue and each other.

All communication that goes through us is completely confidential, and we will not share anything with your mentor without consulting you first. Everything you discuss with us, stays with us.

PREPARATION.

When you receive this material, you and your mentor will have been introduced over email by the Conflux team. You will meet each other for the first time at the kick-off event, but we recommend that you reach out to each other before that. Exchange phone numbers over email and arrange for a quick chat over the phone, so that you can get to know each other a little before meeting in person. It might also be a good idea to invite the mentor to connect with you on LinkedIn.

Before the first meeting

Before the first meeting there are a number of things that are important to reflect on. Reflecting before the first meeting will help ensure that you and your mentor can get the best possible outcome. To help with this process, we have gathered some questions below to help begin the preparation process.

It might be the case that you won't be able to answer some of the reflection questions - and that is totally okay. The most important thing is that you provide the best answers that you can at your current state, and that you go through the thought process of trying to answer them.

Think about the questions in relation to your entire professional timeline and write them down. The answers to these questions might bring out a number of valuable stories, advice and knowledge sharing that could be relevant for your mentee.



What does your perfect job look like in five years?

Focus on your everyday work life - do you work with many people or few people? In teams or alone? Do you have management responsibility? Don't worry about what is realistic - think about your dream scenario.



What are my strengths?

Think about in which situations you thrive the most - is it when you are able to dive deeply into a complex topic? Is it when you work in a team? Which strengths do you use in these situations?



What do you view as your mentor's role?

Some people need a mentor who are proactive and gives them a push - others just need a different perspective on their problems to figure out which way to go. How is your mentor able to help you the most? Clarifying this with yourself makes it easier to communicate this to your mentor when you meet.



Is there something you mentor should know about you, to be able to help you out the best?

Do you have certain needs, problems or goals, that your mentor should know about? Are you currently faced with an academic, professional or personal dilemma that takes up a lot of energy?

General preparation for meetings

Preparing for the meetings with your mentor in general is crucial. You can prepare in a number of different ways. Look through notes from your last meeting and reflect on what has happened since then. Is there any topic or interesting point from your last meeting that you would like to follow up on? Has your situation changed since then? By following up on notes from previous meetings, it is easier to figure out what the next meeting should focus on, and ensure that you keep progressing.

THE FIRST MEETING.

During the first meeting with your mentor, the focus will be on laying the foundation for your relationship. That also means that you will get to know each other on a more personal level and set the frames for your relationship.

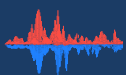
When mentoring relationships go wrong, it is often because of miscommunication or misunderstandings. It can be the expected number of meetings, the definition of success criteria and so on. The more you plan and communicate, the more you will both get out of it.

Mentoring Contract.

It is a very good idea to agree on a mentoring contract from the very beginning. These are the general rules of your relationship that both of you adhere to.

That is why we have reserved time for you to clarify this with your mentor at the kick-off. It might therefore be a good idea to reflect on how this could look like beforehand.

An example of a mentoring contract could be:



Frequency: We meet once a month for a one hour duration, except for exam periods.



Follow-up: We follow up on each meeting via email, two - three weeks after.



Contact: You are welcome to contact your mentor between meetings with questions over email or phone.



Time: Our meetings start and finish at the scheduled time.



Booking: You are responsible for booking meetings, and we should always have a meeting scheduled in the calendar. After each meeting, we schedule the next.



Agenda: We agree on an agenda before each meeting.



Participation: We are both committed to actively engage in the relation.



Documentation: We keep a shared Google docs or other form of document where we document our learnings from meetings, and our progress on the goals that we have set.



Closure: The mentor program includes an official closing event. However, we recommend that you discuss and agree on how to formally end the mentoring commitment and how to evaluate on it. You could agree beforehand that, no matter what happens with our mentoring relation, you will plan a final meeting.

Make sure you write down the key points of what you agree on.

The mentoring contract ensures that you have a framework to start from, so that you can avoid misunderstandings and disappointments. The contract does not have to follow the above formula, but is recommended to get around the mentioned areas.

PERSONAL LEARNING GOALS.

You have applied to become part of this program for a reason. You have something you want to achieve, clarify and learn, together with an experienced person who might be able to get you there. Structuring these reasons into tangible goals is crucial for maximizing the output of a mentoring program. During the first meeting, you should make sure to outline these goals together with your mentor.

To help you with this process, we recommend using SMART goals. SMART is an acronym that you can use to guide your goal setting. To ensure that goals are clear and reachable, each one should follow a number of criteria.



Specific.

Your goal should be clear and specific, otherwise it becomes difficult to focus your efforts or feel truly motivated to achieve it. When drafting your goals, try to answer these five questions:



What do I want to accomplish? Why is this goal important? Who is involved? Where is it located? Which resources or limits are involved?

Example: You are currently a student, working part-time at a supermarket next to your studies. You want to obtain a student position that is more academically relevant to your studies, at a big engineering company. A specific goal you could set: “I want to gain the skills and experience necessary to become a student worker at a big engineering company, so that I can start building up relevant experience.”



Measurable.

It is important to have goals that are measurable, so that you and your mentor can track progress and stay motivated. Assessing progress helps you meet deadlines, and feel the excitement of getting closer to the finish line. A measurable goal should address the following questions:



How much? How many? How will I know when it's accomplished?

Example: You might agree to measure your goal, by the number of job interviews you go to, the number of interview cases you practice on, or the number of extracurricular projects you do at university.



Achievable.

Your goal needs to be realistic to be successful. It should stretch your abilities and challenge them, but still remain possible. An achievable and realistic goal will usually answer questions such as:



How can I accomplish this goal? How realistic is the goal, based on other constraints, such as financial factors?

Example: Is the goal realistic, based on your existing experience and qualifications. For instance, do you have the time to gain enough extracurricular activities? Are the necessary resources for interview practicing available? Make sure you minimize external influence when helping defining goals. For instance, if the goal is: "Get a student position at company X", then the chance of obtaining a student position depends on who else applies for the position, and on the recruiter's decision. If you rephrase it to: "Get the experience and training that I need to be considered for the position", it is entirely up to you, and therefore makes the goal more fair.

Relevant.

A relevant goal is a goal that truly matters to you. It aligns with other relevant goals, so that reaching one goal also helps moving forward on others. A relevant goal can answer yes to the following questions:



Does this seem worthwhile? Is this the right time? Does this match our other efforts / needs? Am I the right person to reach this goal? Is it applicable in the current socio-economic environment?

Example: You might want to gain the skills and experience needed for that a specific student position. However, is it the right time to start gaining this experience, or to start working towards additional qualifications? Maybe it is too early in in your studies, and it might be better for you to focus on your studies, until you are far enough into your studies, when companies start considering you as a candidate more naturally.

Time-Bound.

All goals need a deadline, so that you have something to work towards. This part of the SMART goal criteria helps to prevent everyday tasks from taking priority over long-term goals. A time-bound goal will answer these questions:



When? What can I do six months from now? What can I do six weeks from now? What can I do today?

Example: Gaining the skills to obtain a student worker position will take time. How long will it take you to acquire these skills? It is important to give you a realistic time frame for accomplishing the smaller goals that are necessary to achieving your final objective.

Confidentiality.



It is important that you can both be honest in your relation, even about confidential topics. A mentoring relation can go on after the Conflux program in other professionals contexts.

It is important to understand that “what happens in Conflux, stays in Conflux”.

MEETINGS IN BETWEEN.

At this point, you have gotten to know each other better. You have maybe agreed on a mentoring contract, set some goals for what your mentee wants to achieve, and laid the foundation for your relationship going forward. Here, we want to provide you with some ideas and advice on how to get the most out of your future meetings.

USE YOUR TIME WISELY

Put away your computer and cellphone and write notes on paper. It is a pity if you meet once a month and spend part of the meeting on your phone. You owe it to each other to respect your appointments,, so come prepared for meetings.



WRITE NOTES BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER AND KEEP A CENTRAL JOURNAL



To make sure good points don't go lost, write down your thoughts during the meeting and reflect on them afterward, especially when you prepare for the next meeting. Former participants have also kept a central journal (such as shared Google docs) where they keep all the notes and agendas from their meetings, as well as agreed goals.

ITERATIVE FEEDBACK

If something goes wrong during your meetings - for instance, if meeting appointments aren't held or progress isn't made - then talk about it. None of you are mind-readers, so the only way to know if meetings are going well is by talking frequently about it and by being transparent. For instance by always setting aside 10 minutes of each meeting to talk about how things are going between you.



FOLLOW UP ON GOALS AND EARLIER MEETINGS



Focus on your own - and your mentor's - development throughout the program, and follow up on milestones you have agreed on. If there is no progress or if you are encountering challenges along the way, ask your mentor if they can help you get to the finish line.

MEETING STRUCTURE.

To make the best out of your meetings, we recommend to structure your meetings around the goals you have defined together. Some people prefer more informal agendas, where there isn't a topic in focus, and that's also okay. Our experience is however that meetings are more productive when you keep a certain goal in mind.

One way to do this is using the **GROW** model. GROW is an acronym for **G**oal, **R**eality, **O**ptions and **W**ill.



The idea is that each meeting has a goal that you are working towards achieving. It does not have to be an action per se, a goal could just as well be getting to know a certain industry better. You can now focus on this goal by first discussing the current situation you might be in, followed by what options there are for moving forward. Finally, by the end of the meeting, you can set a plan for what you will do moving forward to get to the finish line.

MEETING TOOLBOX.

You might have a general idea of the goals you want to meet and what to discuss in order to reach them when first going into the mentorship. However, some of us might need some inspiration sometimes to get a better overview of our development both career-wise and academically. We have therefore gathered a number of different ideas for meetings topics, tools and frameworks that you might want to consider incorporating in some of your meetings.



Cultural Differences

In this year's mentorship program, we have many mentees from many diverse international backgrounds. You may be an international student looking to make a career in Denmark after you finish your studies, but you find it difficult to understand the culture in Danish workplaces compared to your home country's - or you lack the network that your Danish peers have.

However, culture is not only limited to national differences, and is just as relevant for Danes amongst one another. Cultures can also vary in different companies. The culture within a startup company might be different from a large, established enterprise. Discussing these cultural differences is therefore relevant for both Danish and international students. Both in terms of figuring out how to fit in a company, as well as which kind of company or industry might fit you best.



Transition from university to workplace

As a student, you are usually very focused on your study program - both the academic content itself and in the social context. Graduates might therefore not know what to expect when entering "the real world", and might have difficulties adapting to life in the workplace. Depending on where you are in your studies, it might be relevant to address these differences. Listen to your mentor's experience and how they handled their transition.



Personality Assessment Test

Doing an online personality test in the beginning of the program might be a good way to outline your strengths, weaknesses, and what makes you thrive in a professional setting. Discuss the results with your mentor and have them ask questions based on it.

There are a number of different free online tests that serve well for this purpose, but sometimes, your mentor might also have access to professional tests through the HR department at their company.



Personal SWOT Analysis

A personal SWOT analysis is a tool used to identify a person's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in academic and professional contexts. The following figure shows which questions a personal SWOT analysis focuses on.

As preparation for your next mentor meeting, try to fill out the four boxes. Then go over your own assessment of yourself together with your mentor. Not only does it help with outlining your general competencies, it also gives a clearer picture of how you view yourself. It might for instance be the case that you are underselling yourself.

Strengths.

- What are my academic skills?
- What are my professional skills?
- What are my personal skills?
- What resources do I possess? (Network, connections etc.)
- When do I perform best in a team?

Weaknesses.

- What do I not do well?
- What will I need to improve?
- In which areas do my peers do better than me?
- What am I afraid of?
- When do I fail?
- What are the reasons for my failures?
- How do I handle difficult times?

Opportunities.

- What activities are available at university?
- What activities are available outside of university?
- Which jobs will benefit my CV and career?
- How can I use my network?
- How can I grow my network?

Threats.

- Which obstacles are in the way of my success?
- What competencies generally demanded by employers do I not have?
- What are the trends and future perspectives in the industry I aspire to join?
- How will technology / trends influence the value of my competencies?



Presentation Skills

Preparing and delivering presentations are needed in most job functions, whether you are a specialist or generalist. As a mentee, you can benefit highly from training your presentation skills and building confidence in public speaking, and it can be rewarding to incorporate this focus in one of your meetings. Try to agree on a topic for a 5-minute mock presentation. Discuss what the contents and key points of the presentation should be, and try to deliver the presentation for your mentor.

It could even be inspired from an actual presentation you have to deliver in an academic or professional context. Be open to feedback from your mentor. Even though it might be intimidating at first, remember that your mentor is not assessing you for anything else than your own sake, development, and growth.



Personal Elevator Pitch

An elevator pitch is a 30 - 60 second presentation of who you are, your strength, and why you are the right candidate for a specific position or company. It is an effective tool for branding yourself professionally, by boiling down the most important aspects of your profile. Prepare an elevator pitch and try to deliver it to your mentor. Nailing your elevator pitch could come in handy later on.



A day in the life of - you!

You might be very interested in your mentor's current job, company and what it is they do on a day-to-day basis. Former participants in the program have had great success with having a mentee join a "normal day at work" by shadowing them for a day on the job. This is a powerful tool the two of you can use in your relationship.

Other topics that you can discuss:

- Improving job application processes: Feedback on motivational letter, CV, and conducting mock interviews
- The importance of networking throughout your studies and career; this could be how to improve your networking skills, and how to utilize your network
- Discuss the mentor's current job position and what a typical day looks like for them
- The mentor's future perspectives and past experiences of their work and career
- How to balance work and private/family life
- Unwritten rules or code of conducts at work places or in the field that might be surprising or different from university life
- Your academic interests, experiences and skills from current studies or next to current studiesYour career prospects, dreams and goals
- Discuss which academic direction you want to go in and how you might be able to direct it through the available academic choices, both at your university and outside it
- How to handle stressful periods in school and work

THE FINAL MEETING.

The mentorship program will end off with a farewell event where all mentors and mentees are invited. This event will help provide tools for future work and development after the program finishes and round off your learnings from the program. Before participating in the event, it might be a good idea to plan for a final “official” meeting with your mentor. For the final meeting, we encourage you to go through the below areas together.

Loose ends:

If you have previously set milestones or talked about specific challenges that haven't been handled yet, this might be your final chance to talk to them about it. It might be a good idea to look through notes from previous meetings.

Three key points that are important to address are:

1. OUTCOME



Reflect on the outcome and learnings from the program.

Go through what you have learned by being part of the mentoring program together with your mentor. Discuss whether or not your overall objectives of the program have been met. If the objective has not been fully reached, make sure to discuss with your mentor why this is the case, and how you can continue to work towards your goal.

2. FORWARD



Reflect on what the mentee should use the learnings for.

Go through what you have learned as a mentee, then talk about what it can be used for and how you can apply it in your life. What are you able to do in the future with the knowledge and experience that you have now?

3. RELATION



Plan for the future relation.

Some choose to stop their mentoring relationship at the end of the program, others choose to continue - though less frequently or in a more informal fashion. If you do decide to continue your relationship, think and talk about what your relationship with your mentor would look like and what changes you will need to make. What will your mentoring contract look like in the future? How will it affect your relationship?



**CELEBRATE
SUCCESES!**

Remember to celebrate that you have completed the mentoring program. You can for instance agree to go out for dinner or even grab a beer at the company friday bar.

EVALUATION.

Thank you for being part of the Conflux mentoring program. We are very grateful for your participation. We want to learn as much as possible from this year's program so we can keep improving the program for future participants. Thanks to your participation, you're helping us to do so. That's why we want to hear about your experiences through the following ways:

ANONYMOUS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Throughout the program, and following our events, we will send you an anonymous questionnaire to get an overall idea of how the participants have felt about the program. These data points are extremely important for us, since it gives us a more transparent view of what can be improved for future mentorship rounds from our mentee's perspectives.



PERSONAL INTERVIEWS.

To gain a deeper understanding of your learnings from the program, we will conduct a number of interviews with different mentees. Real-life stories gives us a more tangible idea of what can be gained from the program and room for constructive feedback. If you have 30 minutes available, we would greatly appreciate if you would sign up for an interview.



THANK YOU!

This program wouldn't exist if you had not been eager to participate. Our only job is to set up the framework; and then you fill it out. If you know someone who could be a good match - either as a mentor or mentee - please don't hesitate to send them our way. They might be able to give a helping hand in future Conflux mentorship programs. **You can recommend people from your network through the following form:**