

## GSAS Alumni Career Contacts: Alumni Participant Guidelines

**We appreciate your enthusiasm to serve as a GSAS Alumni Career Contact!** By joining this group, you become part of a network of alumni committed to offering their professional insights to GSAS master's students.

### What do Alumni Career Contacts do?

GSAS Alumni Career Contacts meet with up to two students per month for a one-time 30-minute meeting, also known as an informational interview. Career Contacts help MA students explore career interests, discuss the transition into the professional world, give feedback on job search strategy, and may help make introductions to others in the field.

### How can I be an effective Alumni Career Contact?

As you may remember from when you were in graduate school, exploring possible career paths is both exciting and challenging. As a GSAS Alumni Career Contact, you will draw on your own academic and professional experience to act as a source of support, guidance, and information.

A successful career conversation with a student is based on trust and openness. Share what you have done or have learned, not as a prescription, but more as an example of something from which you have gained wisdom. As a collaborator, feel comfortable contributing suggestions and critical feedback, but do not be critical; you are there to provide encouragement and support.

Below, find an outline of a suggested meeting format:

- **Start with introductions**, ask the student to “tell me about yourself,” and give the student a brief overview of your current work and career trajectory. All participating students are in GSAS MA programs.
- **Ask the student what they hope to accomplish by the end of the meeting** so you can set expectations and spend your time together working towards a specific goal.
- **Send a follow-up email with additional information**, if you have materials to share with your student.

### Alumni Career Contacts are expected to:

- **Introduce students to new ideas:** Share your knowledge and experiences to broaden students' perspectives.
- **Refer students to relevant resources** that may further their career exploration and goal attainment, such as websites, books, professional associations, etc.
- **If you are willing, share your professional contacts** to help a student meet industry professionals, find internships, and locate job opportunities.
- **Provide clear, honest, respectful feedback** on students' resume, cover letter, and/or job search strategy, to improve their chances of being noticed by recruiters and hiring managers.
- **Explore with students possible challenges to achieving their career goals** and how they can get around them.

**As a GSAS Alumni Career Contact, you should:**

- **Be open, approachable and responsive.**
- **Use solid professional judgment.** It is your responsibility to act professionally and appropriately at all times when interacting with GSAS students. Students will likely follow your lead, so it is important to recognize that you are in a position of influence and to use good judgment.
- **Tailor your advising style and content to the student,** including adjustments due to different ways of communicating and academic/career interests. Students may carry a variety of interests and experiences; they may be ready to plan for a specific career, or still exploring their identity as an emerging professional.

## **Alumni Participant Terms**

**All participants in this program must agree to the policies and principles below,** which have been established to ensure professionalism when working with GSAS students as well as the smooth functioning of the program. GSAS Alumni Career Contacts agree to:

1. Participate in the program for a minimum of one year.
2. Meet with up to two students per month for a one-time 30-minute conversation.
3. Notify GSAS Compass ([gsas-compass@columbia.edu](mailto:gsas-compass@columbia.edu)) of any changes in your employment status and/or city in which you live.
4. Acknowledge receipt and respond to student emails within five business days.
5. Attend all scheduled one-on-one interactions and provide 24 hours' notice for any cancellation, if possible.
6. Model professional behavior in dress, e-mail etiquette, and proper conduct for productive meetings.
7. Hold all in-person meetings in a public space; virtual meetings may be held online, either using your video conferencing platform of choice (Zoom, Teams, etc.) or the student's Columbia Zoom account.
8. Notify GSAS Compass ([gsas-compass@columbia.edu](mailto:gsas-compass@columbia.edu)) if a student behaves in an unprofessional manner over email or during a one-on-one meeting.

**We have worked with the students to prepare them for their informational interview, but let us know if you have questions or if a situation arises that we should be aware of.** We are here to help and facilitate the process and want it to be a positive experience for both parties.

**Thank you again for your help and support!**