



## 2021 iGEM Mentorship Program Guidelines

The 2021 iGEM Mentorship Program is coordinated by the Steering Group of iGEM Education Network ([after-education@igem.org](mailto:after-education@igem.org)), as an important part of the iGEM Mentors Network, led by Nannan Jiang ([nannan@igem.org](mailto:nannan@igem.org)). Details about the Mentors Network can be found [here](#).

### Objective

This program aims to provide iGEM alumni with an opportunity to reconnect with the iGEM community, gain experience, and hone their communication, mentorship, and consulting skills.

Mentors, who are experienced iGEM volunteers, will directly interact with teams and share experiential knowledge from both iGEM and their area of expertise. By fostering a strong After iGEM community, new and returning iGEMers can build their skills in light of both the competition and future pursuits.

### Program Structure

For 2021, the program will begin in April (in the early stage of the iGEM Competition Season). This gives mentors an opportunity to assist teams in brainstorming, background reading, and fundraising efforts. However, an early start introduces two potential challenges: teams who had not committed to a project at the time of applying may commit to ideas that lie outside of their mentor's expertise, and some teams may be unable to finish their registration process for 2021.

In both cases, the structure of the 2021 program enables the iGEM Education Network to respond. Mentors can switch between working with teams and serving as 'consulting mentors' that share their specific expertise with any team on the 2021 Slack workspace. In 2020, we drew on our pool of consulting mentors and assigned several to be mentors for individual teams as the needs for their particular expertise arose. We predict this will continue in 2021.

Each participating team will receive the support and guidance of a mentor throughout the competition season. The mentors and teams should have weekly video calls to discuss the progress of the project and any questions they might have related to the main objective of the program.

It is mandatory for all the participants to connect to the iGEM Mentorship Slack workspace. A link to join the workspace will be sent upon acceptance of your application. We encourage the teams to share any questions surrounding their iGEM experience on this platform. The Slack workspace is a way to ask questions in a public setting for any other teams and mentors to



answer. Mentors are encouraged to post answers to questions from their team meetings and narrate informative personal experiences on the workspace if they believe the answer would be useful to other teams.

At the end of every month, both teams and mentors will answer the questions in feedback forms sent by the Education Committee, allowing the program coordinators to follow-up on their progress and provide support as necessary.

A special Mentorship Workshop will be held at the 2021 iGEM Giant Jamboree, where those who participated in the program and other Jamboree attendees will be invited to share their experiences and brainstorm about the Mentorship Program and other tools to support iGEM teams. We invite all participants of the Mentorship Program to attend this workshop.

**Benefits to iGEM Teams:** An iGEM mentor will help new iGEM teams and advisors in the following ways:

1. Covering the basics from competition deliverables to important deadlines.
2. Mentors must have experience with iGEM, either as team members or from supporting teams. Therefore, mentors are primarily a resource for firsthand iGEM experience, and secondarily a resource for expertise in specific subject areas they specialize in.
3. Address broad questions that team advisors have about synthetic biology in general and about teaching synthetic biology information and lab techniques to their students if they fall into the expertise of the mentors.
4. Provide tips and remind advisors and students about how to submit iGEM deliverables.
5. When possible, answer questions about troubleshooting experiments, refining protocols, and other issues that the team experiences.

**Benefits to Mentors** The connection with an iGEM team and its advisors will benefit alumni mentors as follows:

1. Provide an opportunity to demonstrate and improve skills in science communication, design, ethics, and other crucial aspects of an iGEM project.
2. Collaborate with other alumni mentors to advise teams on key iGEM skills such as discussing the local/global impact of iGEM projects, identifying and addressing safety considerations, developing a wiki, designing a part, and submitting a part or device.

3. Expand one's synthetic biology career network.
4. Acquire familiarity with the iGEM judging process that prepares participants to serve as effective iGEM judges in the future.
5. Gain mentorship experience and improve mentorship skills. These skills are critical in order to become an effective leader from whom people seek guidance.

## **Program Expectations**

### Teams

1. Must register for the competition (note that teams can register without paying any fees).
2. Meet with mentors in scheduled weekly video meetings throughout the 2021 iGEM season to discuss themed topics. Teams should be the primary creators of agendas for meetings, with additional input from the mentor if necessary.
3. Add mentors to your team roster to acknowledge their contributions to team success.
4. When preparing to ask a question to your mentor, check the documentation on the iGEM site to understand where information is missing and what specifically you want to know that is not available.
5. While we encourage teams to do background research on questions before asking them to their mentors, you are encouraged to post any general questions on Slack where the answer, provided by other members on the Slack workspace, will be visible to those who may have the same question.
6. Answer the monthly Team Survey to help us better understand how every team and mentor are doing in an effort to follow up and improve the Mentorship Program. These will be distributed via Slack.
7. Respond to a final yearly survey about the Mentorship Program.
8. Highly encouraged: Attend the 2021 iGEM Mentorship Workshop at the Giant Jamboree.

### Mentors

1. Must commit to helping teams throughout the iGEM season over weekly video meetings with appropriate preparation time to develop a plan (e.g. a one-hour meeting between the mentors and an additional hour to write and submit the plan)
2. Remain up to date on the Slack workspace in case there are questions to answer.
3. Set up additional meetings with the team by Slack or video chat/conference call if the team requests additional help beyond the meetings (optional/as needed)
4. Acknowledge when you do not have the expertise to provide informed answers for questions and help connect your team with outside sources to obtain answers.
5. Respond to monthly mentor surveys to help us better understand how every team in the Mentorship Program is doing in an effort to improve the program. These will be distributed via Slack every month.
6. Highly encouraged: Attend the 2021 iGEM Mentorship Session at the Giant Jamboree.

The email [after-education@igem.org](mailto:after-education@igem.org) should be used for logistical or administrative questions. We are always open to feedback, hearing your concerns, and any comments that could help us improve the overall mentorship experience and make it fulfilling to all participants regarding the Mentorship Program. This email will notify everyone on the iGEM Steering Group of Education Network.

**After reading through the requirements and the Mentorship Program description, please confirm in the form that you have read and agreed to the terms and responsibilities outlined in this document.**