From Passion to Action - OBSEA

Mentoring and Support - what is available

As part of the Oxford Brookes Social Entrepreneur Awards (OBSEA) programme in addition to learning support through our workshops and Masterclasses and the opportunity to bid for an Award ranging up to £5000, you are also eligible to receive mentoring support. Here we set out what level of support you can expect.

General Support

If you have signed up to the OBSEA programme there is comprehensive advice on our webpages as well as a range of learning resources. We also have contact details on the site to many useful organisations such UnLtd and SE UK which have an extensive range of on line learning materials.

Our dedicated in house Programme support team based in Research and Business Development Office can offer you general advice about your awards, payments and also routine enquiries about the programme, eligibility or changes to your circumstances. You can contact them at socentpren@brookes.ac.uk or call 01865 482804

If you want to speak to someone you can contact any of the Faculty Champions listed below and can arrange to make an appointment:

Faculty of Business
Jonathan Louw

Faculty of Health and Life Sciences
Ann Ewens

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Jeff Willmore (temporary cover)

Faculty of Technology, Design and Environment
Alison Honour

There is additional support from Student Hubs Oxford Hub Manager, Harry Jenkins

How Much Support is available from within the OBSEA Team?

We want to offer you as much support as possible and for you to feel that you can contact us to get the right advice to ensure that you develop your project satisfactorily, that you achieve what you set out to do and what you have agreed with the OBSEA team. However as is the case in any programme there are limited resources available and in the main you can expect the following guideline amount of face to face support over the period of 1 year from the time that you receive your award:

Try It Award winners: 4-6 hours face to face contact

Do It Award winners 8-10 hours of face to face contact

What about specialist advice?

We have access to a national network of specialist mentors from within the University and via UnLtd. Whilst we cannot guarantee we will be able to get you some specialist help we have had a good record of putting Brookes students staff and recent graduates in touch with subject specialists who may be able to give pro bono advice. You should contact your Faculty Champion in the first instance who will try to put you in touch with someone who may be able to help you.
What level of support can I expect?

Staff and mentors will not be able to tell you what to do or specifically how to do things. They can advise and they can tell you where to look but part of the journey is learning by doing. The final decision on what to do and how to do it rests with you. They can, for example, tell you that you may need to think about producing an action plan but you should not expect them to write it as they cannot do things for you. Doing things that you have never done before is all part of the experience - so is learning from it.

Faculty Champions and mentors are good at telling you about things that you didn’t know that you needed to consider. Once you have been told, it’s often for you to work out what to do next and how it applies to you. A common area is public liability insurance. We may point out that you need to investigate. We won’t check how much cover you need and whether the premium is good value for money. We can’t micro-manage your decisions, but once you’ve done your investigations your mentor or Faculty Champion can act as a sounding board to ensure you’re on the right lines.

You should not expect mentors to act as personal advisers in a professional capacity with legal or taxation advice and certainly not become active in the business as Directors or Partners. They should not be approached to become guarantors which puts them at risk although they may be approached to take on a passive role; for example they can be asked to witness documents or act as referees for subsequent award applications.

As a general rule we do not recommend individual service suppliers but we do often know of people that you should consider and investigate for yourself. From experience there are often specialist service providers that operate as social enterprises themselves within the sector and who understand your specialist needs.

Programme support staff, Faculty Champions and mentors can often help when things don’t go as originally planned. If you have an award and something fundamental changes it is important to discuss the implications of this. It may not be a deal breaker but you may need to reconsider what you are going to do or how you are going to do it. If that is the case, it’s most important that you keep people informed about both progress and setbacks. No one is going to be judgmental about you or your project but they will want to ensure that the money and everyone’s time and energy is used appropriately - so it’s important from the outset that you remember to keep in touch.

Your final report.

At the end of your year you will be required to write a final report. You should explain:

• What you set out to do
• What you did and how and if and why this changed as the project developed
• What was the outcome at the end of the year in terms of:
  o Your personal learning outcomes
  o The impact of your project on the group or issue you are trying to address or help
  o How you used the funding that you received
• Your overall conclusions and next steps.

It is perfectly reasonable for you to discuss this with your Faculty Champion and to get their advice on any issues that you are finding difficult to address.

The key to a successful relationship and outcome for your project is to keep in touch, ask questions and to learn by doing things yourself.

The OBSEA Team

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