

Mentoring across the IP profession: A guide to current schemes for current and future IP professionals

This year, one of the focusses of the IP Inclusive Scotland Network Committee is mentoring. The subject comes up repeatedly at IP Inclusive events – from the annual general meeting to the smaller events run by the Scotland Network.

Mentoring usually involves pairing a mentee with someone who can offer support, guidance and access to a wider professional network. It can make a real difference at every career stage. Whether someone is looking to enter the intellectual property (IP) sector, is in the early years of their career, or is a veteran of many years, mentoring can provide the confidence, reassurance, and inspiration needed for a mentee to achieve their goals and progress within the industry. Mentors often find the experience personally and professionally rewarding too.

The difficulty is not necessarily a lack of activity. Opportunities can be hard to find, eligibility criteria vary, and it is not always obvious which scheme might be the best fit.

In order to try and make the picture a little clearer, we have reviewed a selection of mentoring opportunities relevant to people seeking careers in IP and those already working in the profession. This is not intended to be an exhaustive directory, and availability and participation figures may change.

A practical starting point: choose the scheme that most closely aligns with your career stage, and then check the organiser's current eligibility and application information.

Careers in Ideas Mentoring Hub

BEST SUITED TO: ANYBODY LOOKING TO BREAK INTO A CAREER IN IP.

Established back in 2021, the Careers in Ideas Mentoring Hub has served as a focal point for much of the UK IP sector's mentoring efforts in recent years. The scheme is directed primarily towards those seeking to enter the IP industry and has had over 350 mentees take part since its launch.

As of mid-2026, the scheme has around 60 active mentors overseeing around 120 mentees. Mentors come from a wide range of IP-related roles, including patent attorneys, trade mark attorneys, IP solicitors, paralegals, HR professionals and marketing or business development professionals.

The scheme has a structured approach to mentor preparation. Mentors complete a two-stage training process, with introductory videos followed by a live two-hour group session.

CIPA Informals

BEST SUITED TO: EARLY CAREER PATENT ATTORNEYS

The CIPA Informals are the student membership association of the Chartered Institute of Patent Attorneys (CIPA) in the UK. The Informals represent trainee patent attorneys who are partially qualified, newly entered into the profession, or recently dual-qualified. The Informals offer a range of schemes whereby more experienced patent attorneys provide mentorship to trainees throughout their training.

These schemes offered by the Informals include a Buddy Scheme that seeks to pair up trainees to support each other as they enter the profession. The intent of the scheme is to provide new trainees

with mentors who are further along in their journey and who can guide them as they transition from their previous education or career into the patent profession.

The Informals also arrange tutorial sessions for trainees targeted at the Final Diploma Qualifying Examinations for patent attorneys and the European Qualifying Examinations. Sessions are run based upon the availability of volunteers with sessions provided in various formats. The Informals also support CIPA by arranging an annual lecture series which aims to cover a wide range of topics for relatively new trainees, from novelty and inventiveness through to BioTech inventions, security considerations and Designs. More information can be found on the Yellow Sheet Blog.

Women in IP

BEST SUITED TO: WOMEN IN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ROLES

In 2025, Women in IP launched a mentoring consultation which became the foundation of a pilot scheme that launched in early 2026. The pilot scheme is ongoing and involves 27 pairs of mentors and mentees who were manually matched by Women in IP's Mentoring Focus Group. Mentors and mentees were paired based upon the desires and goals of each individual and initial feedback is that the scheme has been a great success.

Mentees and mentors were asked for a large amount of detail as part of the application process to ensure the strongest possible fit between mentor and mentee. An in-person social event allowed participants to meet informally prior to the pairings and participants were provided with training to ensure that the experience was as positive as could be for those taking part.

Women in IP intend to repeat this process for new participants next year in 2027. Anybody with an interest in the scheme should look out for updates or reach out to Women in IP for more information.

Chartered Institute of Trade Mark Attorneys (CITMA)

BEST SUITED TO: CITMA MEMBERS AT ANY CAREER STAGE, INCLUDING THOSE STARTING OUT IN THE TRADE MARK PROFESSION

CITMA Mentoring is available to all members of CITMA. Members can participate as a mentee, a mentor or both, which recognises that someone may have experience to share in one area while also seeking support in another.

The scheme uses an online platform on which participants create a profile, identify the areas they would like to discuss and search for suitable connections. Once a potential match is identified, the participants decide whether to proceed and agree how they will work together. CITMA recommends meeting for around one hour a month for up to six months, with the pair setting an objective at the outset.

As of May 2026, 126 members were registered: 69 as mentees, 41 as mentors and 16 in both roles. The scheme therefore offers a substantial pool of trade mark professionals. Mentors may have more than one mentee at any one time, and – given the scheme's recommendation that a mentoring relationship last for around six months – there should be good availability of mentors at any one time.

Law Society of Scotland

BEST SUITED TO: SCOTTISH SOLICITORS, ACCREDITED PARALEGALS, TRAINEES, LAW STUDENTS AND GRADUATES SEEKING CAREER SUPPORT

The Law Society of Scotland's mentoring scheme, recently refreshed and reconfigured in 2026, has two streams designed for different career stages.

The "career development" stream is open to all in the profession who are looking to progress in their careers. Mentees will be paired with a suitable mentor who can help with a variety of different issues – ranging from professional development and goal setting to choosing different career paths and taking ownership of their careers.

The “early career” stream (formerly known as the student:trainee stream) pairs LLB and Diploma in Professional Legal Practice students and graduates with early career solicitors, from trainees to solicitors with around five years’ post-qualification experience. This gives newer members of the profession an opportunity to act as mentors while their own experience of studying and recruitment remains fresh.

Participants use an online platform and can identify the fields in which they want to develop, including ‘Media, IT, Intellectual Property’. As of April 2026, the scheme had around 100 mentees and a little under 80 mentors. It is not necessarily an IP-specific programme, but may be particularly useful to people pursuing IP as part of a Scottish legal career.

Legal Education and Access Programme (LEAP)

BEST SUITED TO: ASPIRING COMMERCIAL SOLICITORS, INCLUDING THOSE INTERESTED IN COMMERCIAL IP PRACTICE

LEAP provides one-to-one mentoring for people seeking to enter commercial law. Its scope therefore includes commercial IP alongside areas such as corporate, banking and disputes, so it is best viewed as a broader route into commercial law generally, rather than as a dedicated IP mentoring scheme.

LEAP takes on around ten mentees each year, with applications usually opening during the summer. Recruitment of the 2026 cohort finished recently, with applications slated to reopen next year. The first year was fully subscribed and attracted more applications than available places. Each mentor supports an average of around two mentees, but sessions remain one-to-one.

Some participants have a particular interest in IP, and LEAP welcomes applications from those candidates. The scheme may therefore be relevant to aspiring IP solicitors who are looking for support with the commercial law recruitment process.

IP Inclusive Communities

BEST SUITED TO: THOSE IN MINORITY GROUPS AND THEIR ALLIES SEEKING SAFE SPACES, SUPPORT, AND GUIDANCE.

IP Inclusive is made up of a several community networks that aim to provide safe spaces, support and guidance focussed upon particular minority groups and their allies. These groups include: (i) IP & ME, for IP professionals from minority ethnic backgrounds and allies; (ii) IP Ability, which focuses on issues relating to disability, neurodiversity and health conditions of all kinds, as well as carers, and allies; (iii) IPause, for those experiencing (peri)menopause, and people who want to support them; (iv) IP Futures, for those building their careers in IP, from early-stage to mid-level professionals; (v) IP Out, for LGBTQIA+ people and their allies; and (vi) Women in IP, which acts for everyone who identifies as a woman within the IP professions. The IP Inclusive Regional Networks in Scotland and the South West are also welcoming and supportive for those in the IP profession within their geographical areas.

While only Women in IP currently has a formal mentoring programme, each of the IP Inclusive communities and the Regional Networks provide safe spaces, support, and guidance to those who may benefit from it. If you have encountered issues by being part of a minority group, or if you might benefit from some friendly help from any of these communities, then they would all encourage you to reach out to them. There is a good chance that somebody will be able to help or offer advice for any situation you may be facing.

What does the current landscape tell us?

The overall picture is encouraging. There are meaningful opportunities for people trying to enter the IP professions, trainee patent attorneys, CITMA members, those developing careers in the Scottish solicitors’ profession and women in IP. Several schemes also allow experienced professionals to contribute as mentors, and some allow a participant to be both mentor and mentee.

There is, however, no single scheme covering every role and career stage. Access often depends on professional membership, qualification route or the particular objective of the programme. The strongest provision appears to be at entry and early-career level. The position is perhaps less obvious for established and senior professionals seeking cross-disciplinary support or looking to progress into leadership positions, and for people in IP-related roles who may fall outside the membership criteria of the attorney and solicitor bodies. In-house professionals, administrators and business-services colleagues may also need to look across several schemes, or to employer-led programmes, to find the right fit.

Visibility remains a challenge in its own right. A scheme can only help if potential participants know that it exists and can understand quickly whether it is relevant to them. Clear signposting, collaboration between organisers and regular updates on eligibility and availability would make the current provision easier to navigate.

This review is intended to be a snapshot rather than a complete census. Many firms and organisations operate internal or informal mentoring arrangements that are not covered here. Nevertheless, the schemes above provide a useful starting point, and speak to the collegiate and inclusive approach that we see often across the IP profession generally.

Information and participation figures reviewed in 2026. Please check the linked scheme pages for current details before applying.