

## **NZSA Mentoring Program AGM Report – December 2025**

**Lisa Thomasen**

### **Mentoring Program**

Over 80 NZSA members have now been involved with the mentoring program to date, with many of these individuals being involved across multiple cohorts and connecting with the program in multiple ways. Cohort 4 of the mentoring program included 20 mentor:mentee pairs. We had 5 people who were both a mentor and a mentee this year which resulted in three 'mentoring trains.' Two of these consisted of 4 individuals and one consisted of 3 individuals (e.g. A mentors B who mentors C who mentors D). This is a great example of how mentoring provides opportunities for growth and development in both directions and can equip people to support others.

Cohort 5 of the mentoring program will be offered in 2026, with details shared via the NZSA mailing list and social media channels in February.

#### Testimonials from 2025 Participants:

*This programme offers unmatched opportunities for junior, senior and emerging statisticians to connect formally or informally. – Mentor Cohort 4*

*I really appreciate the structure [the program] provides and the opportunities to engage with other statisticians outside of my workplace - in addition to offering something that I feel I missed early in my own career. – Mentor Cohort 4*

*It was an incredibly positive experience that gave me both direction and encouragement. I'd definitely recommend the program to others in the NZSA community. – Mentee Cohort 4*

*I really appreciated hearing how statistical thinking is used in large, real-world operations, and how communication, teamwork, and pragmatism come into play when working with non-statistical colleagues. – Mentee Cohort 4*

### **Lean in circles**

Our Monday lean in circle met monthly from March to November and consisted of 9 NZSA women. Seven were involved in the same circle in 2024, with 2 new members joining this year. Topics discussed included:

- Busyness
- Time management
- Strategic Yeses
- Integrity

- Stakeholder Management
- Career Reflection
- AI Benefits & Limitations
- Collaboration

This circle has provided a valuable opportunity for building strong connections and supporting each other through the ups and downs of the year.

A second mixed circle was offered and held an intro session in June. It was challenging to find a convenient time for everyone interested in this circle and all of the participants were involved in at least one other mentoring program initiative.

### **Lunch ‘n’ Learns**

This year we offered three lunch ‘n’ learn sessions. These sessions generated interesting discussions and provided NZSA members with a valuable opportunity to connect with and learn from others.

#### Scientific Writing – James Bristow

This session had 18 attendees, and the discussion covered what makes scientific papers memorable, useful tools for writing, thoughts on the future of scientific writing and the role AI will play going forward.

#### Current Job Market for Statisticians – Richard Vale

Our second lunch ‘n’ learn was held in July and attracted 33 attendees, making it the most attended Lunch ‘n’ Learn so far. The discussion covered ghost jobs, roles with 10+ interview rounds, Applicant Tracking Systems, and the challenges of job applications and interviews from the perspective of both the applicant and recruiter.

#### Support & Challenges for Mid-Career Statisticians – Elena Moltchanova

Our August lunch ‘n’ learn focused on the challenges facing mid-career statisticians. We had 19 attendees, which formed a bi-modal distribution of early and mid-career statisticians. The consensus of this discussion is that there is often a rapid drop off of career support as we transition to mid-career, despite the new goals and challenges that mid-career statisticians are often faced with. Peer mentoring and open discussions about the challenges were suggested as possible solutions to enable visibility and support.

An Introduction to Quarto was scheduled for November but was postponed due to presenter availability. Multiple presenters have expressed interest in facilitating a Lunch ‘n’ Learn in 2026. We also have an opportunity to collaborate with the SSA Mentoring Program on their webinar series for next year.

## **Coffee roulette**

Coffee roulette kicked off in May with monthly matches sent out in the first week of the month from May to November. Matches then reached out to find a half hour slot to network and connect. Most pairs connected virtually, but multiple pairs made the most of the opportunity for an in-person coffee where location allowed. There were 24 members involved in coffee roulette this year.

Initial feedback suggests that some months, pairs did not manage to find a time to connect which impacted the momentum of the matches. Many participants have reported having insightful conversations with their coffee roulette matches which helped them network and feel connected to the wider statistical community.

I personally had 7 stimulating conversations with the individuals I was matched with. I learnt a lot from the various discussions I had and found I had a lot in common with the individuals I connected with which led to some valuable insights.

I plan to offer coffee roulette again in 2026 as it provides a valuable opportunity for networking, informal mentoring and connection among members with less commitment and more flexibility than the mentoring pairs and lean in circle.

## **SSA Collaboration and Plans for 2026**

I have recently been given access to PushFar which is the mentoring platform that the SSA uses to manage their mentoring program and I'm currently exploring the available features. There may be an opportunity for the NZSA to share the licence for this in future.

All mentoring program initiatives are taking a break over December and January and the program will resume for 2026 from February onwards.

## **2027+ beyond**

I am planning to lead the NZSA Mentoring Program throughout 2026 and have plans to step down from this role at the 2026 AGM. I have found someone who is interested in taking on the mentoring co-ordinator role for 2027 and plan to support in the background to ensure a smooth handover.

## **Thank You!**

I would like to acknowledge the valuable support I've received from both Rina Hannaford and Manori Wickramasinghe throughout this year. Rina ran the coffee roulette initiative, sending out monthly emails to our coffee roulette pairs and Manori arranged the speakers and timings for our lunch 'n' learn series. Thank you both for your support of these initiatives.

Thank you to James, Richard and Elena, for leading a lunch 'n' learn this year.

Thank you to all the mentors who gave up their time to support our student and early career statisticians. Thank you to everyone who got involved in any of this year's mentoring program initiatives – your contribution to the program has helped to create a vibrant and connected

support network within the NZSA and I hope you've also experienced personal benefit from getting involved.

### **Get Involved!**

There are multiple ways to be involved in the NZSA Mentoring Program:

- Become a mentor or mentee
- Join a Lean In Circle
- Join Coffee Roulette for monthly networking opportunities
- Attend a lunch 'n' learn session
- Offer to facilitate a discussion topic for a lunch 'n' learn *or*
- Help out with the organisation of the program

If you're keen to get involved, or have some good ideas, please email: [mentoring@stats.org.nz](mailto:mentoring@stats.org.nz)

I look forward to connecting with many of you again throughout 2026.