University Logo


Mentoring Scheme

Guidelines

A Mentor and Mentee's Guide to Mentoring

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## Introduction

Have you ever wished you had someone that you could talk to about the challenges that you are facing; ideas that you want to implement or how to develop your career?

Or do you have a desire to help others to develop and grow; do you have experience and knowledge that you want to share with others?

Mentoring can support your learning and development throughout your career. It is as important at the start of a career, as it is when you take on new challenges and roles, and many senior leaders rely on executive mentors to help them think through their strategic decisions. Its benefits include improving your understanding of the working environment, skills development, increased motive- tion and boosting confidence.

You may wish to consider mentoring if you are:

* A newcomer to the University or Higher Educa- tion sector.
* Taking on a new role and/or responsibility, such as management / leadership.
* A lecturer during your probation period.
* A researcher, requiring support with research management activities etc.
* Returning to work after a period of absence,

e.g. sabbatical, research leave, maternity or pa- ternity leave or sickness.

* Facing a specific challenge or change or you are in a particular minority group, e.g. women in science and engineering etc. What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a process that supports and encourages the mentee to develop their knowledge; skills and confidence to achieve the goals that they have set for themselves.

It is a supportive, one to one relationship, where the mentor acts as a sounding board and encour- ages the mentee to clarify their thoughts and feelings and helps them to develop approaches to achieve their goals, within a confidential and supportive environment.

A mentor is a more experienced individual who is willing to share their knowledge and experience with someone who is less experienced, in a relationship of mutual trust.

Mentoring is about helping someone to develop over a longer period of time and addresses differ- ent issues which impact on them in their professional life and/or career development as they arise.

## What it isn’t – the myths

*‘Managers make good mentors’* – line manag- ers are not ideal candidates to act as mentors to staff reporting to them (whether or not they process the characteristics of a good mentor). Mentees are unlikely to be fully open with their managers because they are likely to have different interests in the outcome of mentor- ing.

*‘A mentor has to be older than the mentee’* – whilst younger mentors may not possess the same scope of experience as older mentors at a similar hierarchical level, they may be ex- tremely competent overall and/or very ingen- ious in a particular area.

*‘Mentors are teachers or trainers’* – mentoring is not about training someone to do the spe-

*“Mentoring is to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximize their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.”*

#### Eric Parsloe, the Oxford School of Coaching &

Mentoring

cifics of their day to day job. The purpose of mentoring is to facilitate learning in a way that mentees ‘learn how to learn’.

*‘‘Having a mentor will increase you promotion- al potential’* – having a mentor is likely to in- crease your performance and ability to net- work but there are no guarantees that a men- tor will enable you to gain promotion faster.

illustration of two women talking
*‘You only need one mentor’* – different men- tors can provide different learning for different purposes at different times during your career.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Mentor

The mentor’s role is to:

* Support the mentee in defining their own development needs and setting objectives; fostering independent learning.
* Allow the mentee to raise and talk about their issues and to listen, clarify, reflect back, challenge and give appropriate feed- back.
* Help the mentee to reflect on their beliefs, feelings, thoughts and behaviours, and to view issues from multiple perspectives.
* Guide and encourage the mentee in their own analysis and to reach solutions to their problems and opportunities by asking questions.
* Enable the mentee to become an effective decision maker.
* Share stories from their experiences, both successes and failures.
* Help the mentee define precise objectives and commit to action points.
* Help monitor the mentee’s progress to- wards their objectives.

### Mentee

The mentee’s role is to own the relationship. Whilst the mentor is interested and sup- portive, the mentee’s development is their responsibility and they need to manage the relationship by:

* Taking the initiative and arranging the meetings.
* Managing the agenda.
* Setting objectives to work to and reviewing these regularly with the mentor.
* Taking action based on what they agreed during the mentoring discussion.
* Reviewing the action that they have taken and the results with their mentor.
* Being open to feedback.

Mentoring is…

Voluntary

Temporary

Career / Business / Life Supportive

Orientated towards Personal Growth

Mutually Beneficial

## Why Mentoring? What are the benefits?

For the mentee…

* + Individualised development and support.
  + Improved self-confidence and motivation.
  + Broadening horizons and experience.
  + Raised achievements and aspirations.
  + Access to experience, knowledge and a sounding board.

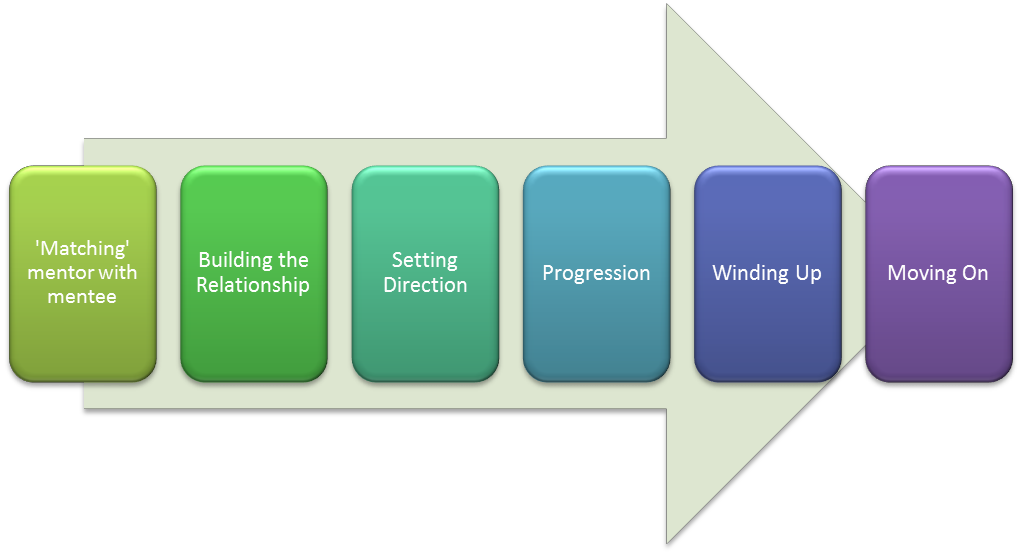
### For the mentor…

* + Satisfaction from develop- ing others.
  + Deeper and broader knowledge of their own working environment.
  + Development of self knowledge and self awareness.
  + Opportunity to build wid- er networks.
  + Personal development.

### For the organisation…

* + Shared learning and shared good practice.
  + Sustained, long-term organ- isational success.
  + Enhanced transfer of skills.
  + Cost-effective method to enhance staff .
  + Development and retention of quality staff .
  + Enhanced performance and contribution.

## Mentoring in Practice—Key Stages



Matching

You can make it easier to find an appropriate mentor by considering what you might want to get out of a relationship and talking to colleagues who may have a broader network than your own, line managers are also a good source for recommendations. They could potentially make an initial introduction, or you could just contact your potential mentor yourself. Make it clear from your first introduction what it is you might be expecting from them and give them an opportunity to say no if they don’t currently have capacity. Be open to a mentor who might initially challenge you or be from another background or work area.

Although the mentee ultimately drives the relationship, the mentor also needs to consider whether they are best placed to support the mentee.

## Building the Relationship and Setting Direction

After the mentee and mentor have agreed to work together, it is important to take time, in the early stages of the relationship, to get to know each other and set direction in order to mutually clarify the purpose of the mentoring relationship and expectations of each other. Building the relationship and developing trust does take time but by doing this and by agree- ing a contract (see contract guidance on page

1. will enable the mentor and mentee to build an effective mentoring relationship.

It is important that both parties are clear of what the other expects. Different or unrealistic expectations can be the cause of the mentor- ing relationship failing or problems arising, so the clearer you both are at the start the better.

## Progression



Exploration

In this stage the mentee talks about what has happened since their last meeting and what they want to talk about and achieve from this discussion.

The mentor should listen carefully to the mentee, without interruption and summarise what the mentee has said to check their un- derstanding.

This is an important stage, as it enables the mentee to reflect on what action they have taken since the previous meeting and what has happened as a result. It also allows them to set the agenda for the current meeting and to de- scribe what they want to achieve during it.

## New Understanding

One of the benefits of mentoring is that it gives the mentee access to someone outside of their management hierarchy, with whom they can build trust and discuss issues in a safe, non-judgemental environment.

In this relationship it is important that the mentor does not take ownership for the prob- lem or take actions (such as talking to some- one) on the mentee’s behalf. Nor should the mentor offer advice or provide all of the an- swers.

In developing ‘New Understanding’ the men- tor will:

* + Listen actively and challenge assumptions.
  + Ask open questions to explore the issue.
  + Provide constructive feedback.
  + Help the mentee to identify all options.
  + Share relevant experiences.
  + Provide any facts or information.
  + Explain any background to a situation, that the mentee may not be aware of.
  + Signpost the mentee to further infor- mation, or sources of support.

The mentor should encourage the mentee to view situations from multiple perspectives. This can sometimes be challenging and the mentee may need time to reflect.

The mentor should also help the mentee to reflect on the discussion and learning and to articulate the implications of their decisions.

## Action Planning

In this stage the mentor helps the mentee to identify what actions they are going to take, as a result of the meeting.

The mentee should make a note of the ac- tions, so that they can be reviewed at the next meeting.

## Winding Up the Relationship

When the mentee has achieved the larger part of their goals and feels confident to continue ‘under their own steam’ is a good time to agree when the mentoring will end. Aim to end on a positive and take some time to re- view the benefits and developments that the mentee has achieved overall.

## Moving On

When the mentoring relationship does end, it is not uncommon for it to be reformulated, typically becoming a friendship, where both parties may continue to meet on a less fre- quent and scheduled basis.

Both mentor and mentee are volunteers and it makes sense for both parties to review how the mentoring arrangement could be made more effective. If the parties feel the relationship is not working, they have a responsibility to discuss the matter openly and truthfully, as part of mutual respect for each other, before making some decisions with regards to the way forward. This is not a sign of failure at all and should be seen as an opportunity to learn.

# Becoming a Mentor

The primary requirement of a mentor is to have a desire to support and develop others to benefit themselves and the University. Be hon- est with yourself – is this something that you want to do and can commit to doing?

## Role of the Mentor

As a mentor your role is to help your mentee to find their own solutions rather than tell them what to do, based on how you would tackle the problem or issue. You need to com- mit to regular meetings and encourage the mentee to drive the relationship by planning meetings dates and topics to discuss, so that the relationship is productive.

## What makes a good Mentor?

A good mentor, has certain experiences and qualities, ask your self “Do I …”

* have a strong desire to help others to grow and develop?” Ideally, you will have experience in developing others.
* have a strong understanding and experi- ence of the context that you can offer mentoring in?” This might include:
* An understanding of the University and how it works (formally and infor- mally), knowing and understanding the key players.
* Leadership and Management experi- ence and success, e.g. experience of improving a department or leading it through a period of significant change. This may also be interpreted as leadership and management of

specific staff groups e.g. technical staff or of being in a minority group

e.g. women in science and engineer- ing etc.

* Winning research grants and manag- ing research projects.

In addition, you also need to consider the practicalities of being a mentor. You will be the experienced one in the mentoring rela- tionship, and there are practical con- siderations required in order to optimise the return on your and the mentee’s time. Before you agree to mentor anyone, make sure that you can:

* Make yourself available and accessible to your mentee. You will contract to meet every so often and you should en- sure that you can honour that commit- ment.
* Provide some initial structure to the mentoring relationship, particularly where the mentee is relatively inexperi- enced. For example, you may ask them to identify some objectives which they wish to achieve, and ask them to sug- gest a review and evaluation process to monitor ongoing progress.
* Follow through on any actions you pick up in your meetings, thereby demon- strating to the mentee your commit- ment and your professionalism: ‘do as I do’ is a good motto for the mentor.

## Mentor Skills Set

The most important skills you need to be a good mentor are advanced communication skills. You will need to adapt your communica- tion style to the person you are mentoring and as the relationship develops and according to the issue you are addressing at any one time. Advanced communication skills include:

### Listening

Arguably listening is the most important skill required for successful mentoring. Active lis- tening requires the mentor to be sensitive to the mentee and concentrate on what they are saying for sustained periods of time. This is not easy!

The aim of listening is to fully engage with and understand what the mentee is saying, this may also mean ‘reading between the lines’ in order to discover the underlying issues. Also, asking relevant questions to help to move the mentee closer to understanding and achieving their goals.

To achieve this, consider the environment that you create for the mentee; they need to feel

safe and relaxed so that they can be open about their situation. This means suspending judgement and giving them your undivided attention. You may also want to make notes of specific things that the mentee raises that you want to re-visit later in the discussion or as ideas come to mind.

By quickly noting them down you can be reas- sured you won’t forget and you don’t interrupt the mentee’s ‘flow’.

Never interrupt the mentee, when they have finished speaking it is often useful to summa- rise or paraphrase what has been said in order to check your understanding and to ask ques- tions to clarify any points or to probe for fur- ther information.

### Questioning

Asking questions to guide and explore the is- sue being discussed will help your mentee to explore their situation in depth, to gain a greater understanding of it, reflect and draw conclusions and actions to move forward. Ex- amples of different types of questions are pro- vided in the table below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Type of**  **question** | **Aim of question** | **Example** |
| Reflective | Getting the mentee to say more about an issue and to explore it in more depth | “You said... can you explain in more detail why you think this?” |
| Hypothetical | Introducing new ideas and/or to get the mentee to consider how an ac- tion would be received by others. | “What about....”  “What if....”  “How do you think xxxx would react?” |
| Justifying | Obtaining further information on reasons, attitudes and feelings | “Can you describe what makes you think/say that?” |
| Probing | Discovering motivations, feelings and hidden concerns. | “What do you perceive is the cause of this?” “When did you first experience that?” |
| Checking | Establishing whether the mentee has understood clearly | “Are you sure about that?” “Why do you feel this way?” |

### Feedback

Giving feedback to your mentee is a vital skill. Giving feedback is the process of holding a mirror up to your mentee, to enable them to see how they are received by others so that they can improve and develop their skills.

Feedback should not be confused with

criticism; when giving feedback always ensure that:

* The intention of the feedback is to be help- ful – consider your motives.
* It includes a positive reinforcement of strengths.
* It describes behaviour – not personality.
* It concentrates on areas of behaviour which can be controlled.
* It is specific.
* It avoids generalisations.
* It describes, but does not judge.

### Why Advice is Unhelpful

The usual reaction to hearing someone de- scribe a problem is to offer advice, after all, isn’t that why they’re telling you? This might be the case in the minority of cases but most of the time the mentee just needs time to ex- plore the issue and come to their own conclu- sion about a way forward.

When a mentor gives advice to a mentee, it can often be to avoid being drawn into the person’s confusion or pain. It is also a way of saying “I know better than you, you cannot find a solution for yourself, you don’t know how”, therefore having a detrimental effect on the relationship. Generally, the conversation then focuses on the mentee explaining why they cannot take that particular course of ac- tion, rather than focusing on what they can do.

Consequently, advice tends to belittle and frus- trate the person who is offered it and to in- crease the givers own sense of importance. Often the person has already thought of the advice but cannot follow that path because it feels wrong for one reason or another.

Always remember that you don’t know the full picture: there is always something that holds people back. What holds them back may be the most important thing.

Also, if they act on your advice and it all goes wrong who gets the blame?



[Access to further on-line materials](https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/media/lancaster-university/content-assets/documents/oed/MentoringskillsworkbookrebrandedJune2021.pdf)

# Becoming a Mentee

As described earlier, mentoring has the capaci- ty to support you with a variety of scenarios,

* 1. career planning and development, learning and developing new skills, coping with a sig- nificant change, gaining a wider perspective of the University to name a few.

Before you embark on a new mentoring rela- tionship it is important to take some time to consider why you need a mentor and what you hope to achieve through a mentoring relation- ship:

## Do you need a Mentor?

What do you need to learn or

develop?

As a potential mentee, you need to be clear about what it is that you need to develop or learn. The clearer you are about this, the more focused you will be with whatever develop- ment activity you undertake.

It is important to discuss this with your line manager or PDR reviewer, as part of ongoing PDR discussions, and to decide together whether mentoring is the most appropriate activity to support this development need or whether some other form of development would be a better option.

## Choosing a Mentor

Once you and your line manager have agreed what your development needs are and that mentoring is the best activity to achieve these needs, you then need to select an appropriate mentor.

You may already have someone in mind, in which case you can approach them directly or you can ask your manager or other colleagues for recommendations.

It is a good idea to contact your potential mentor and arrange to have an informal meeting or telephone discussion to explore whether they can support your development needs.

This will give you both the opportunity to dis- cuss your expectations of the mentoring rela- tionship. You can find out more about what they can offer and learn more about them, their background and area of expertise etc. You should also discuss how a mentoring rela- tionship might work in terms of frequency of meetings, expectations (yours and theirs) and how long you anticipate working together overall.

Try to be open to working with someone who has a different style and approach to you. You might feel most comfortable working with someone who you feel is similar to you, but ask yourself how much you will learn from them.

## Starting the Mentoring Relationship

It is important that you spend time at your first meeting to agree a ‘contract’. This is a set of ground rules which cover how you both agree to engage in the relationship as well as what you want to achieve overall. (A recommended template is available on page 15.) The clearer you and your mentor both are about each other’s expectations the more likely the mentoring will be successful.

The form is just a guide to help your mentor to understand your situation and context, give them some back-ground to your current position and your experience to date. This will help them to under-stand how they can best help you. It also acts to clarify expectations on both sides. It is confidential and not shared with anyone else.

As the mentee, it is your responsibility to ‘own’ the relationship. This means arranging regular meetings and preparing for them by thinking about what you want to discuss and achieve overall and at each meeting. Be specific rather than generic about issues that you are currently facing. The aim of the meetings is to agree action that you will then carry out rather than to have a chat or moan!

## What can you expect from your Mentor?

The role of your mentor is to help you to come to your own conclusions about your issue.

They should do this by asking you questions to fully understand and explore your situation, challenging any misconceptions or assumptions you may have; sharing stories; providing feedback and helping you to identify actions to take forward. They are not there to solve the problem for you.

# Mentoring Contract Guidance

Mentor: Mentee:

Start Date:

**Anticipated End Date**: *mentoring tends be a long-term commitment (i.e. up to a year or more) both parties can review this; however, it is a good idea to be clear of the expected duration at the start.*

**Mentees Goals for the overall Mentoring relationship***: i.e. the high level objectives e.g. the*

*development of strategic thinking; to develop leadership skills.*

**Success Measures:** *i.e. how will you know the mentoring has been successful? What will have changed improved as a result? E.g. confidence in leading people through change and improved communication and engagement through change.*

**Ground Rules in the Relationship:** this might include:

* + - **Confidentiality** *applying to both mentor and mentee (e.g., information provided by the mentor/mentee will be treated in complete confidence and will not be discussed outside meetings unless expressly agreed by both parties).*
    - *A statement about* ***proactivity****, i.e. that the mentee will and drive (project manage) the relationship.*
    - *The* ***scope*** *of the mentoring (e.g. immediate job, career development, personal develop- ment); you may want to be explicit about what is not included.*
    - **Tracking and review** *of the mentoring against the goals. This may also include re- porting back to a third party (if appropriate – this may be more likely to be required where the mentoring is taking place as part of a structured programme).*
    - **Ethics** *– these might be External e.g. provided by a professional body or Internal i.e. provided by the mentor which tend to be situationally specific. Consider, ‘What do my values tell me about this situation?’*

**Logistics**: *e.g. accessibility and contact between scheduled meetings and whether there are any boundaries to this.*

**Venue:**

#### A blank contract template for your use is available:<http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/hr/OED/PersonalEffectiveness/Mentoring/Resources.html>

Mentoring Code of Conduct

Both mentor and mentee will abide by the following code of conduct and act in a way which respects diversity and promotes equality of opportunity.

* The mentor will respond to the needs of the mentee and not impose their own agenda.
* Mentors and mentees will respect each other’s time availability, as agreed in the Mentor Contract, ensuring that they do not impose beyond what is acceptable to each other.
* Either party may end the relationship at any time.
* The mentor will not pry into areas that the mentor wishes to keep private. They should help the mentee to recognise how these areas may impact on professional areas.
* Mentors and mentees will share the responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship, once it has achieved its purpose.
* The relationship should not be exploitive in any way.
* Mentors should never work beyond the bounds of their capability, experience and exper- tise. Where appropriate, mentors should seek advice or refer mentees to another point of contact.

# Confidentiality Statement

The successful partnership between the mentor and mentee is based on trust, honesty and confidentiality. Both mentor and mentee agree that they will:

* Keep any information shared between themselves confidential (unless any issues are raised which may place either party in a vulnerable situation).
* Immediately pass on any information which makes either party concerned about the per- sonal safety of the other or another individual.
* Maintain confidentiality about all personal issues discussed, both during the relationship and also once it has ended.
* Understand that if either party chooses to end the relationship, that both parties are still expected to keep shared information confidential at all times and must never discuss the details of any mentoring relationship in which they have been involved.