



Guidelines to mentoring:

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is essentially about helping people to develop more effectively. It is a relationship designed to build confidence and support the mentee, so they are able to take control of their own development and work.

Mentoring is not the same as training, teaching or coaching, and a mentor doesn't need to be a qualified trainer or an expert in the role the mentee carries out. They need to be able to listen and ask questions that will challenge the mentee to identify the course of action they need to take in regard to their own development.

A mentor is different from a line manager in that they will not have direct responsibility for the mentee's work performance but they will be responsible for encouraging the mentee to work towards their own individual objectives and be a motivating guide for the mentee on their journey.

What is a mentor?

A mentor is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as an "experienced and trusted adviser". This description reflects how we would like to see mentors work with their mentees. Your role as mentor will cover at least some of the following:

- Listen
- Ask questions to help develop your's and the mentee's understanding of a situation or problem
- Provide information and knowledge and share informal networks
- Provide advice on career development
- Offer different perspectives
- Provide support and encouragement
- Provide an insight into your work and career
- Offer guidance and advice in regard to qualifications
- Be a sounding board
- Be a critical friend
- Encourage self-reflection
- Help mentees identify areas for development

As a mentor you will have the opportunity to use your experience and knowledge in a facilitative manner to support the development of the mentee. However, the responsibility for making things happen and putting plans into action lies primarily with the mentee - not with you.

Why mentoring?

- It has flexibility – mentoring can happen in so many ways and under lots of different circumstances
- Is an offline activity- it is not a role carried out by the mentee's line manager although mentoring conversations can become part of day to day activity and don't always need to be scheduled
- It relates to work and the job
- It is individual – each relationship will be unique to those two individuals involved
- It is people centred
- It provides a feedback system- feedback is central to mentoring and is a great tool to enhance and embed learning
- It is broad in focus – it should meet the needs of the mentee and mentor
- It is not exclusive – but complements other methods of learning on their journey.

The mentoring process:

Initial meeting

- explain the purpose of the mentoring relationship
- the format of the meetings and how these will work
- what you will commit to and your role
- what is expected from mentees and their role

Mentor sessions

- review experience
- identify objectives
- provide feedback
- identify strengths and achievements
- identify areas of development
- explore options
- coaching on specific areas if required
- discuss professional issues
- agree support needs
- set targets for future actions
- create opportunities for mentees to gain experience

Moving on

- identifying when the relationship reaches a natural end
- review and sign off objectives
- helping the mentee to identify the next steps (possibly a different mentor)

- Self-reflection and review on the effectiveness of the relationship by both parties

Managing the meetings

The mentor should take on the role of a facilitator during the meetings using questions and a non-directive, non-judgemental approach.

The purpose of the meetings could be for some or all of the following reasons:

- Reviewing and identifying the mentee's experience
- Helping the mentee to identify individual strengths and areas for development
- Discussing professional and work issues
- Agreeing what support is required
- Exploring the options open to the mentee
- Coaching on specific skills
- Supporting the mentee to set achievable realistic and stretching action plans

Remember meetings will not be the only form of contact with your mentee. Telephone calls, emails and brief on the job discussions will also be a part of the process but you should have an agreed number of scheduled meetings with your mentee set to fit around the action plan of the mentee, and around specific points in their development

Making the meetings work:

- Have a clear structure and purpose. Before the meeting consider the structure and the time parameters. These should be agreed during the initial meeting when you are contracting with the mentee. Having a clear structure and purpose in mind will be the best and most effective use of your time and their time.
- Think about the content of the meetings. There should be a balance of looking back and reviewing the mentee experiences and reviewing if objectives set have been met or, if not, why not? There should also be a balance of discussing current issues and thinking about the future and ensuring the mentee sets realistic objectives for their action plan.
- Keep to dates and times set. It is easy to let the day job get in the way but try to focus on the benefits to everyone of engaging in this process. Give it the priority it requires to be successful.

Ending the mentoring relationship

It is important to consider how the mentoring relationship will end. Discuss the reasons for the ending of the relationship with your mentee. In certain situations, the end date is agreed during the initial meeting, but it is not always possible in all situations to be able to identify a clear end date.

Reasons for ending the mentoring relationship can be varied:

- The relationship has achieved its objective
- You feel that your mentee is confident and ready to move on

- You have tried but the mentee is not responding
- The programme is coming to a close
- The relationship isn't working successfully and both parties wish to move on.

It is useful and good practice for the mentor and mentee to revisit the original goals and objectives and compare them with actual outcomes. This allows both parties to review what progress has been made and to acknowledge what has been achieved. It is useful to encourage the mentee to find another mentor for the next stage of their journey and you may even be able to suggest individuals the mentee may like to approach. However, you should take time to evaluate how you feel you have developed during the relationship and what lessons you have learned