MENTORING

making a difference
PREFACE

Mentoring is widely recognised as a highly important and sometimes pivotal professional development opportunity. The aim of this book is to support those in existing mentoring partnerships and those interested in becoming involved in mentoring as a mentee, mentor or manager, in a University context. It provides concise advice, opportunities for reflection, insight into the benefits of mentoring to the individuals involved, and further selective reading.

Dr. Sandra Oza - Organisational Professional Development

“My mentor has been an incredible source of support and inspiration.”
CHAPTER 1

Introduction - Great Mentoring
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Mentoring - “off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking” (David Megginson and David Clutterbuck).

In mentoring, a more experienced person (the mentor) works with someone with less experience of the context (the mentee). Through a process of conversations, the mentor helps the mentee develop their capability. The term ‘offline’ means outside of normal line management arrangements. Mentors are critical friends to their mentees – not their bosses, supervisors or managers. In this way the mentor can focus totally on the mentee’s growth and development without the encumbrance of line management duties.

Conversations are key to effective mentoring, because mentoring is rarely about giving instructions. It involves helping the mentee discover his or her route forward, by focusing and accelerating the mentee’s process of discovery. It’s more akin to reflective learning, stimulated by sagely guidance.

“I found the experience very rewarding, it made me think about what I want to achieve in my work and ideas about work/life.”
“My mentor is just the sort of person I was hoping for, with plenty of experience and suggestions for ways for me to develop as an academic.”
Being a Mentor

The benefits of being a mentor; mentor skills/competences.

So what’s your natural mentoring style? Which of the seven approaches below best describes how you work with mentees?

7. Help them think through their own ideas
6. Add options to their own ideas
5. Advise them what to do
4. Tell them what to do
3. Show them how to do it
2. Do it with them
1. Do it for them

In the course of a mentoring assignment, you might find yourself using all seven, but it is highly likely that the most effective contribution a mentor can make will be at levels 6 and 7. Helping a mentee shape their own thinking and ideas is the crux of being a mentor.

Mentoring – “Be someone who matters to someone who matters” © Mentoring Works

How can mentoring help? Which of the five possible strategies do you think are relevant in mentoring?

1. Accompanying the mentee on the learning journey
2. Sowing seeds and preparing the mentee for change
3. Catalysing and provoking a different way of thinking
4. Showing the mentee, making something understandable
5. Harvesting and stimulating the mentee’s awareness of learning

Learning journey.
Sowing seeds.
Way of thinking.

The answer is all five. Your skill as a mentor is to figure out which approach to use and when. And as the above (which were compiled by Bob Aubrey and Paul Cohen) suggest, you as a mentor will be actively involved in the learning journey along with the mentee.
Mentor competences – so what are the skills you need?

There are several skills and competences useful to mentors. Have a look at ten areas of mentor competence below.

“Being a mentor made me reflect on what was lacking in my own career development.”

01 The mentor is familiar with the reporting and management requirements of the mentoring programme (some mentoring relationships are part of organisation-wide mentoring programmes, which may have their own protocols and guidelines for mentors and mentees to follow).

02 The mentor ensures that the agreed goals and objectives for the mentoring address the mentee’s major areas for learning and development.

03 The mentor demonstrates active listening skills by seeking clarification, re-phrasing the mentee’s statements, and summarising to check understanding.

04 The mentor is able to provide constructive feedback to the mentee.

05 The mentor reviews the mentoring relationship regularly with the mentee to ensure it remains of assistance to them.

06 The mentor ensures that their own beliefs and values do not adversely affect the mentoring process or outcome.

07 The mentor does not misuse their role in any way.

08 The mentor maintains overall focus on the relationship goals and objectives whilst being responsive to the mentee’s immediate concerns as they arise.

09 The mentor encourages the mentee to explore a range of possible solutions to the presenting problem and ensures that potential threats and opportunities for each solution are considered.

10 The mentor is able to encourage the mentee towards self-management and future development, without engendering a sense of dependency on the mentor.
“What I value above all is the fact that being a mentor provides personal satisfaction through supporting the development of others.”

“Good to take an objective look at someone’s career trajectory and really feel that you have helped them to firm their plans and decide on their next goals.”

“I am blessed with a fantastic mentee and so the experience for me has been very positive and very rewarding. It is important to get across that whilst the primary aim is of course to support the mentees, it is a learning curve for the mentors to become more effective and efficient.”
CHAPTER 3

Being a Mentee
Mentee guidelines - so what can you do?

Below are some guidelines about what you can do as a mentee to get the most from mentoring support.

“One of the most precious experiences I have had since I joined the University.”

01 The mentee understands that the mentor works in an advisory/facilitative manner but is not ‘hands-on’ and the mentor is able to do this on the basis of their experience.

02 The mentee is familiar with the reporting and management requirements of the programme.

03 The mentee will discuss and establish a mentoring agreement with their mentor.

04 The mentee makes themselves available for mentoring discussions with their mentor, as agreed between them.

05 The mentee ensures that the goals and objectives agreed with their mentor address their real concerns and major areas for learning and development.

06 The mentee is encouraged to explore a range of possible solutions to a challenge or problem through their discussions with a mentor and should take responsibility to ensure that potential threats and opportunities for each solution are considered.

07 The mentee is able to accept constructive feedback from the mentor.

08 The mentee retains responsibility for solving their own problems.

09 The mentee regularly reviews and maintains the mentoring relationship with their mentor to ensure it remains of value to the mentee over the duration.

10 The mentee presents themselves in a manner that shows respect, honesty and courtesy towards their mentor and with integrity at all times in the course of a relationship.
CHAPTER 4

The Mentoring Agreement
The Mentoring Agreement

Mentoring relationships work more effectively if the mentor and the mentee discuss the ground rules for their relationship and enter into a mentoring agreement. Below are some of the subjects a good mentoring agreement covers, with some good practice guidance.

How often the mentor and mentee will have mentoring discussions
The frequency of mentoring discussions should be agreed between mentor and mentee. If the mentoring support is taking place within a formal mentoring programme, the programme is likely to have expectations of the frequency of mentoring meetings.

How long the mentoring relationship is expected to last
The duration of the mentoring relationship should be agreed between mentor and mentee. It should not be an open-ended commitment (as this can breed dependency). If the mentoring support is taking place within a formal mentoring programme, the programme is likely to have expectations of the number of mentoring meetings and the length of the mentoring relationship.

“I immediately felt at ease with my mentor. He gave me excellent advice on how to advance my research profile. This is exactly what I wanted from the mentoring scheme.”

What form mentoring discussions will take, and their durations
Ideally mentoring discussions are face to face but it is recognised that sometimes this is not possible and some discussions might take place by other media (e.g. Skype). Most mentoring discussions last between 30 and 90 minutes, although these are by no means hard and fast boundaries.

Agreement of permissible contact between meetings
The degree of ‘interruption’ that a mentor will welcome from a mentee between agreed mentoring discussions is a matter for the mentor and the mentee.
The mentor’s view of what type of help he/she is able to provide within the bounds of the relationship and the entrepreneur’s expectations from the relationship

Mentoring is a form of ‘hands-off’ help and one that centres more towards the mentee making decisions for themselves, rather than receiving direct instruction from the mentor. It is expected that the mentee will benefit from the experience of the mentor and also from their process skills in helping the mentee think through their situation and reach actionable conclusions. Mentor and mentee discussing their expectations at the start of a relationship is a major help in ensuring a healthy and productive mentoring relationship.

Hands-off.
Actionable conclusions.
Expectations.
Relationship.

“Thoroughly enjoying it! Stimulating discussion, motivating me to push ahead.”

Mentee confidentiality and the boundaries

It is expected that the content of mentoring discussions remains confidential between mentor and mentee. Without this assurance of confidentiality it is hard to build an effective, trust-based relationship. However, there are three considerations that relate to mentee confidentiality that are generally helpful. First, the mentee might give the mentor permission to discuss issues with another party (the mentor might request such permission if the mentor feels such an action is in the best interests of the mentee). Second, some formal mentoring programmes have reporting expectations. In such cases, mentors and mentees need to be aware of these and ideally the content of any reports are agreed between mentor and mentee. Third, client confidentiality is usually revoked in circumstances of illegal practice or danger of human harm.
Note-taking for mentoring discussions
Good practice recommends a brief record is made of agreed actions that come out of a mentoring discussion. These actions are to be taken forward by the mentee (not the mentor) in the vast majority of situations. Who physically writes the actions should be open to discussion between mentee and mentor (there are sound justifications for either party doing so), but one of the main merits of writing the actions down is that it helps build momentum – the actions from one mentoring discussion are reviewed at the next, and so on.

Mid-point discussion
It is helpful to position this discussion with the mentee at the start of the relationship. The mid-point discussion doesn’t focus on the specific tasks or work achieved within the relationship but how well the two parties are working together. A mentor may indeed have a ‘quality of the relationship’ discussion at every meeting and such an approach might negate the role of a specific mid-point discussion. Either way, such discussion(s) are shown to make a positive contribution to the effectiveness of a mentoring relationship.

“I can speak openly to her… She has been very supportive. I think that I have given her quite a lot to do… Thank you for matching me with her.”
CHAPTER 5

A Year in Mentoring -
an example of a mentoring relationship
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an example of a mentoring relationship

Overview
Sustaining a mentoring relationship over a twelve-month period involves both mentee and mentor. Whilst the relationship will probably take on a life of its own after the initial meeting the plan outlined below could form a framework for the types of activity or topics that mentee and mentor could cover in a year of meetings.

Mentoring meetings can work very effectively on a monthly or bi-monthly basis. There is no set pattern as to ‘what works’. It is worth giving some thought to the pattern that will help to sustain the relationship. Meet too frequently and there isn’t enough opportunity for the mentee to make progress between meetings and meet too infrequently and there is insufficient opportunity to develop a rapport and relationship and there can be drift of both relationship and tasks.

To get the relationship started it might help to plan a regular meeting time for mentoring from the outset. With all six - twelve planned meetings the mentor and the mentee have a clear sense that this is something they are both committed to making happen over the coming year even if either party has to rearrange some meetings, or if the structure changes due to additional/replacement meetings or activities that either mentee or mentor want to add into the process. Additional items to be included in the schedule may arise through ongoing conversation.

Typically mentoring meetings last 60-90 minutes but the mentoring process doesn’t need to be bound by this - it is perfectly reasonable for a mentoring meeting to last 15-30 minutes if the mentor has reviewed something in writing from the mentee and has feedback to give that the mentee can then go away and action. Likewise, if the mentor offers the mentee the opportunity of work shadowing (because that fits both objectives and availability) this might be the equivalent of several months meetings rolled into one. The following meeting outline example is for guidance purposes and each partnership should explore and agree their own preferred schedule.

An example of mentoring leading to sponsored opportunities

12-months of meetings

The mentee: a lecturer who was appointed to the role two years ago and has the following three objectives written down at the start of the first meeting and has emailed them to the mentor in their introductory email:

1. To discuss career development - particularly promotion to senior lecturer within a 2-3 year time frame (although at this stage the term ‘career development’ feels quite woolly) whilst maintaining a work-life balance.
2. To start to develop a specific research area and area of expertise and build a wider research reputation.
3. To increase self-confidence.

The mentor: a reader who is looking for promotion in the next 12-24 months who has a strong research, teaching and leadership background and sits on a number of Department and School committees. They are not involved in the specific area of research that their mentee is focussed on but they are aware of the field.

Meeting 1: The first meeting is likely to be about getting to know each other and for the mentee to talk through their objectives for the mentoring and for both mentor and mentee to start to plan how the mentoring process might help the mentee to achieve those objectives. It will typically be a session where both talk through their experience and the mentee starts to talk through their aspirations and potential plans (or sometimes the absence of plans or difficulty in determining what a plan might look like). It would be useful to discuss the relevance and priorities of the mentees objectives and exactly how the mentor might be able to help and what additional work the mentee would have to do to be able to achieve those.

As a result of the meeting the objectives might now be re-ordered and reframed as:

Priority 1. Understanding their personal research strategy and how to write and develop it so that they can develop their confidence when talking about their research and their research plans.
Priority 2. Developing their skills towards being a Principal Investigator on a small grant and Co-Investigator on a larger grant.
Priority 3. Understanding the promotion process within the Department/School/University and how to shape their CV towards promotion within 2-3 years.

With these slightly refined objectives the mentee could go away from the first meeting with 1-2 hours work to do ahead of meeting 2 to start to draft their first version of their research strategy – maybe 1-2 pages of initial thoughts.
Meeting 2: The mentee could talk through what their emerging research strategy might start to look like and this would be a good opportunity for the mentor to share their own research strategy if they are happy to do so. The mentoring process is a good opportunity for the mentee to talk openly about possibilities in their research and about how they might develop an emerging trend or something of particular interest to someone who is in their wider field but not necessarily in their direct area of research. This might be the first time that the mentee has had the opportunity to talk through their aspirations and plans for their research in any depth with someone outside their direct field.

Between meetings 2 and 3: the mentee could do some further work on their outline to form the basis for meeting three.

Meeting 3: The objective for this meeting could be to start to turn the mentee’s research strategy into a more concrete plan:

- The potential UK funders that might be applicable
- How to understand European Funding and become part of a consortium or apply for European Fellowship Funding
- The number of publications (and potential journals) required to think about different funding
- How to find collaborators and how to approach them
- How to be ‘found’ by collaborators – use of Academia.edu, University Profile, social media (drawing on the mentor’s experience, knowledge – both good and bad!)

The suggested structure of these first three meetings give the mentee the opportunity to discuss their career to date and their research with someone other than their Principal Investigator or line manager within the department and give both mentee and mentor a good base to work from for the following nine meetings. The mentor is not driving the research strategy but is helping the mentee to understand how the input of someone outside their direct area can help them think more broadly. Working with someone more senior can help the mentee to set the context for what is required for career development as a researcher and enables the mentor to see where the opportunities for sponsorship might come from.

The first three meetings do not need to focus on research or on promotion. These are used as illustrative examples. The replacement topic could be teaching, engaging with others in the academic community, having a role better understood within the School/University, leadership tasks and opportunities etc. but should be grounded in the mentees work life and future potential.

Meeting 4: This meeting might cover developing the mentee’s CV in the light of the first three meetings. Where are the strengths and how are they articulated? Where are the gaps and what experience does the mentee need to take things to the next grade? Do they need more funding? Publications? Teaching? Leadership? Administration experience? The follow up to this meeting would be for the mentee to go away and make amendments to/redraft their CV. The mentor could share their experience of being on interview and promotion panels and what they look for in a CV at different levels.
Meeting 5: This meeting could focus on how the mentee develops themselves to build one of the areas/gaps in their CV that haven’t been covered in the first 3 meetings.

Meetings 6 & 7: Could be replaced by the mentee shadowing the mentor at a committee meeting and having a debriefing afterwards.

Meetings 5, 6 & 7: Could be the point at which sponsorship of the mentee by the mentor may start. Sponsorship takes many forms. Introducing the mentee to a colleague who the mentor knows well but the mentee doesn’t could be the start of the sponsorship process.

Ultimately, sponsorship is a result of a more pro-active mentoring relationship where the sponsor actively looks for opportunities to give the mentee additional experiences, exposure or opportunities.

As the mentor develops a greater knowledge of the mentee and their aspirations, competencies and development areas they can bear the mentee in mind for opportunities that they spot, hear or read about. Similarly, if the mentee is asked to suggest someone for a committee, presentation or involvement in an activity the mentor has sufficient knowledge of the mentee to put forward their name and/or make a connection on their behalf for either research or personal development.

Meetings 8, 9 & 10: These three meetings could focus on developing a particular project or skill in the area of teaching, writing a grant application or developing a proposal for something new that the mentee wants to do. The knowledge developed between mentee and mentor up until this point means that this might be an ideal point for the mentee to work on something that they want to/need to develop and work with the mentor and on their own in between meetings to generate ideas, refine and draft a new lecture course, funding proposal or journal article or arranging a conference or meeting of like minded people. i.e. this is an ideal time in the mentoring relationship to focus on a ‘project’ that the mentee can drive and the mentor can help with.

Meeting 11: This meeting could revisit the research strategy and link it to career development in terms of the mentee getting a good understanding of the promotions process that they will potentially be going through in the next 12-24 months.

Meeting 12: Wrap up and next steps. This is a crucial meeting to help the mentee make the most of the mentoring experience and embed it as a longer-term relationship between mentee and mentor. Crucially: Has the mentee made progress in an activity, behaviour or plan since the start of the mentoring process?

Although the formal mentoring relationship may last only 12-months it can be the start of a career-long working relationship where the meetings are more infrequent and less formal but where the mentee retains the sounding board relationship that they developed during the mentoring scheme and the mentor/sponsor retains the role of developing others in their wider environment to take on roles and responsibilities they know about and/or develop a collaborative piece of research with.
“My experience was very positive - very focused on me as a mentee. My mentor is very professional, and has also put me at ease.”

“I would just like to say that I think this is a great initiative and very helpful to feel supported. Sometimes it was very useful for me to have a mentor outside my faculty, who could offer a new perspective - and also help with more personal issues.”

“For me, mentoring has been a great way to voice any concerns that have come up during the course of my academic career. My mentor has been a great sounding board for ideas and plans and has given me invaluable advice. Another helpful feature, I find, is using my mentor to help me identify and monitor progress with self-imposed goals and deadlines.”
CHAPTER 6

The Mentoring Context
The Mentoring Context

The key relationship in all mentoring is the one between the mentor and the mentee. Structured mentoring programmes provide a route map for mentee and mentors to help learning and change to be more effective. Where mentoring support is facilitated by a mentoring programme, both mentor and mentee need to be aware of any programme requirements and factors that may shape how they work together. These may include:

* how long the mentoring relationship is expected to last
* how many times mentee and mentor are expected to meet
* what they are expected to work on together (the mentoring focus)
* how they are expected to keep track of their progress.

One of the main benefits of mentoring programmes is that they help match mentees with suitable mentors. There are existing schemes at the University of Dundee that may be of interest to you. Make contact with the University if you’d like to become a mentee or mentor.

More information on the current mentoring schemes can be found here:

www.dundee.ac.uk/opd/otheropportunities/mentoringschemes
CHAPTER 7

Brilliant Mentoring
Brilliant Mentoring

Working towards a brilliant mentoring relationship. Here are two concepts that might help.

Challenge and the ‘ZOUD’

Cliff Bowman suggested that conversations have three dimensions to them. Each is useful but each is different.

The first dimension is the ‘zone of comfortable debate’. This is the area of convivial conversation. Its main values are relationship building and contextual familiarisation.

The second dimension is the ‘zone of uncomfortable debate’. The zone of uncomfortable debate is about challenge. Challenge is at the heart of good mentoring and a key role of the mentor is to help the mentee challenge their own thinking. But the title says it – challenge is not necessarily comfortable. Discomfort might be felt by the mentee, mentor or both, in a challenging discussion. A skilful mentor knows this and can frame challenges positively and prudently without avoiding them.

The third dimension is the ‘intuitive core’. This is about the assumptions that sit at the heart of the relationship and discussion. Shared assumptions can speed up discussions enabling progress to be made more quickly. The dangers are a) where assumptions are not shared between mentor and mentee and this is not recognised and b) where the assumptions are erroneous. A good mentor will periodically question the assumptions perceived to be at the heart of the issue.

GROW - ‘Goal-Reality-Options-Will’

The GROW framework was created by Sir John Whitmore and has become a staple within the fields of mentoring and coaching. GROW illuminates the four key components to a mentoring conversation.

Goal – what the mentee is seeking to achieve (with the help of the mentor).
Reality – what the mentee’s current experience is, how the mentee views the issue.
Options – what possibilities exist for the mentee to develop their capabilities in the chosen area and move towards the goal.
Will – the appetite of the mentee to take responsibility and move to action in the direction of the preferred option(s).
MENTORING TOP TIPS

- Do some research on the mentee - Google them and see what pieces of their professional jigsaw you can find and the profile they are creating for themselves.
- Clarify that mentoring is about sharing of experience and not coaching or counselling.
- If your mentee hasn't done something they committed to at a previous meeting - be curious rather than judgemental.
- If your mentee is having difficulty choosing between options, ask them to explain what would happen/where would it lead, for each option.
- If you feel you need more structure to mentoring discussions, agree to use the GROW model as the basis for the meeting agenda with your mentee.
- Take very brief notes in the meeting, then add to them as soon as the meeting is finished. In that way you'll remain more engaged in the conversation with your mentee.
- If there's the possibility of you taking some action to help the mentee, always check with them first and only take action with their approval.
- Be prepared to share some of your struggles as well as some of your successes with the mentee - failures, rejections and changes of plan and what you learned from them.
- In the early stages of a mentoring relationship, be proactive in arranging meetings and enable the mentee to benefit from your familiarity with and confidence in the process.
- Share some of your wider experiences and thinking about your role within the University - how did you get an understanding of the 'bigger picture'?
- Help the mentee to maintain momentum with the mentoring process by arranging the next meeting at the end of or immediately after the current one.
Further Reading

Aimed mainly at mentors but mentees will also find it helpful.

A number of perspectives explored by different authors.

Covey, S. (1990) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: restoring the character ethic.*
Bestselling guide to time management and personal development.

An exploration of the key skills and successes of effective coaching, mentoring and supervision.

Discussion rooted in ‘real life’ situations.

Easy to dip into - with examples, discussion and key components relevant to 57 aspects of mentoring.

A clear and accessible guide for mentors.

Very practical and user-friendly text.
About the Authors

DR SIMON HASLAM

Dr. Simon Haslam is a ‘Consultant of the Year’ double finalist and was proud to represent the UK in the 2012 Constantinus International consulting awards. He helps organisations and leadership teams on strategy projects and in the application of consulting techniques.

Simon is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, holds a Diploma in Company Direction from the Institute of Directors and is a Fellow of the Institute of Consulting and Certified Management Consultant. He co-owns the market and social research firm FMR Research Ltd, whose work has been cited in Westminster and Scottish Parliaments and received a European Commission best practice commendation.

Simon is a Visiting Fellow at Durham Business School where he leads masters modules in strategy, change and global business and is also the Programme Lead for strategy at the Institute of Directors. He is an Honorary Research Fellow at Strathclyde Business School where he leads programmes on effective consulting skills. His voluntary board roles are as non-executive director with NATA, a community transport charity and as trustee of the Social Research Association.

Specialties: strategic decision making and change - boards and leadership teams

Process consulting Executive development - strategy, consulting skills, change, personal effectiveness

JANET WILKINSON

Janet Wilkinson leads project, group and 1-1 work specialising in research and researcher development, leadership and commercial enterprise related projects across sectors - HEIs in the UK and Ireland, Industry and Commerce, Social Enterprise and not-for-profit. Having benefited significantly from mentoring in her own career she is keen to encourage mentoring and leadership development across all of her work.

DR SANDRA OZA

Sandra has worked in researcher development since 2009, when she made the successful transition from senior postdoctoral associate to a managerial role. As well as overseeing the researcher development programme she is involved in management, leadership and organisational development activities with staff at the University of Dundee. She is a Belbin and Insights Discovery accredited practitioner and works extensively with colleagues across the university on new training and project based initiatives for researchers. She is also the Dundee coordinator for the Cross Institutional Early Careers Academics’ Mentoring scheme which runs annually with the University of St Andrews.