

Information for Mentees

Part 2: The Mentoring Process - Getting Started

How do I make the first contact?

- ❖ Phone or send an email introducing yourself. You could suggest several suitable times or ask your mentor to suggest times suitable to him/her. Think about the qualities of the place where you would like to meet. This could be private or public – your office, mentor’s office, over coffee off or on campus etc., and suggest your preference - preferably somewhere where you will both be free of interruptions.
- ❖ Some mentors advise the Coordinator of particular procedures to follow in making the initial contact which will be passed on to you.
- ❖ As your mentor will be expecting you to make contact, it is important to do this as soon as possible.

What do we do at the first meeting?

- ❖ The first meeting is an introductory one, where you and your mentor are encouraged to share background information and to explore ideas for the relationship to determine if it is likely to be rewarding and productive for both of you.
- ❖ It is a good idea for you and your mentor to exchange information about yourselves: what you do, how long you have been at the University, and any other information about your professional or personal lives that you think may be relevant and are willing to share. This could be achieved by exchanging and talking about your CVs.

How often should we meet?

- ❖ You are encouraged to meet regularly with your mentor so that you have a chance to get to know them and to explore ways in which you can work together. How often you meet and for how long will be up to you and your mentor to agree.
- ❖ Experience of previous mentees has shown that face-to-face meetings on a regular basis (eg every 3 - 4 weeks for about one hour) are an important factor in the success of the mentoring partnership.
- ❖ If possible, meeting more frequently in the early stages (eg every 2 - 3 weeks) is recommended to help get the relationship established.

What are the important things to clarify?

- ❖ In the first couple of meetings it is important to explore what you might like to achieve through the partnership and how you might like to operate as a pair. Things to discuss may include:
 - When, where, how often, and for how long you will meet
 - How formal/informal and how flexible you would like the relationship to be
 - What your goals are for the mentoring relationship

- What kinds of issues, tasks or projects you would like to work on with your mentor
- Whether you will prepare items for discussion beforehand or decide at the meeting
- What kind/how much contact you will have in between meetings, eg by phone or email
- What level of confidentiality you would like to work within
- Whether you want others to know about your mentoring partnership, eg your head of department/supervisor/colleagues, etc.
- How you will keep the relationship going if either party is away or if meetings have to be cancelled/rescheduled

What can I do with my mentor?

- ❖ There are many issues you may wish to discuss with your mentor, including:
 - Goals you have identified through performance management, staff development workshops, etc.
 - Topics such as workplace relationships, communicating effectively, culture change, work/life balance, team work
 - Career-related issues such as career directions, applying for promotion/progression
 - Generic skills such as time management, supervision, team building, public speaking, report writing, applying for grants, etc.
 - How things are done in your mentor's area or other parts of the University
- ❖ In addition to meeting and talking with your mentor, you might also like to consider:
 - Observing them in action (eg chairing a meeting, lecturing, speaking in public)
 - Shadowing them to see what they do in their job on a typical day
 - Asking them to review your work (eg a research proposal, report, conference paper, your resumé or job application)
 - Asking them to observe you in action and give you feedback (eg giving a presentation, in a meeting)
 - Working on a joint project or task together

What support is provided?

- ❖ A briefing will be held about one or two months after you have been matched. This will be designed to explore the mentoring process and to discuss expectations, needs and preferences.
- ❖ Opportunities will be provided to meet more regularly if required.
- ❖ A briefing for mentors will be held to assist in developing mentoring skills.
- ❖ You and your mentor will be contacted part way through the partnership to review how things are going.
- ❖ After nine months you will be asked to review and complete the formal part of the mentoring process.
- ❖ Ongoing support and advice is also available to you and your mentor through the Mentoring Program Coordinator.

How can I make the most of mentoring?

- ❖ View the mentoring as an opportunity to learn from someone else and to share experiences and ideas. Don't think of your mentor as someone to be approached only when you have difficulties or problems that need resolving.
- ❖ Be pro-active and make the time for the mentoring to work. Don't be discouraged if you and your mentor are unable to meet as frequently as you would like, or if meetings have to be postponed, etc.
- ❖ Go into the relationship with some clear goals defined, no matter how big or how small. Use the goals you identified as a starting point for discussion.
- ❖ Identify your weaknesses and be prepared to get your mentor's help with developing in these areas.
- ❖ Don't worry if you don't always have specific issues to discuss with your mentor. Simply meeting and talking with them may spark off ideas for you to work on together. Your mentor will have a range of self-management and leadership skills that you can tap into and gain valuable experience from.
- ❖ Remember that your mentor has willingly agreed to support you and that they too are benefiting from the partnership in many ways.

How do we end the mentoring relationship?

- ❖ Once you have met with your mentor for approximately nine months, you will be encouraged to reassess the relationship to ensure its continuing relevance. There is no requirement to continue the relationship beyond this time unless you and your mentor wish to do so on an informal basis.

What if the relationship isn't working?

- ❖ While every attempt is made to find the best possible mentor for you, occasionally mentoring relationships are not successful. Please be assured that it is possible for you or your mentor to decide not to proceed with the mentoring relationship. If for any reason you feel that the mentoring partnership is not working for you, please contact the Mentoring Program Coordinator as soon as possible. If necessary an alternative mentor can be found for you.

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