

## Top Tips for Mentors

This document is to be used in conjunction with full guidance detailed on the webpage.

Mentoring is a valuable way of supporting colleagues to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. For mentors it can be a rewarding and developmental experience as well as an opportunity to reflect on your own experience and practice.

### Key characteristics of mentoring

- The sessions should focus on long-term growth that has both mentee and organisational benefits.
- The relationship is mentee-centered, helping them achieve career objectives and should be facilitated by them.
- Mentoring partnerships are generally finite and should come to a natural end when the mentee's objectives have been achieved.

### As a mentor, you should:

- Encourage the mentee's development.
- Provide guidance on career development.
- Share experiences and knowledge.
- Offer constructive feedback and support.
- Maintain confidentiality and a safe learning environment.
- Encourage self-reflection and critical thinking.

### Mentoring is NOT:

1. **Mentoring is not managing** - as a mentor you should not assign tasks or evaluate performance. Instead, offer advice, insight, and encouragement without direct authority.
2. **Mentoring is not about giving all the answers** - you are there to guide and challenge the mentee to think critically and develop their own solutions rather than simply providing answers.
3. **Mentoring is not counselling** - if areas of discussion stray into personal issues or concerns, the mentee should be signposted to appropriately trained experts.

### Effective questioning techniques

- Where possible, ask open questions - avoid blind alleys or steering.
- Be careful using 'Why?' (especially in reference to the past), as this can prompt justification and defensiveness.
- Ask one question at a time - and give time for an answer.
- Allow for silence if the other person prefers this time for processing and thinking.
- Listen to the responses - really listen.

Scan to visit  
the mentoring  
website



## Open-ended questions:

- Gain deeper insights (e.g., “What do you expect to achieve?”)
- Explore different avenues (e.g., “What other options might work?”)
- Encourage self-reflection (e.g., “How did that experience shape your thinking?”)

## Closed questions:

- Summarise discussions (“So, are you saying that...?”)
- Confirm key points (“Do you agree with this approach?”)

## Guided decision-making

- Identifying challenges: What are your biggest obstacles?
- Exploring solutions: What approaches have you considered?
- Evaluating outcomes: What are the possible consequences?
- Choosing a path: Which option aligns best with your goals?
- Action planning: What steps will you take next?

## Possible mentoring outcomes

Gain knowledge	Learn skills	Receive guidance
Understanding best practice	Providing input to develop specific skills eg. leadership	Discussions around career pathways
Knowledge about the institution, processes and practices	Supporting development of soft skills eg. communication	Supporting with networking, introductions and connections
Sharing relevant experiences	Supporting with problem-solving	Guidance with applications and interviews
Useful techniques and methods	Strategies for time management	Signposting to training and development opportunities
Work through challenges with new ideas and honest feedback	Skills gained in discipline area	Bounce ideas off a critical friend

## Top mentoring tips

1. **Be patient:** Progress takes time - mentoring is a long-term commitment.
2. **Build a relationship:** Focus on trust and open communication.
3. **Celebrate milestones:** Recognise both small and big achievements.
4. **Challenge constructively:** Encourage mentees to push their boundaries.
5. **Maintain open dialogue:** Keep discussions honest and solution-focused.
6. **Stay flexible:** Adapt mentoring style to evolving needs.

Mentors are passionate about supporting others by sharing their knowledge, expertise and experience and offer valuable ideas and advice when appropriate.

## Contact us

If you have any questions about mentoring at the University please get in touch.  
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