

Mentoring Guide



Contents

Your questions answered

What is (and isn't) mentoring?	3
What's in it for me?	4
How can I make mentoring effective?	6
When is a good time to have a mentor?	7
Where can I find a mentor or mentee?	8

Tips, tools and techniques

Mentoring: the practicalities	9
Structuring your mentoring conversation	10
Listening skills	11
Questioning skills – the funnel technique	12
The first meeting	13
Setting SMART objectives	14
Achieving a SMART objective	15
Mentoring challenges and how to deal with them	16
The GROW technique	17

What is (and isn't) mentoring?



Watching someone grow in confidence, independence and self-worth through mentoring is its own reward."

**Louise Vincent,
Business Analyst,
Finance Division**



My mentor encourages me to aim higher and be braver."

**Charity Green,
Research & External
Relations, Cambridge
Inter-Faith programmes.**

At its very basic core, mentoring is a relationship in which an individual supports a colleague, by sharing their professional knowledge and experiences, and utilising key skills and personal attributes, to enable that colleague to achieve their goals.

The mentoring relationship is focused on enabling the mentee to:

- **Progress in their professional life/career.**
- **Develop their skills, knowledge and capability.**
- **Facilitate their personal & professional development so that the mentee is able to fulfil their potential.**

Mentoring isn't about giving advice, telling the mentee to 'do it the way the way I did it'. It's about motivating and empowering the other person to identify their own issues and goals. The aim is to help them find ways of resolving their issues, or reaching their goals, while understanding and respecting that the mentee may do things differently to the mentor.

Mentoring is not coaching, counselling or therapy - although the mentor may help the mentee to access more specialised support if it becomes apparent that this is needed.

Mentors cannot have, and are not expected to have, all the answers. To be effective, mentors need to encourage their mentee to come up with their own solutions and, if needed, seek advice from their line manager or colleague.

What's in it for me: the mentee



When I first joined the University I found it a complicated beast and would have appreciated a friendly face offering help before I needed to seek it."

Michael Dunn, Finance Advisor, School of the Humanities & Social Sciences



My mentor was the person who helped me make the most of my placements, think through the challenges I faced in a productive way, and helped me have the confidence to apply for my next job.

Katrina West, Business Improvement Manager, Student Funding Team

As well as benefiting from the experiences and knowledge of another colleague, and the time and space to reflect on your current and future challenges and opportunities as a mentee you also benefit from the chance to:

- Get help with setting and achieving personal and professional goals and addressing challenges.
- Share ideas and consider new ways of doing things in a space away from your normal working environment.
- Discuss and receive encouragement to progress your career and develop new skills and knowledge.
- Gain independent feedback on your performance.
- Increase confidence and sense of value.
- Build a support network outside your own team or work area to draw on in the future.
- Understand and gain an insight into other parts of the University.

What's in it for me: the mentor



I learned a lot about management from one mentee, who was new to the University, but very experienced in other walks of life. Being alongside her as she worked through some difficult issues in her job taught me new techniques, and gave me confidence about approaches I was already using.”

**Gillian Weale,
Departmental
Administrator,
Department of Physics**

As well as benefiting from the opportunity to draw on your own experience and knowledge to help another colleague grow and develop, as a mentor, you also benefit from the chance to:

- Develop valuable interpersonal and communication skills such as listening and questioning.
- Have the opportunity to ‘give something back’.
- Share good practice from your own experience.
- Enable new colleagues to ‘hit the ground running’ and be as effective as possible in their role.
- Offer perspectives and insights into new or different ways of doing things.
- Learn from your mentee by gaining exposure to new ideas, approaches and perspectives.
- Give your mentee insight into processes and practices that you are familiar with.
- Gain recognition for your skills and experience and for your contribution as a mentor, raising your professional profile.
- Expand your network outside of your own team, department or institution.

How can I make mentoring effective?

In any mentoring partnership, the mentor and mentee both share responsibility for ensuring the partnership is effective. Their roles may be slightly different, but they are both equally important in making the mentoring a success.

Before starting the mentoring relationship, it is important that both the mentee and the mentor are comfortable with taking on their roles and responsibilities.

Mentee

- Be prepared to 'drive' the relationship – schedule meetings, maintain a record of agreed tasks and goals.
- Come to the first meeting with clarity on what you want to achieve.
- Respect and keep to the points agreed at the start.
- Be prepared to reflect and evaluate your own practice – what went well, what could have been done differently.
- Show commitment and flexibility.
- Be honest and transparent when sharing information.
- Be prepared to step out of your comfort zone and consider new ways of doing things.
- Be receptive to challenge.
- Commit to completing agreed tasks between meetings.
- Be sensitive to the individual - culture, gender etc.

Mentor

- Act as a confidential and non-judgemental sounding board.
- Listen well, question constructively and offer supportive challenge when needed.
- Encourage reflection, and independent and creative thinking.
- Give constructive feedback and provide new insights.
- Respect and keep to the points agreed at the start.
- Recognise and celebrate achievements.
- Focus on the objectives set by the mentee.
- Be willing to share experience, knowledge and expertise.
- Provide advice when relevant.
- Be encouraging and supportive.
- Show commitment and flexibility.
- Be sensitive to your mentee - culture, gender etc.

When is a good time to have a mentor?

A mentor can be a useful resource at any point in your career.

Whether it's at the start, at the end, or at any point in between, mentoring can give you the boost you need. Some of the reasons for seeking support from a mentor might be...



Successful mentoring relationships can be with those who are not necessarily older or more advanced in their profession, as in reverse mentoring for example. By actively surrounding yourself with diverse people (age, race, gender, profession, education, etc.) you can gain a wider perspective which will offer you insights to interpret challenges and setbacks in a different light.

Where can I find a mentor or mentee?

Mentoring can be with someone in your own **department or institution**, or a **colleague outside of your own work area**.

Some departments and institutions have their own mentoring schemes which you can get involved with as a mentee or as a mentor. So ask your Departmental Administrator or HR Manager if one exists where you work.

If you want to find a mentor or a mentee outside of your own team, department or institution, there are various mentoring schemes available across the University.

Go to the **[PPD mentoring web page](#)** to see some examples of where these schemes are taking place and how you can access them.

If you can't find a scheme that is appropriate for you, you can source a mentor or mentee by alerting your own professional networks to your aspiration to either mentor or be mentored.

You could ask someone within your own professional network, or a colleague you have come across that you think you may gel with, or who has the kind of knowledge and experience you are keen to benefit from.

People are usually happy to be approached to be a mentor, so don't feel worried about making contact. They may not be able to help due to other work commitments, but may be able to suggest someone else who you could approach.

Mentoring: the practicalities

At the start of the mentoring relationship, it is important that the mentor and mentee agree the terms of how they intend to work together, the purpose of the mentoring and what to expect from the each other.

Mutual expectations:

- Agree what you both expect from each other e.g. who will be responsible for making arrangements for each meeting (this should be the mentee).
- Review and discuss the roles and responsibilities of both mentor and mentee outlined in 'How can I make the mentoring effective?' on p.6 of this guide.

Practical arrangements:

- Agree when the mentor relationship will start and how long it will last for. You can always decide to extend the relationship if you both wish, but it is best to set a finite time from the outset.
- Agree when you will review progress – depending on the reason for the mentoring relationship, this could take place after the first or second meeting or much later in the relationship.
- Agree how often and how long you'll meet for, and a regular meeting location that is convenient for both of you, including online if suitable.
- Discuss and agree whether the mentee can contact the mentor between meetings and, if so, what the circumstances for that might be e.g. to ask a particular question. It is a good idea to agree this initially and re-negotiate if it gets out of hand — which is unlikely if your other meetings are regular.

Confidentiality:

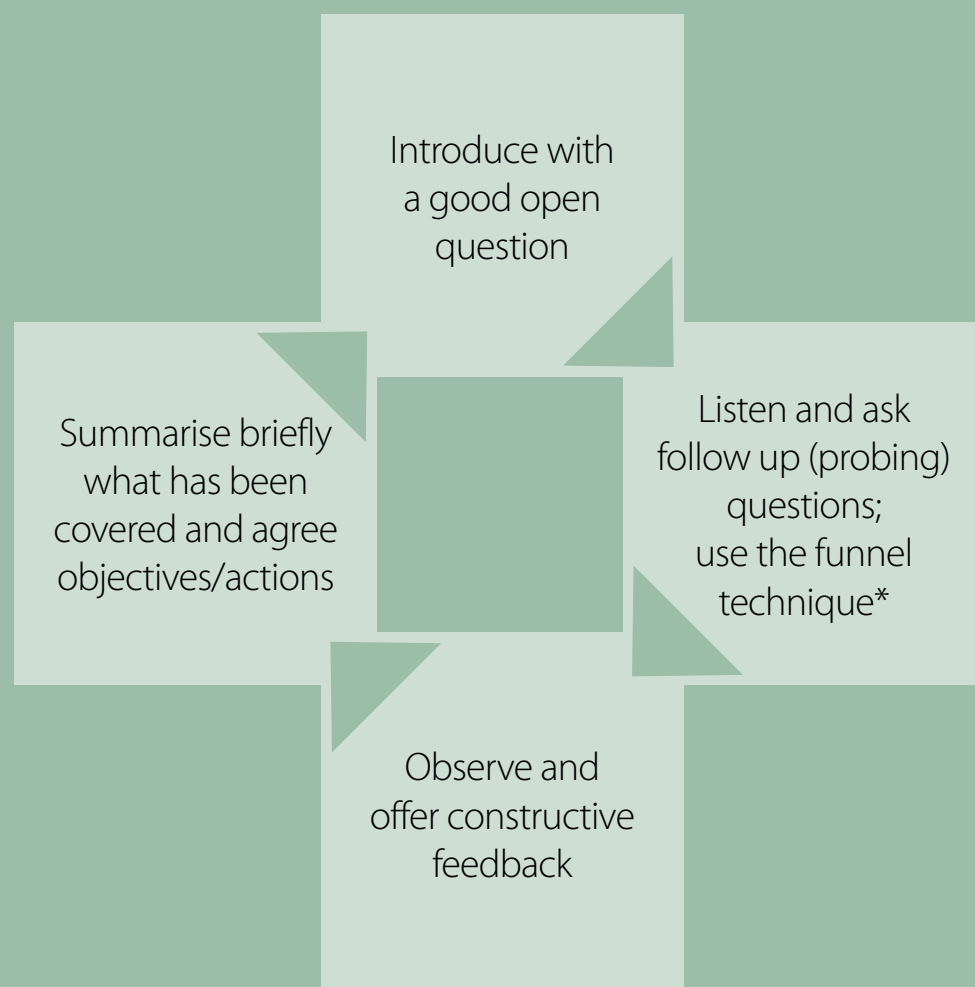
- In order to build an effective and trusting mentoring relationship, agree together that you will not disclose to anyone else what is discussed in the mentoring conversations unless otherwise agreed.

Review and evaluation:

- At the end of the arrangement, look back over the time and list what went well and
- What you might do differently another time. Comment constructively on each other's handling of the role.

Structuring your mentoring conversation

It is helpful to structure your mentoring conversation to ensure that conversation remains focused and productive. Each topic that is discussed, can be structured by **encouraging self reflection, setting and agreeing goals** and finally **agreeing actions and timeframes**. The following communication cycle supports this structured approach.



* The funnel technique is addressed on p.13 of this guide

Tips on Giving Feedback are available in the **Giving Effective Feedback online course**

Listening skills

Listening is a core skill for being an effective mentor and mentee. How well you listen has a major impact on the quality of your relationship.

To improve your listening skills, practise **active listening** - making a conscious effort to hear the words and understand the meaning behind them.

Pay careful attention. Try not to become distracted, bored or lose focus.

It can be challenging to stay focused. You may be thinking ahead to your next question or topic of discussion for example.

If you're finding it difficult to focus or concentrate, try repeating the words mentally – this will reinforce their message and help you stay focused.

L

Listen to what is being said and how it is being said – tone of voice, speed, volume.

I

Interpret non-verbal messages - body language, facial expressions etc.

S

Show you are being attentive – affirming gestures such as nodding, smiling – and short words or noises 'um', 'yes', 'go on'. Avoid interrupting.

T

Try to understand the meaning, not just hear the words – listen and ask questions.

E

Evaluate and summarise/paraphrase the words of your mentor or mentee back to them to clarify you have understood.

N

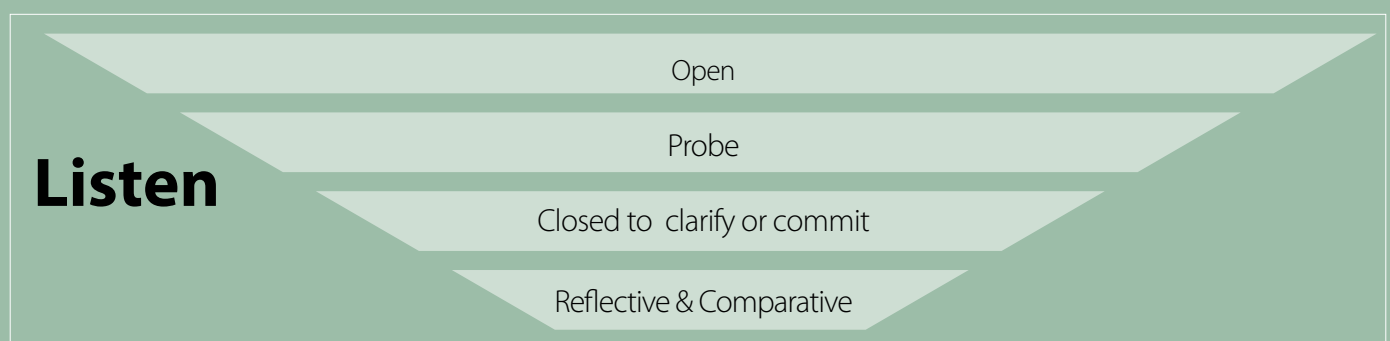
Neutralise your feelings – try not to show negative emotions e.g. shock, disapproval, as this may affect your mentee or mentor's willingness to be open with you in the future.

Tips on active listening are available in the **Communication Essentials online course**

Questioning skills: the funnel technique

Asking the right questions is another critical skill in the mentoring process.

The funnel technique involves starting with general questions, and then drilling down, asking for more detail each time.



Question types	Examples
Open: Framed to encourage a detailed response and prompt thought and reflection.	How have things been since we last met?
Probing: Help to get under the surface of an initial answer and bring out more detail, enabling the mentee to explore an issue in depth.	What was that like for you?
Closed: Framed to elicit a yes or no answer. They are used to clarify or to commit to something, or to check understanding.	My understanding is that. ...is that right? You are happy to agree to complete that objective before we next meet, yes?
Reflective: Repeat something the mentee has said or implied, enabling them to reflect on the impact of what they have said. Can provide new insights.	So you've told me that... It sounds like from what you have said that...
Comparative: A form of closed questions, providing the mentee with options to decide on the most suitable way forward.	Which would you say is more difficult to achieve?

The **Communication Essentials online course** has more about questioning

The first meeting

As well as discussing the practicalities (see p.8 of this guide), during the first mentoring conversation it's important to start building a good relationship and understand what you both want and can give to the mentoring relationship.

The questions on this page may help you get to know each other and establish a solid basis from which to build a positive mentoring relationship.

- What can you tell me about yourself to help me to get to know you better?
- What do you think we need to do to make this mentorship work?
- What are you want to get out of this mentoring relationship?
- What knowledge, skills or experience do you wish to gain from the mentoring relationship?
- What do you need from me?
- What knowledge, skills and abilities do you feel I possess that would most benefit you?
- What are your strengths?
- What are the areas that you feel you need to develop in?
- What is the toughest stretch for you?
- How can I best understand what you need and how can I best help you?
- What is the best way to give you feedback?
- Do you feel successful in your role at this time? If not, what is preventing you from succeeding?
- What satisfies you most at work?
- What do you like best about your job?
- What are your career goals?
- What have been the most significant learning experiences in your career?
- What do you think most hinders your success?
- How do you learn best?
- What scares you?
- What do you need from me today?
- Who/how will we keep a record of what is discussed in our meetings?

Setting SMART objectives

To ensure the mentoring relationship is effective, it is important that there are tangible outcomes from the mentoring process.

These agreed actions can be captured as objectives for the mentee to work on.

In order to be effective, objectives need to be distinguished from a general expression of intent. They must be clear, achievable and provide a definition of success.

Clear and achievable objectives typically have five key characteristics:

S	Specific – Clear, unambiguous and focused on specific deliverables
M	Measurable – Include milestones and markers to measure progress over time
A	Attainable – Realistic but requiring a stretch
R	Relevant – Aligned with the overarching University and departmental goals
T	Time-based – Include a time frame for achieving each specific objective

Achieving a SMART objective

1. Identify

what needs to be achieved

2. Clarify

and record it using SMART

3. Consider

what needs to be done to achieve each objective

To help the mentee work through these steps, the mentor can consider using a specific technique named **'GROW'** outlined on p.18.

More tips on setting **SMART objectives at PPD on demand**

Mentoring challenges and how to deal with them

Relationships that don't gel

Not all mentoring partnerships work out. It's no one's fault, it's just the way it is. Any mentoring relationship should have a no-fault termination policy. You can ensure that this is less likely to happen by starting with an initial meeting to check the 'chemistry' is right before you begin your mentoring relationships.

This should include a frank and honest discussion about what you want and need, and how you see the role of mentor and mentee.

Unrealistic expectations

Mentees' expectations for their mentoring partners can be unrealistic. A mentor cannot and should not provide all the answers. Be flexible and discuss with your mentor where you could look for additional support if needed e.g. your line manager, a colleague, the Counselling Service.

Equally, mentors should feel confident to say that they don't have the knowledge or experience to support the mentee with a particular issue.

If you experience any issues during the mentoring relationship, it's important to be open and honest with your mentor/mentee. Discuss what isn't working and try to reach an agreement as to how to resolve the issue and move forward. If you can't resolve the issue, you both need to agree to finish the relationship at that point and part on good terms.

Managing Challenging Conversations
online course

The GROW technique

Goal: What is the objective or desired outcome?

It must be specific and measurable, think SMART. Ask the mentee:

How will you know when you have achieved that goal?

Reality: What is the current situation? What is stopping the goal from being reached? Check any assumptions with the mentee:

Why do you think that might happen?

Options: What choices do they have? What different journeys can they choose to reach the goal? This is also known as 'Obstacles Exploration.' Avoid making suggestions on the mentees' behalf.

Way Forward: What will they do next? This is also known as 'Will' or 'Way forward.' Gain commitment to an action and a follow-up if required.



More information about the **GROW model** and how to apply it at **PPD** on demand



Mentoring can come in many forms... formal/peer/informal/upward and can be really rewarding for both mentor and mentee. Mentoring for me is a mutual way of learning and of developing new understandings of people, roles and the workplace. In a complex organisation, having a mentor or being a mentor can really help you to navigate in all roles and career stages."

**Milly Bodfish,
Secretary of the School of Arts and Humanities**



During my progression through the University I have had one absolutely unbelievable and solid mentor that made a profound difference in my attitude towards work, the problems I dealt with and general experience on matters. He was a focal point for me and a sounding board for when something hadn't gone to plan. Without this mentoring I wouldn't have got as far as I have, and I certainly wouldn't have had his experience to draw on to influence my own path."

**Adam Brown, Technical Operations Manager,
Chemical Engineering & Biotechnology**