

Guidance for Mentors

1. Introduction

Mentoring is employed to provide a variety of individual support strategies in which there is learning by association with an appropriate role model. It can offer an effective means of facilitating development and change in individuals and their profession.

The essential feature is a focus on a one to one relationship between mentor and learner which ensures individual attention and support for the learner

A mentor can provide this support as a facilitator, counsellor, role model, challenger, advisor, coach, guide and co-ordinator. Key to the success of this relationship is a requirement that both parties get on well together, have mutual respect for each other and are fully committed to the relationship.

Essential skills for the mentor include a willingness to make time and share experiences, a capacity to listen and communicate effectively, an ability to offer challenges, and a high level of personal enthusiasm and integrity. Suitable mentors may include, for example, those who have been trained as appraisers. (addendum 1)

2. Agreement of Roles

At an early stage in the working relationship, the mentor and learner need to establish a structure for the relationship. This should be defined, agreed and written down as an informal contract/agreement that will address the following issues:

Objectives: What is the purpose of the mentoring; what concerns will need to be clarified; will limitations be set on subject matter.

Meetings: What will be the frequency and duration; will meetings be arranged on demand, at regular intervals or by arrangement; will communication take place by telephone, email or face to face. Both parties must be happy with the location of meetings giving due regard to safety, security, mutual well being and travel arrangements.

Monitoring and evaluation: How will progress be assessed; are a formal agenda and minutes to be issued; how will review of progress relate to objectives.

Clear policies, an agreed structure and open communications will help to avert problems such as:

- conflict about roles between mentor, learner and management
- the learner becoming dependant on the mentor
- accusations of favouritism and professional jealousy from colleagues

3. Procedures and Conditions

The mentor should have a practical working knowledge of the required format of the written submission, the procedures by which the Professional Institution will assess the candidate's submission, and the standard required. Points which need to be considered include:

- The mentor's role is to respond to the mentee's developmental needs

- The mentor must not impose his/her own agenda and should be non-prescriptive. It is the role of the mentor to offer advice and support.
- Both parties should take equal responsibility for progression of the mentoring partnership.
- Any matters discussed between the mentor and mentee should be treated as confidential. The mentor should not act on behalf of the mentee. (addendum 2)
- The mentor and mentee should respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring that they do not impose beyond what is reasonable.

The mentor will neither take part in the formal assessment of the submission or the Viva voce examination. The mentoring relationship is entirely voluntary for both parties. The Professional Institution does not reimburse any expenditure.

4. Feedback

The mentor should provide constructive feedback to the mentee, while the mentee should attempt to tackle any areas for development. It is the mentor's role to challenge and support the mentee. However, mentors should realise their own limitations. Where the required experience, knowledge or skills are lacking, mentors should be able to refer a mentee elsewhere for advice.

5. E-mentoring

Most of the above guidelines will apply to those participating in e-mentoring pairings, however, additional points which need to be taken into consideration are as follows:

- When face-to-face mentoring is not possible for individuals (distance difficulties, no local mentor/mentee availability, etc), e-mentoring may be suggested and co-ordinated by the Professional Institution.
- Whilst e-mentoring may be convenient it also has to be recognised that it can have its limitations; for example:
 - it may take longer to build a good mentoring relationship
 - the benefits of a face to face meeting such as facial expressions, body language, etc are lost

6. Ending

The relationship should last for a mutually agreeable time period, whereupon it can be continued or terminated.

Both mentor & mentee should share responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship once it has achieved its purpose, and for informing the Professional Institution.

Either party may terminate the relationship after discussing the matter with one another first ensuring mutual respect and understanding of the conclusion.