

Mentorship Guide

For university students and recent graduates

A mentorship program or relationship can be very rewarding for both the mentor and the mentee. However, both need to understand the relationship and the expected outcomes.

A mentor shares experience and perspective to support your development. It is a great way to get perspective from someone who has been there before. It's a way to proactively take charge of your growth as an employee and a professional. Start with a clear learning need, agree on expectations together, and take responsibility for applying what you learn.

Understand the relationship

Mentoring draws on the mentor's experience to offer guidance, context, and feedback. It is different from teaching, coaching, or managing, although each of those can have a mentoring component. Teaching or training focuses on skills or knowledge transfer. Coaching places greater emphasis on developing your own thinking and solutions through questions. A manager is primarily interested in achieving results for the organization. A mentor may use several approaches to offer advice and guidance. However, the mentee remains ultimately responsible for decisions and actions.

Note: Mentorship does not guarantee employment or access to the mentor's contacts.

Identify what you need

Choose one or two development priorities, such as understanding a career field, strengthening workplace communication, or preparing for your first leadership responsibility. Seek someone with relevant experience, availability, and a communication style that helps you learn. A suitable mentor need not be the most senior person.

My development priority: _____

Why it matters now: _____

What progress would look like: _____

Experience I would value in a mentor: _____

Begin with a small request

Hello [name],

I am working on [development goal], and your experience in [area] would be valuable. Would you be willing to have an initial 20-minute conversation about [specific question]? If we both find it useful, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss a short series of mentoring meetings. I would understand if your schedule does not allow this.

Best regards,

[name]

Agree on expectations

Discuss the goal, meeting length and frequency, communication method, preparation, confidentiality and its limits, and how either person can end the arrangement. An optional starting point is three monthly meetings followed by a review; agree on what is realistic for both people. Do not assume introductions, reference letters or out-of-meeting availability.

Use each meeting well

Before: send a short agenda, progress update and one or two questions.

During: describe a real situation, listen to the mentor's perspective, ask for examples, and consider which advice fits your context.

After: choose one or two actions, set a date, send thanks and report progress at the next meeting. If you miss a commitment, explain what happened and agree on a realistic next step.

Useful mentoring questions

- What would you consider before making this decision?
- What did you learn from a similar situation?
- What skills should I develop for this kind of role?
- What do you notice in my approach that I could improve?
- How could I practise this before our next meeting?

Meeting and action record

Meeting date and focus: _____

Progress since last meeting: _____

Situation or question discussed: _____

Advice and options I considered: _____

Action I choose to take: _____

Completion date: _____

Evidence of progress: _____

Question for next meeting: _____

Review and close respectfully

At the agreed review point, discuss progress against the original goal, what has helped and whether to continue, change focus or finish. If the match is unhelpful or boundaries are unclear, raise this respectfully and adjust or end the arrangement. Thank the mentor with specific examples of what you learned.

Keep private information private and ask permission before sharing advice attributed to the mentor. Avoid sharing confidential employer or university material. A mentor can guide your career learning; use an appropriate qualified service for concerns beyond their expertise.