

# Mentoring

The following are helpful extracts from a Manchester Metropolitan University publication – ‘**Mentoring Guidelines**’.

## What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is essentially about helping people to develop more effectively. It is a relationship designed to build confidence and support the mentee so they are able to take control of their own development and work.

Mentoring is not the same as training, teaching or coaching, and a mentor doesn't need to be a qualified trainer or an expert in the role the mentee carries out. They need to be able to listen and ask questions that will challenge the mentee to identify the course of action they need to take in regards to their own development. The following definition provides a useful insight:

“ **off-line help by one person to another in making significant transactions in knowledge, working or thinking** ”

(Clutterbuck & Megginson 1995)

Off-line means an individual who is not the mentee's direct line manager. A mentor is different from a line manager in that they will not have direct responsibility for the mentee's work performance but they will be responsible for encouraging the mentee to work towards their own individual objectives and be a motivating guide for the mentee on their journey.

## When to use Mentoring

Mentoring can be used for a wide variety of situations and different points in someone's working life for example:

- Induction for a new starter\*.
- Individuals working towards promotion.
- Staff who have changed roles in the department or across the organisation.
- Staff on structured learning programmes for example ILM programmes.
- Changes to job roles for example following a restructure.
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD).

# What is a Mentor?

A mentor is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as an “experienced and trusted adviser”. This description reflects how we would like to see mentors work with their mentees. Your role as mentor will cover at least some of the following:

- Listen
- Ask questions to help develop your's and the mentee's understanding of a situation or problem
- Provide information and knowledge and share informal networks
- Provide advice on career development
- Offer different perspectives
- Provide support and encouragement
- Provide an insight into your work and career
- Offer guidance and advice in regards to qualifications
- Be a sounding board
- Be a critical friend
- Encourage self reflection
- Help mentees identify areas for development

As a mentor you will have the opportunity to use your experience and knowledge in a facilitative manner to support the development of the mentee. However, the responsibility for making things happen and putting plans into action lies primarily with the mentee - not with you.

# Why Mentoring?

- It has flexibility – mentoring can happen in so many ways and under lots of different circumstances
  - Is an off line activity- it is not a role carried out by the mentee's line manager although mentoring conversations can become part of day to day activity and don't always need to be scheduled
  - It relates to work and the job
  - It is individual – each relationship will be unique to those two individuals involved
  - It is people centred
  - It provides a feedback system- feedback is central to mentoring and is a great tool to enhance and embed learning
  - It is broad in focus – it should meet the needs of the mentee and mentor
  - It is not exclusive – but actually complements other methods of learning
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# Skills and experience required to be a Mentor

- **Self Awareness** – you should have a good understanding of your own strengths and development needs.
- **Organisational know-how** – you should know how to get things done at MMU and how things work.
- **Credibility** – you should have personal and professional credibility, this may include being a member of relevant organisations.
- **Accessibility** – you should be willing and able to commit sufficient time to your mentee to offer support and guidance.
- **Communication** – you need excellent communication skills and be able to understanding the ideas and feelings of others. You also need to be a great listener.
- **Ability to empower** – you should be able to create an working environment where it is safe for individuals to try out different things, allowing them to contribute in different ways.
- **A desire to help others develop** – you should understand how individuals develop and have experience, either formally or informally, of developing others.
- **Inventiveness** – be open to new ways of doing things and different ways of working.
- **Empathy** – Ability to empathise with others.
- **Understanding** – You should be prepared to try to understand different perspectives, approaches and possibly backgrounds of different mentees.

## Remember to

- Focus on what the mentee needs to achieve
- Listen more than you talk
- Support and encourage the mentee
- Encourage the mentee to adress challenging issues
- Keep an open mind.

## Don't

- Take responsibility for the action plan
- Assume that what worked for you will work for your mentee
- Take action on behalf of the mentee unless you jointly agree that this is the best course of action
- Assume you know what the problem or the answer is.



<p><b>Coaching</b></p> <p>This is a very active role for the mentor where you will be working with the mentee to encourage them in the development of relevant skills and attitudes for the future. The focus of the coaching role is on the ability to help the mentee see beyond the current situation and to identify what the future can look like and what needs to happen to help achieve this. This is helpful in setting goals and identifying what actions an individual needs to take next.</p>	<p><b>Core skills needed :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening with an open mind and suspending judgements</li> <li>• Being able to see the issue from a different perspective, that of the mentee</li> <li>• Identifying behaviour that needs to change</li> <li>• Helping mentees to recognise their own individual strengths and areas of weakness</li> <li>• Providing constructive feedback</li> <li>• Setting projects that will stretch the mentee</li> <li>• Ability to clarify so both parties have a shared understanding</li> <li>• Being able to take a mentee back through and experience, to help them to evaluate it and to recognise what could have been done differently.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Counselling</b></p> <p>In counselling mode the mentor acts as a sounding board what the mentee is solving a problem or making a difficult decision. As a confidant, the mentor helps the mentee to clarify the real issues involved and to see the bigger picture.</p>	<p><b>Core skills needed :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening – withholding comments unless it helps the mentee to clarify their thoughts</li> <li>• Focusing on observable behaviours rather than personality traits</li> <li>• The ability to handle negative information without driving the mentee into an emotional corner</li> <li>• Avoiding unconstructive arguments</li> <li>• Being able to help move the mentee into constructive problem solving mode</li> <li>• Knowing when to call in specialist advice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Networking</b></p> <p>In the role of networking the mentor alerts the mentee to the use of contacts both formal and informal outside of the official structure of the department. They also explain how these individuals can add value to the mentee in the achievement of their goals..</p>	<p><b>Core skills needed :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ability to define and understand networks, what adds value and why</li> <li>• Understanding key areas you need to influence and who are the key individuals</li> <li>• PCreating opportunities for mentees to meet others who will help provide information or opportunities to help develop gaps in the mentee's knowledge</li> </ul>
<p><b>Facilitating</b></p> <p>The mentor as facilitator takes action that will indirectly smooth the way for something else to happen. This could be as simple as passing on a phone number or making an introduction to someone who will be helpful for the mentee either now or in the future. By facilitating you are starting a process that will help the mentee to pursue their goals.</p>	<p><b>Core skills needed :</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being clear about what needs to happen and why</li> <li>• Recognising potential barriers and what causes them</li> <li>• Provides advice and guidance on ways to overcome barriers</li> <li>• An understanding of the politics of management</li> <li>• Smoothing the path for mentees for example by providing introductions, backing ideas and spreading the word on projects the mentee is working on</li> </ul>