

Leadership And Management Development

Mentee's Handbook

Helping you to get the most from your mentoring



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Introduction

This Handbook is for colleagues who have a mentor. It aims to provide you with an easy-to-use guide that will support you at each stage of your mentoring relationship and to get the most from the mentoring experience.

If you have any queries, please contact the Leadership and Management Development team at LMD@warwick.ac.uk

Mentoring at Warwick

“Mentoring is a learning relationship, involving the sharing of skills, knowledge, and expertise between a mentor and mentee through developmental conversations, experience sharing, and role modelling. The relationship may cover a wide variety of contexts and is an inclusive two-way partnership for mutual learning that values differences.” (EMCC (European Mentoring and Coaching Council), 2024)

Mentoring provides staff with the opportunity to receive focused developmental support outside of their normal line management relationship. Mentors will use their knowledge, expertise and experience to help enhance the performance and/or development of a colleague. Mentoring and coaching are different, and the University has a separate provision for coaching. Find out more about coaching [here](#).

Staff may seek mentoring to help with any aspect of their development. Mentoring is often used to support:

- Talent development.
- Specific skill development.
- Career development.
- New to the University/HE sector.
- New to the role.
- Specialist / subject matter support.

Mentee’s Responsibilities

- To actively engage in the mentoring process, accepting personal responsibility for the outcomes.
- Act with integrity regarding meetings with mentors, including arriving on time and being prepared.
- To maintain confidentiality, as agreed during your contracting conversation.
- To undertake any actions identified during a mentoring meeting by the agreed deadline.
- To be honest with the mentor about how the relationship is working.
- To provide feedback on your mentoring experience to the mentor, if requested.
- To respect the mentor’s time, to not impose beyond what is reasonable and to not ask for excessive support from the mentor in between mentoring meetings.

- To respect the position of third parties (e.g., the line manager).
- To adhere to the [University's values](#) and [guiding principles](#).
- To arrange a suitable location for the mentoring meetings if they are taking place in person.

Conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest is a situation in which a mentor or mentee is in a position to gain unfair advantage / benefit from the mentoring relationship, or where there is a clash between their job role and their mentor or mentee role. An example is where a mentor is also a member of an interview panel for a job for which the mentee is a candidate.

Consider the impact of a mentoring relationship on your other working practices, processes, and relationships. If either party perceives an actual or potential conflict of interest, they should have an open and honest conversation about it. If a conflict of interest exists, you may need to set boundaries around what you can or cannot discuss. Don't take the mentoring forward if you feel that entering a mentoring arrangement will compromise you or your mentor in any way.

Stages in Mentoring

Identify your mentor

Once you have identified a mentor that you would like to work with, you can make contact with them to ask if a mentoring relationship is something they could help with. If they agree, you can arrange to meet with them for a chemistry conversation.

Chemistry conversation

A chemistry conversation is the first meeting between the potential mentor and mentee. It is an informal, friendly discussion which enables both parties to get to know each other, build rapport and to assess whether they are a good match and can work together.

A chemistry conversation is a 'no- commitment' conversation. This means that either party can decide not to go ahead with the mentoring relationship, without blame. It simply means that they feel they are not the right match. This chemistry conversation can take place online, in a meeting room or, if both parties are comfortable, in a public place such as a café. Once you decide to go ahead with a mentoring relationship, you will have a 'contracting conversation'.

Topics you might want to discuss during the chemistry conversation:

- Find out about the mentor – ask them open questions about their career, role, interests.
- Explain what you are looking for in a mentor and what you hope to gain from mentoring
- Previous mentoring experience as a mentor or mentee and what you gained from this.
- Your career and professional experience.

- A little about you as a person, interests etc. – within the boundaries that you are comfortable to share.

Contracting conversation

The contracting conversation is an important and essential part of mentoring. It is a conversation between the mentor and mentee and is led by the mentor. It takes place before the mentoring begins or at the beginning of the first mentoring meeting. The purpose of the contracting conversation is to ensure a shared understanding of:

- What mentoring is and isn't.
- The boundaries in which the mentoring relationship will operate.
- How the mentoring will work in practice.
- The roles and responsibilities of both parties.

The contracting conversation involves reaching an explicit agreement that provides structure, guidance, and alignment for both the mentor and mentee. A lack of shared understanding could lead to assumptions or misunderstandings later in the mentoring relationship.

Topics to cover during a contracting conversation:

Confidentiality	Duration of mentoring relationship
Role & responsibilities of mentor & mentee	Record keeping
Boundaries	Review arrangements
Conflict of interest	Mentee's goals
Duration of mentoring meetings	Mentor's goals (if appropriate)
Frequency of meetings	Feedback
Postponement or cancellation arrangements	Completion/ending the mentoring relationship

Mentoring conversations

Having had a chemistry conversation and a contracting conversation, you should have been able to get to know your mentor and to start to build a rapport with them. At the first mentoring meeting it is recommended that you review your goals, check they are still relevant, before moving into your first mentoring conversation.

Reviewing progress

Progress reviews are valuable as they help both parties identify and acknowledge your progress towards achieving your goals. You can discuss with your mentor a suggested timeframe to review progress.

Feedback

It is good practice for mentors to ask their mentees for feedback. Mentors are committed to developing their mentoring ability and therefore your honest feedback is very important.

Ending the mentoring relationship

Ideally the ending of a mentoring relationship is anticipated and will have been planned for by agreeing to the duration of the relationship during the contracting conversation. It is good practice for your mentor to review your progress and achievements during the mentoring, so you may want to think about this before your final mentoring meeting. Reflect on what you have learnt and your successes and consider how you might continue your learning.

Getting the most out of your mentoring

Identify goals using SMART

Setting goals is an important part of mentoring. Goal setting is powerful and will help you to:

- Create a sense of purpose.
- Have a clear focus.
- Overcome procrastination.
- Foster better time management.
- Hold yourself accountable.
- Measure your progress.

You should determine your own goals and what you want to achieve through mentoring, although your mentor may help you to shape and define the goals. Goals will be discussed during the contracting conversation, so that both parties know what they are working towards and what success looks like. As far as possible, develop goals which are SMART as it will be easier to review progress made towards achieving them.

- **Specific** – is the goal clear?
- **Measurable** – how will you know when it has been achieved? Use an active verb or action word to help make the goal measurable; for example: complete, publish, plan, produce, develop, design, install, observe, identify, investigate, propose.
- **Achievable** – do you have the resources and time to meet the goal? Is it realistic?
- **Relevant** – does the goal align with your development needs and/or career?
- **Time-based** – does the goal have a deadline or series of milestones?

Be open and honest

Be open about what you need from mentoring and tell your mentor what you need from them. Think about how much challenge you want and are comfortable with and share this with your mentor. Be honest if you need something to change. Mentors will be open to receiving feedback.

Build rapport and trust

Be prepared to work at the mentoring relationship. The most successful relationships are based on trust, and both parties will need to work to establish trust at the beginning. Building rapport is a great start towards building trust; you can build rapport by sharing a little about yourself and finding areas of mutual interest or similarity.

Be aware of different types of support

Mentoring support can be broadly categorised as both providing advice and guidance and challenging your perspectives and helping you to think differently. Be prepared for both types of support. Mentors will not be able to provide all the answers and often the most effective solutions are those you come up with yourself.

Do your preparation

Come to each mentoring meeting with an idea of what you want to focus on. This might be a challenge at work or a goal you have set yourself. It may be helpful to share this with your mentor before the meeting.

Ask questions

Be curious and use different types of questions to gain information, generate ideas and test your understanding.

Commit to actions

Mentors will guide you towards identifying actions that will help you to make progress. Write down any actions you identify and make sure you commit time to carry out the actions before the next mentoring meeting or within the timescale you set yourself.

Review progress and reflect

Periodically reviewing your progress through the mentoring process is helpful. Thinking about your mentoring goals, outcomes of discussions, actions and reflections can help to bring about insights, build self-awareness, and consolidate learning.

Be respectful

Mentors will be very supportive of the mentoring process. However, they are all busy and the mentoring is in addition to their normal role and workload. Be respectful of their time and give them plenty of notice if you need to cancel or reschedule a mentoring meeting.

Leave your comfort zone

Mentoring is an opportunity to test out ideas and seek feedback in a safe environment. Your mentor can help you to remove barriers and take you out of your comfort zone; use your mentor as a sounding board. Leaving your comfort zone is often where real learning happens. Try new things, do things differently and allow yourself to make mistakes.

When mentoring relationships do not work out

Hopefully, you will find yourself in a productive and rewarding mentoring relationship. Occasionally mentoring arrangements do not work out, despite everyone's best efforts. Sometimes there is a mismatch on an interpersonal level, or miscommunication between mentor and mentee. Not every pair is a good match, and that is okay.

Jointly explore whether there are things you could both do to get the relationship working more effectively. Do not feel guilty or a failure if the mentoring arrangement is not working out. It is better to acknowledge this as soon as possible and explore why you are feeling this rather than carrying on regardless. You might find that this process is a valuable learning opportunity.

Good luck on your mentoring journey!

