

SKILLS HANDBOOK
for **Mentors and Mentees**
completing **Initial Teacher Training Qualifications**
within **Work Based Learning**





Contents

What is Mentoring?	3
The benefits of Mentoring	4
The principles in Mentoring	4
The Mentor's role	5
The Mentoring relationship	6
Preparing for the role of Mentor	9
Review Meetings	10
Other useful sources of material	12

Introduction

This Handbook was produced to support mentors and mentees involved in the WBL Mentoring Pilot and is a useful resource with which to support those taking on the role of a mentor or mentee, whether as part of a formal mentoring programme or not.

It is particularly aimed at mentors in work based learning, supporting candidates undertaking Initial teacher Training Qualifications but could be used in other mentoring settings. The Handbook gives guidelines and information that can be used to develop a relationship/partnership between mentor and mentee. It has been written from the mentor's perspective, providing support and guidance to facilitate the mentee's personal and professional development.

What is mentoring?

A 'mentor' has become synonymous with trusted adviser, friend, teacher, wise person, the Oxford Dictionary defining it as: "experienced and trusted adviser".

Mentoring has been an established tool/process used by organisations to develop individuals helping them reach their potential. However for most, the process is informal and is defined by the mentor assisting the mentee to discover something new about their capabilities and self.

Many definitions of 'mentoring' have been offered, but its very nature has defied definition, as it has been used in different establishments through different systems. This has given those taking part varied experiences and different support mechanisms.

There are commonalities which appear when looking at definitions of Mentoring such as:

- A professional relationship.
- Support for professional development.
- Personal support.
- A partnership lasting over a pre-determined and fixed time-scale.
- A significant process over an individual's career.

One way to help in understanding what mentoring is, is to look at what mentoring is not:

- It is not a tutor/student relationship where the focus is on producing an academic outcome within a prescribed syllabus where the tutor is in control.
- It is not an instructor/trainee relationship focusing on learning skills and techniques to perform a specific function where the instructor is in control of the learning process.
- It is not a manager/employee relationship where the manager controls the outcome of the task.
- It is not a friend/friend relationship, which mainly focuses on personal development usually outside work, focusing on either friend depending on the circumstances.

For work based learning we can see the mentoring process as: "a relationship orchestrated to provide professional and personal support". The mentor uses their experience to facilitate and support the development of the mentee. Mentoring is used to assist individuals at specific times of development or transition and lasts for a defined period of time. The relationship provides an opportunity for both to develop and benefit from the process.

The benefits of mentoring

Mentoring will have a clear and positive effect on the personal and professional development of the mentee. It is also intended to benefit the mentors and the organisations they work for.

Your involvement as a Mentor offers support by:

- Giving the mentee an insight into your work and career.
- Assisting them with practical tips on planning and strategy.
- Offering advice and guidance.
- Developing understanding, skills and problem-solving support
- Encouraging reflection and recognise and celebrate effective practice.
- Identifying areas for development and improve self confidence.

Your involvement will benefit you and your organisation as the project allows you the opportunity to:

- Develop and practise coaching skills.
- Demonstrate your commitment to equality and diversity.
- Gain a real understanding of diversity issues facing mentees.
- Share knowledge and experience and good practice.
- Improve job satisfaction, motivation and enhance peer recognition.
- Encourage self-reflection and develop specific skills.

The principles in mentoring

The following principles underpin the project and the mentoring scheme and should not involve any formal assessment activities as the mentor is a critical friend and not part of any formal process in the qualification requirements.

- 1) There must be shared understanding of and agreement with the purposes of the mentoring scheme
- 2) The process has to be understood by all those taking part
- 3) The mentoring project is a constructive, developmental form of support – of mutual benefit to those taking part
- 4) There will be adequate training, preparation and support for those taking part in the mentoring scheme
- 5) A clear understanding of and agreement on the level of confidentiality will be required within the mentoring relationship
- 6) Any written record produced should be appropriate to the needs of the mentor and mentee and should be accessible to the mentee
- 7) The mentoring scheme will reflect and promote a commitment to equal opportunities
- 8) Open communication and consultation will occur throughout the implementation and management of the scheme
- 9) The continuing development of the mentoring scheme will require regular reviews of its operation
- 10) Participants will create a time frame both for the frequency of meetings and for the duration of the relationship

The mentor's role

The relationship between mentor and mentee is very much mentee-centred, focusing on their professional and personal development. It may include the giving of advice, information, establishing facts, sign-posting, self-appraisal, etc. Whatever the techniques, the emphasis is on enabling and empowering the mentee to take charge of their own development and their environment.

To allow this transition the importance of interpersonal skills is essential. These skills include listening effectively, empathy, understanding, a non-judgemental approach and the ability to facilitate through skilled questioning.

The role of the Mentor is to:

- Listen
- Question, to elicit facts
- Give information, knowledge about organisation/occupation and informal networks
- Offer different perspectives
- Offer support and encouragement
- Draw on own experience when appropriate
- Confront and discuss current issues
- Take the lead and make decisions – at least early on in the relationship

And to encourage the Mentee to:

- Take responsibility for their own development
- Review and reflect on themselves
- Listen
- Clarify understanding
- Share thinking
- Change assumptions
- Consider different perspectives
- Make decisions to maximise the outcomes of the mentoring relationship

Ethical code of practice:

- The mentor's role is to respond to the Mentee's needs and agenda; it is not to impose their own agenda.
- Mentors must work within the current agreement with the mentee about confidentiality that is appropriate within context.
- Mentors must be aware of any current law and work within the law.
- Mentor and mentee must be aware that computer-based records are subject to statutory regulation under the data protection act 1984.
- The mentee should be aware of their rights and any complaints procedures.
- Mentors and mentees should respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring they do not impose beyond what is reasonable.
- The mentee must accept increasing responsibility for managing the relationship; the mentor should empower them to do so and must generally promote the learner's autonomy.
- Either party may dissolve the relationship.
- Mentors need to be aware of the limits of their own competence in the practice of mentoring.
- Mentors and mentees should aim to be open and truthful with each other and themselves about the relationship itself.
- Mentors and mentees share the responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship when it has achieved its purpose – they must avoid creating dependency.
- The mentoring relationship must not be exploitative in any way; neither may it be open to misinterpretation.
- The relationship should encourage a mutual trust with confidentiality shared to create and open dialogue.



The mentoring relationship

The mentoring relationship can be a very powerful positive experience. It enables and develops a greater sense of confidence, enhancing the professional and personal skills of both parties. There are a number of factors which will contribute towards a successful relationship between mentor and mentee:

- Clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of both parties.
- Agreed and shared understanding of the nature and type of support.
- Commitment towards the principles and values of the mentoring scheme.
- The skills of both the mentor and mentee.
- Clear communication in both directions.

Clear communication is the cornerstone on which all the other factors sit. It is through constructive and empathic dialogue the relationship can develop allowing both parties to bring forward their ideas, enter discussions and maintain professional development. It is within this environment both parties can flourish.

To allow clear communication we can consider activities, tasks, strategies and skills that can be utilised.

Activities (the following are suggestions of activities that mentors may take part in):

- An initial contracting meeting
- Gain understanding of the mentee's organisation and role
- Review discussions
- Making use of a learning log
- Building a portfolio or record of achievement
- Personal support
- Reviewing the relationship
- Ending the relationship

Tasks (the following are tasks which the mentor may use to varying extents depending on the relationship and circumstances):

- Negotiating and agreeing
- Identifying needs
- Observing
- Recording
- Giving and receiving feedback
- Assessing (informal)
- Advising
- Informing
- Problem-solving
- Target-setting
- Clarification of strategies and actions
- Evaluating
- Encourage reflective learning

Selecting and using strategies for supporting the Mentee once mentee and mentor have established the tasks, clarified activities and within a mentoring agreement determined the basis of the professional discussion. It is the mentor who determines the nature of the communication.

There are different ways a mentee can be supported, checked, encouraged and given constructive feedback.

With each strategy, it is important to be aware of its purpose, appropriateness, the likely impact and its value to the mentee.

Strategies can include:

- Giving advice – offering the mentee your opinion on the best course of action.
- Giving information – giving information on a specific situation. (e.g. contact for resource)
- Taking action in support – doing something on the mentee's behalf.
- Observing and giving feedback – work shadowing and observation by either or both parties. Observation coupled with constructive feedback is a powerful learning tool.
- Reviewing – reflection on experience can develop understanding allowing one to consider future needs, explore options and strategies.

The selection of strategies can be guided by a number of factors, such as:

- Values and principles underpinning the mentoring scheme, encouraging self sufficiency and empowerment.
- Shared understanding between mentee and mentor of the purpose behind the mentoring relationship.
- Quality and level of the professional relationship
- Level of experience and need of the mentee.
- Level of mentor's own awareness and comfort with the mentoring process.

Mentoring is an empowering experience for the mentee; it is therefore vital that the strategies chosen encourage the mentee towards autonomy. The mentee will negotiate the forms of support needed at the initial contracting stage by making use of processes that are self-helping such as learning logs, self review journals, reviewing meetings and feedback.

The relationship can be used to develop skills for both parties and is dependent on clear communication. This all-important communication can benefit from analysing a number of key skills, Active Listening and Questioning.

The skill of Active Listening

Active listening is the ability to listen and internalise what is being said, essentially listening and understanding. You can use your whole self to convey the message of an active listener involved in the discussion, showing interest, gaining trust and respect. This can be achieved by using verbal and non-verbal communication.

Non-verbal communication has more impact than words alone, so facial expression, eye contact, non-verbal prompts (e.g. head nodding) and body posture (leaning slightly towards the mentee, showing interest) will contribute towards building upon the professional relationship and improving discussions. Your surroundings can also be utilised to create a climate appropriate for discussion to occur. The aim is for a quiet, pleasant and relaxed environment with no physical barriers (e.g. a desk between mentor and mentee).

Within active listening we can concentrate on two important aspects used within mentoring these being: Being Focused: *Keeping the mentee focused on a specific discussion topic: Keeping the conversation confined around one area.* This is difficult as mentees in the early stages of mentoring tend to have many questions and move from one to the other without linking or having a structured approach.

Using Verbal prompts:

Using sounds or key words to encourage the mentee to talk more, clarify a point or extend an idea e.g.

- The use of expressions like 'I see' and 'Go on...' and by using sounds like 'Uh-huh' and 'Ye-e-s'.
- Repetition of key words within a discussion e.g. If the mentee says 'I am really concerned...' repeating 'concerned?' may prompt the mentee to expand further and shows the mentor is interested and concentrating on the mentee.



There are of course barriers to active listening which mentors need to be aware of. Awareness of these barriers will allow the mentor to encourage, support, show interest and respect to the mentee.

Barriers to listening include:

Tuning in and out – on average we think approximately four times faster than we speak, leading to listeners tuning out, using the space to address their own thoughts or concerns rather than staying tuned into the listener.

The *glazed look* – there are times when an individual will concentrate on the speaker (mentee) rather than on what is being said for whatever reason, bringing on that glazed look on the face of those listening, a look we all recognise.

Mentee-centred – issues discussed are less important than the mentee, our discussions should always work around the development of the mentee and not the subject being discussed.

Becoming heated – certain phrases, words and views may cause mentors to feel as if they should dive in with their own opinions; resulting in the mentee becoming irritated,

Upset and switching-off - It is OK to give your own view but remember the professional discussion is for the mentee and it is their 'arena' with the mentor's primary task being that of the facilitator/listener.

Giving space – during discussions the mentee will have silences and spaces, which will vary in length. Try not to rush in and fill these, as we all have differing periods of reflection and thinking. It is important to allow the mentee time to internalise their thoughts.

Questioning - if used effectively, is a very useful and powerful tool. It allows the mentee-mentor relationship to develop, assisting the mentee in exploring and understanding their experiences with the hope of formulating avenues and actions for the future.

There are many reasons to ask questions, they may be:

- To satisfy curiosity
- To obtain or clarify information
- To assist in exploring an issue
- To look at possible alternatives
- To check understanding
- To challenge contradictions, views etc.
- To move the discussion forward
- To direct the discussion

With the effect questions have and their power, it is important to select those which are of greater use. Questions can be broken down into two types, closed or open

Open Questions:

These are questions which require more than just a 'yes' or 'no' response and usually begin with 'How?' 'Where?' 'What?' 'Who?' Questions beginning with these can be used to:

Gain information – 'What happened as a result of...?' Explore personal issues – 'What is your view on...?' 'What are you expecting to achieve?' 'How are you feeling having...?' Consider and explore avenues – 'What are the possible options for...?' 'What may help when...?' 'How would you deal with...?'

Closed Questions:

These are questions which evoke a 'yes' or 'no' response and in doing so narrow down the opportunity for the mentee to expand, closing down the discussion e.g. 'Do you...?'; 'Did you...?' Continual use of closed questions will restrict the discussion, resulting in the mentee saying less and the mentor asking more and more questions. The overall effect is poor communication and a difficult environment to work within.

There are times when closed questions are useful. They can be used to summarise and confirm a discussion, bringing parties up to speed and to the same level e.g. 'So, you are saying that you don't have an issue with...?' Avoid asking multiple questions. These are a number of different questions asked within the same sentence. They are unclear, cause confusion and stop both parties from focusing on the meeting.



Preparing for the role of mentor

Mentors may have concerns, and it is reassuring to know that these concerns are also experienced by the mentees. Some of these concerns may be:

- Will we get on?
- Will there be enough time for the meetings?
- What am I supposed to do?
- Will I be able to do this?
- Confidentiality?
- What if things go wrong?

We can see that these concerns can apply to both parties. The mentor and mentee initial meeting is very important, it will set the stage for the relationship; allow a forum in which to establish the parameters essential for the success of the mentoring experience. It is the time to set, clarify and agree issues, these may include:

- The purpose of the mentoring scheme and your expectations of what you hope to get from the experience?
- The framework for the supporting activities – What and how will these be delivered? What preparation prior to the meetings is needed? Each other's responsibilities?
- Issues around time – Frequency of meetings? How long will these meetings be?
- Review meetings – Important to review the aims, objectives and consider how the relationship is developing and changing.

At the end of discussions of the initial meeting both parties need to reach a shared agreement that states clearly what each party expects to give and gain from the relationship.

Review Meetings

Review meetings are the central function allowing discussion on experiences, giving and receiving feedback, exploration of issues and talking through options for future action and development. The mentor acts as facilitator/enabler through skilful questioning, a non-directive, non-judgemental approach and the use of different strategies. All this needs to happen within an agreed framework around a clear purpose or purposes.

The main purposes of the meeting may include:

- Reviewing experience
- Giving feedback
- Identify strengths and achievements
- Identify weaknesses and areas for development
- Exploring options
- Teaching or coaching specific skills and techniques
- Engaging in discussions on professional issues
- Agreeing support needs
- Setting targets for future action

The emphasis on the purposes will vary both during the meeting and across the meetings and during contact. The meetings are not the sole point of contact as individuals may use the telephone and e-mail for shorter types of contact.

How can we ensure these meetings work?

There are a number of important issues/factors which we can consider to make the meetings work, these are important for success.

Structure, purpose, content and process. The meetings should have a clear structure and purpose with respect to content and time parameters. These need to be defined and agreed upon during the initial contracting meeting and recorded if required on the mentoring agreement. Giving the meeting a clear structure and process will ensure the time is used effectively.

Content of the meetings will normally follow a linear progression. Moving from, looking back at recent experience, then discussing present experience and finally discussing.

Future options. These three areas are linked and follow on from each other systematically. You may only discuss the last two looking at present experience and discussing future options or even work from looking at options and then the present experience.

- Looking back at recent experience – How have things been going? What has worked well? What hasn't worked?
- Discussing present experience – What are your thoughts now, in the light of what's been discussed and raised?
- Discussing future options – exploring and agreeing goals for future action, discussing ways to meet the needs identified. Developing potential, clarifying and agreeing the support needed.

There are normally three key process stages within the review meetings:

1. Establishing the task and people parameters –developing trust, connecting with each other, setting the agenda and ground rules
2. Exploration and clarification – of issues raised, mentee's thoughts and feelings and the mentor's views
3. Identification and agreement – targets and tasks for future action for both parties

The mentor's skill as a reviewer -In order for the review meeting to work effectively the mentor's ability to use their skills appropriately is essential.

The core skills will probably involve: displaying respect, understanding, empathy, the ability to clarify, active listening, questioning, focusing, delivering feedback, summarising, negotiating, and solving problems, target setting and action planning.

Just by looking at the core skills, we can see that the position of the mentor is very powerful. It is the mentor's ability in using these skills to empower the mentee, that is the 'magic'; moving the power base from themselves to the mentee, allowing them to develop. The mentor will draw on their expertise, experience, knowledge base, charisma and ability to assess the mentee and situation.

Feeding back to the mentee - Feeding back into the mentoring process is essential for any review and is the core component to the development of the mentee. There are many factors, which can disrupt the feedback (receiving and giving) process, and for that reason it is a challenge for both mentee and mentor.

We can try to support and make the process easier by considering 4 key steps.

Step 1. Trust and Respect – Before the feedback process even happens it is important that mentee and mentor develop their professional relationship. Part of this development will be to discuss issues around feeding back, what it involves and what both parties want from it.

Step 2. Quality of the information fed back – Base comments on quantifiable and reliable information.

Step 3. Two-way discussion – Make sure the discussion is a two-way dialogue, where both parties are involved and buy into the process. There needs to be an exchange of ideas, views and opinions from both.

Step 4. Constructive Outcomes – Feedback needs to search for ways forward, strategies and solutions to difficulties that arise moving the development and learning forward.

These Steps can be helped along if we are:

- Specific – feedback is useless unless it is based around specifics and clarity. Neither party will be able to move forward until they know what does or does not work well.
- Evidence based – refer to materials which support the feedback.
- Parameter bound – work within the agreed and negotiated agenda set prior to the review. (initial 'contracting' meeting)
- Realistic – feedback on those aspects which can be changed or developed
- Checking – ask for views and comments on the focus of the feedback, allowing involvement and an ownership of the process. The mentoring will work better if both parties feedback into the review.
- Honest – be true to the agreed delivery of feedback, using sensitivity along with honesty to address issues.

Moving on - A review and feedback session that is successful will lead to clear outcomes. These clear outcomes are identified areas of strength, achievement and clearly show how things have worked and why. From these, clear and well-defined ideas for progression can be formed. To assist the process Appendix 4 provides a simple recording format.

Other useful sources of material

WMCETT website - www.warwick.ac.uk/go/wmcett/resources under Practitioner Zone, Mentoring Cycle

Everyone Needs a Mentor by David Clutterbuck - Published by the CIPD

If you would like to purchase this book please visit www.cipd.co.uk/bookstore

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