

# The Eastern Arc Guide to Mentoring



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ARC** Academic Research  
Consortium

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# What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a voluntary, but formal, arrangement whereby “an experienced individual, outside the reporting relationship, holds regular meetings and discussions and takes a personal interest in guiding and supporting the development of a less experienced person in progressing within and beyond their immediate role” (Hale, 2000).

A mentor is a guide who can help the mentee to find the right direction and who can help them to develop solutions to career issues. Mentors rely upon having had similar experiences to gain an empathy with the mentee and an understanding of their issues. Mentoring should be viewed as a relationship rather than a management activity. It should be a safe non-judgmental relationship that facilitates a wide range of learning, experimentation and development.

This booklet outlines what both mentors and mentees might reasonably expect and the importance of clear, honest, objectives. It also includes a sample mentoring agreement that mentors and mentees can use if they wish.

Prof Tracey Loughran (University of Essex), the academic lead for the Eastern Arc Mentoring Scheme



# Mentor

The role of the mentor is 'to be a wise and trusted advisor by supporting exploration, new understanding and action planning'

Mentors should:

<b>Listen</b>	Seek to understand Demonstrate value and care through attention
<b>Empathise</b>	Validate difficulties and feelings Share experiences (without 'stealing the story')
<b>Challenge</b>	By questioning their purpose/focus/priorities/approach etc By identifying unseen opportunities or 'blind spots'
<b>Encourage</b>	By reflecting their strengths and qualities back to them By showing you believe they can do this
<b>Create perspective</b>	By giving information (about context or your experiences/insights) By helping them to identify what's most important
<b>Create focus</b>	Help them to identify priorities, intentions, goals etc Help create the agenda
<b>Open up</b>	New ways of thinking, new possibilities New contacts and networks
<b>Close down</b>	Help them make decisions Help solve problems

Mentors should be:

<b>Trustworthy</b>	Keep confidences Be a 'safe' person to talk to
<b>Reliable</b>	Keep appointments and commitments Don't overcommit
<b>Authentic</b>	Be true to yourself Be honest about your own thoughts and feelings
<b>Curious</b>	Be open to what the problems and answers might be Co-create solutions

## What Can a Mentor Expect?

Colleagues who take on the role of mentor assume responsibility for guiding, advising and helping to facilitate the development of the mentee. In addition they will need to support the mentee in trying out new ideas, challenge their assumptions from time to time, and make themselves available for meetings. The mentoring relationship should provide a non-threatening environment in which the mentee feels able and willing to express their concerns and anxieties as well as discussing their ideas and aspirations. The mentee must feel assured that their confidentiality will be respected. For the relationship to be effective it needs to be built around mutual trust and respect.

## Different Roles of a Mentor

The mentor can expect to take on a number of roles within the mentoring relationship involving a range of skills and behaviours. Which role the mentor adopts at any time will depend on the needs of the mentee and the situation. No one role is more important than another. Typical roles a mentor will undertake include:

- **Sounding board** Someone to test ideas and suggestions on
- **Facilitator** Point to potential opportunities and contacts
- **Advisor** Provides non-partisan advice on diverse issues
- **Coach** Assists the mentee in developing specific skills
- **HE knowledge** Helps to understand HE culture and politics
- **Role model** Promotes and encourages positive behaviours
- **Source of feedback** Provides constructive feedback on development
- **Confidant** Listens to fears and concerns
- **Motivator** Encourages mentee to achieve goals
- **Challenger** Suggests different ways of thinking

## Attributes of a Mentor

A mentor does not necessarily need to be senior to the mentee, but should have some expertise or experience that is outside or beyond the mentee's own current skills. They should be able to influence the mentee in a positive way to achieve results.

They will also:

- have chosen to act as a mentor and be committed to the process;
- be able to devote sufficient time to making the mentoring relationship successful;
- be prepared to share experience, including what they have learnt from making mistakes, and pass on skills to others;
- have a genuine interest in developing potential for the future.

## Active Listening

The mentor does not need to know everything or to offer ready-made solutions. Instead, they should listen, try to understand the mentee's aspirations and anxieties, and help the mentee to reach a new understanding too. Active listening is probably the mentor's key skill. This is simply the ability to listen and internalise what is being said, and to convey that you are listening and understanding to the speaker. This

can be achieved by using verbal and non-verbal communication, including facial expression, eye contact, non-verbal prompts (e.g. head nodding) and body posture (leaning slightly towards the mentee, showing interest).

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. Open questions (questions which require more than just a 'yes' or 'no' response) are particularly helpful. These questions usually begin with 'How?' 'Where?' 'What?' 'Who?'

These types of questions 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...?'

## Useful Mentoring Questions

What exactly...?  
How exactly...?  
What's stopping you...?  
What would happen if you...?  
So you're saying...?  
You seem...?  
What's at the back of your mind?  
Would ... be of any use?  
Have you thought of...?  
What problems does that cause?  
In what way is that a problem?  
What isn't happening now?  
What do you want to be different?  
How would you like X to respond?  
How do think that Y needs to be changed/altered?  
What would you like to do - ideally?  
Who have you consulted/talked to?  
Who else might you talk to?  
How does the other person/department see the issue?  
How will you go about it?  
In what way will that help?  
Who else can you involve/get to back you?  
How are you feeling about this?  
Do you feel confident?  
What worries you most?  
What excites you most?  
Are you being honest with yourself?  
What else would you find helpful?  
How can I help you?  
Are we getting away from your question?  
Is this helpful?  
Why haven't we tackled ..?  
What would you like to focus on?

# Ten Tips for Successful Mentoring

1. Take on the role of mentor only if you want to do it, you believe in its value and are willing and able to commit sufficient time to it.
2. Discuss expectations of the mentoring relationship at the outset to avoid potential misunderstanding later on.
3. Invest time early on in the relationship to establish rapport and get to know the mentee.
4. Recognise your own strengths and weaknesses in relation to the mentee's development needs and be prepared to guide them to other sources of help if appropriate. You are not expected to be an expert on every subject.
5. Support the mentee in producing realistic development plans and goals. Be honest, don't support unrealistic expectations. If the mentee's plans and/or career aspirations are impractical or unreasonable then challenge them.
6. Keep the relationship with your mentee on a professional level. Be aware of and sensitive to potential misinterpretation in language and behaviour particularly where there are differences in gender, background and culture.
7. Wherever possible encourage the mentee to work out their own solutions to problems that they face.
8. Be aware that you are a role model. How the mentee perceives the way in which you manage yourself and others will impact on your relationship with them.
9. Build the confidence and commitment of the mentee and help them develop by providing honest feedback in a constructive and positive way.
10. When the time comes to end the formal mentoring relationship, end on a positive and supportive note by reviewing and sharing the value and benefits that you have both gained from the experience.



## Benefits for the Mentor

While the focus of the mentoring relationship is primarily on the development needs and opportunities of the mentee, there are also benefits for the mentor including:

- Personal satisfaction in helping to develop the potential of others
- Understanding of different people, disciplines, or institutions
- Different perspective on the culture and landscape of HE through listening to the views of others
- An opportunity to share and further develop their experience and expertise.



# Mentee

The role of the mentee is 'to be willing to learn by being open to new ways of thinking, and taking responsibility for self, choices and actions'

Mentees should:

<b>Talk openly</b>	Share the full story Think aloud
<b>Think differently</b>	Be open to challenges to think differently about situations and yourself Try out new thoughts within the safety of the mentoring relationship
<b>Try new things</b>	Be open to taking action as the result of new thinking 'Own' your choice to try new suggestions
<b>Listen</b>	Don't assume you've heard it all before - listen for insights and perspective Demonstrate respect and gratitude through attentiveness
<b>Look for value</b>	Consider carefully suggestions and experiences shared with you Reflect on the value of ideas that are different from your own
<b>Create focus</b>	Work with your mentor to identify priorities, intentions, goals etc Help create the agenda

Mentees should be:

<b>Trustworthy</b>	Keep confidences Be professional with information shared
<b>Reliable</b>	Keep appointments and commitments Don't overcommit, be prepared for meetings
<b>Authentic</b>	Be true to yourself Be honest about your thoughts and feelings
<b>Curious</b>	Be open to what the problems and answers might be Co-create solutions

## What Can a Mentee Expect

There are many potential benefits for the mentee to gain from the mentoring relationship including:

- A broader perspective
- Increased understanding of how HE operates
- Help in clarifying and setting realistic goals
- Increased self-awareness and confidence
- Insight into different academic roles
- Access to someone outside their normal sphere of influence
- A sounding board for voicing aspirations and anxieties in confidence
- A safe environment to test out ideas and suggestions

## The Mentoring Agreement

At the beginning of the mentoring relationship, both partners should be clear about and agree upon what they expect from each other. Some mentors and mentees find it useful to complete a mentoring agreement (see separate form) which establishes the ground rules for the relationship. If you think this would be useful for you, then you can discuss and sign the agreement at the first meeting.

Whether you use the mentoring agreement or not, at your first meeting it is helpful to discuss:

- How will you conduct the meetings?
- How often will you meet?
- How much time will you spend on each meeting?
- What do you do if a meeting has to be cancelled or rescheduled?
- What method of communication may you use between meetings?

# Mentoring Agreement

*This mentoring agreement represents one approach to structuring the mentoring relationship. Its use is optional.*

## Mentoring programme

There is a no-fault exit clause for both mentors and mentees. Should a mentoring relationship not be working for any reason, please contact Phil Ward ([p.ward@kent.ac.uk](mailto:p.ward@kent.ac.uk)) or Tracey Loughran ([t.loughran@essex.ac.uk](mailto:t.loughran@essex.ac.uk)) and every effort will be made to make alternative arrangements.

## Mentoring relationship

In this scheme, mentoring is a one-to-one relationship. Meeting frequency is to be agreed at the outset. The relationship is strictly confidential and its content must not be discussed with anyone else.

Mentee name	
Mentor name	

## Objectives

Below, state the mentee's objectives. If the objective requires the mentee to acquire specific types of knowledge, skill, and/or experiences, you might want to list these here too.

## Mentor responsibilities

Within the relationship, the mentor agrees to:

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## Mentee responsibilities

Within the relationship, the mentor agrees to:

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## Other agreements

Other items discussed and mutually agreed (e.g. meeting length and frequency; no-contact times; length of mentoring relationship; etc)

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## Signatures

Mentee	
Mentor	

# Further Reading

- David Clutterbuck, *Everyone Needs a Mentor* (2001)
- Reg Hamilton, *Mentoring* (1993)
- Nigel MacLennan, *Coaching and Mentoring* (1995)
- Eric Parsloe, *The Manager as Coach and Mentor* (1995)
- Stephen Carter and Greth Lewis, *Successful Mentoring in a Week* (1994)
- Gordon F. Shea, *Mentoring - A Guide to the Basics* (1992)

# Acknowledgements

This guide has been adapted from materials produced for the Women in Universities Mentoring Scheme (WUMS), and mentoring schemes previously run at the University of Essex and Cardiff University.