

MENTORING AT SUSSEX

# Guidance for mentees

US  
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OF SUSSEX



# What is mentoring?

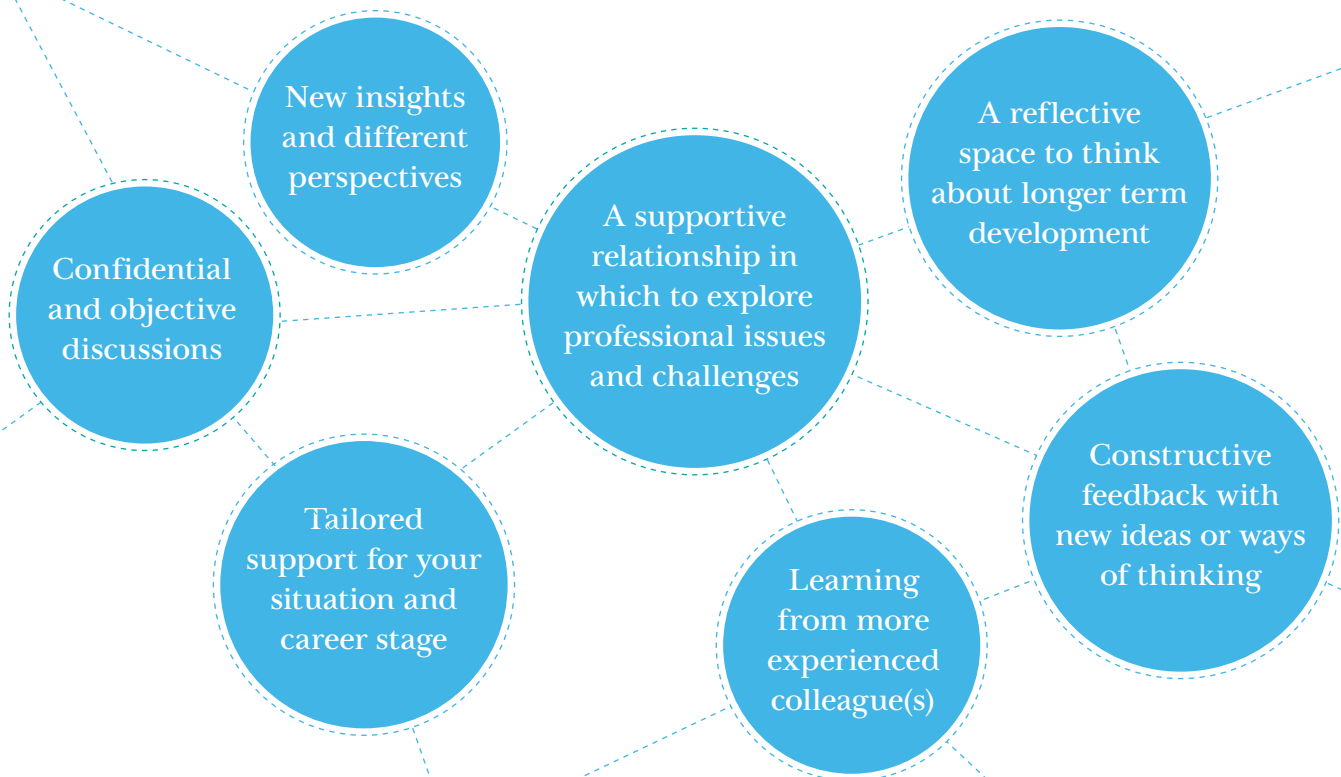
Mentoring is the process by which one person (the mentor) supports another individual (the mentee) to manage their own development so that the mentee becomes self-reliant in the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and abilities, and develops a continuous motivation to do so.

Mentoring relationships are most commonly between a more experienced person (mentor) and a less experienced person (mentee), although mentoring can also be a developmental relationship between peers.

# Benefits of mentoring

Mentoring can have many personal and professional benefits at any stage of your career.

Mentees report benefits such as:



## What do mentees say?

“It’s been nice to be able to be open about my career aspirations/goals without having to worry about political or strategic tangles that might arise as a result of discussing them with people in my work area.”

“I have enhanced many aspects of my profile learning from others experience. I am more confident and more capable to face new challenges and risks.”

“I definitely feel more confident about myself and my work and my place in the department.”

# Is mentoring right for you?

Mentoring is one of a range of options for supporting your career and professional development. It is important to have realistic expectations of what your mentor can and can't support you with. You may need to seek additional/alternative mechanisms for your professional development if you require support or information that mentoring cannot provide.

## MENTORING WILL NOT PROVIDE:

### **Direction or management**

Mentoring is distinct from management in that you, as the mentee, direct the relationship. Your mentor should not direct you towards any particular course of action, the only agenda the mentor has is to support you in your development – wherever that may lead.

### **Specialist advice or training**

Your mentor will not be in a position to offer specialist training or advice (for example, therapy, legal, careers guidance, HR, clinical). Your mentor may be able to assist you in finding out where to access specialist information or support, but should not be expected to provide advice on areas beyond their expertise.

### **All the answers!**

If you go into a mentoring relationship expecting your mentor to solve your problems, you will be disappointed. Your mentor's role is to support you in developing your own ideas and solutions to overcome challenges and progress towards your goals. The best solutions to your challenges will come from within you. Your mentor will help you find them by listening to you, asking you questions, exploring a range of perspectives and where appropriate sharing their own experiences.



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# Making the most of mentoring

## MAKING THE MOST OF MENTORING

To give your mentoring arrangement the best chance of success, before you meet your mentor, it is worth spending some time considering your reasons for seeking mentoring and any particular goals or requirements that you have.

- **Be clear of your reasons for seeking mentoring.** Identify some development goals that you would like to work on with your mentor. Consider how you will use your mentoring sessions to support you in reaching your goals.
- **Have a clear idea of the type of support you require** from your mentor (e.g. sounding board, providing feedback, challenging your limiting assumptions, providing alternative perspectives...).
- If you're not part of a pre-defined scheme, **research potential mentors** within and outside your network. Ideally meet informally with a few potential mentors to see who you have a good rapport with. If you are part of an organised mentoring scheme, be clear and specific about your mentoring requirements to assist in the mentor matching process.
- If your mentoring requirements are diverse, you may need to **consider having more than one mentor** in order to meet your needs.
- In your first mentoring meeting **have an open discussion about your hopes and expectations of mentoring.** Agree practicalities such as meeting times, duration of relationship, contact between meetings etc.

- **Be open and honest with your mentor,** they can only help you based on the information you choose to disclose. Also provide honest and constructive feedback to your mentor about how the mentoring sessions are working for you.
- **Keep to your commitments,** follow through with agreed actions and be proactive in your development, both during and between mentoring meetings.

### PRE-MENTORING CONSIDERATIONS

**The following questions might be useful to consider when preparing to be mentored (adapted from *The Mentoring Manual*, by July Starr):**

- What is my purpose for seeking mentoring?
- What do I need to know about my mentor?
- What does my mentor need to know about me?
- What type of support do I need from my mentor? Are there any particular agreements I need to seek from them (e.g. level of challenge, confidentiality agreements, meeting arrangements etc)?
- Are there any barriers to me getting the most from mentoring? If so, what can I do to overcome these?
- How will I know if the mentoring arrangement is working? What is a successful outcome?

## MAKING THE MOST OF MENTORING

### WHAT IF IT'S NOT WORKING?

Hopefully you will find yourself in a productive mentoring relationship that is rewarding for both mentee and mentor. However, mentoring arrangements can and do break down for a variety of reasons.

#### Signs that a mentoring relationship is not working might be:

- Mentee/mentor cancels appointments, fails to turn up or regularly rearranges last minute
- Mentee/mentor consistently fails to make progress on actions identified in meetings
- Mentee/mentor appears distracted in sessions or cuts sessions short



So what should you do if you find yourself in a mentoring relationship that is not working? Some ideas are presented below:

- **Ask the other person for feedback on how they are finding the mentoring arrangement** – it might be that they think everything is going well or have similar concerns to you. Either way, you have more information to help you decide how to proceed.
- **Acknowledge the issue openly.** The next time you meet, be honest and tell the other person that you feel that something isn't working with the mentoring arrangement, giving factual examples of why you think this (e.g. you've cancelled a number of appointments). Jointly explore whether there are things you could both do to get the relationship working more effectively.
- **End mentoring relationships constructively.** Not all mentoring relationships work out, and it is not useful to prolong the arrangement if it is clear that it is not working. Don't leave your mentor hanging. Instead, have a constructive discussion about how you can progress beyond this mentoring arrangement; see if your mentor has suggestions of other support or information that might be useful to you, and of course, thank them for the support they have provided you during the mentoring arrangement (however brief).



# Further information

# Find out more about mentoring at Sussex

Our mentoring web pages provide practical information and resources for anyone engaged in mentoring activities, whether you are (or would like to be) a mentee or mentor; or if you are involved in developing a mentoring scheme for your department or area of work.

**[www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development/mentoring](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development/mentoring)**

For mentoring related training and development within the University, visit:

**[www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development)**

For mentoring information and support for researchers visit:

**[www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/rs](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/rs)**

External mentoring skills courses are available through providers such as:

ILM

**<https://www.i-l-m.com>**

Chartered Management Institute (CMI)

**[www.managers.org.uk](http://www.managers.org.uk)**

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD)

**<https://www.cipd.co.uk>**

The OCM

**[www.theocm.co.uk/products-and-services/courses](http://www.theocm.co.uk/products-and-services/courses)**

More information is also available via mentoring professional bodies such as the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC)

**<https://emccuk.org>**

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FIND OUT MORE:

[www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development/mentoring](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/organisational-development/mentoring)

