

Mentoring @ Edinburgh Napier University

Information to get you started

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# 1 Introduction

Have you ever wished you had someone that you could talk honestly about the challenges of your role or the ideas you have about our own development? Or perhaps you would like to use your own experience to support others to develop their own skills? Mentoring is a process that can support both these objectives.

If you are interested in having a mentor or becoming a mentor this booklet will provide you with information to help you make your choice.

## 1.1 Is mentoring for me?

There are many points in your career that having a mentor may be valuable, such as.

* A change in role.
* Requiring help to formulate a clear career development plan
* You may wish to develop new skills to try new things within your current role
* Perhaps you are facing a specific challenge in your role.
* Perhaps you are returning to work following a period of absence such as maternity or paternity leave or sickness.
* Working towards promotion.

## 1.2 What will I gain from mentoring?

**As a Mentor** there is a great deal of satisfaction in passing on your experience and supporting your mentee progress towards their goals. Additionally, it provides the opportunity to develop advanced communication and interpersonal skill, practice and develop your leadership skills and gain a new perspective and deepen your understanding of the university, a subject and discipline area, and your own role.

**As a Mentee** working with your mentor, you will focus on your personal goals. But potentially you will gain so much more. During your mentoring relationship you will be challenged to stretch yourself, be encouraged to question your assumptions, and raise your aspirations for your achievements through your individualised support.

# 2 Mentoring

## 2.1 Who is a mentor?

A mentor is an experienced colleague who confidentially works with an identified individual (mentee) for a time-limited period to support and develop their learning and development. There is a specific focus to the mentoring relationship, with the purpose of mentoring relationships that supports the mentee to change something, move from where the mentee is, ('here'), to where they want and aspire to be ('there').

## 2.2 Who can be a mentor?

We recognise that mentoring happens naturally throughout the university as individuals will seek out the support of people who will help facilitate their learning and development. We would call this informal mentoring and value its place at the core of a learning organisation. From a formal perspective, here at Edinburgh Napier we have invested in enabling the development of the mentor role, so it is as beneficial for both the mentee and mentor as possible. Mentors within the formal process will have been prepared for their roles and will continue to be supported as they develop their skills in working with mentees.

In addition to having accessed formal preparation for the role, mentors need:

* Time to work with the mentee over a time-limited period which will need to be agreed.

They also need to have enhanced skills in:

* Active listening,
* Asking thoughtful and incisive questions,
* Challenging thinking/ beliefs and
* Assisting in action planning and goal setting

Other attributes include being:

* Approachable
* Motivated
* Self-awareness
* Ability to empower
* Inventiveness
* Empathy
* Understanding

## 2.3 What is the role of the mentor?

The role of the mentor is to support an individual’s learning and development. There are different approaches as to how this might be enabled. Mentors will be familiar with some of these approaches and will need to agree, as part of the contracting process[[1]](#footnote-1), which one(s) they plan to use. A successful mentoring relationship needs to have defined goals, ensuring there is clarity of purpose for both parties. The role also depends on developing trust, evidencing commitment, and demonstrating engagement over the period that they work with the mentee. Honesty and ensuring confidentiality[[2]](#footnote-2) are also necessary to the role.

## 2.4 What are the responsibilities of the mentor?

* Lead in developing and agreeing a mentoring contract.
* Agree and commit to supporting the relationships for the agreed timeframe
* Commit sufficient time and energy to carry out the required planning and activities for each meeting.
* Take an interest in the mentee and, where appropriate, share their knowledge and experience.
* Act in a professional manner always, arriving on time and informing the mentee if they are unable to attend planned meetings
* Observe confidentiality and personal boundaries
* To be non-judgmental
* Facilitate and encourage mentee exploration of ideas and to promote self-directed learning
* Encourage the mentee’s strengths and help them work on their limitations
* Monitor and check on the effectiveness of the mentor relationship
* Contact [Staff Development](mailto:staffdevelopment@napier.ac.uk) if they feel they need additional support or advice.

## 2.5 What a mentor is not:

* A mentor is not a buddy[[3]](#footnote-3), a coach[[4]](#footnote-4), a councillor or therapist[[5]](#footnote-5)
* A mentor is not a line manager and cannot change working circumstances or conditions.
* A mentor is not all knowing! A mentor acts as a guide to the mentee’s development; they do not “know best”.
* A mentor is not a mind reader. You cannot read your mentee’s mind and you can’t guide and support if your mentee does not share their own thoughts and experiences.

**3. Mentee**

## 3.1 Who is the mentee?

A mentee is someone within any role in the university who has identified a specific area of their role or career and wishes to take the opportunity for support and guidance from a colleague to work towards achieving this aim.

## 3.2 Being a mentee.

You might have expectations of a mentor relationships, therefore when considering if entering a mentoring relationship is right for you need to know what is involved. First, there are some fundamental questions you need to ask of yourself.

* What is the area of your role or career you wish to develop?
* What is the outcome you would hope to achieve from the process?
* Do you have the time to commit to a mentor relationship?
* Can you meet the responsibilities of a mentee?

## 3.4 What are the mentee responsibilities?

An individual one to one mentoring relationship can be positive and developmental and it is important that the process be driven by the mentee. Mentees, therefore, need to take responsibility for their own development in addition to the practical elements of the meetings. Therefore, mentees are expected to:

* Have a commitment to the relationship, respect and appreciate the support being offered.
* Be proactive in preparing for meetings, suggesting (and if necessary, finding) a space to meet, setting the meeting agenda and actively following any actions agreed following the meeting.
* Actively listening to their mentor and responding the feedback provided.
* Be open to new ideas and challenges.
* Respect the commitment and time given by the mentor, responding to communications, and attending agreed meeting times.

# 4 Key aspects of the mentoring process

## 4.1 Confidentiality

Confidentiality is fundamental for both mentor and mentee to feel able to talk honestly and openly, safe in the knowledge that what they say will not be repeated without former agreement. It is important that there is complete understanding of confidentiality at the start of the relationships and about different aspect of the process such as.

* Confidentiality is called out and agreed to as part of the contracting step of the relationship
* Meeting discussions remain confidential for the duration of the relationship and beyond the end of the mentoring relationship
* All correspondence such as email is seen only by the mentor and mentee concerned
* That no personal or confidential information will be revealed at any time.
* Should one person wish to refer issues raised by the other to a third party then permission to do so will be sought.

If difficult topics arise in discussions during the relationships that either party needs support to address these. There are confidential advice services provided by the university to support staff, please look [this page](https://staff.napier.ac.uk/services/hr/workingattheUniversity/healthandwellbeing/Pages/Employee%20Assistance%20Programme.aspx).

## 4.2 Voluntary

Both mentor and mentee give of their time freely when entering a mentoring relationship. The voluntary nature of the relationship supports the developmental ethos of the process which is benefited for all those involved.

## 4.3 Time bound.

Mentoring relationships have a specific focus aimed at addressing a pre-identified aspect of the mentee’s role. Therefore, it is important at the start of the mentor relationship (the contracting phase[[6]](#footnote-6)) to define the duration of the relationships. If the mentee objectives are met, you are free to agree to end the relationship. Should there be a need to extend or change the objective of the relationship we recommend that re-contracting take place or if requested by ether party a new mentor be sought.

While parties can agree the length of the meeting, being mindful of the voluntary nature of the process, it is recommended that meetings should last one hour and not more than two hours.

## 4.4 Flexible

Both the practicalities and the nature of the relationships needs to respond the needs of both mentor and mentee. At the initial meeting (the contracting phase) it is important that both the practicalities, the time frame and the nature of the meetings are discussed and agreed.

## 4.5 Support

All mentors will have access guidance, training and support in the skills required to support the mentoring relationship, if applicable.

If you have any questions or suggestions for further support, please contact [StaffMentoring@napier.ac.uk](mailto:StaffMentoring@napier.ac.uk).

# 5 What is the mentoring process?

All university colleagues have an opportunity to become involved with mentoring.

If, having read this booklet, you feel you would benefit from a mentor relationship either as mentor or mentee please contact [staff development](mailto:staffdevelopment@napier.ac.uk) to register your interest.

## 5.1 Mentoring pairs

1. Contact [StaffMentoring@napier.ac.uk](mailto:StaffMentoring@napier.ac.uk) to register your interest
2. You will then be issued you with the appropriate form or directed to the applicable online Mentornet platform
3. Complete your online registration to Mentornet, or email your completed form back to [StaffMentoring@napier.ac.uk](mailto:staffdevelopment@napier.ac.uk)
4. Unless you are taking part in the self-matching academic mentoring programme. Matching will then take place after your application has been received, it is important to be clear about your skills and experience (for mentors) and development goals (for mentees). The team will then match you as a pair and the mentee will first be notified of the match by email.
5. *Your right to say no*. Should you not wish to accept your first match, the team will endeavour offer you an alternative mentor. Once agreed your mentor will be approached to participate. Should the mentor not be able (perhaps time contracts do not allow them to take on this responsibility at this time), the process will be repeated a maximum of three times, after which one of the team will arrange to have a conversation about your needs and expectations.

# 6 The mentoring relationship

Once both mentor and mentee have agreed to the match there are several phases to the relationship.

**6.1 Contracting & setting the direction**

It is important to set the expectations and the ground rules for working together. This is called *contacting*. As a pair you will work together agreeing on the practicalities for the relationship and clarifying the aims and objectives of the mentoring. Listen careful to each other and make sure you understand each other’s expectations. Make sure you are flexible and committed to the relationship. A contracting template will be provided via staff development or within the Mentornet platform.

**6.2 Building the relationship & exploring understandings**

Once you have agreed the contract, take time to get to know each other and build a rapport. Building a relationship and trust does take time and developing the contract will have supported this process. During this phase explore together the mentees questions, wishes, challenges. This is important stage of explorations, through mentor questions, mentees should reflection on their aim and on what action they might have taken in the past and could take in the future.

### 6.3 Coming to new understandings.

The mentor’s role is to encourage the mentee to view their problem, issue, or idea from multiple perspectives, actively listening, questioning, and challenging. Through this process new understandings can be formed with the mentee taking ownership of their problem, issues, or ideas. These challenging conversations need time to develop, and mentees may need time to reflect on the discussion and learn to articulate decisions.

### 6.4 Action planning

Through reflections and ownership, it is important that mentees consolidate their thoughts, reflect on their journey and learning, and at this stage mentors might encourage mentees to identify actions they will take resulting from the meetings. Action plans can have short and long-term objectives which as a mentee you should document for your own development and reflection.

### 6.5 Winding up & moving on.

As the mentee comes to achieve the larger page of their objectives and feels confident to move on the relationships comes to an end. Mentors should be sensitive towards the ending of the relationship, mindful that the mentee may not be fully aware that the relationship is no longer adding value to their objectives. Reflect on the process and questions if the original goals have been achieved. It is important that both mentor and mentee acknowledge the value of the relationship as it closes.

# 7 Further information & support

## Staff Development

The development of our mentors will be provided by the university Learning and Development team. There are a variety of short workshops available on request. Please email [Staff Development](mailto:staffdevelopment@napier.ac.uk) for more information.

## Discover Learning

The universities online self-directed platform has a wide range of mentoring resources. log into [Discover Learning](https://app.mindtools.com/#/napier/s/95104f4c) (located in quick links on the universities main intranet page) and either search mentoring or select [Coaching and Mentoring](https://app.mindtools.com/#/napier/s/7b5f8d97) from the Management Development tab to access these resources.

## University counselling service

If through the process of mentoring, you feel you need additional specialist support and advice the university offers several services. Please look at the [University workplace options website](https://www.workplaceoptions.co.uk/) .

## Scottish Mentor Network

If you are interested in finding out about mentoring across Scotland a good place to start is the [Scottish Mentor Network](http://scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk/).

1. Information on the contracting process is found on page 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Confidentiality is a core requirement; however, it cannot be absolute. This needs to be discussed as part of the contracting phase. Page 7 talks about confidentiality further. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. A buddy is a colleague who partners with a new colleague during her/his 3 months of starting a new post. Having a buddy at the start of a new role can make a huge difference to the enjoyment and speed at which new colleagues manage to settle into the role, the department, and the university. Just knowing there is someone who is genuinely interested, reliable, and a single point-of-contact for basic questions can make new colleagues members feel supported and welcome to Edinburgh Napier University. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Coaching involves having a specific end goal or target which needs to be achieved, whereas mentoring is directed by the needs of the person. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. A counselling relationship focuses on personal issues, the University provides specialist counselling support for staff. Please look at the University website for options. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Information on the contracting process is found on page 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)