

What to discuss in your first mentoring meeting

Adapted from part of Harald Lapisk's 'Mentoring for Impact' course

When you meet your mentee for the first time, you may be wondering what to cover apart from a general chat to get to know each other better. Here are some suggested discussion points:

- 1. Ask your mentee to explain why they have requested mentoring.**
What do they want to achieve? What change do they want to see in their life? This will ensure that you both stay focused on the mentee's goals during mentoring meetings and that you as a mentor can tailor your support and advice to their priorities.
- 2. Ask your mentee how they will know that the mentoring relationship has been successful.**
Ask them to think about what changes they would like to see after a few months of mentoring meetings. This is related to the first question, and enables the mentee to further articulate their goals for mentoring and gives the mentor a greater insight into what the mentee wants to achieve.
- 3. Ask the mentee about their current work in general.**
This could include what they enjoy, any particular challenges and career progression.
- 4. Ask the mentee what their expectations are of you as a mentor.**
This could include the topics the mentee would like to cover; how much would they like to be challenged by their mentor; what style of mentoring they prefer (for example, are they looking for advice, a listening ear, constructive feedback, an opportunity to expand their network, etc?)
- 5. Outline what you as a mentor expect from your mentee.**
This is your chance to agree some 'ground rules' – for instance, you may want your mentee to ensure they have done some research of their own before asking for your advice; you may ask them to ensure they prepare for meetings and complete any agreed actions in between meetings; you may expect them to take the initiative in arranging meetings.
- 6. Discuss how often you would like to meet.**
This will depend to some extent on the purpose of the mentoring. If you are supporting your mentee with a particular project or activity (such as preparing a job application or writing a paper) you may want to meet frequently over a shorter period, but if the mentee is looking for more general support with career development, for example, you may want to meet less frequently and over an extended period of time.

Structuring future meetings

Once you have met for the first time as mentor and mentee, you may like to use the suggested structure below as a guide for your future meetings:

- 1. Progress update:**
Discuss what the mentee has done since your last meeting, what went well and any challenges they have encountered.
- 2. Set the focus for the meeting:**

Ask the mentee what they would like to focus on during the meeting, so that the discussion topic is led by them.

3. Structured conversation:

You may like to use a model such as GROW (see separate sheet) to guide your conversation, helping the mentee to gain clarity on what they would like to do and to develop a plan of action to make progress towards their goals.

4. Create accountability:

Encourage the mentee to identify their next action steps, even if these are only small. You can then check how they have got on at your next meeting.