

Introduction to mentoring



Congratulations



You have decided to either become a mentor or have found someone in your professional network to become your mentor.

Entering into a mentoring relationship is a rewarding experience for both the mentor and the mentee. Mentees receive the benefit from the mentor's knowledge and experience and for mentors, it can be an opportunity to develop their leadership, communication, and relationships skills.

A mentoring relationship, just like any relationship, takes time to develop. Creating a successful mentoring relationship requires an investment in time and commitment. If you take the time to get to know each other and show interest in their world, it can grow into a strong and trusting relationship that in many times long outlives the mentoring program.

Effective mentoring also requires specific skills, structure and a strong desire to help guide and support a less experienced individual.

Mentoring, although similar, is different to coaching or consulting.

Coaching is a process. With the help of an experienced and qualified coach, individuals can tap into sources of knowledge, imagination, productivity, and leadership. A coach will guide you through a process and a journey that inspires you to set and reach specific goals. Goals to help you to reach your full personal or professional potential.

Consulting is providing professional independent advice, expertise, or services to an individual or an organisation in an area of specialisation.

A mentor on the other hand is someone who can inspire, help shape and guide a less experienced individual's career direction by generously sharing their own knowledge and experiences and by helping to explore choices and navigate challenges.

Mentoring can be both formal and informal.

Now we have established what mentoring is, read below some tips to help you to structure, navigate and get the best out of your mentoring experience.

For the mentor



First establish clear expectations and boundaries:

Clearly define the objectives and expectations of the mentoring relationship. Explain what the aim of the time spent together should achieve.



Build a strong and trusting relationship:

Create a positive and open rapport with your mentee. Confidentiality and mutual respect are key to building a trusting relationship.



Listen deeply and actively:

Pay close attention to your mentee's questions, thoughts, concerns, and achievements. Show empathy and understanding and remember don't jump into trying to fix problems or advice giving.



Provide constructive feedback:

Offer feedback in a constructive and nonjudgmental manner. You can focus on specific actions and behaviours and use questioning skills to help guide more effective ways to handle situations.



Share your knowledge and experience:

Mentorship is about passing on your expertise and insights. Share the lessons learned. Mentees enjoy listening to your challenges as well as your successes.



Be a professional role model:

The way you speak and behave during the mentoring relationship will have an impact on your professional brand. It will also demonstrate to your mentee what professional etiquette looks like.



Encourage critical thinking:

Help your mentee develop problem-solving, creative, and innovative thinking skills. Helping them to find solutions on their own rather than providing all the answers will provide them with skills needed for the future.



Provide resources:

Help your mentee access valuable resources, there will be many handouts you can share in the 'Alumni Mentoring Vault'. These resources can also act as prompts for discussion topics and themes.



Adapt your approach:

Although we will provide many tips and resources for you, every mentee and mentoring relationship is unique. Each mentee will have different needs and different ways of communicating with you. Be flexible and adjust your mentoring style to suit the individual needs of your mentee.



Be available, approachable, and responsive:

Make time and keep time for your regular meetings. You might even choose to be available in between sessions (within the clear boundaries you have already established) when your mentee needs guidance or support.



Learn and grow too:

Seek opportunities to improve your mentoring skills and be open to learning from your mentee too.



Check in to assess:

Check in often to ensure the mentoring relationship remains effective and beneficial for both parties. And be open to feedback. Give the new relationship time to grow, but if you strongly feel that it is not the right fit speak to the Alumni team.



Celebrate success:

Acknowledge and celebrate your mentee's achievements and successes. Positive reinforcement even for micro achievements boosts confidence and motivation.

For the mentee



Gratitude:

Mentoring is a big commitment for a busy professional. Ensure you thank your mentor for offering to mentor you.



Boundaries:

Together you and your mentor will agree on boundaries and expectations of the mentoring relationship. Respect boundaries and be open to sharing your expectations too.



Drive the conversation:

Your mentor will generously be sharing their experiences with you and may even bring some topics and themes to your meetings but it's your professional development so take charge and be clear what you would like from each session too. Bring questions and be prepared to drive much of the conversation.



Listen deeply:

Although your mentor will be using active listening skills, listen deeply to what your mentor is sharing with you or suggesting. Take notes and be prepared to ask for clarification.



Share your experience too:

You are also bringing to the mentoring relationships and sessions your own unique experiences and expertise. Be open to sharing too. It might help to incite some interesting discussions.



Professional etiquette:

This is a professional relationship. Practice professional etiquette in every interaction. Be on time, dress professionally and use appropriate language are just some examples to consider.



Be curious:

Try not to bring to the sessions a fixed mindset. Develop a curious mind and be open to exploring new ways of thinking and doing things. An open mindset will help you to develop your critical thinking skills and new ways of approaching professional challenges.



Access resources:

Your mentor may choose to offer you selected professional resources. Read, view, and refer to them during your sessions.



Respect time:

Your mentor is a busy professional that has offered to invest their time in helping you with your personal and professional development. Do not cancel or try to re-schedule meeting times without good reason. Ensure you are well prepared for every meeting and respect every minute.



Celebrate the wins:

Be proud of all your achievements along the way, regardless of how small and be prepared to celebrate them with your mentor. Your mentor will get a great sense of joy from all of your success, after all they have been a part of the journey too.



Be honest and open:

Sometimes a mentoring relationship is just not working. Your mentor will check in with you from time to time, ensure you communicate anything that is not working for you at this time. And be open to feedback too. Give the new relationship time to develop, but if you strongly feel that it is not the right fit speak to the Alumni team if you are an alum or Careers team if you are a student.

Sometimes there are challenges

Mentoring can be highly rewarding on most occasions, but occasionally it comes with some challenges too.

Commitment:

Mentoring takes time and commitment for both the mentor and the mentee. Balancing your mentoring program and relationships with other competing personal and professional commitments can be a challenge. Don't commit until you are confident you can fully commit.

Mismatched expectations:

Sometimes, mentors and mentees may have different expectations for the mentoring relationship. This needs to be clearly communicated upfront or it can lead to frustration, disappointment, and dissatisfaction for either party.

Communication issues:

We now live and work in a multi-generational, multi-cultural and diverse world. Differences in age, background, culture, or experience can lead to misinterpretation, misunderstanding and general confusion. It is critical that you learn to communicate clearly with each other. You may also have to adapt the way you communicate to ensure a positive working relationship.

Expertise expectation:

Mentors should not be expected to have all the answers. They may not have had the experience to address every challenge or situation faced by their mentees. Mentors are encouraged to be honest about their limitations. They can choose to explore experience from their peers to share or they can advise their mentees to seek out insights from other professionals too.

Motivation and drive:

Some mentees lack the motivation or dedication to actively engage in the mentoring process. This can be frustrating and disappointing for mentors who have invested time and resources to a mentoring program. Ensure there are no other factors at play before jumping to conclusions. However, if it is the case, speak to the Alumni team.

We don't always agree:

Disagreements can arise in any relationship, including mentoring. Mentors must be prepared to address these quickly and professionally so the mentoring program can continue successfully. Go into these difficult conversations with empathy and understanding and be prepared to be open and curious about why the disagreement has occurred in the first place.

Look after yourself:

As much as mentoring can be rewarding, it can also be emotionally and mentally challenging for some, especially for first time mentors. Do not take on mentees problems or try to fix them, it is not your responsibility. When your session is over, it's time to re-connect with your own world. If you believe your mentee at any stage needs professional help that exceeds the role of a mentor speak to the Alumni team or the Careers team.

Despite the challenges, the benefits of mentoring far outweigh any negative experiences and provides meaningful contributions to help others succeed is selfless and generous.

As the saying goes 'what comes around goes around' we hope that once you have experienced working with a mentor and have benefited from both the mentoring relationship and program, you will consider sharing your own knowledge and experience and becoming a mentor yourself one day in the future.

Alumni Mentoring

At ECU, we are here to support you even after you graduate.

The Alumni Mentor Program is an ideal way to hone your own coaching and leadership skills while providing invaluable support to current students and/or recent graduates with a successful transition into the workforce. It's a win, win!

You'll be provided with training, resources and support to make it a rewarding experience for you and your mentee.

Because ECU is a community you will always belong to.

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