

iam Introductory Award

Mentoring Guidance

The practice of mentoring is where one member of staff acts as guide, adviser and counselor to another. Mentoring can vary according to the context and the purpose for which it is being used, but it has two unique characteristics:

- It is a relationship built on mutual trust, respect and confidentiality
- It facilitates a process of learning, development and experimentation.

Mentoring and its uses

Mentoring has been described as a form of professional intimacy in which the mentor and the mentee form a relationship that lies somewhere in the middle of the colleague-friend continuum. Mentoring can be used in a number of ways, for example:

- In the induction of new staff
- To offer support with educational programmes
- To develop staff who have been identified as having high potential
- To support staff involved in a career change or a significant change in their responsibilities.

Mentor Benefits

Being asked to act as a mentor is recognition of your leadership skills. If you are acting as a mentor, the gains are great since it will give you the chance to:

- Promote the organisation's vision, values and strategies and the wider environment within which the organisation operates
- Gain personal satisfaction through development of people who are outside your own immediate area of responsibility
- Interact with junior staff from other areas of the organisation.
- Develop your own management skills

The importance of the mentor is that they can provide support by identifying opportunities and experiences that enhance the candidate's learning experience. They can also help candidates to reflect on these experiences and evaluate how this learning can improve their job performance. This then leads to further development and allows candidates to become self evaluating.

Mentoring

The purpose of this support is to

- Develop skills, knowledge and understanding
- Develop individual needs
- Counselling
- Ensure the any educational programme is shared
- Provide leadership within the partnership
- Ensure that assessment is understood
- Manage the assessment process

Develop skills, knowledge and understanding

Mentors need to understand the programme needs and the level of knowledge and understanding that candidates should acquire. Once mentors have this understanding they then have the ability to ensure that candidates are given opportunities to acquire the specific knowledge and skills.

Develop individual needs

Mentors should guide the candidate to develop their individual needs. This should be related to the programme and also the candidate's specific needs either within an organisation or related to developing their work needs.

Counselling

As part of the role the support should include counselling. Candidates need to reflect on their experience and develop realistic understanding related to their strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes candidates have development needs that are not easy to articulate. Whilst mentors should always be positive it is unrealistic to allow candidates to continue to do things that might be detrimental to their career in the future.

Ensure the programme is shared

Candidates need to be made aware that when they are taking part in learning it is useful for them to tell people both at home and work. People are a lot more forgiving if they know that you are fitting in study time whilst working or trying to enhance your job prospects. Part of the role of mentor is to support candidates in this.

Provide leadership within the partnership

Mentors will be more experienced than the candidates. The role is to provide leadership in helping candidates to

- Navigate the programme
- Manage their time
- Manage their development
- Develop their own leadership skills

Supporting a learner requires a number of skills. These include:

- Organisational skills
- Being informed
- Proactivity
- Objectivity
- Listening skills
- Trustworthiness
- Openness and honesty
- Friendliness and approachability

Mentee Benefits

The benefits of the mentoring relationship include:

- Enhanced knowledge and understanding of the wider issues affecting the organisation and the impact they have on policies and processes
- Greater awareness of organisational culture and politics
- Improved confidence and sense of worth
- The provision of a safe learning environment through observation and advice rather than trial and error
- A source of help, support and objective feedback and a sounding board for ideas
- Access and visibility to senior management, which offers a source of career and networking opportunities.

Learners benefit from having a mentor/coach or facilitator whether their learning is for an exam based course or one that has some form of learning diary/portfolio. Candidates need to have official support whilst learning. They can also have other people who facilitate or coach their learning. Learning does not only take place when reading a book or attending a lecture. Learning is taking place all the time and an experienced mentor can use these experiences to enhance candidates learning.

Candidates often need help to understand how they are performing. A person who is supporting a candidate can listen and interpret what the candidate is saying and allow the candidate to develop greater self awareness. It is the candidate's responsibility to identify their needs and how to address these. Candidates can be supported and encouraged in this process but cannot be directed.

Being mentored

The support should include:

- Identification of areas for improvement
- Encouragement to be increasingly responsible for own development
- The management of records
- Setting objectives and action plan
- Have review meetings
- Feedback and reflection
- Ensuring the assessment process is understood

Ensure that assessment is understood

Mentors have a role in ensuring that there is an understanding of assessment requirements. They have the opportunity to observe and assess and give feedback on the evidence that candidates provide

What is a learning diary/portfolio?

Many programmes have learning diaries or portfolios. The purpose is to collect evidence over time of learning development. These portfolios can be kept electronically or paper based. Students should be encouraged to be reflective in this work but should be made aware that they must be professional in their reflections.

A portfolio should contain

- Evidence of achievements
- Qualifications
- Certificates
- Courses attended
- Posts of responsibility
- Reflection on learning and experience

Evidence

The evidence should be related to:

- Career progression
- Particular sets of competencies
- Pan of career
- Training and development
- Professional development reviews.

Personal Profile

It is important that your portfolio gives people an idea of who the candidate is. It should include:

- Personal attributes – e.g. good communicator
- Personal job skills – e.g. good with computers
- Personal skills – e.g. work well with people
- Hobbies

What can you use your learning diary/portfolio for?

- Job interviews
- Evidence of competency
- Performance review meeting

Benefits for the organisation

Successful mentoring arrangements within an organisation can:

- Speed up the induction process for new employees
- Develop a culture of co-operation
- Improve staff retention rates
- Facilitate internal communications
- Encourage the development of a learning organisation
- Bridge the gap between development and training theory and practice in the workplace
- Create a more profound understanding of the organisation's aims, objectives, culture and systems.

A good mentor can make a learning experience of great value for the learner and turn them into life long learners.