



Mentor Handbook

Material adapted from

[University of Wisconsin Madison](#)

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Common Expectations for Mentors



Checklist of Functional Expectations for Mentors:

- **Role modeling of appropriate professional attitudes, values and behaviors, such as:**
 - How to develop and maintain a professional network
 - How to negotiate a difficult conversation with a colleague

- **Providing advice for:**
 - Strategies for handling difficult work situations
 - The merits of serving on particular committees
 - Finding and securing resources
 - Suggestions for balancing "work and life"

- **Reviewing work and career progress by:**
 - Reviewing goals, plans, and performance reviews

- **Advocating for the mentee's success by:**
 - Showcasing mentee's work/accomplishments
 - Recognizing talents
 - Providing opportunities for participation in professional activities
 - Providing access to key people and resources

- **Offering encouragement by:**
 - Demonstrating enthusiasm and confidence in the mentee's successful future
 - Conveying positive regard
 - Serving as a sounding board
 - Providing a forum in which the mentee is encouraged to talk openly about anxieties and fears
 - Providing moral and emotional support
 - Giving positive feedback

- **Keep confidences.**
 - Keep the content of your discussions within the relationship confidential. All exchanges, both personal and professional, are subject to the expectations of professional confidentiality.

Adapted from: Bland, C.J., Taylor, A.L., Shollen, S. L., Weber-Main, AM, Mulcahy, P.A. (2009). Faculty Success Through Mentoring: A guide for mentors, mentees, and leaders. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. pp. 81-84.

Mentors: Selection Phase Resources



The selection phase begins by taking the time to gain clarity about your motivation to mentor as well as the strengths, goals, and areas of development of your potential mentee. The more information you can gain and share in investigatory meetings with potential mentees the better the ultimate fit will be. Review the material below to set yourself up for a successful match.

Mentor Responsibilities in the Selection phase:

- Have a clear understanding of your motivation to be a mentor
- Agree to mentor based on a realistic assessment of your skills, leadership experience and availability
- Be open to mentoring individuals from outside your discipline
- Train to be a more effective mentor

Mentors: Questions to Ask Yourself Before You Begin

What is your motivation?

Are you interested in working with colleagues who have stimulating ideas, who would benefit from opportunities to learn and grow with and from you? Good mentors engage with promising people with promising ideas. What do you need in order to bring your best self forward as a mentor? Gain insight into your decision process by writing a *mentoring philosophy* for your own reflection, which you can also share with potential mentees.

Do you have time to mentor?

Like all relationships, mentoring takes a significant investment of time. To help you assess whether you are willing to make that investment, ask yourself the following questions when considering whether to take on a new mentee.

The amount of interaction a mentee needs with a mentor is highly variable, depending on their research experience, personality, and the stage of the relationship. Putting in additional time at the beginning of a mentoring relationship is highly recommended for by both mentors and mentees alike. You do neither yourself nor your mentee a favor when agreeing to mentor if you are not able to give the time it will take to cultivate the relationship.

Do you have the time to commit to the following professional behaviors?

- Promptly return emails, phone calls, etc
- Respond to questions with timely and meaningful feedback
- Understand that the "5-minute question" always takes longer and see the time invested as important to helping the mentee develop and advance
- Allocate regularly scheduled mentoring meetings and protect uninterrupted time for mentee

- Learn about the person, as well as his/her discipline, and center

What are mentees looking for?

The supports mentors provide are many, and you should not feel as if you need to meet each of the needs for every mentee. Instead, help potential mentees understand what it is you can provide and determine what unmet needs other mentors might provide. To help you determine the mentee's needs and your own resources, consider common roles and expectations for [mentors](#) and [mentees](#) as a starting point.

How can you get started?

The initial conversations between you and your mentee set the tone for the relationship. The focus should be on who you are as individuals and what you each bring to the relationship (your background, context, culture, strengths, etc). To help ensure your conversation is comprehensive, consider the questions and strategies for your initial mentoring conversations included in the Initial Conversations document linked below. Remember that development of the mentee is the key focus of the mentoring relationship; having the mentee complete a list of goals and a development plan will help the mentee articulate their desires and needs and will give you both a clear place from which to begin your conversations.

[Initial Mentoring Conversations - Questions and strategies](#)

Mentors: Alignment Phase Resources



The Alignment phase is where formal and informal mentoring can part ways, where early conversations about goals, roles and timelines get fleshed out and, in a more formal approach, written down for future assessment and revision. Taking the time early in the mentoring relationship to articulate, align, and document expectations is an investment in developing trust, effective communication and shared goals. Discussions with your mentee should include compatibility of learning and communication styles, expectations around progress, and intentions of evaluating the relationship.

The act of articulating and aligning expectations is an important and iterative process. Formal plans should be revisited every 6 months with revisions made to capture current realities and future directions. Templates for prompting and capturing key elements of these discussions are provided in sample [mentoring compacts](#).

Common Mentor Responsibilities:

- Listening carefully to your mentee's goals
- Assessing your mentee's strengths and areas of growth
- Identifying potential physical, financial, and personal resources of relevance
- Understanding career development expectations
- Clearly communicating your expectations verbally and in writing
- Being flexible and willing to alter your expectations and change your plans
- Identifying time in your schedule to dedicate to your mentee

Mentors: Process for Alignment

Each person comes into the mentoring relationship with unique needs.

Before you align:

- Take advantage of mentoring workshops and learn what being a good mentor means beyond your own first-hand experience.
- Clarify the goals and expectations of your own career and be honest about your ability and desire to reserve time in your schedule dedicated to your mentee's best interest. Be honest with yourself about how you work best and how a mentee can best work with you.

Alignment:

- Use the [mentor](#) and [mentee](#) expectation documents and your potential mentee's goal and development plan to prompt strategic conversations and, when an agreement to work together is reached, collaboratively write a [mentoring compact](#).
- Tailor the expectations checklist, development plan and mentoring agreements to meet you and your mentee's particular personalities and needs across all areas of investigation/development.

- **Include both the big-picture and achievable steps for making the shared vision a reality.**

Revisiting Alignment:

1. Regularly discuss if you and your mentee are still in alignment.
2. Edit/revise expectations documents, development plans, and mentoring agreements as expectations shift.

Important: Have you addressed all of the important aspects of the alignment process? Use the Alignment Phase Checklist to confirm that you are ready to move forward.

Mentors: Signs of Misalignment

Agreements made at the onset of a relationship reflect the best of intentions for the relationship and how things will move forward. As road maps become reality, however, you might find that the relationship is not working out as planned. Consider the following observable signs:

- Mentee and/or mentor dreads attending mentor meetings.
- Mentor does not find the time to meet as agreed upon.
- Mentor does not respond to emails in a timely manner.
- Mentee does not follow through on deadlines.
- Mentee does not feel a sense of belonging within the professional culture.
- A sense of shared curiosity and teamwork is not present.
- Mentor does most of the talking and direction-setting during mentoring meetings.

Consider using a [compact](#) to help frame a more structured conversation. If agreement on the way forward cannot be reached, consider formally bringing [closure](#) to the relationship.

Mentors: Cultivation Phase Resources



In the Cultivation phase, the mentor and mentee follow through on the expectations and timelines outlined in the Alignment phase, modifying the specifics as the relationship plays out. For you as a mentor, the cultivation phase means tailoring opportunities to your mentee that foster their growth and then providing the encouragement and agreed upon resources that empower them to succeed and become more independent.

Mentor Responsibilities in the Cultivation Phase:

- Advise on what you know; admit what you don't and refer to others
- Provide relevant examples and resources
- Recognize your mentee's strengths and areas of growth
- Give constructive feedback
- Foster your mentee's independence
- Respond to the changing needs of your mentee
- Don't shy away from difficult conversations
- Celebrate successes
- Revisit mentoring plans, development plans, and expectations
- Periodically evaluate progress and assess the relationship

Cultivation Resources:

- [Assessing understanding & supporting mentee learning and development](#)
- [Maintaining effective communication](#)
- [Communicating ethics](#)
- [Mentoring across differences](#)
- [Managing mentoring challenges](#)
- [Assessing the mentoring relationship](#)
- [Resources and relevant readings on Cultivation](#)

Maintaining Effective Communication

Virtually every aspect of successful mentoring boils down to effective communication. Four key skills for effective communication in mentoring relationships are:

1. Increase your awareness of yourself and others.^[1]

You are the instrument through which mentoring happens, both as mentor and mentee. The more you are clear about your own agenda and able to separate out your own thoughts, feelings, and wants from those of your mentor/mentee, the greater the potential for intentional partnership and mutual benefit.^[1] "In each moment you spend in another person's presence, you are communicating that person's importance to you. Are you doing this consciously or unconsciously?"

- Denise Holmes^[1]

2. Get curious about the other person's story.^[1]

Listening in order to learn something new (rather than to confirm what you already know) is essential to good mentoring. When you get curious about the other person's story, you open up the possibility of greater connection and value for both parties. [In order to understand what another person is saying, you must assume that it is true, and try to imagine what it could be true of.](#) - George Miller

3. Listen for passion and potential.

Great mentoring means understanding what makes the other person tick, what has brought them to this moment in their career, and where they would like to go next. [Read more about active listening.](#) Listening for potential means listening to people as if they have all the tools they need to be successful, and could simply benefit from exploring their thoughts and ideas out loud." - David Rock

4. Share your own crystallized experience.

One of the pleasures of mentoring is the chance to share one's own hard-earned experience so that it might be helpful to others coming along a similar path. [Read more about receiving feedback as a mentee](#)

Mentoring Across Differences

Individuals bring a wide range of different life experiences to their mentoring relationships. Three key principles can help mentors and mentees bridge the potential differences to create satisfying mentoring relationships.

1. Be aware of your own assumptions.

In the same way that others may have different points of view because of differences in their life experiences, you likely have been shaped by your gender, race, social class, education, generation, geography, and a multitude of other cultural influences. Increasing your awareness of the ways you are a product of your past can help you avoid assuming that others see the world in the same way.

2. Get curious about the experience of colleagues who have different life experiences.

Putting yourself in other people's shoes and seeking to understand how they may have come to their different points of view is a critical step in building a mentoring relationship.

3. Address differences openly.

Relationships in which it becomes comfortable to talk about and acknowledge differences have much greater potential value for both mentor and mentee. While it may initially feel uncomfortable to talk about topics such as race, gender, and/or socioeconomic background, the potential for increased understanding and connection makes it worth the risk.

Assessing the Relationship

Formally evaluating the mentoring relationship and providing feedback to mentors is an important next step. If an explicit plan and expectations have been laid out at the beginning of the relationship, assessing progress and checking in on the health of the relationship is not only possible but necessary if maximal benefit is to be gained.

As you negotiate your expectations at the beginning of the relationship, be sure to lay the ground work for ongoing assessment:

1. What do you want to measure?
2. What are your criteria for success?
3. How will you go about measuring success?

Be sure to include measures for each domain of the mentoring relationship:

- Meetings and Communication
- Expectations and Feedback
- Career Development
- Psychosocial Support

As always, the instruments you use need to be tailored to your individual relationship; effective assessment relies upon both parties feeling free to be honest and forthright. Leverage these [existing evaluation templates](#) as you negotiate how you will evaluate your relationship success with your mentor.

Mentors: Closure Phase Resources



At all phases of the mentoring relationship, both you and your mentee should feel motivated and confident that each is contributing toward shared goals. Once the mentoring relationship has served its purpose and the long-term goals are achieved, or it becomes clear that those goals are not going to be met, it is helpful to have a framework or set of conditions in place for when the association should change or end.

Mentor Responsibilities in the Closure Phase:

- Be sensitive to when the relationship has run its course
- After formal mentoring relationship is finished, follow up on your mentee's successes
- Provide a summative evaluation of the experience
- Say "thank you" and give credit where credit is due
- Learn from your experience when mentoring others

Closing Resources:

- [Preparing for Closure](#)
- [Relevant Readings on Closure](#)

Mentors: Preparing for Closure

If closure is to be a meaningful experience, mentoring partners must prepare and plan for it beginning in the Alignment phase. The first step toward closure is a review of the intentions laid out in the mentoring plan. What was accomplished? What is yet to be done? What really worked? What was not successful? By meaningfully engaging in these questions, good closure should catapult both parties forward into a new stage.

Typical reasons for closure/redefinition:

- Accomplished intended achievement
- Lack of adequate progress toward goals
- You or your mentee leaves institution

To ensure meaningful closure, consider the following:

- **Be proactive.** Agree on how you will come to closure when you first negotiate your mentoring partnership. Make one of the ground rules an agreement to end on good terms. Many mentoring partners adopt the no-fault rule, meaning that there is no blaming if the partnership is not working or one person is uncomfortable.
- **Look for signals.** Check out your perceptions and assumptions when the first indicators appear.
- **Respect your partner.** If he or she wants to end the relationship and you don't, you must honor their wishes.
- **Evaluate the relationship.** Periodically, check out the health of the relationship. Make

- sure your needs and those of your partner are both being met. Make ongoing evaluation a commitment.
- **Review your goals.** Regularly review your goals and objectives with your mentoring partner. Gauge where you and your partner are in the accomplishment of goals and objectives.
 - **Integrate.** When it is time to come to closure, ask how you can use what you've learned. Without closure, you lose the value-added dimension of integration. Good closure involves taking what you've learned from the mentoring relationship and applying it. Focus on both the process and the content of the learning in your discussion.
 - **Celebrate.** Find meaningful ways to celebrate your accomplishments and be vocal in your appreciation of each other.
 - **Move on.** Once you have redefined your relationship, "let go" of the relationship as it was and embrace it as it will be going forward.

From Zachary L. and Fischler L., (2009). *The Mentee's Guide: Making Mentoring Work for You*. Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons. pp. 99-103.