

Five best practice suggestions to gain the most out of the Mentoring Scheme and your mentoring relationship



It's just over a month since you have been a part of the mentoring scheme and I hope it has been a rewarding experience for you all? I agree, it's early on in the process but, based on feedback, I thought it would be good to share some of the best ways to gain the most out of the scheme and your mentoring relationship.

Are you still wondering how to make the most out of the scheme and benefit effectively from your mentor or mentee?

I have been doing a lot of background reading about mentoring and based on my previous experience, I have put together a few ideas that can help you to get the most out of your mentoring relationship:

1. Mutual expectations

Being open about each other's expectations will ensure that both parties have the same understanding of mentoring, roles and the ground rules to make it run smoothly.

Either party can initiate a conversation using the following opening lines:

"Let's spend a few minutes talking about what we'd expect from one another in terms of being a mentor or mentee"

"What do we expect of each other in terms of confidentiality?"

"What do you want to get out of the mentoring process?"

Tip: It's unlikely that the expectations of both of you will be identical, be ready compromise to find a common ground.

2. Establishing Boundaries

Setting boundaries is particularly important to strive for mutual benefits of mentoring. It helps define what is appropriate behaviour and what may cause conflict or discomfort for those involved.

Tip: Mentors and mentees should take the time to set appropriate boundaries from the start, e.g. to give advice but not give in-depth knowledge on a certain topic.



3. Open and flexibility

While it's always important to meet your mentor with clear objectives in mind. A mentor is a trusted advisor who encourages the mentee to think through why they want to do something, and whether the course of action they are taking is the best way to do it. This is only possible when both parties are open and flexible to each other.

Tip: Be prepared to challenge yourself and to work with a mentor or a mentee who has professional experience different from your own.

4. Maintain momentum

Aim to set the dates in your calendar in advance for your meetings for next 6 months. If you don't set up dates beforehand, it's very easy for your monthly meetings to end up being every three months or not having them at all, you are then going to lose the momentum. If it's not possible for you both to meet face to face because of time constraints and distances, you could plan alternative ways to keep in contact a monthly.

Tip: If there's a will, there's a way! Keep in contact using a method that is convenient to you both if a face to face meeting is not possible e.g. email, phone or webchat.

5. Mutual honesty

Mentoring at UIS is a two way learning approach, it's important that you both are honest with each other. If you think you are still not clear about what you actually want out of the mentoring scheme, ask for it. Share your thoughts to give each other the full picture of your challenges, needs, goals, strengths and weaknesses so you can both understand how's best to support each other.

Tip: If you are not honest or open, you're not doing yourself any favours.

Your mentoring relationship should be a rewarding experience for you both. Use these best practice tips to help you to gain the most out of the scheme. If you know of any other best practices, I'd love to hear them to share with others within the community.

I will keep sharing my experience in an on-going series of mentoring updates and blogs. Your suggestions and ideas are welcome and will play a vital role in making the entire process effective and useful to everyone.

I look forward to hearing your suggestions and supporting you further.

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