Apprenticeships at the University of Cambridge

A Guide for Mentors

[](http://staging.apprenticeships.internal.admin.cam.ac.uk/future-apprentices)



Contents

[What is an Apprenticeship? 3](#_Toc47520137)

[The Purpose of Mentoring 3](#_Toc47520138)

[Role of a Mentor 4](#_Toc47520139)

[Mentors can… 5](#_Toc47520140)

[Responsibilities of a Mentee 5](#_Toc47520141)

[Mentee responsibilities include: 6](#_Toc47520142)

[Who Would Make a Good Mentor? 6](#_Toc47520143)

[Listening Actively 6](#_Toc47520144)

[The First Meeting 6](#_Toc47520145)

[Getting To Know Each Other 7](#_Toc47520146)

[Models to Facilitate and Structure Mentoring Meetings 7](#_Toc47520147)

[GROW Coaching Model 7](#_Toc47520148)

[The Five Cs Model of Mentoring 8](#_Toc47520149)

[The Mentoring Contract 9](#_Toc47520150)

[Sample Mentoring Contract 9](#_Toc47520151)

[Addressing Difficulties 10](#_Toc47520152)

[1. Discuss it with the apprentice 10](#_Toc47520153)

[2. Discuss it with the line manager 10](#_Toc47520154)

[3. Contact the Apprenticeship Team 10](#_Toc47520155)

# What is an Apprenticeship?

Apprenticeships offer exciting opportunities for new and existing members of staff to develop their careers and gain a nationally recognised qualification. Apprentices of all ages can benefit from tailored learning and develop their professional skills whilst helping to meet the current and future needs of the University.

They gain this through a wide mix of learning in the workplace, formal off-the- job training and the opportunity to practise new skills in a real work environment.

The formal off-the-job learning element of the apprenticeship is provided by an approved training provider and apprentices will typically spend 20% of their time conducting guided learning which will vary, depending upon the apprenticeship, and may include: day release; block release; online learning; projects; and work place learning.

The different levels of apprenticeship correspond to the following:

| Name | Level | Equivalent Educational Level |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Intermediate | 2 | GCSE |
| Advanced | 3 | A level |
| Higher | 4,5,6 and 7 | Foundation degree and above |
| Degree | 6 and 7 | Bachelor’s or master’s degree |

Apprenticeship Standards or Frameworks outline what an apprentice will be doing and the skills, knowledge and behaviours required of them, by job role. It is important that their job role gives them the right opportunities to meet the standard or framework.

A full list of current government approved apprenticeship standards can be found [here](https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/)

Apprenticeships are for individuals over the age of 16, living in England and not in full time education and can be offered to new or existing members of staff.

Apprentices have a contract of employment with the University which is long enough for them to complete the apprenticeship successfully. Apprenticeships last between one and four years depending on the level and complexity of the apprenticeship.

The Apprenticeship will always be of adequate length to ensure that workplace learning and job experience is sufficient to prepare the apprentice for the role required of them.

# The Purpose of Mentoring

Mentoring is an important part of an apprenticeship and can provide much needed additional support to an apprentice, helping them understand their role in the organisation, develop their career path, and provide a listening ear if they’re facing any problems and challenges.

Mentoring helps people to learn and develop. Mentoring therefore has the potential to make a valuable contribution to apprentices in terms of their personal and professional development and to the overall development of the organisation.

Benefits for the apprentice can include:

* Increased confidence/self-esteem
* Increased sense of value within the organisation
* Additional help and support
* Safe learning environment (can be open about vulnerabilities)
* Increased understanding of the organisation
* Focus on specific skills through coaching from the mentor
* Ideas about career opportunities

The benefits are not all one way.  Mentors too can gain a sense of value within the organisation as well as satisfaction from passing on their skills and wisdom; also greater understanding of the organisation and its issues and problems, as well as improving one-to-one communication skills, coaching skills and management skills.

# Role of a Mentor

Mentoring is particularly important for apprentices as they are often young people entering the workplace for the first time. The mentor relationship provides additional support, guidance and pastoral care, which is outside the more formal line management relationship.

Mentors can help a new apprentice orientate into the workplace, provide information, advice and guidance relating to the learning and training aspects of the apprenticeship, and work with the apprentice to ensure that problems are resolved quickly and do not threaten the apprenticeship.

The mentor is not there to replace the apprentice’s line manager, instead they will provide an additional supportive resource.

## Mentors can…

Help the apprentice explore current **Challenges & Aspirations**

Talk through C**hoices** and **Options** with the mentee to address these

Discuss what the **Possible Outcomes** of these options may be

Help the apprentice establish which **Solution(s)** to take forward and help to determine **Next Steps**

The role of the mentor can encompass any or all of the following depending on the specific needs of the apprentice:

* act as a sounding board
* listen and challenge
* question
* provide professional and personal support
* encourage independent thinking
* keep to boundaries and principles – mentoring is not therapy
* encourage the apprentice to come up with their own solutions to problems
* coach the apprentice to make the most of their talents
* build the apprentices self confidence
* act as a role model
* be someone to talk to outside the line management structure
* offer insights into the culture and values of the organisation
* share their experience and expertise
* give feedback
* provide advice where possible

# Responsibilities of a Mentee

The apprentice also has an important role to play in the relationships as the mentee.

## Mentee responsibilities include:

* Driving the relationship; scheduling time to meet with the mentor and maintaining an up to date record of their plan and progress
* Working proactively with the mentor to assess their areas of strength, development areas, career goals and personal objectives and expectations of the mentoring relationship
* Taking ownership for their own development and committing to the exchange of information including; ideas, development themes, actions, feedback
* Following through on actions discussed with the mentor, gathering feedback and sharing personal learning
* Respecting the mentor’s experience, ideas, guidance and time
* Interested in skills building and goal-setting, and a keen willingness to step out of their own comfort zone
* Committed to the process and willing to learn from all formal development activities

# Who Would Make a Good Mentor?

A mentor should be someone from outside the apprentice’s reporting hierarchy at work. It is also essential that issues between mentor and mentee are confidential. A mentor should be an experienced member of staff who has the following mentoring skills:

* active listening
* questioning
* building rapport
* offering constructive feedback
* setting targets
* offering support and guidance
* signposting
* acting as a role model

## Listening Actively

Active listening is an important skill for both mentors and mentees. Mentors can demonstrate their active listening by:

* Showing interest with encouraging responses such as “hmmm…” and “yes...” or by paraphrasing certain comments in their questions to show they understand
* Using nonverbal signs of understanding, such as nodding their heads, leaning forward, and smiling
* Avoiding the interruption of others when they are talking
* Showing interest and remembering comments made in previous meetings
* Summarizing key elements of conversations as the meeting draws to a close

[Skills training on listening effectively and asking good questions](https://www.training.cam.ac.uk/cppd/event/1873350)

# The First Meeting

As well as agreeing the practical arrangements and identifying objectives for the mentoring relationship, typically, first meetings allow the mentor and apprentice to get to know each other and attach a face to a name. So that the first meeting of the mentoring relationship is as productive as possible it is useful for the mentor to prepare.

Here are some questions mentors may ask themselves in preparation for the first meeting:

* What are the most important lessons I have learned from my career experiences?
* How can I utilize this learning in my contribution to the mentoring relationship?
* What kinds of mentoring (or equivalent) experiences have been most helpful to me and why?
* What can I offer someone I mentor?
* What are my major strengths, skills, knowledge and abilities?
* How much time, effort and enthusiasm can I realistically devote to working with someone like this?
* What do I think my mentee should contribute to the effort?

## Getting To Know Each Other

There are many topics of conversation that can lead to a comfortable environment. Here are some key questions you may wish to consider using to open out the conversation during the first meeting:

* What do you think your key strengths and skills are?
* What skills, knowledge and experience do you feel you would like/need to develop and how do you see the mentoring relationship helping you to do that?
* What do you think might most hinder your success?
* What knowledge, skills and abilities do you feel I possess that would most benefit you?
* What do you want to know from me?
* What do you want/need from me?
* What information do you have for me on how I can best help you or better understand what you need?
* What do you think we need to do to make this mentorship work?
* What is the best way to give you feedback?

# Models to Facilitate and Structure Mentoring Meetings

The following provide a ‘journey map’ for facilitating a structured mentoring session.

GROW Coaching Model

Using a coaching approach can help the mentee to formulate their goals and objectives. One proven approach is the GROW model. GROW is an acronym standing for:

**G**oal

Current **R**eality

**O**ptions (or Obstacles)

**W**ill (or Way Forward)

The model is a simple yet powerful framework for structuring a mentoring or coaching session.

A good way of thinking about the GROW Model is to think about how you'd plan a journey. First, you decide where you are going (the goal), and establish where you currently are (your current reality). You then explore various routes (the options) to your destination. In the final step, establishing the will, you ensure that you're committed to making the journey, and are prepared for the obstacles that you could meet on the way.

The model is designed to help the mentee think things through for themselves and drive towards improved performance

**Goal:** what is the objective or desired outcome? It must be specific and measurable, think SMART. Ask the mentee, "How will you know when you have achieved that goal?"

**Reality:** what is the current situation? What is stopping the goal from being reached? Check any assumptions with the mentee, "Why do you think that might happen?"

**Options:** what choices do they have? What different journeys can they choose to reach the goal? This is also known as 'Obstacles Exploration.' Avoid making suggestions on the mentee's behalf.

**Way Forward:** what will they do next? This is also known as 'Will' or 'Wrap-Up.' Gain commitment to an action and a follow-up if required

[More information on using the GROW model](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_89.htm)

## The Five Cs Model of Mentoring

The model is particularly helpful during a session where the mentor may need to help the mentee to consider alternative ways for dealing with a challenging situation, or for tackling any situation where there may be a number of options and the mentor wants to help the mentee explore these options.

The model has a number of different stages that may be followed sequentially. Nevertheless, it is likely that you will move around the process a number of times, or jump between the stages of the model during a mentoring discussion. It is the role of the mentor to underpin the discussion with an appropriate degree of structure.

Questions are answered at each stage of the process, each one in turn moving the mentee forwards.

1. **C**hallenges - what are the challenges facing the mentee?
2. **C**hoices - what possible options are available to overcome these challenges?
3. **C**onsequences - the consequences of taking each of the choices identified are discussed by the two parties.
4. **C**reative Solutions - this is an opportunity for the mentor to share their wisdom and experience and offer the mentee some further solutions.
5. **C**onclusions - the mentee decides what they will do next, making a commitment to action

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# The Mentoring Contract

A mentoring contract is a simple, yet critical, means of stating the purpose and boundaries of a mentoring partnership. As part of your initial discussion regarding how you are going to work together you should agree the duration and frequency of meetings, ground rules, roles and responsibilities, mutual expectations, review points, duration of the mentoring relationship itself and the importance of confidentiality. We would recommend that the mentee takes primary responsibility for documenting the output of this discussion, using the Sample Mentoring Contract as a template, however, it is important for the mentor to be aware of these key areas to consider in order to ensure that all areas are discussed and agreed during the first few meetings:

## Sample Mentoring Contract

Mutual expectations (i.e. what do we each expect from the other?)

When shall we review progress? How long with the mentoring relationship last?

How often will we meet? When and where will we meet, and for how long?

What will be the ground rules for our discussions (e.g. Confidentiality, openness etc.?)

Who will be responsible in driving the mentoring relationship?

What contributions will each party be committed to bring to the relationship?

If problems arise how will they be resolved?

Date

Signature

# Addressing Difficulties

Although a lot of consideration will have been given to identifying a suitable match, if after a series of meetings either the mentor or mentee, feels that the relationship is not going to be as beneficial as either party would wish, please take the following steps:

## 1. Discuss it with the apprentice

Talk to the apprentice and discuss why you feel the relationship may not be working. In some circumstances, simply by discussing these concerns, the situation can be easily resolved. Also, discuss and agree a way in which you can work better together going forward.

## 2. Discuss it with the line manager

Talk to the line manager about your concerns and agree a plan for moving the relationship forward.

## 3. Contact the Apprenticeship Team

If your concerns are still not resolved, agree with your apprentice that you will contact a representative from the Apprenticeship Team at [Apprenticeships@admin.cam.ac.uk](mailto:Apprenticeships@admin.cam.ac.uk) who may be able to offer additional support and advice.