

Apprenticeship Mentor Handbook

The Role
of the
Mentor



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Apprenticeship Mentor Handbook

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Mentor Introduction

Welcome to Abingdon & Witney College's apprenticeship programme and thank you for agreeing to be a workplace mentor for an apprentice.

The tailored apprenticeship programme has been designed by Abingdon & Witney College, to meet the needs of the employer and effectively develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours within the apprenticeship standard set out by the Institute of Apprenticeships & Technical Education.

The bespoke training plan for your apprentice provides learning experiences and professional development opportunities to meet these national apprenticeship standards which will have a lasting impact on the apprentice's career and workplace.

Working towards the End-Point Assessment of the apprenticeship standard will provide many challenges. Remember that the apprentice will be balancing their learning with a busy role in the workplace and, often, several important commitments outside work.

In order to do well apprentices will need the support of those around them, not only from Abingdon & Witney College staff, but also their line manager, colleagues, family and friends. As a mentor you are agreeing to play a key role in the workplace support network.

This handbook includes guidance on what it means to be a mentor and support the apprentice through their journey.

Enjoy the mentor experience!

Mentoring roles and responsibilities overview

Mentors are appointed in agreement with the appropriate person(s) within the workplace prior to the start of the apprenticeship. The mentor should be functioning within a nearby and similar area of work, and usually in a more senior position to the apprentice so that they are able to offer the apprentice opportunities to learn from a range of work activities, but the mentor does not need to be their manager or direct senior.

The mentor is not there to replace the apprentice's line manager, instead they are an additional member of the workplace support network, as detailed in the table below.

	Mentoring	Managing	Supervising	Coaching
Core focus	Personal development or problem solving	Meet policies and procedures of the organisation	Support skills and knowledge acquisition	Learning specific skills and issues
Relationship	Equal	Hierarchical	Hierarchical	Thinking partner
Timescale	Finite-duration	On-going	On-going	Finite duration
Delivery	Can be formal or informal with an internal or external mentor	Formal relationship with clear job descriptions	Clear contract – can be internal or external supervision	Clear contract usually with outside expert
Target group	Primarily on an individual level	Individual level	Can be individual or group basis	Learning and progression for individual or team around issue
Outcomes	Guidance on developing career path and making career choices	Against agreed performance standard	Improved and current practice, increased knowledge insight	Improvement in specific skills required for role

Mentoring focuses on facilitating the apprentice's learning in the workplace and support for career development. To do this the mentor will need to be aware of the role the apprentice is currently performing and the proposed development of their role.

The mentor will need to have facilitation skills to support the apprentice in self-directed learning and to give feedback on their progress. The support and guidance provided enables the apprentice to develop more holistic insights into their skills and aptitudes and take responsibility for their own development.

The role of the mentor

The role of a mentor is to encourage, challenge, advise, guide, and support their apprentices in reaching their own conclusions. Mentoring relationships will take time to establish between the mentor and apprentice and are built upon trust and encouragement. At different stages of the mentoring relationship, it is therefore important for mentors to assume different roles or characters.

Mentors assume the 'role model' role:

- Providing examples of behaviour, attitudes and actions to imitate
- Demonstrating values that the apprentice desires for themselves
- Expanding the apprentice's outlook on life.

Mentors also assume the motivator role:

- Helping their apprentice collect information and developing their problem-solving skills
- Joining with the apprentice in new learning
- Encouraging their apprentice to try new things.

Mentors also play the supporter role:

- Listening to the apprentice's ideas and concerns without hurried judgement
- Developing apprentice's self-esteem and confidence through greater self-awareness
- Expressing a sincere personal attitude regarding the well-being of the apprentice
- Communicating belief and confidence in the apprentice's abilities.

Mentors also act in the resource provider role:

- Providing new opportunities for the apprentice to try different things
- Encouraging the apprentice to contact other people as potential resources
- Introducing the apprentice to new people, places, interests and ideas.

Mentors also assume the challenger role:

- Challenging the apprentice to perform to their best abilities and try things on their own
- Encouraging the apprentice to identify goals, frame them and plan how to achieve them
- Encouraging the apprentice to participate in increasingly challenging activities.

The responsibilities of the mentor

- Gather an awareness of the apprentice's current role in the workplace and the expectations of the new role that they may be aiming for on completion of the apprenticeship
- Agree dates with the apprentice for mentoring meetings at appropriate stages of the apprenticeship based on the apprentice's individual needs
- Establish parameters of your relationship with the apprentice for the duration of the apprenticeship programme
- Provide feedback to the apprentice and line manager on progress where relevant and requested.

The benefits of mentoring

There are benefits to both the mentor and apprentice of mentoring.

For the mentor:

- Career development - Mentoring is widely recognised as a key skill within contemporary businesses. The training and personal development provided will help boost this skill and further enhance your existing relationship building skills
- Increased creativity and fresh ideas - The two-way mentoring process offers excellent opportunities to develop and share new ideas
- Personal satisfaction - Alongside the increased satisfaction of helping others, mentoring also offers the chance to put something back through the imparting of expertise and specialist knowledge and skills
- Latest developments and thinking - It will also help you keep up to date with industry sector developments and strengthen your relationship with your employer.

For the apprentice:

- Greater self-awareness - Mentoring aims to build self-confidence and self-esteem by exploring the apprentices' awareness of their knowledge, skills and behaviours. This self-knowledge is critical to be able to identify strengths and weaknesses
- Broaden horizons - By sharing ideas with a mentor, apprentices will be able to question some of the self-limiting beliefs and career myths which can hold them back
- Realisation of goals and achievements - By exploring in depth goals and achievements with an experienced practitioner the apprentice is more likely to set challenging and attainable goals in the future
- Networking - Mentoring offers the opportunity for apprentices to be introduced to a wider range of professionals through their mentor's professional network
- Enhanced career opportunities - Mentoring will improve apprentices' ability to develop their CV and should sharpen their self-promotion skills
- Ability to manage change - Working with an experienced executive offers the opportunity to identify successful practices for managing changes and transitions at key life intervals.

Building a positive mentoring relationship

Planning time for your first meeting to develop a good appropriate working relationship will prove useful for both the apprentice and you as the mentor.

For the initial meeting to be successful you need to think about the practicalities and gather some background information to start building the relationship.

Practicalities:

- Exchange contact details
- Identify arrangements for meeting and arrange future meetings
- Discuss their new role and responsibilities as an apprentice
- Make colleagues in the work area aware of the apprentice's new role as appropriate.

Background information:

- Discuss whether they have any support needs and make them aware of support networks in the organisation
- Discuss the apprentice's previous education and work experiences
- Review what the apprentice considers to be their specific strengths and areas for development
- Explore what they want to experience/see/do/develop?
- Identify any concerns the apprentice has about on the job training experience—potential fears and anxieties
- Ascertain what the apprentice must achieve for their apprenticeship.

Start to build the relationship/initial meeting:

- Tell the apprentice about yourself as a person and a practitioner
- Ask them about themselves as a person and as an apprentice
- Share your own experiences of learning
- Find out about any anticipated barriers to their learning
- Discuss how you would like feedback on your performance as a mentor
- Discuss how to deal with problems and the associated responsibility/accountability.

Facilitation skills

As the mentor you will be facilitating the process of enabling the apprentice to learn by providing

non-judgmental supportive and constructive feedback built on truth, openness and trust not necessarily or primarily an advisory role.

The following aspects can create successful facilitation and a positive learning culture:

- Help identify apprentices' needs
- Listen more than talk
- Keep the apprentice focused on the task and process
- Encourage participation but remember that individuals participate in different ways
- Be sensitive to gender and culture
- Help make connections in thinking
- Be alert to signs of confusion and review tasks which are causing confusion
- Share opinions but do so in ways that do not demand nor impose but simply represent a personal sharing which apprentices may take or leave
- Do not do the work for the apprentice. Learning is more effective and lasting if the individuals discover on their own
- Remain as objective as possible
- Help the apprentice to work outside their usual methods of learning, to encourage growth and flexibility; for example, if they read a lot, suggest a discussion goal; if they read little, suggest some short articles and discuss them
- Encourage the apprentice to stretch and challenge their thinking
- Ask frequently if there are questions. When you ask a question allow time for apprentices to think before answering
- Do not feel you must be an expert. Remind the apprentices and yourself that you are a facilitator and use their expertise and experience
- Be flexible. Changing something does not mean you planned poorly, but probably means you are listening, watching and adjusting your actions to fit the situation
- Recognise and accept your own limitations.

Finally, just remember you already have all you need to be a great mentor.

Model code of practice for mentors and mentees

The purpose of the code of practice is to ensure that the mutually respectful relationship between the mentor and mentee is as positive and successful as possible, and each individual is clear about their roles where both are willing to learn and be open to suggestions.

Mentors will:

- Respond to mentee contacts within a mutually agreed time limit
- Be on time for meetings (virtual or face to face). If cancelling, ensure that the mentee has been informed in advance via their contact details
- Give open and honest feedback to the mentee
- Seek feedback from the mentee on the practical arrangements, as well as style and approach.

Mentees will:

- Establish and maintain contact with their mentor
- Prepare for each meeting with relevant questions for discussion
- Respond to contact within a mutually agreed time limit
- Be on time for meetings (virtual or face to face). If you have to cancel, ensure that the mentor has been informed in advance via their contact details.

The mentoring relationship is designed to last at least for the duration of the apprenticeship, but can be continued if both parties agree.

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