

Guidance for Mentors and Mentees

What is mentoring? ⁰¹

Mentoring is a highly valuable development activity. At the core of the activity is the relationship between the mentor and mentee, where the development of the mentee is the key focus. SEPnet (South East Physics Network) strongly supports the value of mentoring and aims to create mentoring opportunities for physics students

The development needs satisfied through the relationship can vary in focus and should be determined by the mentee. The mentee must lead in identifying issues and, with guidance from the mentor, resolving them. The mentor is not there to provide 'the answers', but to guide the mentee towards 'the answer' that is right for them.

Types of mentoring

Short term

Focus is on a particular issue.

Mentors offer one-off sessions to support students with a specific task or goal.

Examples

- CV advice and guidance
- Interview practice
- Providing insight into a specific role

Long term

Focus is on a range of issues.

Mentor relationship might be ongoing over a number months or years and focus on the student's career plans and development.

Examples

- Building a strong online profile
- Learning a new skill

Methods

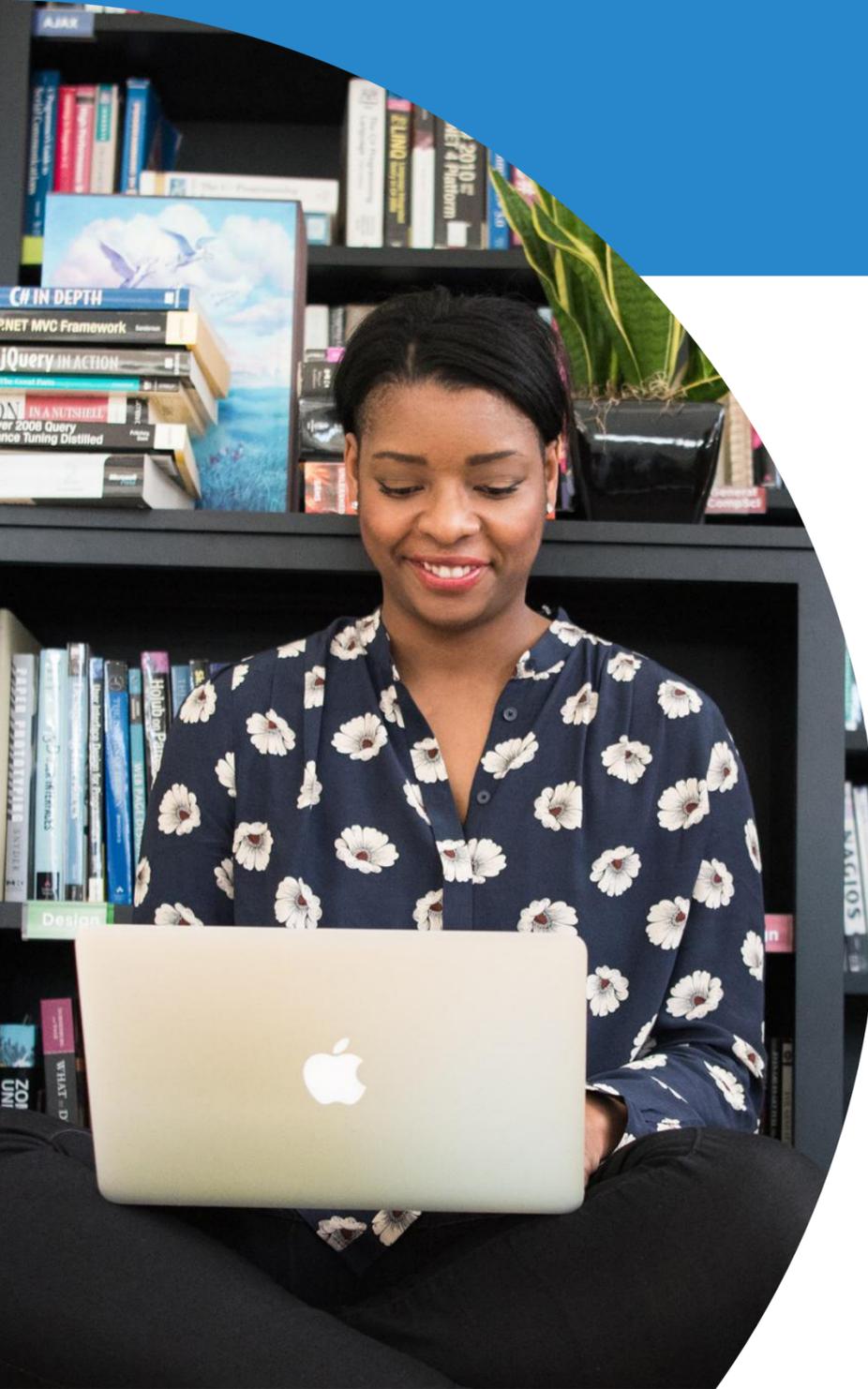
Depending on your goals, you can choose from a variety of mentoring methods:

- Email (e-mentoring)
- Telephone
- Video call
- Face-to-face

Typically the mentor and mentee arrange designated times to discuss issues, make plans to resolve and then review.

The formal vs informal nature of the sessions is down to those involved. However each session should have a purpose.

Role of the mentor



As a mentor you will be viewed as a more experienced individual who is willing and able to pass on the benefit of that experience. You can't solve all the mentee's problems but you can refer or signpost them to others who can help. You can't do the mentee's work or give detailed academic advice but you can encourage them to become a successful independent learner by helping with time management, setting targets, giving study or research tips, listening to ideas and helping to interpret feedback.

Your role is not to 'tell' the mentee what to do but to act as a sounding board and:

- provide non-judgemental support
- clarify the goals of the mentee
- build rapport
- listen and accurately ascertain meaning
- ask questions and encourage the mentee to explore issues
- structure conversations
- encourage and allow the mentee to take the initiative
- provide feedback that is both challenging and empathetic
- offer knowledge and advice with care
- offer fresh perspectives
- maintain professional boundaries and confidentiality
- commit sufficient time and mental energy to the mentoring relationship.

Role of the mentee

The purpose of mentoring is for you to work on your professional development. Don't expect the mentor to solve your problems or provide quick fixes. You need to play a proactive part and ensure you are driving your mentoring sessions, just as much as your mentor.



Own and take responsibility for the content of the sessions



Be open to developing your self-awareness and to making changes



Be open to what the mentor has to say and to their advice - this doesn't mean you have to agree with it. Reflect and decide



Reflect between sessions on what has been discussed so you are prepared for your next steps

Benefits to the mentee

Gain support with developing your career path or understand requirements to get into a field of interest

Increase confidence, self-awareness and feel more empowered with your career development strategy

An opportunity for knowledge transfer and develop new skills

Gain support while you study

Build a career development strategy with your mentor so you are better equipped to take steps to securing your next role

Gain from the knowledge, experience and expertise about a specific career area or industry field

Advice on how to stand out and improve employability, like help with tailoring your CV so it stands out or practise your interviewing skills

Expand your professional and personal networks

Additional information

Confidentiality

- Discussions are confidential and information should only be disclosed with mentee's consent or in exceptional circumstances where safety and wellbeing or the safety of others is a concern.
- If you are finding something difficult to handle or think that you are being asked to do something outside your role, please get in touch with your SEPnet Employability Adviser.

Tracking

Track your meetings including: further actions, resources you may need, your progress and positive comments you receive for your own development as mentee or mentor.

Withdrawing

In case of any difficulties with the mentoring relationship, please inform your SEPnet Employability Adviser BEFORE either party withdraws from the scheme.