

Royal Society of Chemistry Mentoring Service

Thank you for participating in the Royal Society of Chemistry's mentoring service and we hope that you will benefit from the support provided by your mentor. Please take the time to read the information in this pack, which provides clarity about what to expect from your mentoring experience. After reading this document we ask that you [complete a short questionnaire](#); understanding what you hope to achieve through being mentored will help us find you a suitable mentor. Please also then contact careers@rsc.org to confirm that you would like to be part of the scheme.

We are here to help you get the most out of this service and to support you throughout your mentoring relationship. If you need any assistance at any time, please contact our mentoring coordinator Laura:

by phone 01223 432420

by email woodwardl@rsc.org or careers@rsc.org

by post Laura Woodward

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1 Introduction to mentoring

Mentoring is “A process whereby an individual guides another individual in the development and re-examination of their own ideas, learning, and personal and professional development”¹. Through our mentoring service we train members to mentor other members in order to support them in their career progression, development and growth.

Mentoring allows you to **explore new ideas** in confidence and look more closely at yourself, your opportunities, your goals and any issues you face. It can help you learn how to manage your career in order to **maximise your potential** and develop your skills. Some common benefits that you can gain from being mentored include:

- Being supported through change
- Personal development
- Broadening your horizons and experiences
- Raising your aspirations
- Building your confidence
- Improving your performance
- Greater job satisfaction
- Enhancing your creativity and thinking in new ways

2 Your role as a mentee

We want you to get the most out of your mentoring relationship, so we ask you to be committed in seeking **development** opportunities, **self-learning**, feedback, encouragement and support. To help you understand the role you play in the mentoring relationship, here are some thoughts about how you can contribute to effective sessions:

- **Prepare** in advance of the meetings to make the most out of the time available.
- Bring **challenging** and **significant topics** to the sessions to get value from the experience.
- Take **ownership** for driving each session in the direction you want it to go.
- Be **open minded** and willing to try new approaches, behaviours and techniques to stretch yourself further and achieve your goals.
- **Commit** to acting on outcomes from the session.
- **Ask for support when you need it.**
- **Challenge** your mentor constructively to explore a wider viewpoint.

Equally, here are some things to avoid, as these can create ineffective sessions:

- Bringing to the sessions a **long list** of things you expect your mentor to do for you.
- Bringing **nothing** to the sessions and expecting your mentor to suggest discussion topics.
- Treating the mentoring sessions as a **low priority** in your schedule.

A mentoring relationship is a **professional** relationship – some mentors and mentees do stay in contact after the formal mentoring is complete, but this is not always the case. Approach your mentoring partnership as you would any other professional relationship:

¹ Rina Dutta, Sarah L. Hawkes, Amy C. Iverson, Louise Howard, **Women in academic psychiatry**, *The Psychiatrist*, 2010, **34**, 313-317

- Act in accordance with our [Code of Conduct](#).
- Avoid discussing issues that could be commercially sensitive to either party's employer.
- Maintain an ethical approach with your mentor, including confidentiality to protect sensitive and personal information.
- Uphold other basic values, including treating people with respect and being non-judgemental.

2.1 What to expect

Once you have read through these guidelines, the next step will be to fill in the online questionnaire. This will allow us to find out more information about you and what you hope to achieve through being mentored, which will help us match you with a suitable mentor. If your objectives change or other issues arise after you have completed the questionnaire please let us know as soon as possible, as this will affect the matching process.

When you have completed the questionnaire, we will ask you to have a briefing session, usually by telephone or Skype, to ensure you are fully prepared for the mentoring relationship and that you are comfortable with what our mentoring service involves. It will also give you the opportunity to raise any concerns and questions you may have before being mentored. Remember, this can count towards your Continuing Professional Development activities.

Once you have had the briefing session we will put you in touch with an appropriate, trained mentor who we will have matched you with based on your responses in the questionnaire. We will do this as soon as possible, but you may not be matched straight away; while we will do our best to find a suitable mentor for your needs, we cannot guarantee one.

To ensure you are well supported while being mentored we will send you an invite to join the mentee forum, where you can contact others being mentored, share experiences and update others with your progress. We also encourage you to use our online webinars and reading resources to help you get the most out of mentoring. To offer you further support we have worked with mentoring experts at Coach Mentoring Ltd to provide you with an independent confidential hotline to ask any questions or address any issues. They can be contacted on rsc@coachmentoring.co.uk and will respond to you within 24 hours, offering follow up phone or skype conversations if you need specific support.

To maintain the high quality and standard of our service we have three 'formal' touch points with you during your mentoring relationship, where we will be asking you to complete feedback surveys. However, this does not restrict you from sharing your thoughts with us at any time by getting in touch.

3 The role of your mentor

Your mentor is a trusted advisor and an unbiased listener who will help you **explore** your thoughts, ideas and options. They will help you to broaden your thinking and **guide** you in reaching your own decisions. They will ask questions and challenge you, while providing direction and encouragement. It is worth remembering your mentor is a **volunteer**, committing their time, energy and expertise through personal choice and without financial gain; having someone's undivided attention for these sessions is extremely valuable.

It is important to be clear about what to expect from your mentor and the boundaries they can provide. Below is clarity of what your mentor is **not** there to do:

- Solve all of your problems, provide all of the answers, and always have the solution.
- Tell you what to do or how to behave in certain situations.
- Take responsibility for your decisions.
- Be available for you whenever you want them.
- Decide when to meet and what to talk about.
- Be a counsellor.
- Provide training.

- Replace other important relationships you may have, such as the one with your line manager.
- Help you achieve Chartered Status, become a Registered Scientist or Registered Science Technician; we have mentors available for these processes and this runs as a separate programme. Your mentor is there to help you with other aspects of career development and planning.

There is no need to be concerned if your mentor comes from a different discipline, type of work or field of science from you; remember they are there to encourage, listen and offer another perspective on your thinking.

4 How mentoring works

Mentoring relationships tend to move through five phases as the relationship progresses. Being aware of how the relationship can change is helpful to ensure both yours and your mentor's needs are met.

1. **Introduction and rapport-building:** you and your mentor get to know each other, start to become comfortable and develop trust for one another. Rapport will build as you get to know each other and work together on achieving your goals, but it does demand both parties to share or acknowledge the validity of each other's values.
2. **Direction-setting:** we recommend you discuss your goals with your mentor at the outset to give **focus and direction** to the sessions and to ensure you are both working to the same agenda, although these goals may evolve as the relationship develops. It is a good idea to think about what your mentor can do to help you achieve your goals, how you will both measure progress and how your expectations will be met.
3. **Cultivation:** where the relationship is in full swing and provides the full range of benefits.
4. **Maturation:** learning and support becomes mutual and you become increasingly self-reliant.
5. **Review and closedown:** the formal relationship comes to an end. This can be for a number of reasons, for example if you have achieved your goals and there are no new challenges to cover, or if you feel you can tackle situations confidently without your mentor's help. Either party must be able to leave the mentoring arrangement without blame when either or both feel it is no longer beneficial. At the end of the relationship it would be beneficial for you and your mentor to review your original expectations and goals against the outcomes. It is important for you to **reflect** on what you have obtained from the sessions; what was useful and what was not so useful.

We want all of our members to feel completely comfortable in their mentoring relationship, so if at any time you feel that the partnership is not going to work out, please contact us to discuss the problem. If it is necessary to terminate the relationship early, it is important not to assign fault but to use this experience as an opportunity to be clear about the type of mentor you would like to work with. The Royal Society of Chemistry is your point of contact for any queries and we will support you if you have difficulties with your mentor that you cannot resolve; if necessary we will take responsibility for ending the partnership. Where possible, we will do our best to match you with another mentor if a suitable one is available.

5 Mentoring sessions

5.1 The first session: your goals

Before the first session consider what you want to gain from the mentoring relationship. Discussing with your mentor **the reasons** why you want to be mentored and what you would like to achieve can be a good starting point for the first session. This can include any challenges you face, what you have achieved so far and where you would like input.

Set clear goals at the beginning of the relationship and consider how you will know when these have been achieved. Most mentoring relationships have a finite lifetime, usually one to two years depending on your goals, and applying an approximate end date to the relationship encourages focus to the sessions.

5.2 The first session: practicalities

Before your first meeting it is good to think about the venue. It is best for this to be private and comfortable with enough time away from interruptions and distractions. It is also a good idea to agree with your mentor in advance how long the first session should be.

We have suggestions of practical aspects of the mentoring sessions to discuss with your mentor in the first meeting. Defining these limits will allow expectations on both sides to be managed from the outset. It is a good idea to record a summary of your discussion from the initial meeting.

- **Where** you will meet and who will arrange room bookings.
We advise you arrange to meet in a reasonably quiet public place to avoid unease, for example we do not recommend you meet in either your or your mentor's home. If you decide to meet at either of your workplaces, you should check with your employers first; issues of commercial sensitivity and use of company time should be considered.
- **How often** you will meet.
This may be a regular occurrence (for example once a month) or it may vary in regularity; it will need to be something that you can both commit to, so it is good to be honest and realistic. Again, if you decide to meet in working hours, agreement from both employers will need to be sought first.
- **How long** the sessions are likely to be.
Setting a time limit to the meetings will help focus the session.
- How you will **communicate** and whether you can contact your mentor between sessions.
If using email to communicate, both of you will need to check with your employers before commencing email discussions with your mentor from work. Although it is possible to be mentored using email, video calls and telephones, we recommend your mentoring sessions take place face to face whenever possible.
- How you intend to **keep records**.
We suggest you take notes to capture any areas that are important for you to achieve your goals; it is not your mentor's responsibility to take notes and provide them to you. However, they may wish to take notes for their own memory, which is something you may want to discuss with your mentor.

5.3 The first session: how the relationship will work

At the beginning of the relationship it is essential that both parties discuss expectations of each other and how the relationship will be managed. Think about what will make this a satisfying, useful relationship and discuss these thoughts with your mentor. Asking your mentor what will make the relationship useful for them may also add some value in the first session and help to build a mutual understanding.

The following questions can help you discuss expectations at your first meeting:

- Are we clear about what we both expect of:
 - Each other?
 - The mentoring relationship?
 - What we hope to learn from each other?
- How closely do our expectations match?
- How formal or informal do we want our meetings to be?
- How structured do I want the sessions?
- Are we agreed that openness and trust are essential? How will we ensure that they happen?
- Are we both willing to give honest and timely feedback, being constructively critical?

- What, if any, are the limits to the scope of discussion (i.e. what we talk about)?
- What, if any, are the limits to the confidentiality of the relationship (i.e. what we are prepared to tell others)?
- How do we ensure my line manager is supportive (where appropriate)?
- Is the role of my mentor clear?
- How challenging do I want my mentor to be?
- When and how shall we check this relationship is 'right' for the both of us?

5.4 The first session: building rapport

Every mentoring relationship is different and it can vary how quickly an effective and trusting environment is created; it may take longer than your first session for you both to feel completely comfortable with each other. The more you meet the more you will build trust as you work towards your goals and get to know each other.

Here are some tips that can help to build rapport:

- Get to know your mentor and share information about yourself. This establishes trust and helps you to work person to person rather than just role to role. Things you could discuss are work, personal life and what is important to you both
- Have clear, defined goals. This gives a shared point of interest and you can learn to value and respect someone easily when you work with them on something that is important to you.
- Review your goals and how you are working together regularly to ensure you are getting what you need from being mentored.
- Provide feedback to your mentor on what works well and anything you feel is a barrier to achieving your goal. This will give your mentor an opportunity to change their approach.
- Make sure you follow up on anything you have committed to.
- Be reliable.
- Be honest and discuss any issues as soon as they arise.

Generally, however, if two people do not 'click' within the first two meetings, the relationship is unlikely to develop the depth of rapport and trust necessary to address personal issues through mentoring. The reality is that not all relationships will work. In the absence of rapport it is always better to dissolve the relationship and we will try to help you find a different mentor with whom you are more compatible. Please get in touch with us at any stage if you need advice on this.

5.5 Future sessions

The mentoring sessions are for you to focus on what is important for you. We would expect that you do the majority of the talking (around 80% of the time) with your mentor asking relevant questions to support your thinking and help you consider any actions. Being flexible on the structure and frequency of the sessions can help you work together and maintain an environment that suits you both.

The following are questions you could ask yourself to prepare before each meeting:

- Is there anything specific you would like to talk about? Example topics you may wish to cover include:
 - Your goals: how you have progressed, achievements to date, or a specific goal you would like to focus on.
 - Your career or your work.
 - Identifying and working on your strengths.
- Are there any challenges you are facing?
- Are there any areas of particular importance right now?
- What have you been working on since the previous session?

- Has anything changed about your goals since the last session?
- What has worked well and what hasn't worked so well?
- What would you like to focus on in the next session?
- What would you like to take forward?

6 Mentoring Policy

This policy sets out the Royal Society of Chemistry's aims and approach to supporting all mentoring relationships, and applies to all mentees and mentors. It is not intended to create a legally binding relationship or contractual agreement.

The Royal Society of Chemistry is committed to mentees, who can expect to:

- Be valued as individuals and respected for their knowledge and skills.
- Have support, feedback, appreciation and encouragement.
- Have opportunities to discuss concerns or problems of the mentoring relationship.
- Have all the information relevant to them.
- Have adequate insurance cover (see "[Supplementary Information](#)" document).
- Have their personal data collected, held, used and disclosed in accordance of the Data Protection Act 1998.

The Royal Society of Chemistry expects its mentees to:

- Show commitment to the mentoring service.
- Be reliable and engaged in the mentoring service.
- Have a flexible approach.
- Be sensitive and tactful where necessary.
- Treat their mentor, other Royal Society of Chemistry members and Royal Society of Chemistry staff with respect.
- Respect confidentiality of any discussions. This is important and will help to create trust with your mentor.
 - All information should be regarded as confidential unless otherwise advised. Only under exceptional circumstances where the discussion has serious implications (e.g. where illegal or dangerous) should you take appropriate action and disclose the information.
 - Confidential matters must not be disclosed with members of the general public (including other Royal Society of Chemistry members).
 - Personal information should not be repeated and should be treated in a sensitive manner.
 - No information must be released to a third party without first seeking the agreement of the individual concerned.
 - Personal details should be held securely.
 - Records no longer required should be shredded or safely disposed of.
- Remain within the law at all times.
- Conduct themselves in a safe manner and not to act in a way that may cause injury to themselves or others.
- Consult the Royal Society of Chemistry if in need of help or guidance, or to discuss any concerns.
- Have read and understood these guidelines and all other information provided.

The Royal Society of Chemistry will not be able to reimburse any costs that you incur as a result of the mentoring sessions.

6.1 Further information

Details of our complaints procedure, insurance details and confidentiality (including data protection) can be found in the "Supplementary Information" document. We ask that you read these so that you are aware of the procedures and policies in place, should you need them.

7. Next Steps

Once you have read and agreed with the guidelines outlined in this document and you have read the "Supplementary Information" document, we ask that you complete the initial questionnaire to help us find a suitable mentor for you. Please also email careers@rsc.org to confirm your interest in becoming a mentee. We will then ask you to participate in a briefing session, online or by phone, before we put you in touch with your selected mentor.