

**Mentoring** can play an important role in an individual's career development through the sharing of experience and expertise to help with personal and professional growth. For mentors, a mentoring relationship can offer:

- Skills development especially in providing feedback and interpersonal communication
- Personal and professional satisfaction
- Contributing to the development of future ANU leaders
- Staying in touch with emerging issues relevant to less experienced ANU staff.

## Being an effective mentor

The best mentors combine technical competence, experience, the ability to communicate, and most importantly the ability to listen. They offer constructive feedback, share experience and networks, provide empathy and understanding, assist with problem-solving and provide honest and objective guidance.

Three key factors in being an effective mentor, each focusing on maximizing the value of the experience for both members of the relationship, include:

1. **Share.** an important part of being a mentor is sharing experiences. Mentees are looking to learn and benefit from the successes and failures you have had in your career and life.
2. **Advise and Listen.** Good mentors listen and advise. They provide a sounding board on how to address certain situations, challenges and opportunities. As a mentor provide advice on how to address certain situations, challenges and opportunities. A good mentoree will bring "real-world scenarios" to you and request specific advice. Those situations may be career decisions, ethical dilemmas and other professional 'forks in the road'. Provide honest and objective guidance.
3. **Network.** Your personal and professional network is often one of the reasons a mentee has contacted you. Leverage your network appropriately, and ensure the mentee understands the ground rules for engaging with those contacts. Be prepared to pick up the phone, write an email and make an introduction on behalf of your mentee.

## Mentoring conversations

Mentoring conversation invites the mentee to reflect on their own experience with a situation, issue or problem, then gather information from a variety of sources (perhaps including the mentor), sort through options and decide on a course action, plan and implement it. The ideal is for the mentee to be empowered with knowledge and techniques and to take responsibility for their actions.

## Getting started

In preparation for your first meeting, ask your potential mentee to email a brief introduction about themselves together with their CV and a summary of their objectives for the mentoring relationship.

Your first session provides an opportunity to meet each other and decide if the "fit" is right. This often is an informal meeting held perhaps in either person's office or at the university coffee shop. Discuss what the mentee is looking for from mentoring at the first meeting and what you as a mentor is able and willing to provide.

## **Subsequent meetings**

Agree on time frames and a mutually acceptable meeting place for each meeting.

At each new meeting review how things have gone since the last meeting. Agree on the focus for each meeting with the mentee – for example, a decision on whether to write an invited book chapter or how to prepare for an upcoming and challenging meeting or how to approach a particular work-related problem. It may be helpful for the mentee to email through what they want to talk about before the meeting. This can help you prepare and enables most productive use of time. At the end of the session, it's a good idea for each to summarise next steps and subsequently, for the mentee to send an email summary of this discussion.

Reach agreement with you mentee on acceptable timeframes and location for each meeting, and decide on a beginning and end time.

## **Sustaining a mentoring relationship**

Some mentoring relationships extend over many months or years, others for much shorter periods of time. Mentoring relationships should only continue as long as both parties are able to commit to the relationship and it is meeting the agreed needs and purpose.

## **Boundaries**

Different mentoring partnerships have varying 'rules' about what is discussed and what mentors are willing to assist with. There are no right or wrong examples, but it is important that both mentee and mentor agree on what can comfortably discussed and what can't. .

Likewise, confidentiality is an essential part of the mentoring partnership. It is a good idea to discuss this issue early on in the relationship and agree on what information remains confidential.

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