

3 possible mentoring structures

Features common to all 3

- They involve protected time in which the mentee is given the space, attention and support to usefully explore and resolve issues of importance to him/her. These issues may be educational, professional and/or personal: the mentee sets the agenda.
- A 'contract' should be established between the mentor and mentee. This might include the minimum number of meetings you will have, their duration, the structure of your meetings, the mentee's broad agenda (if known at the outset) and a confidentiality agreement. There may well be other elements to your contract: this is up to you.
- The prime role of the mentor is to listen attentively without making judgment. Frequently, the mentee finds his/her own answers just by being listened to. Additional skills employed by the mentor act to facilitate greater understanding and to aid problem solving.
- It is useful for the mentee to offer regular feedback to the mentor. This will include how appropriate are the skills being used, and how helpful he/she is finding the mentoring process.

1. Mentor/mentee

Participants have a consistent role as mentor or mentee. The mentor may be in a more senior position than the mentee, for example an educational supervisor. This structure lends itself well to a mentoring relationship where educational support and guidance is a priority.

2. Co-mentoring

Participants take on the roles of both mentor and mentee. This structure brings equality to the relationship, and enables both participants to develop mentoring skills.

A possible format for meetings would be

A-mentor B-mentee

Feedback B to A

B mentor A mentee

Feedback A to B

3. Group mentoring

A facilitator 'chairs' the session. Participants negotiate whose issues will be discussed, prioritises these and allocates time accordingly. The person airing an issue becomes the mentee, and all others act as mentors. The facilitator summarises periodically, ensures the mentee is aided to produce an action plan if appropriate, and summarises outcomes. He/she enables the mentee to feed back to the group on the helpfulness of the process. This structure frequently works well where an established small group wants to take on or

formalise the function of mentoring, and where all participants feel comfortable sharing their concerns within a group.