

AHEP Mentoring

A guide for mentors

1. An overview of mentoring

The role of a mentor can be described as being a 'critical friend'. By this we mean providing honest and constructive feedback whilst also providing support and encouragement.

In order to be able to support their mentee, mentors should have some experience of developing others. We would also expect mentors to have the professional background to be able to support colleagues from a place of credibility.

However, this does not mean mentors need to have held the most senior roles in HE. The level of experience required will depend on the needs of the mentee. We anticipate most AHEP mentees will be looking for support in one or more of the following areas:

- New to the sector
- Moving into management
- Seeking new opportunities
- Get feedback on professional challenges
- Work-life balance
- Taking the step up to senior leadership
- Support with interpersonal relationships
- Career development planning

Here is a brief list of some of the characteristics a good mentor will possess:

1. **Self-awareness:** Recognise your own strengths and areas for development. Being aware of your own capabilities and limitations enables you to provide authentic guidance and support.
2. **Adaptability:** Be flexible and adaptable in your mentoring approach. Recognise that each mentee is unique and may require different methods of support. Adapt your communication style, feedback delivery, and guidance strategies to meet the individual needs and preferences of your mentee. Being adaptable ensures that you can effectively support mentees from diverse backgrounds and with varying learning preferences.
3. **Accessibility:** Be approachable and available to your mentee. Make yourself open to communication and ensure you have the time and willingness to commit to their development journey.

4. **Effective Communication:** Listen actively and empathetically. Understand your mentee's background, perspectives, and needs. Respond thoughtfully, providing guidance that is relevant and challenging, while avoiding projecting your own biases onto them.
5. **Trustworthiness & Transparency:** Build a foundation of trust by maintaining confidentiality and following through on commitments. Be transparent in your communication, sharing thoughts and opinions honestly and respectfully.
6. **Encouraging:** Recognise and celebrate your mentee's achievements. By focusing on their strengths first, you help cultivate resilience and self-confidence, creating a positive environment for growth.
7. **Desire to Develop Others:** Understand the developmental process and assist your mentee in identifying their strengths, areas for development, and goals. Guide them in creating a roadmap for their professional growth and support them along the way.
8. **Constructive Feedback:** Provide feedback in a constructive manner, focusing on growth and development rather than criticism. Help your mentee see feedback as an opportunity for improvement, not a reflection of personal inadequacy.

2. The matching process

Mentees are matched to available mentors using the information provided in the application forms. An outline of that process is included below.

- i. All AHEP mentors complete an online form which indicates how many mentees they are able to take on, along with details of their mentoring goals, principal areas of growth based on AHEP's Framework and area of expertise.
- ii. When a mentee applies, they complete a similar form and once the application window has closed, our Professional Development team will carefully review all applications and strive to connect participants with suitable mentors or mentees based on identified areas of growth and strength.
- iii. At this stage the mentor will be notified and will have the opportunity to review the mentee application and accept or decline the match. Once matches are made, you will receive an email introduction to your mentoring partner. You will both be provided with the name, job title and biography of your matches.
- iv. Once matched, you can arrange your first meeting and establish what methods you would like to use to communicate. If a mentor declines the match, the mentee will be notified and provided with another match.

In most cases we would expect the mentor to accept the match and at least have an initial meeting with the mentee before deciding whether they can offer any support. However, there may be occasions where it would be appropriate to decline the match, and the AHEP team should be informed.

3. **Contacting your mentee**

You will be introduced to your mentee via email. From this point, it is up to you and your mentee to decide how you would like to communicate with each other.

4. **The mentor-mentee relationship**

A mentor will agree to share with the mentee information about their own career path, provide guidance, motivation, and role modelling. They may help with exploring career opportunities, setting goals, developing contacts, and identifying suitable learning resources. The mentor can help the mentee to establish a development plan if that is required by the mentee. We recommend only mentoring up to 3 mentees at a time.

A mentee will be motivated and feel empowered to plan and manage the direction of their own professional life. They will initiate the mentoring relationship and will be open to coaching, feedback and guidance by the mentor.

Compared to other relationships, there is little time to get to know each other. For this reason, [a proposed agenda](#) is available for your first meeting.

5. **The first meeting**

At the first meeting, it is essential that both parties spend some time explicitly discussing the boundaries of your relationship. This may seem artificial – however, it will help you to establish a rapport more quickly and avoid misunderstanding later on. Some of the things you should discuss and agree are:

Confidentiality	Both of you have a reasonable expectation of confidentiality in relation to what you discuss at your meetings. Both of you should be clear about this.
Expectations	It is important for you both to talk about what you expect from the relationship so that it doesn't come as a surprise later on.

Limits of discussion	The primary focus of your discussions will, of course, be your mentee's professional practice and development. In conversation, it is possible that you will touch on other topics. Some people will not be comfortable with discussing their personal lives in this context, and you should explore whether this is the case to avoid awkwardness or embarrassment later on.
Frequency of meetings	You should agree with your mentee how frequently you will meet.
Length of meetings	You should agree an approximate length to meetings. We suggest 60-90 minutes, but this may vary depending on circumstances. Try to avoid open ended meetings, as these can leave meetings unfocused (and lengthy!).
Time of meetings	You need to find a time which is mutually convenient. You should discuss whether there are any limiting factors on your meeting times (e.g. caring responsibilities, working hours, transport times, etc.).
Location of meetings	We anticipate that most meeting will take place online via zoom/teams etc. However, you may also wish to meet in person if practical.
Setting the agenda	Having an agenda may sound formal, but it is essential to enable you to prepare for the meeting and for your mentee to get the most out of it. Agreeing the agenda in advance will be helpful.
Other contact	In between meetings, it is normal for mentors and mentees to stay in touch. Your mentee may well have quick questions they would like to ask you, and you may well like to find out how they are getting on. You need to discuss how best to stay in touch. The chat function of the AHEP Mentoring Platform is the ideal tool to use for this. However, you could also use email/phone. You should discuss how soon it is reasonable to expect a response to such communications and if there are any times to avoid.
Commitment	Both of you are making a commitment to each other. Both of you must respect the commitment that the other is making. That means, for example, not cancelling meetings at short notice, responding to messages within a reasonable space of time, preparing appropriately for meetings to get the most out of them, etc.

Losing contact	Communication between the two of you is essential. It is therefore important to discuss what you will do if you can't get a response from your mentee, and what your mentee should do if they can't get hold of you. Discussing this upfront is another way to avoid difficult situations later down the line.
Reviewing the relationship	Over time, your relationship with your mentee will evolve. Periodically, it is important to take time to assess the relationship together. This will be an opportunity for both of you to revisit the boundaries, and check that they are still appropriate. As a mentor, it is also the only opportunity for you to get feedback about the relationship. Your mentee should have the chance to give you honest feedback about what has and hasn't worked, what has been useful, and anything that has been problematic. At the first meeting, you should both give some thought to how, and how often, you will do this. We recommend that you try to limit the duration of the relation to 6 months.

6. Subsequent meetings

Both parties should agree how frequently they would like to meet. There is a [template](#) available to capture the agenda and to record any action points.

7. Reviewing and ending the connection

We are advising that the connections last around 6 months. Following reflection and review at the 6 months stage, if participants still find the relationship helpful and productive, they may continue if they wish.

Likewise, participants can review the value of the relationship at any point and choose to end the connection. We would always expect this to be done in line with AHEP values and professional courtesy.

When it is time to end the connection, please inform the AHEP Professional Development team.

8. Surveys and feedback

The AHEP office will contact all participants for feedback, and this will be shared with mentors where appropriate.

9. **AHEP Membership**

There is an expectation that mentors and mentees maintain AHEP membership for the duration of the relationship. Access to AHEP resources is restricted to AHEP members only.

10. **Additional support and guidance**

Any questions or requests for support can be sent through to hello@ahep.ac.uk. Mentors will also be invited to join an MS Teams group where peer support from other mentors will be available.

