

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 professionals
- New to the sector
- Moving into management
- Seeking new opportunities
- Taking the step up to senior leadership
- Support with interpersonal relationships
- Seeking wellbeing, resilience and work/life balance support
- Career development planning

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

Self-awareness – you should have a good understanding of your own strengths and development needs.

Accessibility – you should be open and approachable, and willing and able to commit sufficient time to your mentee to offer support and guidance.

Communication – you should be a good communicator who is able to empathise with others and can understand different backgrounds, perspectives and approaches. You should be a great listener.

Trustworthiness - you should keep confidences and follow up on promises.

Encouraging – you should be able to recognise accomplishments and point out positive traits.

A desire to help others develop – you should understand how individuals develop and be able to assist them in understanding their current strengths and weaknesses and setting future goals.

2. The matching process

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

- i. All AHEP mentors complete a form which indicates how many mentees they are able to take on, along with details of which areas they could support.
- ii. When a mentee applies, they complete a similar form and the system scores their answers against all mentors in the database and finds the top 3 mentor matches.
- iii. At this stage the mentee sees the name, job title and biography of their possible matches and makes their selection.
- iv. This triggers an email to the mentor who gets to see the mentee's reasons for wanting a mentor, before being given the option to accept or decline the mentee match.
- v. If a mentee is accepted, you are connected through the AHEP website and can begin chatting and arranging your first meeting. If a mentor declines the match, the mentee gets notified and is instructed to head back to the website to review other possible mentors.

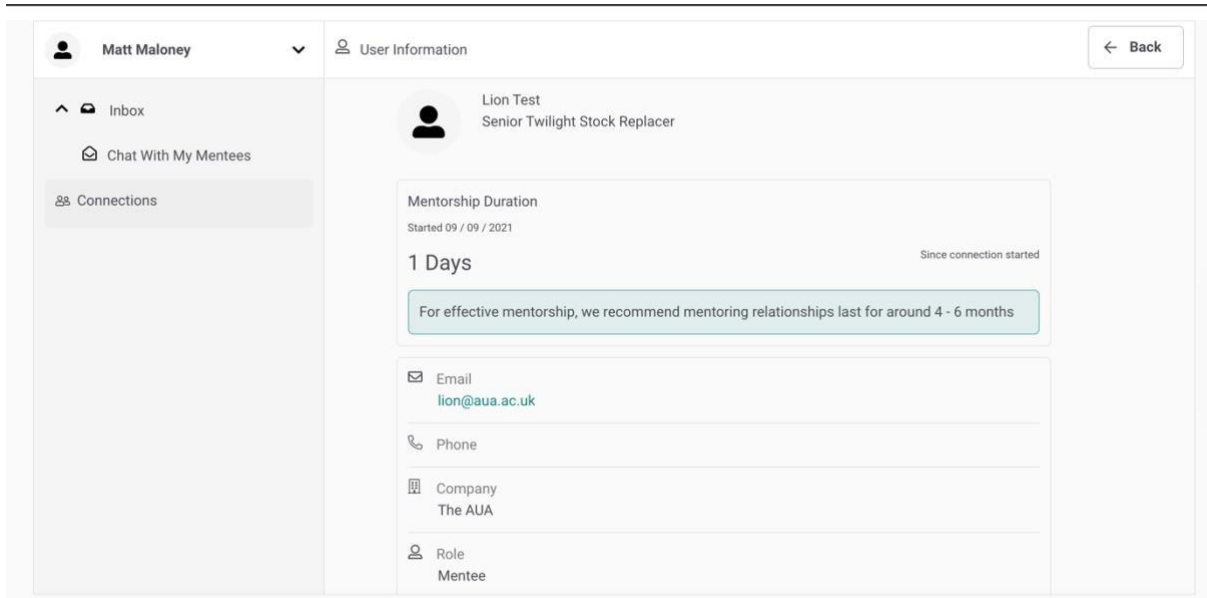
In most cases we would expect the mentor to accept the match and at least have an initial meeting with the mentee before deciding whether they can offer any support. However, there may be occasions where the

mentor is unavailable for a period of time where it would be appropriate to decline the match.

3. Contacting your mentee

All your mentee connections can be viewed at AHEP.ac.uk/mentoring-platform. On the platform, you can [chat to your mentees](#) and share documents.

And you can also view their contact details if you would like to contact them another way:



4. The mentor-mentee relationship

A mentor will agree to share with the mentee information about their own career path, provide guidance, motivation, emotional support 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 the 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

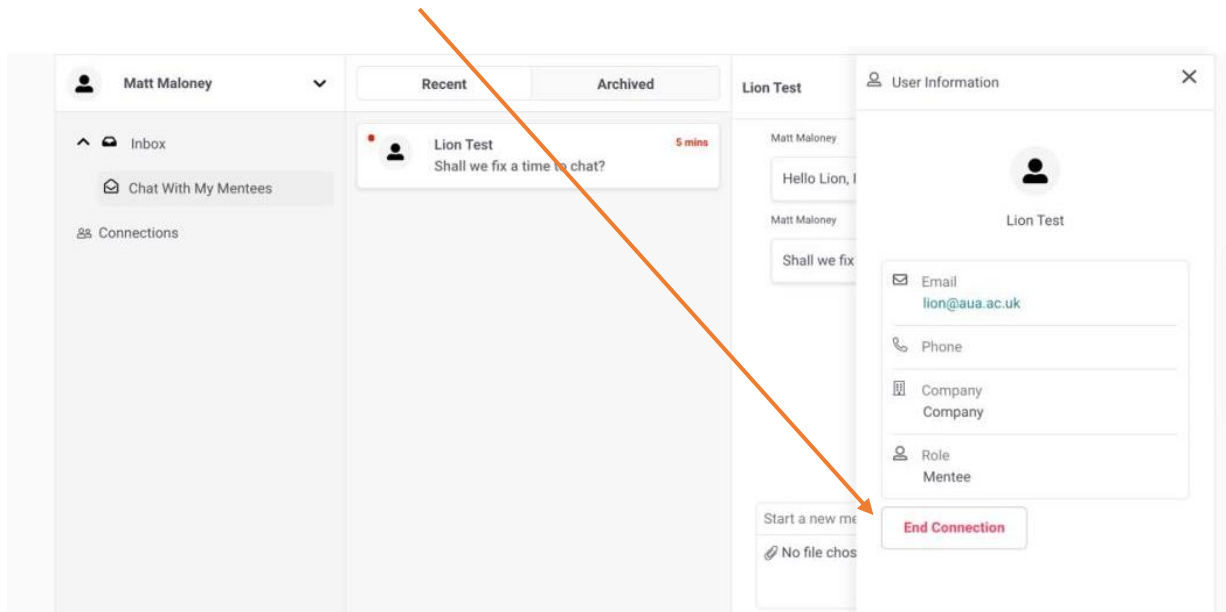
Both parties should agree how frequently they would like to meet. There is a [template](#) available to capture the agenda and to record any action points.

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 either party can press the end connection button from within the chat window.



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 the chat platform and many 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.