

# MRS Mentoring Programme

## Mentee Webinar Handouts

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MRS Mentoring Scheme – Mentee Webinar Training Handouts  
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## 1. Helpful roles

**The sounding board** – Mentee uses mentor to build confidence in own decisions, mentor listens to ideas or proposals, encourages reflection of work events, uses questions.

**The coach** - Mentee uses specific mentor skills, knowledge or experience e.g. client-facing skills, finance or IT skills, etc.

**The networker** - Mentee uses mentor to broaden horizons, introduce them to new contacts, learn about another area of the industry, etc.

**The critical friend** - Mentee asks the mentor to challenge ideas or proposals, play devil's advocate, challenge thinking and ideas, offer different / broader perspectives, mutual exploration and discovery.

**The problem solver** - Mentor and mentee work together in deciding how issues could be tackled, discussion of difficult work situations or issues, support in working out how to manage implementation of major corporate change, exchange of knowledge skills and insights.

**The personal advisor** - Mentee uses the experience of the mentor for personal support, advice on personal development, setting of personal development objectives, careers advice, feedback on personal style, etc.

## 2. Not-so-helpful roles

**The wizard** – “Heed my word and you may succeed, Grasshopper.” The goal of learning is the wizard's approval. This mentor has a 'guru' quality. Can be condescending and patronizing.

**The busy bee** – “Uh, what were we talking about? – Oh, yeah.” Answers telephones, accepts interruptions, doesn't listen effectively. Does not spend enough quality time with mentee to make a difference in terms of knowledge or skill. Leads to mentee frustration.

**The lifeguard** - The lifeguard watches the swimmer try to swim. He doesn't teach the swimmer to swim, but is there to save them just as they're about to drown. Tries to be the hero, but does not realize the real hero is one who conducts swimming lessons, thereby reducing the need for rescue attempts.

**The motivator** – “You can do anything if you put your mind to it! Yeah! This is great. Way to go!” Pump 'em up and send 'em out. Motivation quickly disappears if the motivation turns out to be rhetoric. Too much cheerleading can give a false sense of security.

**The sergeant** – “Tell 'em what you're gonna tell 'em. Tell 'em. Then tell 'em what you told 'em.” This style relies on emotional distance, discipline and commanding communication. You get movement without motivation, compliance without commitment.

**The mother** - “Now don't forget your hat, it's cold outside!” “Yes, Mum.” Needs the mentee to need them. Does not like to let go. Is resistant to letting the mentee learn for himself / herself. May lead to mentee exasperation and suffocation. Mentee cannot move on and develop.

### 3. Code of Practice

Having a discussion and mutually agreeing a “Code of Practice”, or “ground rules” that both mentor and mentee agree to at the outset of the relationship will greatly increase the likelihood of the success of that relationship.

We recommend that you consider the following, and decide on which of them you both agree to sign up to. Even better if one of you puts it in writing....

#### **For example:**

- **Frequency of meetings** – what’s manageable, and what’s the optimum for how frequently we meet over the course of the relationship?
- **Cancelling meetings** - what circumstances are acceptable for cancelling, what’s our cancellation period in advance of meetings, and what’s the best method for communicating that?
- **Duration of meetings** – what’s a minimum and maximum amount of time for our meetings?
- **Contact between meetings** - what kind of contact is acceptable between meetings, and how regular should that be?
- **Locations for meetings** - what type of locations are acceptable to both parties?
- **Issue of confidentiality** - what does confidentiality mean to both parties? Are there any occasions when the content of our sessions can be divulged to another party? If so, to whom, and under what circumstances?
- **Personal privacy** – to what extent is each party willing to divulge details of life outside work?
- **Informing others** - do we want to consider who else needs, or would want, to know about this mentoring relationship (e.g. mentee’s line manager, other colleagues)?
- **Review process** - how frequently do we want to review how the mentoring is going, and what needs to be included in that review?
- **Who takes responsibility** for the following:
  - Making time for the meetings, and keeping to appointments
  - Arranging future meetings
  - Providing an agenda
  - Writing up the session record
  - Keeping the session record secure
  - Action points
  - Keeping confidentiality
  - Being honest about how the relationship is progressing
- **Ending the relationship** - how do we decide when the relationship is coming to an end? And how will we prepare for that?

## 4. Learning styles

Learning style	Honey and Mumford definition
<b>Activist</b>	<p>Activists involve themselves fully and without bias in new experiences. They enjoy the here and now, and are happy to be dominated by immediate experiences. They are open-minded, not sceptical, and this tends to make them enthusiastic about anything new. Their philosophy is: "I'll try anything once". They tend to act first and consider the consequences afterwards. Their days are filled with activity. They tackle problems by brainstorming. As soon as the excitement from one activity has died down they are busy looking for the next. They tend to thrive on the challenge of new experiences but are bored with implementation and longer term consolidation. They are gregarious people constantly involving themselves with others but, in doing so, they seek to centre all activities around themselves.</p>
<b>Theorist</b>	<p>Theorists adapt and integrate observations into complex but logically sound theories. They think problems through in a vertical, step-by-step logical way. They assimilate disparate facts into coherent theories. They tend to be perfectionists who won't rest easy until things are tidy and fit into a rational scheme. They like to analyse and synthesize. They are keen on basic assumptions, principles, theories models and systems thinking. Their philosophy prizes rationality and logic. "If it's logical it's good." Questions they frequently ask are: "Does it make sense?" "How does this fit with that?" "What are the basic assumptions?" They tend to be detached, analytical and dedicated to rational objectivity rather than anything subjective or ambiguous. Their approach to problems is consistently logical. This is their 'mental set' and they rigidly reject anything that doesn't fit with it. They prefer to maximise certainty and feel uncomfortable with subjective judgements, lateral thinking and anything flippant.</p>

**Learning style****Honey and Mumford definition****Pragmatist**

Pragmatists are keen on trying out ideas, theories and techniques to see if they work in practice. They positively search out new ideas and take the first opportunity to experiment with applications. They are the sort of people who return from courses brimming with new ideas that they want to try out in practice. They like to get on with things and act quickly and confidently on ideas that attract them. They tend to be impatient with ruminating and open-ended discussions. They are essentially practical, down to earth people who like making practical decisions and solving problems. They respond to problems and opportunities 'as a challenge'. Their philosophy is "There is always a better way" and "If it works it's good".

**Reflector**

Reflectors like to stand back to ponder experiences and observe them from many different perspectives. They collect data, both first hand and from others, and prefer to think about it thoroughly before coming to a conclusion. The thorough collection and analysis of data about experiences and events is what counts so they tend to postpone reaching definitive conclusions for as long as possible. Their philosophy is to be cautious. They are thoughtful people who like to consider all possible angles and implications before making a move. They prefer to take a back seat in meetings and discussions. They enjoy observing other people in action. They listen to others and get the drift of the discussion before making their own points. They tend to adopt a low profile and have a slightly distant, tolerant unruffled air about them. When they act it is part of a wide picture which includes the past as well as the present and others' observations as well as their own.

## 5. The most frequently asked questions about mentoring

**How long should a mentoring session last?** Between one and two hours, typically.

**How frequently should we meet?** At least once a month, with telephone or e-mail contact in between. If you meet very frequently, the mentor is likely to become too hands-on, or to feel imposed upon. Use common sense to agree at the start a balance that suits the two of you, but be prepared to review that agreement if there is a radical change of circumstances.

**Where is the best place to meet?** Where mentor and mentee both feel able to relax, yet be business-like in their discussions. The mentor's office is usually not a good idea, especially if the mentor is significantly more senior. It can be even more threatening to meet in the mentee's working area. In general, a neutral, private space is usually best.

**How long should a mentoring relationship last?** Some last for many years, perhaps a lifetime. However, most people outgrow their mentor and this is generally a good thing for both people. It is usually considered best practice to set an expected end date for the relationship, to provide some sense of pace. The MRS recommends 12 months, but if the relationship comes to a natural end before then, decide together how best to bring it to an amicable close.

**Do I have to really like my mentor?** It helps, and the relationship won't go far if you can't stand each other. However, formal mentoring is often seen as a "professional friendship"; the key is that you respect each other and make the effort to understand each other. Many deep friendships have developed from mentoring relationships where the two parties were initially unsure about each other.

**How does my mentor avoid treading on the toes of my line manager?** In general, line managers focus on developing people for the roles they are currently in, while mentors are for the longer-term and for a much broader range of issues (for example, work / life balance). It's important to make it clear that the mentor is not there to sort out your day-to-day work issues or to build your technical competence.

**How confidential is the mentoring relationship?** In general, everything said in the mentoring discussions is private to the mentor and mentee. However, be aware that your mentor would have certain legal obligations to report criminal conduct if they hear about it through the mentoring discussions.

**What if I want to discuss leaving my organisation?** The confidentiality rules still apply. And because the mentor is entrusted with looking after the best interests of the mentee, s/he should not automatically try and dissuade them. Rather, the mentor should help the mentee review the opportunity and the reasons for choosing to leave, helping them test whether this is a good choice.

**We know that mentor and line manager play different roles; however, handling the relationship between the mentor and line manager seems a bit sensitive for us.**

A good question and one that is asked often! The mentor is not there to replace the line manager so it is important that mentor and mentee are clear about that. If you as the mentee confides in your mentor about an issue or challenge that should be handled by the line manager, the mentor should encourage you to be raising this with your line manager, and support you in the

best way to do this. However, if you decide you do not want to let your line manager know you are being mentored, the mentor will need to respect that decision.

***I'm a little concerned about how to communicate with my mentor if we are not similar to each other, or our professional areas are not the same. For instance, qual people might have fewer topics in common with fieldwork people, etc.***

This is a good chance to give a different perspective on situations and challenges. Mentors do not necessarily have all the answers; this is where asking the right questions are fundamental. Also, making it clear from the beginning on where the mentor's key expertise lies will avoid any misunderstandings along the line. This is also a great learning opportunity for both mentor and mentee to gain knowledge of different areas within this industry.

***Does the mentor have the right to decline a mentee? And vice versa?***

Yes, you both do. If either of you do not feel comfortable with the matching, for whatever reason, either of you can of course decline. The MRS will revisit the matching process, and if possible, come up with an alternative suggestion.

***What defines success at the end? What makes it worthwhile?***

It is important to set a success criteria at the first meeting i.e. what do you want to get out of the mentoring relationship? It would be worth setting some key objectives that can be reviewed from time to time to ensure that the relationship is on track. It all depends on what you want to get out of the mentoring relationship, which could change as the relationship develops. Regular reviews on how the relationship is benefiting will be helpful.

**And finally, here are 3 useful questions that the mentor might ask at the end of each session:**

- What have you taken away from our mentoring session today?
- Was the session useful?
- Is there anything you would like me to do differently during our mentoring sessions?



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