



HESPA

HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGIC PLANNERS ASSOCIATION

HESPA MENTORING HANDBOOK



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INTRODUCTION TO MENTORING

This handbook has been developed to offer support and information to users of the HESPA Mentoring scheme. We recognise that mentoring means different things to different people, and that a range of different models and interpretations exist. However, for the purposes of using our scheme and getting the most value from it, the information in this guide should be helpful and relevant.

It is also worth noting that HESPA Mentoring is tailored to the needs of HESPA members and is concerned with the development of specific areas for strategy and planning professionals. We are aware that other institutional schemes exist to support and connect staff and we hope that ours – which is centred on the needs of the planning community and connecting the people within in – meets a slightly different demand.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring can be defined as “*off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking*” (David Megginson and David Clutterbuck). In mentoring, a more experienced person (the mentor) works with someone with less experience of the context (the mentee). Through a process of conversations, the mentor helps the mentee develop their capability. The term ‘offline’ means outside of normal line management arrangements. Mentors are critical friends to their mentees – not their bosses, supervisors or managers. In this way the mentor can focus totally on the mentee’s growth and development without the encumbrance of line management duties. Conversations are key to effective mentoring, because mentoring is rarely about giving instructions. It involves helping the mentee discover their route forward, by focusing and accelerating the mentee’s process of discovery. It’s more akin to reflective learning, stimulated by guidance and questioning.

It is important to note that:

- The mentee is responsible for leading the relationship, inviting the mentor into their own inner dialogue and coordinating meetings.
- The hierarchical status of the mentor is not as significant as the learning potential he or she has to offer.
- The mentor has no line management responsibilities.
- The mentor helps the mentee to review their situations through a process of reflection, questions, support, signposting, challenge and feedback.
- Mentoring is undertaken this way rather than through advice to allow the mentee to come to their own decisions. A mentor is simply there to help the mentee on their own journey.

How is mentoring different from coaching?

Mentoring is a learning relationship, generally focused on long term career development. The primary purpose is to drive personal growth; building skills, knowledge and understanding. Mentors may use coaching skills in their conversations, but usually the mentor role is wider than that of a coach and may include opening doors, making connections and sharing experiences. Coaching in a business environment is primarily focused on assisting people with their current performance. Rather than the long term, career development focus of mentoring, coaching seeks to enable executives to “get fit” for their current role, or perhaps prepare them for the next.

2. HESPA Mentoring – scheme objectives

The HESPA Mentoring scheme has been established to support members to develop in their roles as strategy and planning professionals, and to connect them with people within their community to learn and share. It is also an opportunity for those with more experience to give something back.

Scheme objectives:

- **Career development** – supporting members in setting and meeting their career goals by building confidence and developing or improving new capabilities.
- **Succession planning** – helping to develop emerging leaders from our membership through shared experience and skills development.
- **Raising environmental awareness** – enabling the sharing of valuable information about the sector and the expectations of those working in strategy and planning roles within it.
- **Connecting people** – providing a platform via which our community of members can build stronger networks and support one another.
- **Building critical friendships** – promoting a healthy culture of open and constructive feedback to drive successful working practices for the benefit of the sector.



3. What to expect

SUMAC

Those wishing to take part in the scheme, as a mentor, a mentee, or both, will be required to log in to our SUMAC platform and complete a sign up form. Once this is complete, you will receive an acknowledgement.

The focus of any mentoring programme is on the mentee. Therefore, once a potential match has been identified, the mentee is contacted first and asked whether they wish to accept or reject the offer. The mentor will not be informed at this stage. If the partnership offer is not deemed suitable by the mentee and they wish to reject it, they can do so in the email and the system will look again to identify a new match. Once a match is accepted by the mentee, the mentor and mentee are both contact together to inform them that a match has been made.

At this point the mentee will take over the responsibility for further arrangements, including completing the Mentoring Contract and ensuring it is signed by both parties. A confidentiality Agreement should also be signed by both mentor and mentee before the first meeting takes place.

Before the first meeting

Mentoring Contract

It is important that partnerships are unique, flexible and centered on the needs of each individual pair. Therefore, the mentee is responsible for completing the **Mentoring Contract**, but it must be agreed and any changes taken into account before being signed by both parties. This document outlines the mentee’s goals, steps to achieving them, meeting information (including frequency, duration and location – if not virtual), confidentiality, plans for evaluating the effectiveness of the relationship and details about partnership termination and continuity. It is a good idea for goals to be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-based) and this can help with the success of the partnership.

Both the mentor and the mentee should sign the completed contract. This can be done before the first meeting, or the first meeting can be used to discuss, agree or make changes to the content before both parties sign.

Confidentiality Agreement

You must be able to trust each other and to develop a safe, non-judgemental relationship where you can both be open. Mentoring relationships have little value if they are not based on truth. This may be difficult if, for example, you are discussing difficulties with other people at work. But unless you are sure about confidentiality your partner will feel inhibited about explaining all the details of a situation. You should each continue to respect confidential information, even after the mentoring relationship has formally been completed.

This is why we suggest that a **Confidentiality Agreement** should be signed by both mentor and mentee to protect against any breach of confidentiality during the partnership. This is a very short form which just needs a signature.

Meetings

Most meetings will take about 45 minutes, but some may be more, others less. You may plan to meet every month, but again, this is likely to vary. A casual meeting may lead to a quick chat that can be helpful. A phone call asking for timely advice can work well. A discussion by e-mail can be quick and productive. Be creative and responsive to need.

The mentoring relationship is progressive and developmental so each meeting builds on the previous ones. At the first meeting you may discuss and agree your contract and you may want to write down notes.

Always allow time to reflect and review the process and discuss the effectiveness of the mentoring relationship. You may also wish to maintain a record of meetings. You may decide that one or both of you will keep a record of key points, plans for the mentee, and for the mentor. This can provide a useful starting point for the next meeting. These records are private and remain confidential to the two of you.

4. Guidance for mentors

Anyone can be a mentor if they have skills to pass on, with the only requirements being to have the time and commitment to participate.

Mentors should be prepared to invest (approximately) one hour per month to the scheme. Mentoring relationships are finite and should come to a natural end when the mentee's objectives have been achieved. There are lots of resources available online should you wish to read around the subject and the roles more.

Mentors often express the satisfaction they gain from passing on knowledge and playing a role in the development of their colleagues, as well as the positive impact this can have on their organisation.

Giving feedback will probably be one of the most important parts of mentoring. Remember to:

- Give positive feedback before negative comments
- Give feedback as soon as possible after the event
- Build on your partner's strengths
- Be specific and detailed
- Focus on things that can be changed
- Help your partner accept the feedback
- Find constructive ways to tackle problems
- Suggest ways to improve
- Use words, tone of voice and body language sensitively

Remember that the mentee should be doing most of the talking. Active listening is a huge part of the mentor's role, sometimes just allowing the mentee to say things out loud can be hugely beneficial. For more information please see our short **Code of Conduct**.



5. Guidance for mentees

Mentees can be any HESPA member who would find it useful to have a neutral mentor who can help them achieve specific objectives that they set for themselves.

Mentees should be prepared to invest (approximately) one hour per month to the scheme for a period of around twelve months. Mentoring relationships are finite and should come to a natural end when the mentee's objectives have been achieved. There are lots of resources available online should you wish to read around the subject and the roles more extensively.

There are many benefits to the scheme and the focus is always on the mentee, allowing them to highlight areas they wish to develop and improve. While participation in the scheme should help to improve skills, listening to and learning from an experienced colleague may aid the management of long-term career development. With mentoring often being conducted 'informally' it is also an excellent opportunity to discuss problems that may have arisen, and gain advice/support from a 'neutral' person in a friendly and informal environment. For more information please see our short **Code of Conduct**.

Talk to your partner about how to receive and use your feedback, regardless of your role. Consider trying the following:

- Ask for feedback about specific points
- Clarify the details to ensure you understand
- Look for specific ways to improve
- Listen to feedback without being defensive
- Ask for advice and support
- Set small goals for in between meetings

6. Common dilemmas

The mentee or mentor uses the sessions to talk about personal problems.

The personal problems may be so overwhelming that they will inhibit any meaningful discussion about work issues. A mentor is not a trained counsellor. It may be appropriate to suggest that they refer themselves to Occupational Health, counselling service, GP etc.

The mentor or mentee does not complete the agreed action plans.

Explore if the plans were unrealistic. Identify the reasons why the plans have not been completed. If this recurs, does it indicate a lack of commitment from either/both of the parties?

The mentee and mentor have very different styles of working.

Recognise that different approaches may be equally valid. Mentors should not impose, and mentees should not copy, work styles.

The mentor is aware of problems that the mentee has not mentioned.

It's ok for the mentor to raise the issue, but they must allow the mentee the right not to talk about it. The mentee may wish to return to the issue in the future.

The mentee/mentor thinks their partner has breached confidentiality.

Perhaps this should be raised, but there may be implications for trust to be damaged in the relationship. If the relationship has broken down, contact a scheme co-ordinator.

The mentor is supportive but not challenging so the relationship is too cosy.

Mentoring is meant to be developmental and to encourage growth, so challenge within a supportive environment is good. The onus here is on the mentor to ensure an appropriate balance of challenge and support.

The mentee keeps asking for support outside of the agreed mentoring meetings.

Revisit the mentoring contract and clarify your expectations. The mentor can encourage the mentee to develop a wide support network and to use different sources of support.

The mentor is too keen to offer solutions and advice.

Encouraging mentees to work out their own solutions will prove a better long-term strategy. If you feel tempted to offer advice, why not offer a range of solutions and discuss the consequences of each?

One partner suggests a joint work project.

Would this enhance or damage the mentoring relationship? What happens to the project if the relationship falters? What happens to the relationship if the project goes badly?

The mentee or mentor gives their partner a small gift.

This might depend on the nature and value of the gift and the stage in the relationship. Would refusing a gift make you feel comfortable and uncompromised? Or would it seem to your partner like rejection?

7. Complaints procedure

HESPA is committed to offering an excellent service to all of its members. If you are dissatisfied with any aspect of this mentoring scheme, you have the right to complain. As such, we aim to provide an effective way for you to inform us if you are not happy. We also wish to support your right to complain and will take every opportunity to resolve your complaint quickly and effectively.

You can make a complaint verbally or in writing to Jen Summerton, HESPA's executive director. Jen can be contacted on 01509 228851 or jennifer@hespa.ac.uk. Complaints will be handled sensitively and in confidence.

8. Frequently asked questions

I haven't been assigned a partner – why?

There may be a higher number of mentors or mentees in the system, making it difficult to match everyone. Your sign-up information might make potential matches difficult to find – you may wish to review the information provided and make small changes to increase your matching criteria. As the scheme is new, we are recruiting new mentors and mentees all the time, but until a critical mass has been reached, it might be difficult to make regular matches.

How much of my time will this take?

This depends on the individual pairs. It is entirely your choice how frequently you meet and for how often. We recommend that you discuss this and set down some guidelines at your first meeting. However, as a rough guide we'd predict that pairs may want to meet for around 45 mins every month or so

What happens if we don't get on?

There is a chance that some of the suggested pairings will not work in practice, and this will probably be apparent quite quickly. We expect this, and will do our very best to provide an alternative partner when this happens. It is worth bearing in mind that a mentoring relationship is designed to challenge you and make you think differently about yourself and your approach to things. As a result there could well be points during your meetings where you feel moved outside your comfort zone. In retrospect, this could well be when you gain the most from the scheme. However, if there is a more permanent and fundamental 'mis-match' please let us know by emailing mentoring@hespa.ac.uk.

How confidential is all this?

What you discuss with your mentor/mentee is strictly confidential between the two of you, and you must maintain this confidentiality even after your relationship has ended. You will never be asked for details of what you discuss at your meetings. The information you submitted in your application form is stored securely by the scheme administrator. It will only be used in the matching process and for communicating with you about the scheme.



My mentor/mentee does a very different role to me.

Due to the nature of strategy and planning roles, it is likely that your mentoring partner will have a role that is quite different to yours. Whilst this may mean that you have to take time to explain the nature of your role to your mentoring partner, it can also prove an excellent way to learn more about the sector and gain an insight into another role.

I want to talk about work issues, but I don't want to talk about personal issues.

Often the two are closely linked – what happens at work can affect your personal life and vice versa. However, you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to. You should discuss your boundaries with your partner at the first meeting when you both draw up your mentoring contract.

I want to withdraw from the scheme.

This isn't a problem. However, we do ask that you let us know why you want to withdraw. If you've run into problems, can we help you overcome them? Sometimes mentoring relationships aren't easy, you may be pushed beyond your 'comfort zone', but often this can lead to real insights and gains being made.

It's 6 weeks in and I've heard nothing from my mentor/mentee, what should I do?

We ask that mentees take responsibility for making the first contact with their mentor and arranging a meeting. If you have made initial contact but then hear nothing let one of the scheme co-ordinators know and we can do some investigating.

I've lost touch with my mentor and I feel awkward about getting in touch after so long.

These things happen, although we do ask that you are committed to the mentoring scheme. You will have to make time for mentoring meetings otherwise other activities will take over. Your mentor will most likely understand about time pressures and your lack of contact – they've very likely been in your shoes before! If you'd rather have a scheme coordinator break the ice on your behalf, just let us know.

How long will this scheme last for?

Mentoring relationships aren't open-ended, but they are individual and some partnerships may last longer than others. If you set some key objectives when you first meet, you should be working towards them over the course of the scheme. We anticipate that most relationships will run for about 12 months. Some pairs may wish to continue their relationship beyond this time if it is mutually desired. Alternatively, some pairings may wish to terminate their relationship sooner if both parties have achieved their objectives from the scheme.

Who's in control?

Our mentoring scheme is driven by the mentee. It is up to them to arrange the mentoring meetings, prepare the meeting agenda and take responsibility for completing any actions between meetings. Mentees may want to think about where the meetings are held. It may be that using a neutral space works best.

I'm a mentor and feel like I'm out of my depth.

Being a mentor is not about solving problems for other people, but to act as listener and offer insight to your partner, or to challenge them to think about issues in a different way. If you are in a position where you feel that you are not equipped to deal with the topics your mentee is raising, please seek help. You can always contact us for advice and support.

I have a suggestion to improve the scheme.

We would love to hear any suggestions for improvements or changes! Send them directly to mentoring@hespa.ac.uk.

Will I be asked to be involved in the evaluation of the scheme?

We will use a variety of methods to evaluate the scheme, including questionnaires and some interviews. However, the evaluation will focus on the process and outcome of the scheme itself, and at no point will you be asked about what you have discussed in your mentoring relationship.

9. Wider reading

With an abundance of mentoring resources available online, the chances are that whatever you're looking for can easily be found via a quick google search. However, if you're stuck and can't find what you need, let us know and we'll help to point you in the right direction.

Most of our member institutions also run their own mentoring schemes, so it's likely that there will also be information and resources available on your institutional websites or intranets.

10. Application process

To join the HESPA Mentoring scheme, either as a mentor, a mentee, or both, please register via our **SUMAC platform**.

Once your registration has been submitted, you will receive an acknowledgement email from SUMAC (our in-house developed mentoring management system). If you don't see anything in your usual inbox, please check your Junk mail and then select 'Never block sender's domain' to ensure you always receive further messages from the system.



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