



## What Types of Mentoring Relationships Exist?

Mentoring can be a one-time intervention or a lifelong relationship. It can be carried out informally by anyone, at any time, in almost any place or as part of a formal structured program. This section describes some of the types of mentoring relationships that can be established.

Mentoring can range from a spur of the moment intervention to an intense long term relationship. The mentor's and mentee's needs, willingness, availability and appropriateness need to be judged according to the individual situation.

The table below outlines a range of mentoring relationships that might exist, depending on the structure and formality of the relationship and the length of time or intervention.

<p>Highly Structured</p> <p>↑</p> <p>Formality of Relationship</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Virtually No Structured</p>	<p><b>Quadrant B:</b> Highly structured, short term</p> <p>The relationship is formally established for an introductory or short period, often to meet specific organisational objectives.</p> <p>The mentee's need is high and the mentor's resources, time etc are low.</p> <p>For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A new staff member may be paired with a senior person for organisation orientation.</li> <li>A student may be paired with a mentor for a set period during their study program.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quadrant D:</b> Highly structured, long term</p> <p>The relationship is formally established for an extended period in order to meet specific organisational objectives.</p> <p>The mentee's need is high and the mentor's resources are abundant. The potential exists for an intense and productive relationship.</p> <p>Often used for succession planning. This relationship involves grooming someone to take over a departing person's job or function or to master expertise.</p>
	<p><b>Quadrant A:</b> Informal, short term</p> <p>This type of mentoring ranges from spontaneous help to a one off meeting or as needed catch ups.</p> <p>The mentor's resources and mentee's needs are low, spontaneous or occasional. Very short term interventions may be adequate and satisfying to both parties.</p> <p>There may be no ongoing relationship.</p> <p>This type of intervention is often thought through and heavily change oriented.</p>	<p><b>Quadrant C:</b> Informal, long term</p> <p>This type of mentoring consists of being available as needed to discuss problems, to listen or to share special knowledge.</p> <p>The mentor's resources are substantial, but the mentee's needs are low.</p> <p>Occasional help may be all that is needed, and the mentor may have time and talents available for helping others.</p> <p>It is sometime referred to as friendship mentoring.</p>
<p>Short Term Spontaneous → Length of Intervention → Long Term/ Even for Life</p>		

## ABOUT INFORMAL AND FORMAL MENTORING

In her book, 'Friends in High Places', Bonnie McKenzie (1995) uses a continuum of mentoring programs to demonstrate the benefits and limitations of each approach.

Mentoring Programs	
Informal	Formal
Unplanned	Planned
No or little organisational involvement	Organisational involvement
May not be measured	Measured and monitored
Natural relationship requiring little or no training	Training for all participants usually provided
No standards set for selection of Mentors and Mentorees	Assessment and selection for Mentors and Mentorees

### INFORMAL MENTORING

Research suggests that up to 95% of mentoring relationships are informal, where the individual self selects the person they would like to be mentored by. The relationship generally develops naturally and may not necessarily be identified as 'mentoring'. They tend to occur over a period of between three and six years, however some will last for a lifetime.

The same tools used in formal mentoring programs are generally available to informal mentoring relationships (see Mentoring Tools).

Informal mentors should expect the mentee to be the lead in the development process. Both parties may agree on the mentoring outcomes either verbally or in writing.

Informal mentoring activity should not conflict with the productivity of either the mentee or the mentor unless it has been sanctioned by the appropriate managers of the organisation/s.

Costs of informal mentoring can be measured based on the amount of time that the mentee and mentor are engaged during normal work hours.

To find such a person for yourself, network. Use the principle of "six degrees of separation". Someone you know, knows someone, who knows someone. Ask! Keep asking until a personal connection can be made. Ideally, the person introducing you to the mentor would lay the groundwork by recommending you.

### FORMAL MENTORING

A formal mentor is someone within an organisation who serves in a mentoring program sanctioned by the organisation and managed by a program coordinator, who facilitates the mentor-mentee relationships. The program is structured and measured regularly according to specific goals.

Inclusion on the program may be by invitation or through a formal selection process. The relationship in this environment is more likely to be driven by the organisation than by the individual staff member.

The mentor and mentee are matched based on the perception that the mentor can help accelerate the mentee's career. Both parties understand the value of the program and agree to work within the structure. A trial period is put into place to monitor the success of the matching process.

A formal agreement is the baseline for the mentoring relationship. It provides guidance for the goals and objectives, frequency of meetings and meeting locations, timeframes and content prior to the beginning of the program.

Formal training may be provided to both the mentor and the mentee to ensure roles and responsibilities are clearly understood and agreed to.

Mentees participating in the program are monitored to assess the progress relative to the organisation's defined objectives.

Mentors are provided an opportunity to be recognised and share their experiences about the success of their mentoring engagements. Feedback gained is used to continually improve the effectiveness of the program.

Formal mentoring programs vary in commitment. Research suggests that they generally last around 1 – 2 years in length, with mentors and mentees meeting approximately once a month.

Costs associated with formal mentoring programs need to be considered as a long term organisational investment. Formal mentoring programs require appropriate funding to support program activities. Generally each mentor's department absorbs the cost of the mentor's time. There should be direct links between the cost of the program and the achievement of program outcomes.

So how can you become a formal mentor?

University of Melbourne staff are encouraged to participate as mentors on formal Mentoring programs run by various Faculties/ Budget Divisions and industry or community groups. Opportunities to participate are generally advertised in Staff News.

### ROLE MODELS

A role model is someone whose behaviours, attitude, and strategies you can emulate to achieve success. It is a form of informal mentoring.

You don't want to become a clone of anyone else. However, many people known to you, or observed from afar, have qualities that you can copy to your own advantage. No one is perfect and you may select the attributes that you want and ignore the less effective aspects.

Using a role model involves identifying people you believe operate in positive and effective ways, noticing what they do and how they do it and practising it yourself.

### DEVELOPMENTAL MENTORING

Developmental Mentoring can be described as someone who listens, questions and enables you to set goals, create plans, make decisions and solve problems related to your career or professional growth.

These people usually have a reputation as "enablers". They develop their own staff and are known to help others. They know and use sound techniques for decision-making and problem-solving. They have life experience that allows them to be authoritative (not authoritarian) and they will challenge your thinking and help you evaluate alternative strategies for getting what you want.

They will help you clarify your vision, set goals and create practical plans to achieve them. They'll be around as you implement your plans so you can debrief and adjust your actions.

## RECIPROCAL MENTORING

Reciprocal Mentoring is a relationship where neither party is designated "mentor". Each is a confidante and resource to the other. You share goals and encourage personal accountability. You each serve as a sounding board for ideas and a reality check for plans.

Reciprocal mentoring is more than mutual reinforcement. Friends, relatives and spouses may lack the objectivity necessary for real mentoring. Mentoring can add stress to a relationship, so a professional colleague may be the best choice. You could find a peer at a conference or training course, through your membership in a professional association or a community group.

## PEER MENTORING

Peer to Peer Mentoring is another informal mentoring process which is usually initiated by management. It occurs when individuals with similar levels of responsibility partner to improve the effectiveness of one or the other.

Peer mentoring provides an effective mechanism for sharing job related knowledge. When experienced staff mentor newer colleagues in a peer to peer relationship, they are exposed to some of the challenges and responsibilities as managers.

They may have the opportunity to help a new staff member develop insight into performance expectations and career opportunities, based on their own personal experiences. A simple measure could be how soon the mentee becomes self-sufficient in their job responsibilities.

Peer mentors and mentees use the job work flow as their guide for developing their working relationship. The mentor may provide more direction during the early stage of the relationship. During this time the mentee may shadow the mentor to see the experienced mentor in action. Then as a routine becomes established, the mentor is likely to be less involved on a day to day basis.

## REVERSE MENTORING

In the reverse mentoring situation, the mentee has more overall experience (in terms of age, position or experience) than the mentor, but the mentor has more knowledge in a particular area. The relationship is reciprocal in nature.

This type of mentoring may be used when executives need to understand operations or technology that can be shared by staff members currently undertaking the role or tech-savvy employees who can share their knowledge with others. It can also be used to help encourage diversity such as appreciating multi generational or cross cultural perspectives.

The key to success in reverse mentoring is the ability to create and maintain an attitude of openness to the experience and dissolve the barriers of status, power and position.

## GROUP MENTORING

Group Mentoring is the classic mastermind concept of tapping into collective wisdom and obtaining mutual support.

Engaging a group takes the principle: "Two heads are better than one" to the next level. When a group of individuals operate in harmony and share their brain power the result is synergy – the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

In other words, the collective wisdom is available to each individual and shared ideas and information trigger additional possibilities that may never have been generated were each person working alone.

Some professional associations use the mastermind concept and can set you up a group or mentoring circle. Access to mentoring circles gives mentees access to more mentors than a traditional one to one relationship.

Generally, business-like meetings are held regularly and a formal agenda and discussion program is established. Guest speakers may also be invited to attend. They provide an opportunity for like minded people to share issues and learn from one another.

## THE ROLE OF COACHING IN THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Coaching can be described as personalised training to develop specific skills and improve performance.

Coaching is different from mentoring (see Do I need a Mentor or a Coach?). If you need specific knowledge or skills to improve performance you can ask someone who has those skills to help you develop. The coach may demonstrate techniques, observe you as you practise and give constructive feedback.

Your manager or an experienced colleague may coach you or recommend someone. Frequently, senior managers and business people use professional coaches.

## CONCLUSION

With the exception of some types of role modelling, each of the above involves you in a relationship.

Any relationship requires self-acceptance and acceptance of others. A good mentor will inevitably be different from you - otherwise they'd have nothing to offer! While we find it easier to build rapport with those most similar to ourselves it is the differences that offer most leverage for self-development.

For tools and resources please visit [go.unimelb.edu.au/3d7](http://go.unimelb.edu.au/3d7)