

Elemental Mentoring Guidance

This guide outlines the key principles, expectations, and best practices for mentors and mentees participating in a mentoring relationship. It supports both parties in building a strong foundation, sustaining a productive dynamic, and ending the relationship constructively.

1. Structuring the Mentoring Relationship

Setting Expectations

At your first meeting, agree on your expectations, preferred working style, communication methods, and intended outcomes. This alignment helps avoid misunderstandings and builds a shared vision for the mentoring relationship.

Boundaries & Limitations

There may be professional or personal areas that are not suitable for discussion. Early conversations should identify any boundaries to ensure that both parties feel comfortable and respected throughout the process.

Frequency & Format of Meetings

Agree on how often to meet (e.g., quarterly, biannually) and through which formats (in person, phone, video call, or email). Stay flexible as schedules and needs evolve.

Length & Timing of Meetings

Discuss a suitable meeting duration, usually 45–60 minutes. Meetings should have clear structure and purpose to avoid drifting or becoming unfocused. Choose a time that works well for both parties, considering other commitments such as work hours, caring responsibilities, or travel.

Location

If meeting in person, pick a mutually convenient and comfortable meeting location. A neutral, informal environment (e.g., a quiet café or shared office space) is often best for open conversation. If meeting online, try to ensure there will be no interruptions.

Using Agendas

While some relationships thrive on informality, an agenda can help guide conversations and ensure productivity. If you choose to use one, the mentee should prepare and share it ahead of the meeting.

2. Establishing Ground Rules

Confidentiality & Trust

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of the mentoring relationship. All discussions held during mentoring sessions and through email will remain strictly confidential.

The only exception is where a criminal act is revealed or there is a genuine concern that someone is at risk of harm: either the mentee, mentor, or another individual. In such instances, the mentor has a duty of care and may be required to disclose relevant information to an appropriate authority or support service. Where possible and appropriate, this will be discussed with the mentee before any action is taken.

This practice is consistent with safeguarding standards across professional mentoring and support services.

A foundation of mutual trust and respect ensures that both mentor and mentee feel safe to engage openly.

3. Commitment & Respect

Both mentor and mentee are making a commitment of time, energy, and attention. Respecting this commitment means:

- Preparing for meetings.
- Being punctual and present.
- Avoiding last-minute cancellations when possible.
- Engaging sincerely and constructively.

4. The First Meeting: Laying the Foundations

This first conversation sets the tone for your mentoring relationship. It should be relaxed and informal while helping to establish clarity, shared understanding, and mutual confidence.

Suggested topics:

- Brief introductions: backgrounds, roles, and experiences, including engagement with mentoring schemes at home institutions, as applicable.
- Mentee's goals and objectives.
- The purpose and intended outcomes of the relationship.
- Confidentiality, trust, and boundaries. The focus is on professional development and is not meant to be a therapeutic relationship.
- Communication preferences and logistics.
- Agreement on whether the relationship feels like a good fit.
- Discuss and agree your ground rules (based on this guidance).

- Schedule your next meeting.

5. Reviewing & Ending the Relationship

Reviewing Progress

It's helpful to periodically reflect on how the relationship is going:

- Are meetings useful and relevant?
- Are goals being achieved, and if not, should more time elapse between meetings?
- Is the relationship dynamic working for both parties?

Adjust where needed to improve the mentoring experience.

Ending the Relationship

Mentoring relationships often have a natural end point, when the mentee achieves a goal or when a set time period concludes. It's important to agree early on how the relationship might come to a close.

Possible reasons for ending:

- Goals have been met.
- A shift in availability or priorities.
- Lack of fit between mentor and mentee.

Discuss the ending openly and respectfully, and take time to reflect on what you've both gained from the experience.

6. Stages of Mentoring

Stage	Focus
1. Rapport Building	Get to know each other, align expectations and boundaries.
2. Goal Setting	Clarify objectives and timelines.
3. Core Work	Deepen discussion, support development and learning.
4. Winding Up	Review outcomes and begin closing the relationship.
5. Moving On	Agree on future contact or opportunities to reconnect.

7. Roles & Responsibilities

To ensure mentors can fully support their mentees while managing their own workload, each mentor will typically be assigned only one mentee at a time.

Mentees

- Take responsibility for your own development.
- Proactively arrange and prepare for meetings.
- Identify your goals and discussion points.
- Complete agreed actions between sessions.
- Remain open to challenge and feedback.
- Understand your mentor is neither a line manager nor a therapist.

Mentors

- Offer a non-judgemental space for reflection and growth.
- Provide honest, constructive feedback.
- Share relevant personal experiences and insights.
- Encourage self-direction and ownership in the mentee.
- Help the mentee identify opportunities, information, and networks.
- Maintain regular contact and professional boundaries.

8. Tools for Success

Setting SMART Objectives

Define goals that are:

- **S**pecific
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-bound

Reflective Log

A reflective log can help both parties document key takeaways and learning after each session. It also supports accountability and progress tracking.

9. Powerful Mentoring Questions

For Mentors to Ask Mentees

- What do you want to achieve in the long term?
- What's holding you back?
- What would you do differently if time or money were no object?
- What strengths are you underutilising?

- What commitment do you feel toward this goal?

For Mentees to Ask Mentors

- What challenges shaped your career?
- What lessons came from your biggest mistakes?
- What do you wish you'd known earlier?
- How would you approach my current situation?
- What do you still find difficult in your role?

10. Programme Oversight and Support

Mentors and mentees will be introduced via email by the programme coordinators, along with a PDF copy of this Elemental Mentoring Guidance.

Participants are responsible for organising their own meetings. While we do not coordinate scheduling, we kindly ask that you notify the Elemental team once your first meeting has taken place. This helps us monitor engagement and maintain a record of the number of mentoring meetings across the programme.

If either party encounters challenges or would like to seek support, advice, or discuss the mentoring relationship confidentially, they are encouraged to contact the Elemental team at elementalmentalhub@kent.ac.uk.

Confidentiality Statement

Confidentiality is central to a successful mentoring relationship. All content discussed within sessions and via email will remain confidential. The only exception is where a criminal act is divulged, or there is a serious concern that the mentee (or someone else) is at risk of harm.

In such rare cases, the mentor is duty-bound to disclose the relevant information. If appropriate, the mentor will first discuss this with the mentee before taking any action.

Final Thoughts

A successful mentoring relationship is built on trust, shared commitment, and open communication. Whether your journey is brief or long-term, it should leave both mentor and mentee with meaningful growth and learning.

Use this guide as your reference point, and revisit it throughout the relationship as needed.

If you have any questions, please contact elementalmetalhub@kent.ac.uk.