

University of Oxford Apprenticeship Scheme: Guidelines for mentors

These guidelines have been developed in collaboration with the Oxford Learning Institute and apprenticeship supervisors. They are advisory and are not intended to be prescriptive.

What is Apprenticeship mentoring?

Apprenticeship mentoring is often undertaken by someone other than the apprentice's supervisor. The Apprenticeship mentor's aim is to encourage the mentee's personal development by taking approaches and using techniques that support the mentee in his/her learning and development.

There are many different forms of mentoring, more details may be found on the Oxford Learning Institute website at <https://www.learning.ox.ac.uk/resources/mentoring/>

Ground rules

As a mentor you will:

- Listen attentively with interest
- Take appropriate approaches, such as challenging if the apprentice is not sufficiently focussed, sympathising and encouraging if the apprentice has had a bad experience
- Keep the apprentice moving on in his/her development, taking action and small steps
- Help him/her to see the bigger and longer term picture if s/he is concerned only about the present and the short-term future
- Help him/her to focus on what is happening now that needs attention in order to achieve longer term goals
- Be confidential
- Be accessible at agreed times
- Be objective, non-judgemental, calm, positive, enthusiastic, assertive, and respectful
- Agree realistic expectations and goals
- Provide reflective feedback
- Contribute ideas and experience
- Take an interest in your mentee's progress

The mentors' role is not to:

- Have magic answers or a 'quick fix'
- Talk too much about yourself
- Talk about luck
- Be cynical about opportunities for young people or young people's lives generally
- Be a counsellor
- Encourage dependence
- Be judgemental
- Hang onto the mentee when the relationship is not working

The mentoring relationship

- You will want to agree at the outset the expected length of your mentoring relationship. If you are the supervisor, this will probably depend upon how long the apprentice will be in post, but it might be helpful to talk about the mentoring aspect of the relationship as something separate and time limited, which is then reviewed periodically.
- When setting your ground rules for working together it might be helpful to agree your expectations of each other. For example, if punctuality is important to you your mentee needs to know this.
- At the initial stages of the relationship, your mentee may appear to be hesitant, unresponsive, and unappreciative of the mentoring relationship. This guarded attitude may be a manifestation of his/her insecurity about the relationship. Remaining positive and patient at this stage will be important.
- Review progress at suitable intervals. Are the practical arrangements working well? Is the mentee able to identify progress as a result of your mentoring? Ask him/her for feedback on your style and approach.
- It will be important to have an 'exit strategy' so that the relationship ends at an appropriate point and in an appropriate way. If you need for any reason to end a mentoring relationship before the mentee is ready to agree the end please explain your reasons for doing so and try to refer her to an alternative source of support.

Resources

Places within the University that might be particularly helpful for mentors are:

- The University's staff counselling service, available by self-referral via the Occupational Health Service www.admin.ox.ac.uk/uohs
- The Diversity and Equal Opportunities Office www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop
- Oxford Learning Institute for staff development and learning opportunities www.learning.ox.ac.uk
- Careers Service www.careers.ox.ac.uk
- Personnel Services information for staff www.admin.ox.ac.uk/ps