

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR MENTORS/MENTEES – SOME HELPFUL TIPS

LSE Mentoring scheme

The School has a formal mentoring scheme for Academic Staff, Research Staff and Professional Services Staff. While this document could be helpful to all staff groups, it is particularly aimed at academic and research staff. Further information on the mentoring schemes and process is available here: <https://info.lse.ac.uk/staff/divisions/Human-Resources/Review-reward-and-promotion>

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is one person sharing their knowledge, skills and experience to assist others to progress in their careers. Mentors are prepared to offer help as the need arises - within agreed bounds. Mentoring is rather more than 'giving advice', or passing on what your experience was in a particular area or situation. It's about motivating and empowering the other person to identify their own issues and goals, and helping them to find ways of resolving or reaching them - not by doing it for them, or expecting them to 'do it the way I did it', but by understanding and respecting different ways of working.

Mentors can:

- Act as an impartial sounding board
- Create valuable space and time for you to 'stand back' and review where you are now, where you want to get to, and how best to get there
- Contribute viewpoints, advice, and information from their own knowledge, experience and expertise
- Assist you to achieve changes and goals to enhance your professional and personal life

Mentoring is not counselling or therapy nor is it a replacement for the line management relationship.

Having the first meeting

A good first meeting sets the scene for forthcoming meetings. In this first meeting both parties should consider the following:

1. The relationship
2. Expectations of mentoring and each other
3. Practicalities

1. The relationship

The first meeting is an opportunity to get to know each other and establish the beginning of a productive relationship. Exchange of information and seeing connections and differences can be useful at this stage and may include the following topics:

- Existing roles
- Career paths to date
- What inspires or excites you about your role/career path
- Previous experiences of mentoring either as a mentor or a mentee

2. Expectations of mentoring and each other

An explicit conversation about expectations reduces the possibility of misunderstandings later. It enables an agreed understanding to emerge about the purpose of mentoring, what each expects of the other and how best to make it work. The following are possible areas for discussion:

- What the mentee is wanting from mentoring and what the mentor is able to offer?

- How mentoring is different from line management or supervision and how that boundary will be managed?
- Preferred ways of learning and giving/receiving feedback.
- How the mentoring meetings will run
- How and when to review progress, consider if mentoring is working and plans for ending of the relationship

3. Practicalities

This will include:

- Frequency and duration of meetings
- Confidentiality – boundaries and limits
- Process for arranging meetings
- Managing cancellation/missed meetings
- Communication between meetings
- Length of the relationship – how long will the mentoring last for

By the end of the first meeting there should be a common understanding of the areas you are most likely to discuss, how you will work together and a clear agreement about how to communicate with each other.

Mentoring skills

Effective mentoring is about building a supportive relationship based on listening, mutual respect and trust. It requires skills and sensitivity on both sides. The mentor can build this relationship through:

- Establishing initial expectations on both sides.
- Being available at times agreed.
- Listening.
- Being open to answering questions.
- Drawing on experience and offering models – be it in research or teaching (e.g. encourage the new member of staff to come to observe you teach, see your materials, read your articles, share your reviewer feedback etc before asking to see theirs).
- Offering insight.
- Being willing to question and challenge the mentee to reflect on their work.
- Sharing networks/contacts.
- Being willing to give both positive encouragement and critical constructive feedback.
- Seeking/giving feedback on the mentoring relationship – and agreeing when this relationship comes to an end.

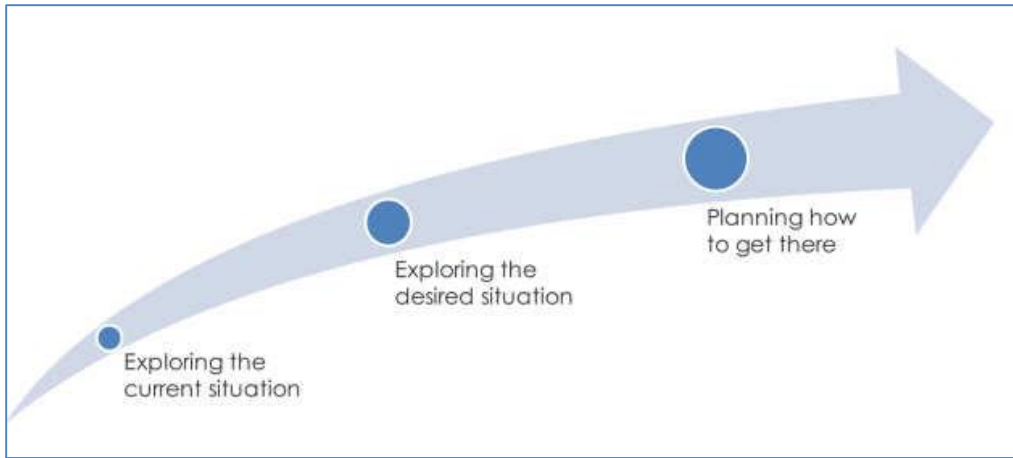
The mentee also needs to work at this relationship through:

- Indicating what you expect from the mentoring relationship.
- Being available at times agreed.
- Coming with questions/ideas/things to explore and discuss.
- Having ideas on objectives and ways forward.
- Listening.
- Being ready to adapt – both yourself and the ideas you gain from your mentor.
- Being willing to accept both positive encouragement and critical constructive feedback.
- Giving/seeking feedback on the mentoring relationship – and agreeing when this relationship comes to an end.

Frameworks to get the most out of a mentoring session

Mentoring potentially benefits both mentor and mentee and therefore the School, and you will find below some models that could be utilised.

1. A mentoring conversation is a particular type of conversation: it is happening for a purpose and there is an intended benefit. The framework below can be helpful in loosely shaping such a conversation. It provides movement towards learning and action.



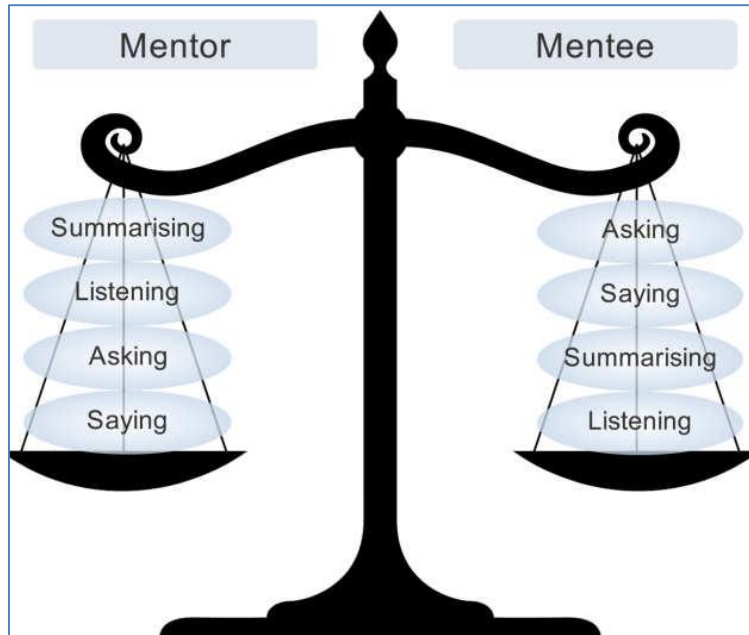
2. The 5C model of mentoring reminds mentors of the focus of mentoring and helps shape appropriate conversations



3. In addition the mentoring relationship and conversations are underpinned by good communication skills by both parties. Those skills are an ever changing balance between:

- Saying – giving information
- Listening and accurately extracting meaning
- Asking – for clarification or exploration
- Summarising and consolidating

At the end of each mentoring session it can be useful to reflect on the balance of communication in the session and whether it was as effective as it could be. This four stage model can help you focus such a conversation.



Ending the mentoring relationship

Many mentoring relationships come to a natural ending: the original issues have been resolved, one or other of the parties has moved away or, if there was a time limit agreed at the beginning, it has been reached. A good ending involves:

- A review of the mentoring process
- Learning and achievements
- A celebration

There are some mentoring relationships that falter and come to unplanned ends. This can be for a variety of reasons including:

- The parties can't communicate and connect with each other
- Logistics mean they can never seem to find a mutually suitable time and location
- The mentee is not being proactive about setting meetings, coming with an agenda and making best use of the mentor's expertise
- The mentor is telling the mentee what to do and not listening to their issues

Wherever possible try and:

- Have a conversation and explicitly agree to finish mentoring. If you have agreed at the beginning to review it after a couple of meetings this makes it easier to raise the subject and reach a conclusion
- Extract the positives
- Review your own contribution and reflect on what you would do differently if you were to take part in mentoring again
- Provide feedback to your department/centre.

Tips for dealing with difficult conversations

Having the right knowledge and practical understanding to have the conversations you want or need to have, even when that may be a difficult discussion, is a key skill. Conversations happen all the time but if we want to improve the quality of our communications it is helpful to consider what we really mean by having a conversation. Remember, it is the *exchange* of information which is important and that implies that a conversation is at least two-way. So the first step is to reflect on how well you engage people in meaningful conversations which build good working relationships.

When you look at the organisational issues you face on a day-to-day basis, what conversations are being avoided? When

would a good conversation help progress things more positively or improve individual or team performance? In the best performing organisations the most impactful conversations are held *when* they are needed and *in the way* they are needed (in other words, the right conversations, in the right way, at the right time).

Behaving assertively and having the confidence to give constructive feedback is a crucial skill for everyone to master. If difficult conversations are handled well they can create more positive working relationships as well as improving performance and increasing motivation. Handled poorly, the result is more likely to be reduced performance, loss of motivation and increased tension or conflict.

If you know you have a potentially difficult conversation coming up, make sure you:

• Are properly prepared	Make a note of the key points you wish to discuss
• Create the right atmosphere	A private, informal environment where a full, frank and friendly conversation can take place.
• Follow a clear structure	Covering all the relevant points and allowing enough time for a two-way exchange of views.
• Use positive feedback	Recognising achievements or where things have gone well.
• Do more listening, less talking	Using open-ended questions where appropriate and encouraging ownership.
• Encourage self-reflection	Checking whether their understanding of the situation matches your own. Analyse jointly wherever possible.
• Tackle the issue	Being prepared for potentially difficult conversations where necessary.
• Avoid nasty surprises	Reflecting on recent not bringing up issues which are no longer relevant.

Immediate and direct dialogue will resolve 90% of issues before they get out of hand. Our success at work and in every relationship relies on us getting critical conversations right. Good communication increases our understanding of the people around us and can improve our happiness and personal satisfaction levels.

Using the CREDS Model

CREDIBILITY = CONTENT + APPROACH

In other words, what you do, together with how you do it.

The **CREDS Model** is a simple yet powerful tool that reminds us to take a balanced approach to all our conversations, no matter how difficult they may be. It is situational and contextual so is completely adaptable to any given conversation. By using the 5 success factors of **CREDS** for every conversation you can ensure you get the results you need and at the same time maintain positive relationships for the future. Whilst no two conversations are the same, all 5 elements must be present for every conversation to be effective. Depending on the circumstances, you will need to 'dial up' or 'dial down' the volume of each of the elements to make your conversation a success.

CANDID	To be frank and truthful. To be honest and tell the truth especially about something difficult or sensitive.
RESPECTFUL	Showing respect for someone. To be polite, kind and considerate.
ENGAGING	To involve or draw (somebody) inclusively into conversations. To take part, to participate, to be charming.
DIRECTION	To aim, point or cause to move towards a goal. The direction that someone or something is going.
SENSITIVE	To be responsive to, or aware of, feelings, moods, etc. Able to understand what people are feeling and behave appropriately. Responsive to external influences.

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Use the **CREDS** Model to plan for any important conversations. Use **CREDS** to adapt your approach to the conversation whilst 'in the moment'. And use **CREDS** to reflect on the conversation after it has happened to build your self awareness and confidence in tackling those potentially difficult conversations.

If there are any issues arising in the mentoring process please do be sure to let your Head of Department/Research Centre Director know so that we figure out how best to address these. If the issue cannot be resolved, please contact your HR partner. The VCAC is also available for further advice if the matter cannot be resolved locally.

Support for new and current mentors

The School offers support for new and existing mentors, such as mentoring development sessions. Further information is available [here](#).

Helpful links:

- [Career Development Reviews \(CDR\)](#)
- [Mentoring Process](#)
- [LSE Professional Development Courses](#)
- [Workshops specifically designed for research staff](#)
- [LSE Careers Service Support for Research Staff](#)
- [Support for Mentors](#)