

Guidelines for the Career Mentor Program

Guidelines are required to ensure successful relationships with clear expectations of the mentoree and mentor.

Mentoring is an important voluntary activity, critical to develop and nurture careers of medical researchers. A career mentor is someone who takes special interest in helping another develop a successful career. A mentor should guide the mentoree on any number of career-related topics.

Medical researchers live or die by productivity. ASMR believes it is of vital importance for medical researchers to benefit from the opportunity to share concerns and aspirations with someone experienced.

Mentoring is ideally a 2 way professional relationship that develops over time, with each person asking questions, finding answers and making choices. We have high expectations that they will succeed in their professional accomplishments; mentoring is an important step in that success. Typically, it is 1-on-1 relationship between a more experienced and less experienced person. It is based upon encouragement, constructive comments, openness, mutual trust, respect and willingness to learn and share.

Although finding a compatible mentor is not as simple as one might like, it doesn't have to be a difficult matter either. The ASMR mentoring linkage program does it for you.

Mentors: The selection and appointment of appropriate mentors is essential for a successful program. ASMR has invited mentors to participate in the program based on track record and skills/traits such as effective communication, positive relationships developed in a professional manner, tact, patience and diplomacy, good organisational skills and high level of commitment and enthusiasm to the program.

A good mentor is likely to have some or all of qualities:

- perceived as a role model
- able to encourage and motivate others
- interested in the learning process
- able to maintain confidentiality
- good knowledge about career paths
- good interpersonal skills, particularly listening

Mentor Responsibilities

- Listening objectively, and acting as a sounding board, to the mentorees' ideas, dreams, plans and problems.
- Asking questions that will encourage the mentoree to explore issues from a variety of perspectives. Not prescriptive in advocating one way of thinking.
- Challenging the mentorees traditional ways of thinking and acting to try strategies that are outside their comfort zone.
- Facilitating the mentorees learning and developing and raising the bar in relation to his/her potential.
- Providing information, guidance, support, encouragement and constructive feedback. Create opportunities.
- Facilitating problem-solving, decision making and strategic planning processes in relation to career matters.
- Maintaining confidentiality.

Mentor vs Supervisor

One thing that sets mentors apart from supervisors is a desire to help the mentoree develop into a successful professional with no more at stake in it than the personal satisfaction of helping someone grow. Outside of giving you an objective perspective, mentors can help you set personal and professional goals and support you through honest feedback until you reach them.

The role of a mentor can benefit by providing the opportunity to develop leadership capacity providing structured support to help individuals define their own careers will ultimately contribute to the effectiveness of workforce planning: career development and succession planning.

The mentorees role

To make the most of the mentoring scheme, the mentoree should plan to meet (or talk) regularly with the mentor (recommendation: every 6-8 weeks) and set that time to explore career issues and concerns. Keeping a list of questions as they arise can be a good way to begin conversations with your mentor. The mentor will encourage the mentoree to go beyond the practical questions and develop a professional development plan. Ultimately, each mentoree takes responsibility for his/her own growth and success, but the mentor can aid in exploring the best ways to accomplish this.

Mentoree responsibilities

- Defining his/her learning needs
- Formulate smart objectives – time bound personal and career goals
- Planning and implementing strategies to achieve those objectives
- Making decisions and taking appropriate action
- Identify how to measure progress and advancement
- Keep commitments you make to your mentor
- Maintaining confidentiality

The mentoring relationship is strongest when each person asks for and give feedback, when needs are articulated, and when confidentiality is maintained. As a learning relationship, the mentoree should follow through on suggestions made by the mentor and show appreciation for the mentors time and efforts.

The Mentoring Relationship

The stages of the mentoring relationships are

- Exploring the possibility of working together
- Building the relationship
- Negotiating the mentoring arrangement/agreement
- Mentoree/mentor development, including measurement of progress and outcomes
- Ending the formal relationship

The mentor and mentorees should negotiate the 'operational' details of the mentoring relationship in the 1st few meetings.

Issues you may want to consider:

- When, where, how often, and long will the mentor and mentoree meet?
Recommendation: every 6-8 weeks
- How formal or informal and how flexible would the mentor/mentoree relationship like to be?
- What are the mentorees objectives for the mentoring relationship?
- What are the expectations and roles of the mentor and mentoree?
- What would the issues and or tasks would the mentoree like to work with the mentor?
- What other activities would the mentoree find useful? eg reviewing work
- What kind and how much contact will the mentor and mentoree have between meetings? ie phone/email
- How will the mentor/mentoree keep the relationship going if either party is away or if the meeting has been cancelled or rescheduled?
- What are the confidentiality agreements?

Effective mentoring can occur informally or as formally as you chose but time together should be planned and maintained building a climate of trust. The mentor achieves this by asking open-ended questions and listening carefully. Finding common ground and understanding perceptions and goals.

The mentor needs to have accurate and sufficient knowledge of the mentoree to be able to offer assistance. The mentor should ask questions to learn details about the mentorees background and career goals using facts as the basis of the decision making process.

The mentor can assist the mentoree in considering various career options. Strategies could include asking about reasons for choices and thinking creatively about alternative means of accomplishing goals.

In developing the relationship, the mentor can be useful in helping the mentoree identify unproductive avenues and take steps toward changing them. Mentors should use the last amount of carefully stated feedback necessary for impact and the focus should be on the most likely strategies for change.

A mentor can also serve as a role model. By occasionally telling his/her own story, then the mentor can motivate the mentoree to take risks and make decisions without certainty of successful results (making independent choices). The conversations could also include learning from difficult experiences and developing the qualities needed to persist in a goal.

Both parties should agree on the negotiated plan of action. The time commitment and time frames needs to be made clear and agreed upon - this will avoid disappointment.

Getting started

Often the hardest step for mentorees is getting things started. One good approach is telling the other person who they are and what they do and what their career aspirations are. Useful questions in beginning and continuing conversations.

Problem solving

- What do you think about this idea?
- What do you think is important?
- How would you solve this?
- If you were in my shoes, what would you do?
- What other factors should we be considering?
- Is this approach going to work?
- What do you see as the obstacles we face?

General

- How are things going?
- What are your goals?
- What are you trying to accomplish?

Problem identification

- What results have you achieved so far?
- Where are you stuck?
- What kinds of problems are you encountering?
- Why do you think that happened?

Options and solutions

- What solutions have you attempted?
- What do you see as your options?
- Do you want input or suggestions from me?

Planning

- What is your favourite go forward plan?

How can you apply what you've learned to this situation?
What else would benefit from knowing this?

Support

What can I do to support you in this?
Whose support do you need?
Would it be helpful to talk about this again?

What if the relationship isn't working!

Occasionally mentoring relationships are not successful. If this is the case, the mentor and the mentoree have the right to request termination

If the mentor has been appointed, the person who made the appointment (ASMR) will need to be notified so that another mentor may be arranged.

When it comes to finding a mentor, perfection is not even a relevant concept. Nobody has the same career, so you are not going to find someone who is a perfect match. If concerns arise, advice must be sought.

Mentorees' needs to remain 'in the saddle' until the very end. When they achieve the objective, they then can decide to wrap the relationship up or set a new issue or objective. Don't waste your mentor's time or your own. If it's not going forward any more, then it's perhaps time to move on. Don't let it stagnate and go stale.