

**The Hong Kong Polytechnic University
Department of Building Services Engineering**

To the Mentees



1 What is mentoring?

1.1 What does ‘mentoring’ mean?

Mentoring happens when one person assists another to grow, acquire new skills and insights, and develop his or her potential. Introducing the learner, or mentee, to new ways of seeing the world is a classic hallmark of mentoring. Many successful people have sought mentors; usually someone they consider is more experienced. Nowadays, an important challenge is to make mentoring more accessible so that more people can take advantage of mentoring. The focus has also shifted to the mentee and mentor as equal partners in the relationship, and away from the mentor as a dispenser of advice.

Mentoring is a natural process found in all cultures throughout history. In some communities in the world, mentors are proficient hunters or good mothers: they can be a ‘critical friend’, a role model, or initiate the young into the adult and spirit world. Mentoring in our society is used for personal and professional development in education, business, the public and voluntary sector, and community groups.

Mentoring is the process by which one person assists another to grow and learn in a safe and sympathetic relationship

Regardless of the specific aim, mentoring is fundamentally about learning and development. You may want to learn to cope in times of change, overcome difficulties or grasp opportunities. The essential quality of mentoring is that this learning and development is a proactive, positive and generally enjoyable choice for both the mentor and mentee.

People embark on mentoring for many different reasons: to support them personally, to help them in their career, and/or to improve their effectiveness in their study.

1.2 Personal benefits

Many mentees report that their self-esteem and self-confidence increase through the support and encouragement of the mentoring relationship. The mentor acts as a ‘sounding board’ for exploring new possibilities and new ways of approaching old problems. This enables the mentee to tackle challenges and opportunities that had seemed out of reach, through:

- Development skills and insights in order to move forwards
- Gaining support through a period of change

- Being helped to realize a personal dream
- Greater motivation and more self-reliance
- More realistic goal-setting and fuller achievement of these goals

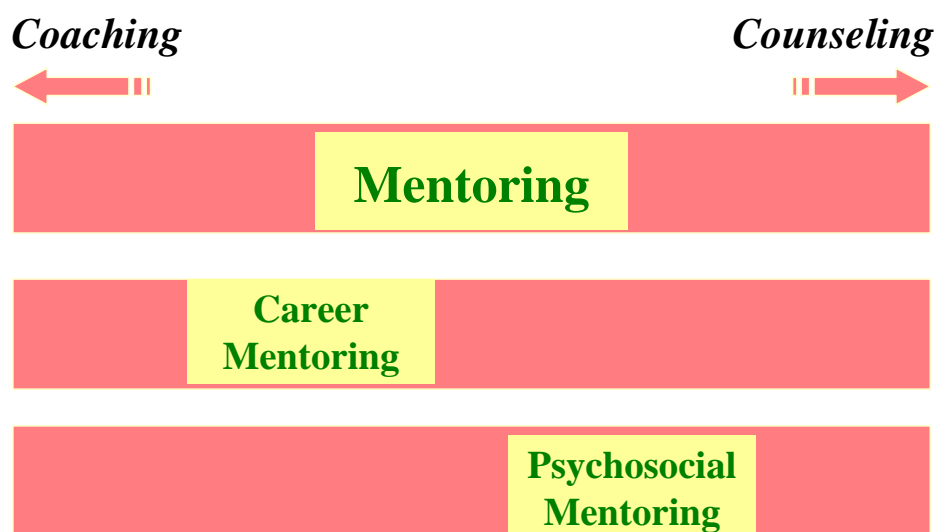
1.3 Career benefits

Career benefits can include:

- Help to know more about the construction industry
- Help to identify and secure a job
- Support for a professional training or development programme, leading to exams and qualifications
- Help to get established in the building services industry or a professional role

1.4 How does mentoring fit with coaching and counseling?

Mentoring involves a range of approaches, which vary depending on the mentee. Many people find mentoring hard to define because it overlaps with coaching and counseling. It may focus on developing organizational and job-related skills (mentoring/coaching) or on the mentee's personal development (mentoring/counseling). Kim Langridge describes an approach to mentoring, shown below, which highlights the relationship between mentoring, coaching and counseling. At one end of the scale is professional coaching, in which the coach intervenes directly to pass on knowledge or to develop skills. At the other end is professional counseling, where the counselor has the individual's personal interests at heart and develops a high degree of empathy with the client. Mentoring is located firmly in the middle separated from counseling and coaching, while incorporating elements from both.



Mentoring relationships can change over time, and may require a change of emphasis in the skills the mentor uses. In a business setting, mentoring often focuses initially on

coaching. More personal issues may not be dealt with until the mentee has built up confidence and trust in the mentor.

When a mentoring relationship hits the boundaries of coaching or counseling as defined by these professions, the mentor signposts the mentee to an appropriate professional.

A vital key to success in mentoring is that each relationship is custom-built by the mentee and mentor to address their specific needs. This flexibility, which is a core strength of mentoring, makes a tight definition very difficult.

2 Your role in the relationship

2.1 Who is involved in process?

Your mentor may be one of many people in a web of relationships that support you in different ways. These supportive roles need to be understood and acknowledged before mentoring starts so that you and your mentor all gain from the process.

2.2 What you can expect from your mentor

As a general rule, the more you put into mentoring, the more you get out. You will probably get most from the relationship if you think of yourself as an active learner.

This means you:

- Decide what you want and what you do not want from mentoring (though your aims may change as the process unfolds)
- Seek development opportunities, self-learning, support and encouragement at a pace which suits you
- Bring issues to the meetings and identify difficulties that you have experienced
- Be willing to listen and reflect on feedback you receive
- Be willing to give honest and timely feedback to your mentor
- Be prepared to experiment with new approaches, behaviours and techniques
- Take increasing initiative for your own learning and development
- Take increasing responsibility for managing the mentoring relationship
- Stick to mentoring appointments that you make

2.3 Your mentor's role

Your mentor is there to:

- Support and encourage your personal development and learning
- Give confidential feedback to reinforce what you already do well, and help you in areas where you want to develop

How this actually happens will depend on the structure of the relationship, which depends on your needs, the context of the mentoring and your mentor's personality.

There are many ways in which a mentor and mentee can work together and you need to find a way that suits you both. You may spend time during a session discussing experiences that you have just had, and your mentor may ask questions and help you to see things from a different angle. Or your mentor may act as a role model, describing how s/he handled similar situations in the past and showing what it is possible to achieve.

2.4 Expectations

All the parties involved in mentoring should openly discuss their expectations of the process at the outset so that you all work to the same agenda. A summary of this discussion could form part of your mentoring agreement (see Section 5.1)

What are you expecting from the mentoring relationship? For instance, who should be responsible for the practical aspects of the process: who will organize when and where to meet, or initiate reviews of the relationship? Do you want limits on the scope of the mentoring? When you first meet your mentor you could check how closely your expectations match. If you are part of a mentoring scheme, the organization(s) involved will probably have aims and expectations of the process. The scheme coordinator should brief you on these; if not, then ask. Whether or not you are part of a scheme, you and your mentor should consider summarizing your discussion of expectations in a mentoring agreement of learning contract. This can be informal (verbal) or formal (written). Section 5.1 has a checklist of points to consider.

2.5 General responsibilities

Responsibility for an ethical approach to mentoring is shared by everyone involved in the process. Such an approach covers confidentiality to protect sensitive and personal information, and a belief in the right and ability of mentees to make their own decisions. Other basic values that underpin mentoring include treating people with respect and honesty, and the mentor being impartial and non-judgmental.

Trust is an essential component of a successful mentoring relationship. For the mentee to be trusted s/he needs to behave in a trustworthy way:

- Not taking unfair advantage of the mentor's trust
- Respecting confidences and personal information – your mentor may give examples from personal experience which could be embarrassing if they become public knowledge
- Not expecting the mentor to behave unethically or illegally
- Realizing that the mentoring process can sometimes evoke strong feelings, such as anger, and that violence or harmful behaviour against yourself or the mentor is not appropriate. You and your mentor need to discuss at the outset a framework for dealing appropriately with strong feelings.

3 Your mentoring sessions

3.1 Your mentoring aims

Before your first mentoring session, you may like to consider what you want to get from mentoring. Your aims may be broad or specific. For instance you may want:

- Support to manage your transition from education or unemployment into employment
- Support for a programme of vocational training where you are trying to apply what you have learned in the classroom to your everyday work
- To develop your people management skills for the benefit of your team
- To identify your next career move and capitalize on the opportunities currently available to you

You can record your aims in section 5.2 and review these aims at regular periods (see section 5.3).

3.2 Preparing for a mentoring session

You will find that you get more benefit from a session if you have thought about it beforehand.

- What did you learn from the last session? Have you had a chance to apply this learning in a practical setting?
- Did you have anything to follow-up from previous sessions? If you meet difficulties and cannot finish follow-up work, let your mentor know before the next session, as it might be more effective to reschedule the meeting.
- What benefits are you noticing from your mentoring? Are there any other benefits you could make happen?
- Do you have any issues you want to raise with your mentor? You may want to keep a notebook devoted to mentoring so you can jot down your ideas, record what you want to achieve and your progress and note dates, places and times for sessions.

You may get some ideas about what to cover in your sessions from the checklist in section 5.4.

If you would like your mentor to prepare anything for the session, ensure you give him/her adequate notice. As trust and communication grow, you may choose to have some sessions by phone or e-mail if it is available to you, and you and your mentor feel comfortable with this.

3.3 During a mentoring session

If you keep in mind the following steps, your session is more likely to lead to a useful outcome for you:

Step 1: agree with your mentor what you plan to cover in the session, and agree how long the session will last

Step 2: work on the topic for the session

Step 3: think about how the session has gone and what you have learnt from it

Step 4: give feedback to your mentor on what you found useful and what was least successful for you in the session

Step 5: review how the mentoring is going overall

Step 6: agree when and where you will next meet, and any issues you think you will want to cover

3.4 After the session

- Look back over your notes to remind you of any actions to take before the next session.
- Think about whether the mentoring is giving you what you need. What works best for you?
What seems least successful? Is this the best format of session for you, the best location, the best time of day to meet?
- Note down your successes and problems between sessions so you can discuss them with your mentor when you next meet.

4 Making the most of your learning

4.1 Keeping a learning log

A learning log helps you reflect on your experiences. Reflection is an important part of the learning process, and is a part that people often ignore. A log contains all the things that help you to learn and benefit from your experience. You can learn a lot from things that go wrong, especially in a safe environment. You can also learn from things that went well – bask in the glory, and also spend some time understanding what you did that worked so well, so you can apply this learning again in the future!

A learning log may contain a record of:

- Situations and events – what happened that was significant or important to you
- What you did in the situation – how your reaction helped or hindered

- How you related to other people involved
- What you would do differently next time.

You are more likely to continue with your log if you write very brief comments soon after the experience. You are the only one who need read it, so don't worry about keeping it neat or grammatical. When you set yourself a target or action, make sure that you are clear about the outcome you want so that you can have the satisfaction of knowing when you have achieved this. Don't try to do too much: make your target achievable, and check that it is something you really want to achieve and the benefits are obvious to you.

Your learning log will build up through your career or development programme and you can look back on your progress with satisfaction. It will also help you to compare your initial aims with what you actually achieved and to monitor how your goals change as the mentoring process unfolds.

4.2 Other ways of recording what you learn

If a log does not seem appropriate you could use a diary to jot down what you have done and learnt. You can then go back over these jottings at a later date and see the progress you have made.

4.3 Learning from feedback

All of us have blind spots – aspects of ourselves that others see but we cannot. Effective learning takes place when someone else alerts us to our blind spots, by giving us feedback about what we do or how we do it.

- How do you tend to react to feedback? Do you take it on board totally without discriminating or do you reject it straightaway? Or do you think about it, explore it and make sense of it in a way that is right for you? Your reaction may well be affected by the manner in which the feedback is given to you.
- You can use your learning log to write down feedback that you have received and your reflections on it.

5 Some useful checklists

5.1 Mentoring agreement

- What outcomes are you aiming for?
- What are your mentor's responsibilities, and what are yours?
- What limits are you setting to confidentiality?

- What involvement or expectations (if any) do any third parties have of the mentoring relationship?
(Third parties may be your mentor's organization, the BSE Department, your personal tutor, or the mentorship programme coordinator.)
- **PROCEDURAL ISSUES** How often will you meet (once you have established a working relationship, if necessary this could be once a month with phone contact in between)? How long are the sessions likely to be? Who will arrange room booking? Who takes responsibility for ensuring meetings are private and uninterrupted? What are the arrangements for cancellations?
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES** How will you and your mentor check that everything is going well in the relationship on an ongoing basis? What will you both do if things are not going well? How will you both end the relationship if either think it is not working? How do you both think you will finish if everything goes well?

5.2 Aims at the start of mentoring

Discuss your aims with your mentor right at the beginning. You could write them in the table below and refer back to them regularly to check you are on track.

What are my aims for learning and development?

What can my mentor do to help me reach these aims?

5.3 Review of aims (every 1-6 months)

It is worth reviewing your progress with your mentor at regular intervals to make sure you are getting what you need from mentoring. You might consider:

- What aims have you already achieved through the mentoring process?
- What aims have you not yet achieved?
- Are any of these aims now irrelevant or unrealistic?
- Do you have any new aims you want to include in your mentoring?

5.4 Preparing for a mentoring session

Useful points to include in your session, and to think about beforehand:

UPDATE

- Progress (however little) since the last session.
- Problems you have experienced since that session.

AGENDA

- Issues, skills or competency areas that you particularly want to concentrate on in the session.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

- Are there any issues about the mentoring process that you want to raise with your mentor?

CHANGES YOU WANT TO MAKE

- Do you need to re-schedule the date, time or place of meetings?

6 Concluding the relationship

6.1 Monitoring your achievements

You and your mentor will probably monitor progress as your relationship develops. If you are keeping a learning log (see section 4.1), you should find it relatively straightforward to identify key outcomes or learning points together that indicate the stage that your relationship has reached. Once you have achieved your aims, you may want to talk with your mentor about setting fresh aims or identifying someone who has different skills and attributes to help you on the next step of your journey.

The length of the relationship is expected to last throughout your period of study in the PolyU. You may wish to continue meeting as mentee and mentor after the scheme has finished, or to see each other as friends.

6.2 Terminating the relationship early

If you and your mentor have not managed to work together effectively, you may decide to terminate the relationship early. It is important to do this without assigning fault to either side. In this case you must discuss with the mentorship programme coordinator before the termination.

7 Learning Log

What happened / what did I experience?

What did I learn from this?

What will I do differently next time?

What further support of resources do I need next time?

What is my next step in this area of learning?

You may wish to adapt the log to suit your own style.

8 Mentorship Certificate

To encourage regular communications between mentees and their mentors, each mentee needs to continuously log the events conducted. Upon finishing the Programme, only those mentees who return to the General Office the log sheet below, with minimum 2 events per year properly recorded and countersigned by their mentors, will be given a certificate. If, however, a mentee does not submit the log sheets by 31 August of the graduating year, the Office will not issue to him/her the aforesaid certificate.

9 Mentorship Programme - Log Sheet

(Sample)



Department of Building Services Engineering Mentorship Programme - Log Sheet



Name : _____ (33 _____) Student Number : _____
Prog. code

Name of Mentor : _____ Submission date: _____

Date of event	Activities/functions held during the event ¹ ¹ Events may include meeting, email/telephone communication etc.	Signature		For Office Use
		Mentee	Mentor	