

Mentor Handbook



Mentoring is a fundamental human relationship, in which a person invests his or her time, energy and expertise to nurture the growth and ability of another person. As a Mentor, you are the special person who helps Mentees reach their potential. You are a *'helper'* and your style may range from that of a persistent encourager who boosts self-confidence to that of a stern taskmaster who teaches a Mentee to appreciate excellence in performance. Whatever your style, it is the care for your Mentees that really matters.

Mentoring is one of the all-encompassing methods of encouraging human growth. Today, mentoring is often spoken about in corporate circles, but mentors can touch every facet of a person's being if their wisdom is accepted and applied in diverse ways to an individual's life. It is a process wherein the Mentor and Mentee work together to discover and develop the Mentee's latent abilities and encourage the mentee to acquire knowledge and skills as and when the opportunities and needs arise. The Mentor serves as a tutor, counsellor, friend and foil enabling the mentee to sharpen her/his skills and increase her/his knowledge.

The following guidelines show you how to make best use of your **Mentoring Relationship**:

1. Getting Acquainted

"Fit and chemistry must be considered when pairing the mentor and the protégé.

If the two don't get along, it matters little what each can offer the other in terms of knowledge and skills."

- *Michael Zey, Building a successful formal mentor program*

Getting acquainted with your Mentee over the Web can be quite convenient. If you are looking for ways to connect online using the SIT Alumni Mentoring Programme, the following are a few suggestions to help you get started on conversations with your Mentee:

1. Jobs, hobbies, and extracurricular activities.
2. Research, projects, or career-related accomplishments.
3. Ways of balancing work with your personal life.
4. Your favourite modules in SIT, favourite book, etc.

Don't forget to learn about your Mentee by asking her/him questions too!

We encourage your Mentee to voice his or her concerns with you, but if your Mentee does not speak his/her concerns, you should certainly be comfortable with taking the initiative. In case, your Mentee lacks the vocabulary or technical terms to discuss topics or issues with you, we advise your Mentee to paraphrase the questions/concerns as best as he or she can. Please be certain that you understand what your Mentee is trying to say. Although it might take several online discussions to clarify a point, your Mentee is likely to appreciate your patience.

2. Means to Communicate

There are various ways in which you can communicate with your mentee. These include:

1. E-mails
2. Skype/Zoom for audio or video conversations
3. Meeting in person whenever possible
4. SMS/ WhatsApp/Telegram/ etc.

3. Set Your Goals and Summarize Completed Sessions

To have a successful **Mentoring Relationship**, we encourage the Mentees to set the pace and direction for what they hope to accomplish through mentoring.

We hope you and your Mentee will be able to set the goals concretely before continuing with the mentoring. Also, we urge you and your Mentee to summarize every completed session in order to form new action items and goals.

Here are some specific questions related to growth and goals:

- Is there anything you wish to develop?
- Are you interested in improving your mentoring, communication, listening or leadership skills?
- Are you seeking greater self-awareness and fresh perspectives through the mentoring of another?
- Which areas do you wish to improve?
- How can I help you to achieve your goal when you graduate?

4. Ideal Traits for Mentors

There are several ideal traits defined for good Mentors and Mentees. We hope the following pointers serve as a useful refresher for your Mentoring Relationship with your Mentee.

- **Inspire** - What makes Mentors effective may very well rest in the ability to inspire their Mentees. By setting an example, you may be able to motivate your Mentee towards future paths that are beyond his/her original dreams. Challenge your Mentee to find importance in what he/she aspires to do and help to create future visions for themselves.
- **Be an Active Listener** - A sign of good listening is that your Mentee feels he/she has been clearly heard and understood. Your Mentee feels accepted and thus places trust on the Mentoring Relationship. Remembering or showing interest in things your Mentee mentioned in the past is one form of active listening and is likely to be appreciated by your Mentee.
- **Share Similar Experiences** - Mentors are not expected to be supermen. Most of the time, they are people who have already experienced similar situations as their Mentees. By sharing your experiences, you can help your Mentee feel more empowered to deal with his/her challenges successfully.
- **Provide Corrective Feedback in an Encouraging Manner** - All of us have probably found ourselves acting defensively at one time when we received feedback. Taking feedback well is not always easy. However, hearing it in a motivating and an encouraging tone can help your mentee to accept feedback and apply it readily.
- **Speak of Your Mentee in Positive or Neutral Ways** - Trusting that your discussions are confidential and that the mentoring relationship is mutually supportive are important building blocks for the Mentoring Relationship. When speaking of your mentee to others, provide only positive or neutral comments.

5. Effective Online Communication

The term '*Communication*' covers just about any interaction with another person. It includes sharing information, ideas and feelings. Communication is a two-way process. You can probably remember several occasions when the lack of communication or miscommunication has left you feeling angry, or worried.

While speaking to someone, whether face to face, or on the phone, you can use hand gestures, facial expressions and voice modulation for conveying your thoughts. Imagine what happens when you communicate over emails; or, when you have to communicate through online discussion boards. Here, you cannot make use of non-textual ways of conveying information; you can only rely on your text messages.

The following netiquette tips are critical to a Mentor - Mentee relationship:

- **Meaningful Subject Line** - A good subject line ensures that the recipient recognises the importance of your message and doesn't delete it accidentally. Another reason is that the subject line will give your Mentee a clear idea of the topic you want to discuss.
- **Clear and Concise Messages** - Were your Mentee's points clear? Were you able to understand them? If not, ask your Mentee for clarification. Asking for a clarification will allow your mentee to restate, elaborate or reconsider her/his message. It is very important that even your messages are clear and concise.
- **Investigating Assumptions** - Even if they have not been stated explicitly, have you understood the assumptions your Mentee has made in the message? Stating your understanding of the message, or asking your Mentee to clarify his/her words can be useful in preventing any misinterpretations.
- **Communicating about Communication** - It is very important to inform your Mentee of your schedule, well in advance. This prevents a communication breakdown, which would have resulted in unnecessary frustration.

We sincerely hope that you have a fruitful online experience, as you exchange your thoughts and messages with your Mentee.

6. Ten Reminders for Effective Mentoring

1. Demonstrate interest, helpful intent and involvement. When you talk with your Mentee, keep your mind clear. Avoid unnecessary thoughts and distractions. This will help in giving undivided attention to your Mentee.
2. Establish rapport by learning or remembering personal information about your Mentee.
3. Begin by focusing on your Mentee's strengths and potentials rather than limitations.
4. Stay in contact with your Mentee. Even a short email or phone call can make a big difference.
5. Be available and keep your schedule and appointments.
6. Follow up continuously on your Mentee's commitments and goals.
7. Don't be critical of other faculty or staff members.
8. Evaluate consistently the effectiveness of your mentoring and make suitable adjustments to your style of mentoring.
9. Be yourself and allow your Mentee to be what they are.
10. Remember that active listening is one of the most important skills of a good Mentor.

7. Networking Tips

Developing and maintaining quality relationships can improve your life and empower you to achieve your goals. By meeting people, connecting with them, and keeping in touch, you are probably constantly networking. We hope you will share some of your advice, approach and insight into networking with your mentee. Some suggestions on what you can share are:

- You may want to let your Mentee know if you found your current job or a promotion, clients, or were able to complete a recent project through networking.
- You may want to share ideas about communication skills, such as smiling when meeting people, maintaining eye contact, active listening, body language, finding common interests over which to connect and complimenting.
- You may share your networking techniques with your Mentees. Some of the techniques that you may share may include using an opening line when meeting people, having a list of getting-to-know-you questions or a list of ideas for casual conversation.
- Your thoughts on what is not considered a good networking practice may be helpful as well to the Mentees. For example, you can tell them why and how contacting long-forgotten connections only when you need something (e.g. a job referral) is never a good practice. Similarly contacting by coercion or manipulation of others is considered unethical and is not welcome.
- Finally, we hope you will be willing to share your contacts with your Mentee as they might help reach his/her goals.

8. Suggested Activities for Mentors and Mentees

The following are activities that we suggest you participate with your mentoring partner when you meet him/her in person:

- Engage in lunch meetings to discuss different subjects, including the university, classes, IWSP, career path and extra-curricular activities.
- Introduce your fellow colleagues or members from other departments that may be of interest to your Mentee.
 - Tour of workplace and key facilities.
 - Show your Mentee some of your favourite places in your area — places he/she might otherwise never discover themselves.
- Attend cultural and sporting events together.

9. Don't Lose Sight of Your Goals

There might be times in your Mentoring Relationship when things might stagnate and a fresh impetus is required. At such times, we recommend the following activities:

- Revisit the goals that you have set for your mentoring partner and for yourself. Are you on the right track to achieve what you had set out to do?
- Could you have done something better? Being enthusiastic can help you and your partner move forward.
- Do you think you need to extend the mentoring period? Learning, as they say, never stops.
- Re-energizing the relationship goes a long way in ensuring the success of the partnership.

10. Help during Periods of Transition

As you and your Mentee near the completion of your Mentoring Partnership, you may wonder whether your Mentee's takeaways from the Mentoring Relationship will smoothen his/her transition into future endeavours. There may still be loose ends that need to be tied up, or some fears about moving on.

We now encourage you and your Mentee to discuss about the transition from his/her current position to the post-mentoring goals. You may be in a position to help your Mentee prepare better for what lies ahead and thus reduce the anxieties that he/she may have about the changes that await them. Your advice could well help in realizing his/her full potential.

Nothing can replace experience!

11. Need for a Good Closure

Some Mentoring Partnerships end with the successful completion of learning goals; some do not for a number of reasons. Even unproductive or unsatisfactory Mentoring Relationships can benefit from a good closure. The key to a successful closure is being prepared with an exit strategy. A good exit strategy has five components:

- A learning conclusion (processing the learning that took place because of the relationship while working towards the achievement of learning goals)
- A process for integrating what was learned (a conversation focusing on how to apply the learning and take it to the next level)
- A meaningful way of celebrating success (planning a mutually satisfying way to celebrate the successful achievement of goals)
- A conversation focusing on redefining the relationship (talking about how the relationship is to continue, whether it moves from a '*Professional Mentoring Relationship*' to '*Col-league*', '*Friendship*', or ceases to exist entirely)

- Moving on (both partners let go and identify ways of keeping in touch, if appropriate and/or mutually desired)

12. Provide Regular Feedback

It is important to provide regular feedback on your mentoring experience and your mentoring relationship to the Mentor program facilitators. Please complete the Mentor Program survey(s) and feedback form(s) sent to you without failure. Feedback to the Mentor Program facilitators will allow them to address your necessities and thus serve you better, thereby ensuring an enjoyable mentoring experience. Constructive feedback to your Mentee is also important as it will help her or him learn more effectively and improve your Mentoring Relationship.