Cognition Education

Department for Education

Mentoring Framework for Practitioners in Further Education

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Introduction

The mentoring framework was developed with practitioners and leaders from the further education (FE) sector. It sets out a series of practices to enable high-quality, developmental mentoring and coaching for teachers and trainers. If you are a leader, mentor/coach or mentee/coachee or simply someone who is interested in mentoring, then this publication is for you.

Alongside the framework are four accompanying guides: one for leaders, one for mentors/coaches, metoring co-ordinators and one for mentees/coachees. These guides provide further information and ideas for how you can put the framework into practice. The aims of the mentoring framework and guides are to:

- establish a shared understanding of effective mentoring practice
- enhance the quality of mentoring for practitioners
- ensure that mentoring is supportive and nurturing
- help mentees and mentors to develop teaching, learning and assessment strategies that meet learners' needs.

Mentoring and coaching have the potential to be one of the most effective forms of professional development for teachers and trainers, including early career practitioners. However, in order for mentoring and coaching to reach their potential, it requires all those involved to undertake a series of practices – these are outlined in the following framework and accompanying guides.

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The mentoring approach

Definition of mentoring

There are many definitions of and approaches to mentoring; the mentoring framework and accompanying guides are focused on a process that involves:

> "teachers and trainers supporting colleagues on a one-to-one basis, over a sustained period, to bring about professional learning and development."

Whilst some people draw a clear distinction between mentoring and coaching, we use the term mentoring in a broad sense, which *includes* coaching[1]. We envisage that a trained and skilful mentor can adopt a wide range of techniques, including both mentoring and coaching activities, which they draw on in dynamic response to the individual needs of the mentee. So, the mentoring framework and accompanying guides are relevant to anyone involved with the mentoring or coaching of practitioners in FE organisations.[2]

We advocate developmental mentoring, which is:

- nurturing in nature
- rooted in collaboration and support
- adaptable to the individual needs of the mentee.

The mentoring framework and accompanying guides draw on a body of research literature that highlights the benefits of developmental mentoring for enabling professional learning and development, especially when adopted in the context of a broader learning culture. The research indicates this approach can have a positive impact on practitioners' wellbeing and career development. It also warns against using mentoring or coaching as a tool to manage, evaluate or assess performance. When used in this way, a stigma can become attached to mentoring. Mentees can be reluctant to speak openly with their mentor and in some cases it can lead to mentees feeling isolated, demotivated and wanting to leave the profession.

1 These definitions of mentoring are based on ideas presented in Hobson and Maxwell 2020
2 For these reasons, from here on in the term mentoring is used in its broadest sense, which includes coaching and other helping behaviours.

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A framework for developmental mentoring

There are lots of definitions and approaches to developmental mentoring. Here is a framework we consider a helpful summary. It was written by Professor Andrew Hobson and is based on his extensive research into mentoring for teachers. It is called the ONSIDE framework and is made up of six elements.[3] It suggests that effective mentoring is:

O	**OFF-LINE** (separated from line management and supervision) and non-hierarchical
N	**NON-JUDGMENTAL** and non-evaluative
S	**SUPPORTIVE** of mentees' psycho-social needs and wellbeing
I	**INDIVIDUALISED** – tailored to the specific and changing needs (emotional and developmental) of the mentee
D	**DEVELOPMENTAL** and growth-oriented – seeking to promote mentees' learnacy and to provide them with appropriate degrees of challenge
E	**EMPOWERING** – progressively non-directive to support mentees to become more autonomous and agentic

3 Hobson 2016

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The mentoring cycle

The Mentoring framework is structured around three broad stages:

1. establishing mentoring – setting up the mentoring relationships within the FE organisation
2. enabling developmental mentoring – ensuring that the mentoring that takes place is nurturing, collaborative and meets the needs of individual mentees
3. reviewing and enhancing mentoring – exploring how the mentoring can be developed so it is continually evolving and improving.

We envisage this as a cyclical process, whereby the final stage will feed into how future mentoring relationships are established.

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About the mentoring framework

The following framework was developed in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including practitioners from the FE sector. It is underpinned by published research, effective practice guides and lived experiences shared by current mentors, mentees, and leaders. The framework incorporates principles of developmental mentoring as outlined above and it aims to enhance the quality of mentoring taking place across the FE sector.

The enactment of high-quality, developmental mentoring has the potential to increase the quality of teaching and learning, raise levels of job satisfaction, and enhance practitioners' sense of wellbeing in your organisations. At the end of this document, you will find self-assessment exercises for leaders, mentors and mentees to help you apply the mentoring framework in your own local contexts.

LEADERS SHOULD USE THE FRAMEWORK AND ACCOMPANYING LEADER GUIDE TO:

- raise the status and recognition of the mentoring role
- establish rigorous mentor selection processes
- create an organisational culture that is conducive to mentoring and professional learning and development. This includes induction, training, education, development and support for mentors, and training for mentees to develop a mindset for mentoring
- set expectations and ensure accountability for mentoring throughout the organisation.

MENTORS SHOULD USE THE FRAMEWORK AND ACCOMPANYING MENTOR GUIDE TO:

- identify and further develop the skills needed to undertake their role effectively
- self-evaluate their practice and help identify areas for further improvement
- help promote the wellbeing of their mentees
- support mentees to become confident, autonomous practitioners.

MENTEES SHOULD USE THE FRAMEWORK AND ACCOMPANYING MENTEE GUIDE TO:

- understand what support they can expect from their mentor
- become confident, autonomous practitioners who continuously reflect on and challenge their practice
- develop a mindset for mentoring that maximises the impact of mentoring on their practice.

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Mentoring framework

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Establishing mentoring

Leaders	Mentors	Mentees
Establish a formal recruitment and selection process for mentors.	Avoid mentoring colleagues who you line manage or observe for quality assurance purposes.	Try to avoid being mentored by your line manager or someone who observes you for quality assurance purposes.
Employ a mentoring coordinator to oversee the programme, mentors and mentees.	Undertake a training course in developmental mentoring before or alongside starting the role.	Start to develop a ‘mentee mindset’ – which includes being open-minded, proactive and ready for change.
Ensure that all mentors and mentees are trained in developmental mentoring approaches to ensure they get the most out of the relationship.	Create safe, trusting and non-judgmental conditions for your mentoring relationships.	Consider what information might be helpful to share with your mentor, so they can effectively support you.
Ensure that mentoring is separated out from lines of management and other quality assurance processes.	Ensure you have access to a mentoring agreement form that can be personalised to meet the needs of each mentee.	Undertake training or preparation in how to be an effective mentee.
Ensure that mentors and mentees are allocated sufficient time to undertake the mentoring process in a full and meaningful way.	Start to build rapport and find out about your mentee’s needs before the mentoring officially begins by having a brief email or phone exchange and/or holding an initial ‘chemistry’ meeting.	Be ready to take a leading role in both the mentoring and your wider professional development.

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Enabling developmental mentoring

Leaders	Mentors	Mentees
Establish a wider learning culture across the organisation.	Adopt a mentee-centred approach (for example, encourage them to set the agenda) and tailor your mentoring techniques to support the needs and goals of each individual mentee.	Strive to be as open as possible with your mentor about your concerns, anxieties, strengths and goals.
Talk to colleagues about the benefits of developmental mentoring approaches.	Focus on adopting non-judgmental and non-evaluative mentoring techniques, such as asking open questions, co-enquiry, scaling, etc.	Set the agenda for your mentoring, do not depend on your mentor to always take the lead.
Be a role model – work with a mentor and promote the benefits of mentoring to colleagues across the organisation.	Undertake ongoing CPD for example, attending mentoring network events, advanced mentoring training programmes and/or mentoring supervision.	Explore a range of learning and development activities within the mentoring relationship (for example, collaborating with your mentor) and outside it (for example, attending external events).
Ensure that all mentors have access to ongoing professional development opportunities, for example, mentoring supervision, networks and training.	Regularly ask your mentee about their goals and needs and how you could adapt the mentoring to best support them.	Continue to suggest new ideas and approaches to develop both your pedagogic practice and the mentoring relationship.
Ensure that there is a diverse range of mentors available across the organisation, representative of the wider workforce.	Keep the content of mentoring meetings confidential – unless there are exceptional circumstances. Mentoring should not routinely inform performance reviews or other types of assessment/appraisal.	Be the mentee you would like to mentor, for example, be committed, reliable and open to new ways of thinking and doing.

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Reviewing and enhancing mentoring

Leaders	Mentors	Mentees
Ensure the mentoring programme is formally evaluated and that recommendations are implemented.	Ensure that you have a safe space to review how your mentoring practice is progressing by talking to a mentoring coordinator/supervisor or another mentor.	Tell your mentor what you found most helpful about the mentoring.
Speak directly to mentors and mentees to find out about the impact of mentoring on their practice.	Recommend potential mentors (perhaps some of your mentees) to the mentoring coordinator in your organisation.	Give feedback about your experiences to the mentoring coordinator at your organisation to inform future developments.
Discuss how the mentoring programme is progressing with stakeholders and review the relevant policies.	Give feedback and make recommendations for how to further enhance the mentoring programme in your organisation.	Consider becoming a mentor yourself – speak to your mentoring programme coordinator about potential opportunities.
Explore opportunities to link the mentoring programme to the organisation's strategic priorities, whilst ensuring it does not become a tool for managing performance.	Continue to identify new mentoring skills and techniques – there is always more to learn.	Contribute to establishing a wider learning culture by creating your own CPD plan for the future.
Speak to leaders from other organisations about their approaches to mentoring and establishing a wider learning culture.	Contribute to establishing a wider learning culture by creating your own CPD plan for how to enhance your mentoring practice further.	Talk to colleagues about your experiences and the potential benefits of mentoring.

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Next steps

Thank you for reading the mentoring framework for practitioners in the FE sector. We recommend you now complete the following next steps:

1. Complete the self-assessment exercise (see appendices below).
2. Download and discuss the mentoring framework and accompanying guides with colleagues.
3. Visit our **website** to find out about the current and forthcoming mentoring CPD for: Mentors, Mentees, Leaders and Mentoring Co-Ordinators.

Appendix 1

Self assessment for leaders and managers

Complete the following questionnaire to identify to what extent your mentoring provision is aligned with the mentoring framework and steps to develop it further. You may want to take a look at the accompanying guide for leaders before deciding your actions.

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	Task	Current score 1-5 (1: not at all – 5: to a great extent)	Actions to develop this further
Establishing mentoring	Write policy that enables practitioners from across the organisation to access high-quality mentoring that is nurturing and developmental.		
	Employ a mentoring coordinator to oversee the programme, mentors and mentees.		
	Ensure that all mentors and mentees are trained in developmental mentoring approaches to ensure they get the most out of the relationship.		
	Ensure that mentoring is separated out from lines of management and other quality assurance processes.		
	Ensure that mentors and mentees are allocated sufficient time to undertake the mentoring process in a full and meaningful way.		

	Task	Current score 1-5 (1: not at all – 5: to a great extent)	Actions to develop this further
Enabling developmental mentoring	Establish a wider learning culture across the organisation.		
	Talk to colleagues about the benefits of developmental mentoring approaches.		
	Be a role model – work with a mentor and promote the benefits of mentoring to colleagues across the organisation.		
	Ensure that all mentors have access to ongoing professional development opportunities, for example, mentoring supervision, networks and training.		
	Ensure that there is a diverse range of mentors available across the organisation, representative of the wider workforce.		

	Task	Current score 1-5 (1: not at all – 5: to a great extent)	Actions to develop this further
Reviewing and enhancing mentoring	Ensure the mentoring programme is formally evaluated and that recommendations are implemented.		
	Speak directly to mentors and mentees to find out about the impact of mentoring on their practice.		
	Discuss how the mentoring programme is progressing with stakeholders and review the relevant policies.		
	Explore opportunities to link the mentoring programme to the organisation's strategic priorities, whilst ensuring it does not become a tool for managing performance.		
	Speak to leaders from other organisations about their approaches to mentoring and establishing a wider learning culture.		

Appendix 2

Self assessment for mentors

Complete the following questionnaire to identify to what extent your mentoring is aligned with the mentoring framework and steps to develop it further. You may want to take a look at the accompanying guide for mentors before deciding your actions.

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	Task	Current score 1-5 (1: not at all – 5: to a great extent)	Actions to develop this further
Establishing mentoring	Avoid mentoring colleagues who you line manage or observe for quality assurance purposes.		
	Undertake a training course in developmental mentoring before or alongside starting the role.		
	Create safe, trusting and non-judgemental conditions for your mentoring relationships.		
	Ensure you have access to a mentoring agreement form which can be personalised to meet the needs of each mentee.		
	Start to build rapport and find out about your mentee's needs before the mentoring officially begins by having a brief email or phone exchange and/or holding an initial 'chemistry' meeting.		

	Task	Current score 1-5 (1: not at all – 5: to a great extent)	Actions to develop this further
Enabling developmental mentoring	Adopt a mentee-centred approach (e.g. encourage them to set the agenda) and tailor your mentoring techniques to support the needs and goals of each individual mentee.		
	Focus on adopting non-judgemental and non-evaluative mentoring techniques, such as asking open questions, co-enquiry, scaling etc		
	Engage with ongoing CPD about mentoring e.g. mentor networks, advanced training programmes, supervision and teaching/ training e.g. pedagogy and evidence-informed practice.		
	Regularly ask your mentee about their goals and needs and how you could adapt the mentoring to best support them		
	Keep the content of mentoring meetings confidential – unless there are exceptional circumstances. Mentoring should not routinely inform performance reviews or other types of assessment/appraisal.		

	Task	Current score 1-5 (1: not at all – 5: to a great extent)	Actions to develop this further
Reviewing and enhancing mentoring	Ensure that you have a safe space to review how your mentoring practice is progressing by talking to a mentoring coordinator/supervisor or another mentor.		
	Recommend potential mentors (perhaps some of your mentees) to the mentoring coordinator in your organisation.		
	Give feedback and make recommendations for how to enhance the mentoring programme in your organisation further.		
	Continue to identify new mentoring skills and techniques – there is always more to learn.		
	Contribute to establishing a wider learning culture by creating your own CPD plan for how to enhance your mentoring practice further.		

Appendix 3

Self assessment for mentees

Complete the following questionnaire to identify to what extent your thinking about mentoring is aligned with the mentoring framework and steps to develop it further. You may want to take a look at the accompanying guide for mentees before deciding your actions.

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	Task	Current score 1-5 (1: not at all – 5: to a great extent)	Actions to develop this further
Establishing mentoring	Try to avoid being mentored by your line manager or someone who observes you for quality assurance purposes.		
	Start to develop a 'mentee mindset' – which includes being open-minded, proactive and ready for change.		
	Consider what information might be helpful to share with your mentor, so they can effectively support you.		
	Undertake training or preparation in how to be an effective mentee.		
	Be ready to take a leading role in both the mentoring and your wider professional development.		

	Task	Current score 1-5 (1: not at all – 5: to a great extent)	Actions to develop this further
Enabling developmental mentoring	Strive to be as open as possible with your mentor about your concerns, anxieties, strengths and goals.		
	Set the agenda for your mentoring, do not depend on your mentor to always take the lead.		
	Explore a range of learning and development activities within the mentoring relationship (for example, collaborating with your mentor) and outside it (for example, attending external events)		
	Continue to suggest new ideas and approaches to develop both your pedagogic practice and the mentoring relationship.		
	Be the mentee you would like to mentor, for example, be committed, reliable and open to new ways of thinking and doing.		

	Task	Current score 1-5 (1: not at all – 5: to a great extent)	Actions to develop this further
Reviewing and enhancing mentoring	Tell your mentor about what you found most helpful about the mentoring.		
	Give feedback about your experiences to the mentoring coordinator at your organisation to inform future developments.		
	Consider becoming a mentor yourself – speak to your mentoring programme coordinator about potential opportunities.		
	Contribute to establishing a wider learning culture by creating your own CPD plan for the future.		
	Talk to colleagues about your experiences and the potential benefits of mentoring.		

List of references

Here is a list of key research and resources that we drew on when developing the framework and guides. Some contain useful literature reviews and references to wider sources; if you are interested in finding out more about effective mentoring for teachers and trainers, then the following are a useful starting point.

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