

Agents of Change

Women’s Community Leadership Programme

Mentor Handbook

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Overview

The Agents of Change Mentoring Scheme aims to build on the knowledge and skills the mentees will develop through the Agents of Change Women’s Community Leadership Programme.

Your role as a mentor is a combination of facilitating the mentee’s own problem solving, building her self-confidence, helping her identify new resources, providing encouragement,

and primarily listening. The mentoring relationship entails establishing a partnership of mutual respect based on working together with the mentee to define and achieve common objectives.

It is important to understand that the Agents of Change mentoring relationship is a learning process for both mentors and mentees. Whilst some mentors might have had prior experience with mentoring, those who have not are still equally as valuable and bring their own unique experiences to the mentoring relationship. Both mentors and mentees will come from different cultural, professional and economic backgrounds, with experiences widely varying.

Matchmaking and initial introductions

Mentors will be asked to complete an application form and provide information on their areas of expertise. Similarly, mentees will be asked to complete an application form to identify their key areas of interest, mentor preferences (i.e. gender, management level), and what they hope to achieve from the mentoring relationship. A member of the Agents of Change team will then match mentors and mentees based on the information provided.

After the matchmaking process has been completed, mentors and mentees will be introduced via email and will be responsible for setting up an introductory meeting where the mentor and mentee will identify mutual expectations upfront (see Appendix A). It is important to recognise that the mentor/mentee agreement may evolve over time as the mentoring relationship builds and circumstances change.

Requirements (time commitments, progress updates etc.)

We only have a few requirements, which we take very seriously in order to maintain the quality of the mentoring experience. We **require** that all mentors:

- Complete and maintain your mentor/mentee agreement (see Appendix A)
- When agreeing to participate in the Agents of Change mentoring scheme, we require both mentors and mentees to commit to **a minimum of four sessions** (and a maximum of six). We strongly recommend that sessions take place monthly, and for a duration of one hour. We would like these sessions to be arranged directly between the mentor and the mentee, and can be in the form of face-to-face meetings or over the phone, depending on what has been agreed.
- With your mentee, keep a written record or diary of your time together to track decisions and progress. The approach of keeping a record has been shown to be an effective tool for facilitating communication, commitment, and engagement in mentoring relationships. We have provided a mentoring log template below (see Appendix B), however you are welcome to use your own template or method.

Meeting places

Mentoring sessions can take place face-to-face or over the phone, depending on what has been mutually agreed between the mentor and the mentee, and the current government [COVID19 Restrictions](#).

However, if you agree on face-to-face meetings then we strongly advise that you **do not** meet in each other's homes in order to maintain a professional relationship. We recommend that you meet in public spaces, such as cafes, museums, libraries and community centres. You will want to find a meeting place that works for both of you, where you can have a private conversation, charges are minimal, and both of you can easily access in terms of time and money.

When you are agreeing to the terms of your mentoring relationship with your mentee (see Appendix A), you should cover convenient times for sessions, preferred location and meeting places, and methods of communication.

Boundaries

It is important for mentors and mentees to have an equal say in how the relationship will work best. Mentors should openly express their expectations and commitments. You both need to be honest about the time that you are willing to give and what you would like to gain from the relationship.

Mentors are **NOT** responsible for the mentee's mental health and wellbeing. If in any doubt, please contact the Agents of Change team.

Maintaining confidentiality is critical in the mentor-mentee relationship. Please do not ask your mentee to disclose her personal history or details that she does not freely volunteer and initiate. Her background, as well as your own, is personal and neither of you should share details that you do not wish to disclose.

Tools, techniques and strategies for effective mentoring

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a widely used development tool that has proved to have a beneficial impact on effectiveness, confidence and career development. At the heart of mentoring is a relationship based on trust and mutual respect where one individual uses their expertise and knowledge to support the development of another individual. Through one-to-one confidential conversations the mentee is encouraged and challenged to achieve their potential and aspirations. It can be useful at all stages of a career.

Mentoring provides:

- a safe space to explore options and plan future action
- a sounding board

- a place to be challenged
- a source of advice and guidance
- new perspectives

Mentoring is not:

- a one-way street
- coaching or training
- therapy or counselling

Benefits for the mentee include:	Benefits for the mentor include:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased self-awareness, motivation and confidence • Greater clarity of purpose and productivity • Increased organisational knowledge and know-how • Improved skills • Focus and preparation for the future and career aspirations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New perspectives • Keeping in touch with the realities and challenges facing an individual's development • Development of inter-personal skills • Personal satisfaction

What do effective mentors do?

- Build rapport
- Listen and accurately ascertain meaning
- Ask questions and encourage others to explore issues
- Structure conversations
- Encourage and allow the mentee to take the initiative
- Provide feedback that is both challenging and empathic
- Offer knowledge and advice with care
- Offer fresh perspectives
- Maintain professional boundaries and confidentiality
- Commit sufficient time and mental energy to the mentoring relationship
- Good mentors speak for less than 20% of the time, address issues raised by the mentee, and are expected to engage in quality dialogue

What do effective mentees do?

- Take responsibility for their own learning
- Actively shape the mentoring conversations
- Accept challenge
- Be open and honest about themselves
- Trust in the mentor
- Be willing to take risks
- Have realistic expectations that are shared and agreed with the mentor

Key areas of focus for mentors



Key skills for the mentor

<p>Active listening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying attention to the words being said, the non-verbal cues and the context, in order to accurately understand their meaning
<p>Exploratory questioning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposeful questions that help the talker achieve their purpose
<p>Challenging</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An invitation to examine or re-examine behaviour, perspective or thinking

Stages of mentoring and key tasks

Stages	Beginning	Middle	End
Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop rapport • Clarify mutual expectations • Establish appropriate boundaries • Initial exploration of mentee's goals/aspirations for mentoring • Talk about the ending – what success might look like • Agree logistics around meetings and communication • Review early sessions to establish the mentoring relationship is working for both parties • Sign mentor/mentee agreement together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively listen • Ask exploratory questions • Challenge appropriately • Be empathetic • Respect the mentee's agenda • Provide shape and purpose in the conversations • Have a genuine desire to support the mentee • Not superimpose own career trajectory or life path on the other person • Be in touch with current realities for more junior staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aware when the mentoring relationship has run its course • Initiate proactive conversations to plan for the ending • Review the original objectives • Review the learning and progress • Celebrate achievements and learning • Agree about future contact/nature of the relationship

Reviewing mentoring sessions – example questions

From the very first moment the mentor and mentee meet it is essential to recognise that the matchmaking remains tentative for the first one or two sessions, and that only after one or two sessions will both parties know if the relationship will work. At the end of the first session and subsequent ones, a short mutual review can be useful. Some example questions are provided below:

- Do we think we have established a good enough relationship for mentoring to work? What could we do to improve/strengthen it?
- Do you find my approach works for you? Is the amount of challenging right for you?
- Do you think I have the right balance of talking and listening?
- Do you want us to continue with the mentoring? If you think someone else may be more helpful at this stage of your career or life, then let's discuss this.

Using the GROW² model of questioning

A purposeful mentoring conversation usually has three parts that lead towards action:

1. Exploring the current situation
2. Exploring the desired situation
3. Planning how to get there

Goals / Reality / Options/ Way forward

The **GROW** model provides a structure and set of questions to help both mentors and mentees move through each session. These questions can be adapted to the specific situation and it often helps to keep a written record of the conversation (see Appendix B for a mentoring log template example).

Begin with simple questions

- How was your day?
- How has your week/month been?

Goals

Set goals, write them down, and establish what the person wants out of the session.

- What do you want to achieve out of this coaching or mentoring session / relationship?
- What are the goals you want to achieve?
- If you were to leave today feeling very good, what would we have done?

Reality

To deepen understanding of the current situation let your mentee talk about her current situation and invite self-assessment.

- Describe the current situation.
- Tell me about...
- What is currently happening?
- What else is going on / do you notice?
- What's your view of the issue / situation?
- What impact is the situation having on you and others?
- What are your concerns?
- Of the issues, you have described which is the most important to discuss in more depth?
- Which of these do you have most energy to tackle?

Options

Brainstorm options. Ask - don't tell. Empower, ensure choice, and explore how she may move towards her goal whilst reflecting on what has worked in the past.

- What have you tried already?
- What is working?
- What is helping you to achieve your goal?
- What is hindering you?
- Where are you stuck?
- What could you do next?
- What else could you do?
- What would happen if you did nothing?
- What have you tried already?
- What options have you considered?
- What has worked for you before?
- I notice that one of your strengths...
- I notice that one of thing that stops you from acting is...
- Another way of looking at this is...
- Here's a suggestion...

Choose options

- What feels like a choice for you?
- Which sounds most feasible?
- What are the plusses and minuses of this course of action?
- What would be the first step?
- How would you put this into practice?
- Who will support you?
- What would you like to happen next?

Way forward

Identify specific steps and any obstacles, write an action plan, and review learning.

- Where does this action fit in with your personal priorities now?
- What steps do you need to take to achieve your goal?
- What obstacles do you expect? How will you overcome them?
- How committed are you to this plan?
- What do you want to have done for when we next meet?
- Where are you now?
- What would you like to be same / different in the future?
- Is there any other information you need?
- What else has this got you thinking about?
- How else can you use this?

Bring the mentor-mentee relationship to an end

At the heart of mentoring is the relationship between the mentee and mentor. As is the case with all relationships, the mentoring relationship is dynamic – it changes over time. A mentoring relationship that works well for someone at a certain stage of their career or life might not work at another stage. Sometimes the chemistry just isn't there. Some reasons for ending the mentoring relationship could include:

- 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 the best use of the mentor's expertise or time
- The mentor is telling the mentee what to do and not listening to their issues

Please inform a member of the Agents of Change team if you need to cancel the mentoring relationship. Please try to be open with the mentee when making this decision, however we also recognise that sometimes this isn't possible.

Contact the team at agentsofchange@imperial.ac.uk

Appendix A – Mentor/Mentee Agreement

Defining the mentoring relationship

The mentee understands that:

- Mentoring is an ongoing, interactive, professional relationship designed to help you achieve your own desired results within your career and life plans.
- Mentoring is not psychotherapy, counselling, psychology, therapy or any other mental health service.
- Mentors are not expected to solve all the mentees issues, rather they support mentees to come up with solutions on their own to issues that may arise.
- Mentoring is not training or coaching.

The mentor agrees to:

- Provide the mentee with professional mentoring advice to facilitate the achievement of the mentee's goals through a series of regular meetings or conversations.
- Keep all information provided by the mentee in complete confidence.
- Arrive at each session on time, regardless if over the phone or face-to-face.
- Provide 24-hour notice in advance if they need to reschedule or cancel a session.

The mentee agrees to:

- Arrive at each session on time, regardless if over the phone or face-to-face.
- Provide 24-hour notice in advance if they need to reschedule or cancel a session.
- Discuss with the mentor at the start of the mentoring relationship what they wish to achieve in the sessions.
- Do your best to work on any steps agreed upon between each session.
- Take responsibility for your own choices and decisions during mentoring.
- Let your mentor know if the mentoring is not working as desired and what could be improved for the mentoring to be effective.
- Work with your mentor to resolve any issues that may arise.

Termination of the mentoring relationship

The mentor or mentee will inform the Agents of Change team, if for any reason, you need to cancel the mentoring relationship and would benefit more from working with someone else. Please be open with one another in making this decision – everyone is different and sometimes relationships don't work out.

Contract details

	Mentor	Mentee
Name:		
Email:		
Phone:		

Commencement date:	
Mentoring period:	
Frequency of sessions:	
Duration of sessions: *1 hour monthly sessions recommended	
Mutually convenient times to meet:	
Preferred locations and meeting places:	
Method of communication:	
Any other details agreed between the mentor and mentee:	

Appendix B – Mentoring Log Template

Date	Reflection	Learning/action