

A black and white photograph of a man and a woman looking at a document together. The man is on the left, leaning over the table, and the woman is on the right, looking at the document. They are both focused on the paper. The background is blurred, showing other people in a similar setting. A network diagram with dots and lines is overlaid on the image.

The Mentoring Partnership

A HOW-TO GUIDE

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY



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What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a learning and development partnership. It can be as little as the right words of encouragement from the right person at the right time to a structured goal-oriented mentoring relationship.

You might seek a mentor to provide guidance with a specific challenge or for more generalised career-related advice. It's important to have clear questions in mind so you can choose the right type of mentor, but you don't have to have it all mapped out - that's what your mentor can help with.



Looking for advice?

Seek support to advance your career from a mentor with experience and valuable insights.

Willing to offer advice?

Share your experiences, inside knowledge, and job insights with a mentee looking for career support.



What are the benefits of mentoring?

Whether you are a mentor or a mentee, mentoring offers a great opportunity for personal and professional growth.

By being **a mentee**, you will:

- Extend your professional network in support of your career goals.
- Stay ahead of the curve by accessing valuable advice and insights.
- Learn from your fellow alumni, industry professionals and leaders.
- Gain access to invaluable insights within your industry.
- Enhance your future success and career development, unlocking opportunities, growth and community.
- Ask questions you've always wanted to know the answers to.

By being **a mentor**, you will:

- Reconnect with your University to support students and alumni.
- Gain new professional and personal development skills as you mentor.
- Experience satisfaction in sharing your knowledge and expertise.
- Extend your network by building meaningful professional relationships.
- Learn about latest trends from students and new graduates.
- Re-energise your career.

How long does the mentoring partnership have to last?

The length of the mentoring relationship should be guided by your goals.

A **once-off** informational interview could be enough. This is an informal conversation that could usually last for 30 minutes with someone working in a career field or organisation that interests you. Informational interviews are not job interviews but aim at giving you an inside look at an organisation or a job function you may want to pursue in the future.



A **long-term** mentoring partnership could be an alternative option depending on your goals. Through a prolonged two-way transfer of knowledge and exchange of experiences, you could establish a deeper mutual understanding and trust with your mentor to achieve advanced outcomes.



How are great mentoring partnerships formed?

In this section we present a framework to building successful mentoring relationships and achieving the ultimate mentoring experience.

The steps of this framework can be mapped out over the days or weeks of the mentoring relationship depending on its lengths.

STEP 1 Finding your mentor

Before you look for a mentor, think about your “Why?”. Some good points of reflection might be:

- What are you struggling with right now?
- What are some of your obstacles to achieving that next step?
- What are you most curious about when you think about success?

We have made it easy for students and alumni to connect via the Western’s alumni account on LinkedIn. If you haven’t connected with us yet, start here.

[LinkedIn.com/in/westsydualumni](https://www.linkedin.com/in/westsydualumni)

Through this LinkedIn account, our alumni can also join any of the relevant Alumni Affinity Groups based on shared interests, geographic location, or professional backgrounds (for example: if you reside in India, you can join the India Alumni Affinity Group that brings together India-based alumni). This is an additional way of connecting with professionals for a chance to identify a mentor in support of your career journey.

But do not let this limit you, as LinkedIn is full of potential mentors. You may also find your mentors through the professional network you developed as a student, associations or clubs, your workplace, attending events and other professional environments.

STEP 2 Connecting with your mentor

Don't be afraid to approach a potential mentor, in most cases if the person can offer the help, they will. First impressions count. When you identify a person you would like as a mentor, before making contact, do some research on that person and read their profile carefully to determine if they are a good match for you.

Once you are ready to connect with your mentor, prepare a clear introductory message which aims to provide enough detail for the person to decide if they would like to help. In return, a potential mentor can also look at your LinkedIn profile or search for you online to learn more about you and if they are suitable to support your journey. This is why it's important to keep your education and professional details updated.

Sample Introductory message

Dear [Mentor's name], it's a pleasure connecting with you.

I am reaching out to see if you would be interested in being my mentor. As an aspiring [your desired role or profession], I am eager to grow both personally and professionally, and I believe your guidance could be invaluable in shaping my path forward. I understand your time is valuable and I am committed to investing my time and effort.

Looking forward to your response and the possibility of embarking on this mentorship journey together.

Thank you, [Your name]

STEP 3 Setting goals for the partnership

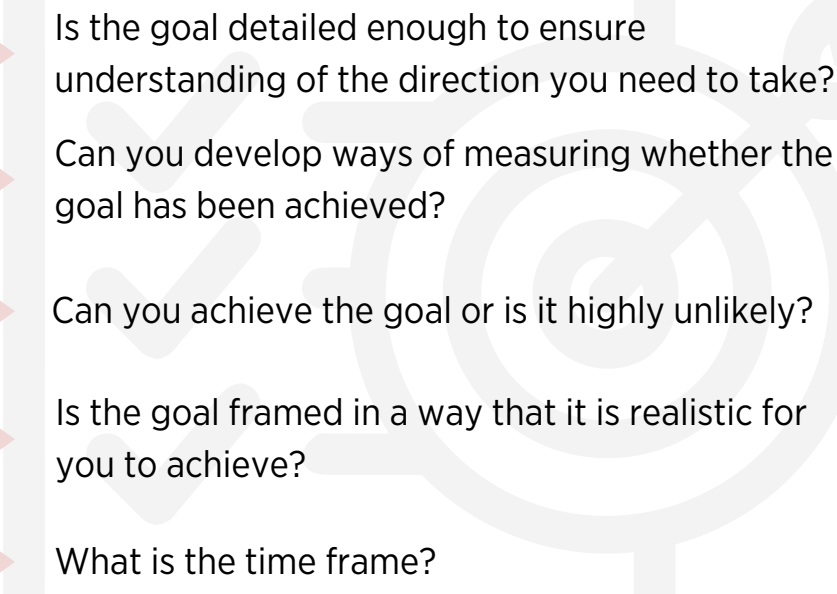
Building a good foundation is important. After voluntarily entering the relationship and getting to know each other, it is advisable to set a clear plan together for an ultimate experience.

The following are three main starting points to consider for your relationship:

- Use your SMART goals to frame the conversation.
- Explain why you are asking support and what your mentor can offer.
- Agree on a mentoring plan: a set timeline (i.e. start and end date for the mentoring relationship), frequency of arranged meetings, and communication channels.

SMART goal setting brings structure and tractability into your desired objectives, with clear milestones and an estimation of the goal's attainability.

What do SMART goals look like?



Specific	Is the goal detailed enough to ensure understanding of the direction you need to take?
Measurable	Can you develop ways of measuring whether the goal has been achieved?
Achievable	Can you achieve the goal or is it highly unlikely?
Realistic	Is the goal framed in a way that it is realistic for you to achieve?
Timely	What is the time frame?

Remember, not all relationships are successful, and it could be due to a variety of factors. Either party may dissolve the relationship earlier if they feel it is not working for them, given that they discuss the matter together, as part of mutual learning.

STEP 4 Starting the mentoring conversations

Start off by learning more about each other through sharing your career stories.

Some conversation suggestions might be:

- What was the career path that led you to your current position?
- How do you best handle career obstacles?
- What parts of your job do you enjoy the most/least?
- What skills are needed in your profession?
- What are your short- and long-term career goals?
- Can you provide more insights about finding a job at your company?
- How can I stand out from other job applicants?
- How does a regular day in your job look like?
- What learning opportunities would you recommend to grow in this field?
- What tips can you give for success in this industry?

As a mentee, don't be afraid of asking questions and ensure that through this, your SMART goals are made clear and that your mentor is providing the needed expertise/knowledge to make it successful.

A mentor is encouraged to address the challenges by discussing the mentee's strengths and weaknesses and consider methods for strengthening weaknesses and effectively using their strengths.

A mentor will evoke, promote, and assist to stimulate and articulate discussions, however, they are not expected to solve all the mentees problems. There is a shared responsibility on both the mentor and mentee to contribute and guide the discussions.

STEP 5 Reflecting on your goals

All mentoring relationships have a lifecycle, so it is important to prepare and reflect on the progress of the mentoring partnership.

Outlining the lessons learned, actions taken and what other activities and goals they can take to gain professional experience is important. Some good points of reflection might be:

- What have I learned?
- What do I need to learn more about moving forward?

The mentee is encouraged to be curious and inquisitive to gain the full benefits the relationship has to offer. The mentor should also take part in reflecting on what was achieved through this mentoring partnership.

STEP 6 Closing the loop

The mentor and mentee are encouraged to provide constructive feedback throughout the relationship or towards the end of their mentoring partnership as necessary. They both share responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship when it has achieved its purpose to avoid creating dependency.

As the time comes to close the loop, this does not mean that the newly found partnership must completely end. A mentor can provide further networking opportunities to a mentee as relevant, which makes it worth exploring if there is further potential.



What are key responsibilities for the relationship?

COMMUNICATION

Mentor: Take the lead and ensure the relationship stays on track.

Mentee: Communicate with your mentor frequently and respond to any communications promptly.

SETTING EXPECTATIONS

Mentor: Set expectations and maintain professional boundaries throughout the relationship with your mentee .

Mentee: Respect the professional nature of the relationship and focus on the agreed goals.

PARTICIPATION

Mentor: Help your mentee to identify and set their personal and professional development goals.

Mentee: Be perceptive and accepting of feedback.

HONESTY

Mentor and mentee: Inform your mentor/mentee of things that limits the ability to respond to communications.

RESPECT

Mentor and mentee: Respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring they do not impose beyond what is reasonable.

CONFIDENTIALITY / TRUST

Mentor and mentee: Mentoring is a confidential activity in which both parties have a duty of care to be open and truthful towards each other.

For more information, please contact:

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