

# **UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA FACULTY & LIBRARIAN MENTORSHIP HANDBOOK**



**University  
of Victoria**

## INTRODUCTION

Mentoring can be a powerful means of enhancing the professional well-being of faculty members. It can aid in understanding and advancing organizational culture, provide access to formal and informal networks of communication, and offer professional engagement to faculty and librarian members at any career stage. Use of mentoring is often seen as one of the common characteristics of a successful faculty career. Demonstrated benefits to mentees include development of skills, greater career advancement opportunities, and increased access to advice, encouragement, and feedback.

The structure of mentoring relationships is determined by the goals of mentees. The most successful and satisfying relationships for both parties involved are those that establish clear objectives and meet regularly. Given the broad range of possible mentoring activities, it is essential that mentees articulate their development needs in order to ensure an effective mentoring relationship.

Mentoring can take a variety of forms including formal and informal practices. Mentees should consider identifying informal mentors both inside and outside of their faculty and department. A variety of mentors can give a wider scope of informed advice and enable the discovery of new resources, support, opportunities and friendships that may lie outside of a mentee's home department. Peer mentorship is an important part the support system and can help build resilience for handling new and difficult situations.

## BENEFITS OF MENTORING

### FOR THE MENTOR:

- Personal fulfillment from assisting in the development of a colleague
- Feedback about their own teaching/scholarship
- Provide a way to share ideas, try new skills and take risks
- Renewed enthusiasm for their role as 'an expert'
- A mentee's success can bring recognition to the mentor

### FOR THE MENTEE:

- Access to constructive and informal feedback
- Advice on balancing role responsibilities and personal requirements
- Gaining practical knowledge about the department/ school/ university
- Better understanding the norms of the discipline
- Access to advice on career progression standards and opportunities
- Expansion of personal networks
- Support and encouragement through transition to the university or a new role
- Access to a sound board for testing ideas and plans

## MENTORING PROCESSES

### CREATING AN AGREEMENT:

This may be formal (written) or informal (discussed at outset). It may be useful for a mentor and mentee to consider making a mentoring agreement that defines the broad parameters of the relationship. Such agreements will vary. Without an agreement in place around the minimum schedule of meetings mentoring relationships tend to wane over time. Whether an agreement is oral or written, the following things should be considered:

- Short-term and long-term objectives for the relationship
- Preliminary development goals for the mentee
- Expectations that both parties have for the relationship
- Tentative frequency/schedule for meetings
- The procedure for handling informal contacts between formal sessions
- Agreement on confidentiality

### DEALING WITH PROBLEMS:

Many mentoring difficulties can be avoided with a clear understanding of the roles, goals and parameters for the relationship. While the mentoring relationship does not necessarily require personal friendship, it is important that both the mentor and the mentee are able to communicate openly and effectively and have some degree of mutual interest. In cases of changing commitments, incompatibility or where the relationship is not mutually fulfilling, action should be taken by the mentee to find alternate mentorship opportunities. The Chair and Dean should offer assistance in this regard.

### INFORMAL MENTORSHIP:

Mentees are encouraged to find mentors outside of their formal mentorship pairing to supplement resources and experiences. Informal mentors can provide advice and networking opportunities that broaden the mentees scope of understanding of university structures and processes as well as to increase networks and support systems. Informal mentorship can be instigated by a mentee through a conversation with a potential mentor. Identify in advance what specific types of guidance is needed and determine which mentors with a skill set suitable to meeting the need. Consider not only their areas of expertise, but also whether they will work well with the mentee in terms of temperament. Asking for advice or a regular coffee meeting is a great way to establish this relationship.

### PEER MENTORSHIP:

Mentorship can be a reciprocal relationship between individuals who are at the same level. Peer mentorship can be an incredibly valuable experience since the individuals may be going through the same experiences, have similar challenges, and be asking the same questions. Working through problems and issues together can help find creative solutions or provide a support. If the peer mentees are junior, it is advisable to also make a more senior mentor accessible.

### GROUP MENTORSHIP:

Mentorship groups are another opportunity to meet and discuss upcoming opportunities or broaden networks. Mentorship groups offer the advantage of multiple perspectives, variant expertise and a holistic approach to the requirements of the mentee's role. Commitment is required to attendance at group meetings.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### ROLE OF THE MENTOR:

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- **ACT AS A ROLE MODEL**  
Demonstrate the behaviours that enable success in the role.
- **BE AN ADVOCATE**  
Put your mentee in touch with other potential mentoring partners, networks or opportunities.
- **LISTEN ACTIVELY**  
Allow the mentee to lead the process, giving them time and space to ask their questions and convey their desired outcomes.
- **BE A SOUNDING BOARD**  
Encourage your mentee to make their own decisions. Mentors provide a place where mentees can share ideas and try out solutions. Remember, advice is not always needed or desired.
- **PROVIDE COACHING AND GUIDANCE**  
Give candid, tactful, and constructive feedback. To advise effectively, understand the qualities, skills and experience of their mentee. Provide suggestions when asked and ensure the mentee is advised of any pitfalls
- **ASSIST WITH SKILL DEVELOPMENT**  
Assist with practice for important meetings and/or invite the mentee to attend development opportunities to share good practices.
- **CREATE A SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**  
Assure their mentees of confidentiality in all communications.
- **UNDERSTAND THE MENTEE'S OBJECTIVES**  
Ask questions to ensure you understand what mentees hope to achieve.
- **ENCOURAGE AND INSPIRE**  
Mentors are selected because they are successful and admired. Their role is to encourage and support their mentees to achieve.

### ROLE OF THE MENTEE:

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- **GUIDE THE RELATIONSHIP**  
Take responsibility for working to build a rapport with the mentor(s) and ensure the relationship is meeting your needs.
- **BE CLEAR ABOUT OBJECTIVES (SEE APPENDIX A)**

Consider what is wanted from the match and communicate these objectives to the mentor(s), recognizing that these may change over time.

- **TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES AND NETWORKS**

Mentors may be able to introduce their mentee to others in related fields of study or provide opportunities for social and professional engagement in a variety of communities. Ask for this support.

- **ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN DEVELOPMENT**

Mentees need to make their own decisions. Mentors can, if requested, provide advice and feedback, but Mentees are responsible for their careers.

- **SEEK INFORMATION**

Come to meetings prepared with questions, so that meeting times are focused and useful. It is good to give your mentor advance notice of a discussion topic so that they can have space to consider their advice.

- **BE OPEN TO FEEDBACK**

Be willing to consider what the mentor(s) have to say with an open mind. Sometimes the feedback is surprising or emotionally triggering. Be prepared to give due consideration to the advice and acknowledge when it rings true.

## APPENDIX A: POTENTIAL DISCUSSION TOPICS

### RESEARCH

- What kind of publications are considered first-tier in the department? What are the standards for career progression?
- Feedback on the writing of research articles and conference papers and appropriate venues for publication.
- Opportunities for participation in departmental and/or interdisciplinary research activities, such as informal discussions about writing projects, colloquia for ideas in progress, and visiting scholar presentations.
- Opportunities to be introduced to departmental and/or interdisciplinary research groups or faculty researching in related areas to provide an avenue for co-authored papers and co-authored/collaborative grant-writing or research projects.
- Identify on-campus and external resources for research, such as grant proposal writing workshops, and information sources for research grants.

## TEACHING

- Visiting each other's classrooms and providing constructive feedback.
- Connecting with the Learning, Teaching, Support and Innovation (LTSI) Centre for workshops, teaching strategies, and creating a teaching dossier.
- Key student issues such as advising, directed studies and working with and supervising graduate students.
- How to deal with student issues (academic performance, academic integrity, non-academic misconduct, personal distress); and services and resources available to support students such as counseling, health services, accommodation services, Equity and Human Rights office; multi-faith chapel, and many others.
- Fostering opportunities to talk about teaching and learning among the other colleagues in your department.

## SERVICE/OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

- What kinds and amounts of service and/or community engagement are expected?
- Advice on selecting committees that will support the mentee's research and teaching agenda, opportunities to network or better understand the wider university, or to fulfill and interest of the mentee.
- Cultural norms for the ways in which a colleague is expected to engage in collegial endeavours within the department.

## PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE (for Librarians)

- Guidance on role expectations and best practice
- Advice on preparing and presenting career progression files
- Opportunities for participation in skill and experience development
- Cultural norms for the ways in which a colleague is expected to engage in collegial endeavours within the library

## ADMINISTRATION

- Guidance on the Collective Agreement provisions outlining rights and obligations of faculty and librarians