

# **A HANDBOOK FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES**

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**IOWA**

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# INTRODUCTION

At the University of Iowa, we know that mentoring matters. For faculty, staff, and students, building intentional connections is a top priority. As a matter of fact, based on what new undergraduate students tell us through their Excelling@Iowa transition survey their first semester, we know that creating connections with peers, faculty, and staff is one of the primary goals that many students hope to accomplish during their time as a Hawkeye. We also know through the personal stories of faculty, staff, and students on campus that mentoring relationships established at Iowa have a profound impact on both the mentor and the mentee.

Mentoring is intentionally focused on the growth and development of an individual. Mentoring comes in various formats, including formal mentoring programs and informal mentoring relationships, and encompasses broad forms of support including professional, career, and emotional support. Mentoring can last days, weeks, semesters, or even years depending on the desired outcomes and experiences of those involved.

Mentors can be peers/colleagues, faculty, staff, or other community members who are usually more experienced in some skill or facet of life. Relationships are formulated to impart some of these skills or knowledge upon a mentee or mentees. Additionally, mentorship relationships are personal, reciprocal relationships; both mentor and mentee learn from each other, finding success and fulfillment in their partnership.

An effective mentoring relationship is one in which the mentee feels holistically supported by their mentor as they grow towards achieving their goals. Honest and regular communication between mentor and mentee allows for trust-filled conversations surrounding expectations, goal-setting, evaluations, and more to flourish organically. Whether the relationship lasts for one day or an entire lifetime, it is a springboard towards the future for both mentor and mentee, as they learn from, and grow with, each other.

You can make use of the resources in this handbook to define what mentoring looks like for you as you navigate your own mentoring relationships.

**FOR MENTEES**

# REFLECTION FOR MENTEES\*

Before engaging with a mentor, use this worksheet to think about what you would like to gain from your mentoring relationship and if this person is the right fit to be your mentor. By clarifying your own expectations, you will be able to have more productive discussions about your needs and goals with your mentor. This worksheet is a jumping off point, so keep thinking about questions you find important and add additional items as needed.

## *The reasons I want a mentor are to:*

- \_\_\_ Receive encouragement and support
- \_\_\_ Increase my confidence when dealing with professionals
- \_\_\_ Challenge myself to achieve new goals and explore alternatives I may not have considered
- \_\_\_ Gain a realistic perspective of the workplace
- \_\_\_ Get advice on how to balance work and other responsibilities and set priorities
- \_\_\_ Receive affirmation or support in regards to my discipline or career path
- \_\_\_ Gain knowledge of “dos and don’ts”
- \_\_\_ Learn how to operate in a network of talented peers
- \_\_\_ Get critical feedback on my work and progress as I move through a project
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

## *I hope my mentor and I will:*

- \_\_\_ Tour my mentor’s workplace/explore various teaching or work sites
- \_\_\_ Go to formal mentoring events together
- \_\_\_ Meet over coffee, lunch, or dinner
- \_\_\_ Go to educational/professional development events such as lectures, conferences, or talks
- \_\_\_ Go to local, regional, and national professional meetings together
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

→ **MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU**

\*Adapted from University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

***I hope my mentor and I will discuss:***

- \_\_\_ Academic subjects that will benefit my future career
- \_\_\_ Academic or professional projects relevant to my continued growth
- \_\_\_ Career options and job preparation
- \_\_\_ The realities of the department, program, or career I am interested in
- \_\_\_ My mentor's work
- \_\_\_ How to network/be interviewed
- \_\_\_ Writing resumes, CVs, cover letters, and/or personal statements
- \_\_\_ Potential connections that would benefit my future scholarship or career
- \_\_\_ How to manage work and family life
- \_\_\_ Personal dreams and life circumstances
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

***The things I feel are off limits in my mentoring relationship include:***

- \_\_\_ Disclosing our conversations to others
- \_\_\_ Meeting in non-public places
- \_\_\_ Sharing intimate aspects of our lives
- \_\_\_ Meeting behind closed doors
- \_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

The amount of time that I can spend with my mentor is likely to be, on average (circle one):

1 2 3 4 hours each week / every other week / per month

Other Time \_\_\_\_\_

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\*Adapted from University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

# MENTEE PERSONAL SWOT EVALUATION\*

Before you begin a new mentoring relationship, take a step back and ask yourself honestly where you are and how you are doing right now. Thinking deeply about the present will help you better envision your plan for the future. You can share the information you gain from this simple SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) reflection with your mentor during your first meeting as you start to plan goals and develop strategies to maximize your mentoring experience.

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What are my top three strengths – three things I feel good about and am proud of?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are three weaknesses or areas in which I could improve – three things I most want to work on or improve about myself?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the top three opportunities available to me at this moment – things I could do, act on or take advantage of that would help me develop and reach my potential?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the top three threats I'm facing right now – well-defined obstacles in the world that could keep me from achieving my dreams?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the three most important things I can do over the next three to six months to build on my strengths and overcome my challenges?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

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\*Adapted from University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

# CONTACTING POTENTIAL MENTORS\*

While each request you send will be personalized to the specific mentor you would like to speak with, keep these basic components in mind while crafting your email. Additionally, you may not want to immediately request mentoring from someone you are contacting for the first time - requesting an initial meeting to determine if there is a potential mentoring fit, may garner more positive results and higher response rates. Remember to keep your entire message succinct.

## 1. Introduce Yourself

If you are reaching out to someone who you have not spoken to before, go for an introduction, along with any commonalities, specific interests, or discussion points. Try to make a quick connection to spark their interest in meeting with you. If you were referred to your potential mentor by a peer, professor, staff member, or another individual in your network, mention their name and referral here.

## 2. Clearly Describe Your Goals

This is where your preparation using the [Personal SWOT Analysis](#) and [Pre-Mentoring Reflection for Mentees](#) will come in handy. These documents will help you articulate exactly what you are seeking from a mentor and for what purpose. Examples for what you are looking for from a mentoring relationship include navigating departmental politics, gaining lab experience, completing a thesis, career transition advice, assistance with graduate school applications, and more.

## 3. Demonstrate Your Research

Briefly mention why you believe your potential mentor would be a good fit for the relationship; perhaps they have been in your department longer or their research area aligns with your own. The point of this short section is to demonstrate that you have thought in detail about who you would like your mentor to be, and are not simply selecting them randomly.

## 4. Display Your Motivation

Make it clear to your potential mentor that you're ready to commit the time, energy, and effort needed to properly invest in the mentoring relationship and make full use of their guidance.

## 5. Schedule a First Meeting

Ask your potential mentor if they can make time for a conversation, about thirty minutes to an hour in length, with you about entering into a mentoring relationship. Provide two specific time frames which work within your schedule to make checking calendars easier.

## 6. Respect Their Time

Most people who are asked to become mentors are highly successful, and therefore, in high demand. It is important for you to acknowledge that reality and clearly express how much you appreciate their consideration of your ask. This is also a way to provide a graceful "out" for those who may decline your request.

## 7. Thank Them

After your meeting, send your potential mentor another email thanking them for their time and for the conversation.

## A Note on Follow-Up:

If you don't hear back within two to three weeks, send a follow-up email. If you do not hear back after a few weeks, you need to assume that they do not have the time to meet with you right now. It is time to focus on others on your list of potential mentors.

→ [MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU](https://mentor.uiowa.edu)

\* Adapted from [It's Your Yale](#)



## ***Reaching Out To Someone You Know - Email Example***

Dear Dr. Haider,

Over the past semester, I have greatly enjoyed your psychology seminar course – the clinical anecdotes that you shared were always interesting, particularly those focused on assisting clients with trauma recovery through holistic techniques. As I approach my junior year, I am planning to pursue an undergraduate honors thesis focused on how meditation can aid the recovery of middle-aged patients with complex medical trauma. After graduation, I plan on becoming a clinical psychologist specializing in this area of treatment, and sharing my own anecdotes with students someday as a professor.

To achieve this goal, I have to finish my thesis, and I need a mentor to support me throughout this process. This kind of relationship would involve assisting me with navigating the IRB, structuring my research, and writing up my findings. Would you be available for about 45 minutes sometime within the next month to discuss my current research goals, as well as if acting as a research mentor was something you are interested in? I am typically available on Tuesday afternoons and Friday mornings, although please let me know what days/times work best for you.

I know that your schedule is busy, so if it simply isn't possible to balance mentoring alongside your other commitments I understand. Thank you for considering this request and I look forward to our future conversations!

All best,

Radhika Singh

BS in Psychology and Pre-Medicine | University of Iowa Honors Class of 2022

## ***Reaching Out to Someone You Don't Know (Referral, New Contact, etc.)***

Dear Masatoshi,

My name is Emily Simpson, and I am currently a fourth-year English student here at the University of Iowa. Dr. Kowalski in the department recommended that I contact you, as I am seeking out guidance from graduate students about navigating the graduate application process and the pros/cons of taking a gap year. She mentioned that you were an expert in this area and had even led a discussion circle for other students with my inquiries last year.

Would you be able to meet for about 30 minutes sometime within the next two weeks to discuss your own experiences with graduate school applications and timelines? I am usually available Monday afternoons and Wednesdays all day, but please let me know what days/times work best on your end, as my schedule is flexible.

I understand if your schedule is busy, so if this isn't doable I understand. Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing back from you!

Best regards,

Emily Simpson

BA in English and Creative Writing | University of Iowa Class of 2021

# PLANNING FOR FIRST MEETINGS FOR MENTEES\*

Before your first meeting with your mentor, use this checklist to plan out a flexible agenda. Think about what you want to achieve in the short and long term, as well as how you can communicate these goals effectively with your mentor.

- \_\_\_ Read through relevant materials on the mentoring relationship, your role, and establishing goals available through [mentor.uiowa.edu](https://mentor.uiowa.edu)
- \_\_\_ Arrange first meeting with prospective mentor
- \_\_\_ Explain your goals for meeting and what you hope to gain from the relationship based off of your answers to the [Reflection for Mentees](#) worksheet
- \_\_\_ Discuss and record your short-term and long-term goals using the [SMART goals](#) framework
- \_\_\_ Review your current progress towards your SMART goals
- \_\_\_ Explore useful academic, professional, and/or personal developmental experiences in relation to your SMART goals.
- \_\_\_ Discuss and record options for completing these SMART goals and target dates for completion
- \_\_\_ Amend your mentoring goals as needed to focus on your growth over time
- \_\_\_ Discuss and record with your mentor the boundaries of your relationship
- \_\_\_ Discuss and record any issues that may impact your mentoring relationship, such as time, lack of confidence, newness to the role, academic or professional deadlines, etc.
- \_\_\_ Arrange a consistent meeting schedule for check-ins with your mentor and discuss preferred methods of communication outside of meetings (email, phone, etc.)
- \_\_\_ Encourage your mentor to exchange feedback with you on a regular basis and determine a consistent schedule for these conversations
- \_\_\_ Record topics discussed and feedback given at each meeting
- \_\_\_ Request that all meeting records be kept private and in a safe place for future reference
- \_\_\_ Thank your mentor for their time and investment in your growth

→ [MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU](https://mentor.uiowa.edu)

\*Adapted from University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

# IOWA ELEVEN COMPETENCIES

The Iowa Eleven are a set of competencies which can support your success as a mentee and may be a good starting point for you to brainstorm **SMART goals** that you would like to work towards with your mentor. Below, find short descriptions of each competency, as well as mentoring specific examples.

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## **1. Analysis - Detecting patterns and trends across multiple sources of information.**

Example: Talia is a third-year undergraduate student who wants to build her resume in preparation for medical school applications. Her lab mentor is Dr. Yang, who works with Talia on strengthening her research and presentation skills, providing her with several structured opportunities to grow her abilities.

## **2. Collaboration - Working with others toward a common objective by sharing ideas and distributing responsibilities equitably across team members.**

Example: Walter, a second-year graduate student, is part of a mentoring cohort through a structured mentoring opportunity. During the month that the opportunity takes place, he works in small discussion groups with other mentees to reflect on their experiences and build peer accountability.

## **3. Ethics - Behaving in an ethical manner and adhering to established code of ethics.**

Example: Elliot, a fourth-year undergraduate, is a first time mentor to Priyanka, a second-year student who is seeking guidance about how to become more confident with her public speaking. In order to be the best mentor they can be, Elliot follows the all of **Ethical Expectations of Mentors** and establishes a relationship of honesty and trust with Priyanka.

## **5. Goals - Creating goals that are measurable and have timetables for completion.**

Example: Annabelle is a recent graduate who has been working in the Communications department for a few months. She is being mentored by Mx. Lee, an alum, on how to use her experience in this university department to transition into a career in Student Affairs. Together, the two of them establish **SMART goals** for Annabelle and track her progress.

## **5. Group Development - Helping team members develop a shared sense of purpose, commitment, and trust.**

Example: Minyang is an Honors student who is working in a Biology lab alongside three other undergraduates, all being mentored by the head of the lab, Dr. Abboud. She participates in weekly meetings with Dr. Abboud and the research team, exchanging feedback and thoughts on the week's work in an intentional, productive environment. Dr. Abboud provides various points of discussion and encourages the undergraduates to work together to find solutions, building a shared commitment and sense of purpose within the team.

**6. Other Perspectives - Considering other opinions, experiences, and outlooks.**

Example: Jordan is a third-year undergraduate student who is mentoring Amina, a first-year student from a different background. During their conversations, Jordan actively listens to Amina's experiences and viewpoints, asking thoughtful questions to better understand her perspective. Jordan also reflects on how these new insights can broaden his own thinking and improve his approach to mentoring and collaboration.

**7. Problem-Solving - Identifying a variety of potential solutions to a problem and determining the best possible course of action to solve the problem.**

Example: Westley is a first-year doctoral student who is experiencing burnout with regards to his thesis. As soon as he becomes aware of his new pattern of behavior, he sets up a meeting with his mentor, Dr. Moreno, to discuss his issues with her. Together, the two of them discuss several solutions to this obstacle and build a new, realistic schedule for Westley to complete his work. The new plan allows him to take time to restore his energy, but still keeps him on track.

**8. Productive Relationships - Developing relationships with others that are healthy, trusting, and respectful.**

Example: Dr. Grange is a senior professor in the Chemistry department who is being mentored by Dr. Andino, a member of the junior faculty. The two of them have set monthly feedback-focused meetings to reflect on their mentoring relationship and set goals for the next period before their next conversation. Together, they have established a professional and productive working relationship.

**9. Self-Development - Seeking opportunities to better oneself both personally and professionally.**

Example: Layla is a second-year graduate student getting her degree in Educational Measurement and Statistics. She wants to more actively prepare for life after graduation and asks her mentor, Ms. Taylor, about others in her network who may be able to share their career experiences. By further connecting with other professionals, Layla is laying the foundation for her future success.

**10. Verbal Communication - Verbally communicating clearly and concisely.**

Example: Salma is a fourth-year undergraduate who is being mentored by Lorelai, a second-year graduate student. In their monthly meetings, the two of them actively listen to each other, communicating effectively and clearly through their conversations.

**11. Writing - Expressing thoughts in writing in a manner that is clear, logical, and understandable.**

Example: Evelyn is a new hire within the Marketing department; her mentor is Max, a more senior hire. In their mentoring relationship, Evelyn is growing her professional skill set and her career network. Before their meetings, Evelyn typically takes about 20 minutes to reflect on various talking points and share a brief agenda with Max through email. This practice helps Evelyn clarify her thoughts and also strengthen her written communication skills.

# CREATING SMART GOALS\*

SMART is an acronym that you can use both when setting goals independently and discussing goals with your mentor. As a framework, it is meant to help make abstract goals more concrete through realistic planning and reflection. It stands for:

## **Specific | Measurable | Achievable | Relevant | Timely**

SMART goals include all 5 of these aspects, explained in more detail below.

### **Specific**

Having specific goals will help you stay focused and motivated as you move forward. When thinking about your goals, ask yourself the following questions:

1. **What do I want to achieve?**
2. **Why is this goal important to me?**
3. **What resources do I need?**

**Mentoring example:** Amna is a third year undergraduate student who wants to get more involved in research before she leaves university. She goes to her lab mentor, Dr. Rodriguez, and asks for help in achieving this goal. After listening to Amna speak, and asking questions, Dr. Rodriguez suggests that she look into completing an undergraduate honors thesis as a way of accomplishing this goal.

**Tip:** Breaking down your goals into unambiguous sub-goals can help you in centering specificity, as well as creating timelines for completion. Think of your goal like the recipe for a cake; you need to start with the ingredients before enjoying a slice.

**Mentoring example:** By their next meeting, Amna has researched the undergraduate honors thesis requirements and decided she wants to pursue this goal. Together, she and Dr. Rodriguez further break down the steps required to start, work on, and finish a thesis. By the end of the meeting, Amna has a concrete idea of where to start and what she needs to complete before her next mentoring check-in.

### **Measurable**

Having measurable goals will help you and your mentor track your progress, meet important deadlines, and feel the satisfaction that comes from getting closer to accomplishment. When thinking about your goals, ask yourself the following questions:

1. **What are my indicators of progress?**
2. **How will I quantify my progress?**
3. **How will I know when the goal has been achieved?**

**Tip:** Keeping track of your progress in a log, digital document, or journal can help you feel like you are making consistent steps towards your accomplishment. Find a system which works for you and stick with it -- you'll be glad to look back on everything you did when you reach your goal.

**Mentoring example:** Makeda is a second-year graduate student who would like to get better at balancing her studies with other life commitments (self-care, community, work, etc.). She goes to her mentor, Dr. Hope, and asks for advice on integrating non-school responsibilities into her schedule. Makeda decides to quantify her progress by tracking how many days a week she is able to dedicate at least three hours towards non-academic duties. She will know when her goal is achieved when she is able to do this at least five days a week.

### **Achievable**

Almost any goal is achievable when you plan actions wisely, remain accountable, and have support in your process. As you grow and develop, previously far-away goals will become more attainable as you learn. SMART goals will stretch your abilities while building on previously established skills. When thinking about your goals, ask yourself the following questions:

1. **What specific actions can I take to achieve this goal?**
2. **Is there a particular order or timeline these actions need to have?**
3. **Are there any other tools/skills/resources I need to accomplish this goal?**

**Tip:** Remember, your goals should be challenging, but not impossible. If you're having difficulty making progress, it's okay to take a step back, reflect, and readjust. In giving yourself more time to grow, you can avoid burnout and frustration.

**Mentoring example:** Lee is a new hire in the university's marketing department and they would like to earn a promotion within a year. To accomplish this goal, they ask Natalia, their peer and a more experienced marketer within the department, for guidance. Natalia helps Lee in finding a professional course which expands their design skills; she also practices business negotiation and networking techniques with Lee. Within their specific time frame, Lee has taken concrete actions to professionally improve and is ready to be considered for promotion.

## Relevant

It's important to think about how your goals fit into your long-term objectives, as well as how they fit together towards your future. Making sure your goals are relevant ensures that you don't waste time on projects that don't serve you in a meaningful way. When thinking about your goals, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is this goal future-oriented?
2. Is this the right time for me to pursue this goal?
3. Will achieving this goal aid me on the path towards my desired future?

**Tip:** Your goals don't always have to mesh together perfectly, but they shouldn't directly contradict each other. By creating more harmony between your goals, you'll be able to better invest your time, energy, and efforts.

**Mentoring example:** Malik, a first-year undergraduate student, wants to volunteer more with Club For Change, an organization on campus. He sets up a series of meetings with Sarai, the organization's president, to discuss this goal. Throughout their conversations, Malik and Sarai talk about his other responsibilities around campus, including work-study, other clubs, and classes. Together, they conclude that it may be better for Malik to get more involved with Club For Change the following semester after his other commitments have eased.

## Timely

Every goal needs a deadline to help you stay on track and remain motivated. Moving your mindset from "someday" to "today" will help you work towards your goal. When thinking about your goals, ask yourself the following questions:

1. When would I like this goal to be accomplished by?
2. How long is this project likely to take me?
3. When am I going to work towards this goal?

**Tip:** Set mini-deadlines for yourself to make sure you are hitting important milestones, especially if your timeline is relatively long. These will help boost accountability and maintain a sense of urgency.

**Mentoring example:** Shane is a third-year undergraduate applying for a prestigious study abroad fellowship which has a national deadline. Several months before the submission is due, he works with his mentor, Dr. Rosenberg, to go over the application requirements, revise drafts, brainstorm interview topics, and more. Shane sets aside specific days each week to tweak his essays and check-in with Dr. Rosenberg about his progress. Due to his planning, and the support of his mentor, he is able to submit his application early.

**Remember:** Goal-setting is a dynamic process and your goals will change over time. Evaluate and review your goals at regular intervals, both independently and with your mentor, to make sure they are continuing to serve you.

	Questions to Ask Myself	Reflection Answers
<b>Specific</b>	1. What do I want to achieve? 2. Why is this goal important to me? 3. What resources do I need?	
<b>Measurable</b>	1. What are my indicators of progress? 2. How will I quantify my progress? 3. How will I know when the goal has been achieved?	
<b>Achievable</b>	1. What specific actions can I take to achieve this goal? 2. Is there a particular order or timeline these actions need to have? 3. Are there any other tools/skills/resources I need to accomplish this goal?	
<b>Relevant</b>	1. Is this goal future-oriented? 2. Is this the right time for me to pursue this goal? 3. Will achieving this goal aid me on the path towards my desired future?	
<b>Timely</b>	1. When would I like this goal to be accomplished by? 2. How long is this project likely to take me? 3. When am I going to work towards this goal?	

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\* Adapted from [MindTools](#) and [The Center For Mentoring](#)

# PRACTICING GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Giving and receiving productive feedback are skills that you will need throughout your life; this process will help you grow as you move towards your goals. When you make the conscious decision to give and receive useful feedback on a regular basis, you will be able to continue your development in a more informed way and gain more from your mentoring relationship.

Effective feedback identifies and reinforces behaviors which contribute towards your growth, and the mentoring relationship, positively while altering those which get in the way. Be prepared to work on yourself and help your mentor understand their role in the relationship better. The more practice you have with giving and receiving feedback, the better you will become!

## Giving Feedback

There are four basic parts to giving productive feedback.

### 1. Check Your Motives

Feedback is meant to assist the recipient in their growth; avoid being harsh or offensive. You will likely find your approach to be more effective if it is positive and focused on what could be done to improve in the future. This does not mean that every comment needs to be positive, but the discussion should be fair and balanced. If you are unsure if your critique is too tough, err on the side of caution.

**Tip:** Before entering into your mentoring meeting, take a moment to think about the positive aspects of your mentoring relationship and what you have learned from your mentor so far. Going through a mini-SWOT analysis, similar to your Self Evaluation, can be helpful in organizing your thoughts with regards to perceived strengths and weaknesses of your mentor or mentoring relationship.

### 2. Make It Regular

Setting regular, private meetings with your mentor to give and receive feedback will help keep communication open between you both. However, if the need for feedback is more urgent than your scheduled check-ins, do not hesitate to reach out and express that desire. By providing frequent feedback, you will ensure that it is timely and closely related to the events it refers to. Set a timeline with your mentor to exchange feedback; for example, dedicating part of a monthly meeting to this process will help you both stay in top shape.

**Tip:** Think about other major deadlines that may exist in the timeline towards your goals; are there any conference dates, submission times, or other relevant schedules to consider? Planning opportunities for feedback in relation to these other responsibilities will assist you in plotting your growth and your mentor in tracking areas which may require additional support.

### 3. Be Sincere

Feedback should be a conversation, not a lecture, and all feedback should be sincere and honest. If positive feedback is forced, it will lose its value and undermine your credibility. If negative feedback is forced, it can seem nit-picky. Remember that this is meant to be a two-way dialogue which enriches both you and your mentor, so engage them in a conversation. Ask questions to make sure they understand your input and actively listen when it is your turn to receive feedback.

**Tip:** It is recommended that you give and receive feedback face-to-face, since tone and message can be easily misinterpreted over text communications.

### 4. Be Specific

Limit your feedback to one or two main action items per meeting. After sharing your point of view, ask your mentor what their perspective is on the situation. Using phrases like “What is your reaction to this?” and “Do you have any additional context or perspective you would like to share?” can help you both achieve clarity and address gaps in communication. You can use the SMART goals framework to help you both understand what exactly needs to be done to improve the situation and establish a time-frame for change.

**Tip:** It can be helpful to take a few minutes before meeting with your mentor to write down the main ideas behind the feedback you will be giving. This can help you determine your desired outcomes from the conversation, as well as good places to start the dialogue.



## Receiving Feedback

There are four basic parts to requesting and receiving productive feedback.

### 1. Be Specific

Start on a positive note by asking about what you are doing well so far, then ask about one or two action areas that your mentor feels need improvement. Together, you can celebrate achievements and also work productively towards completing your SMART goals, taking time to update them if needed. Before your meeting, consider if you want feedback on your general progress or on a particular project you are working on. You will receive better feedback if you ask specific questions such as “What’s one thing I could do, in your opinion, to improve my work?” and “What did you think about the last update to my project?”.

**Tip:** If you are unsure why your mentor is providing a specific type of feedback, then ask further questions. Example questions could include “I’m not sure I understand, can you please explain further?” and “I’ve felt like I’m doing a good job, why do you feel like this is an area where I need more support?”. It is important to clarify any confusion over feedback in the moment it is given so that you do not jump to any incorrect conclusions.

### 2. Make It Regular

Setting regular, private meetings with your mentor to give and receive feedback will help keep communication open between you both. However, if the need for feedback is more urgent than your scheduled check-ins, do not hesitate to reach out and express that desire. By providing frequent feedback, you will ensure that it is timely and closely related to the events it refers to. Set a timeline with your mentor to exchange feedback; for example, dedicating part of a monthly meeting to this process will help you both stay in top shape.

**Tip:** When receiving feedback, actively listen and take notes on what your mentor is sharing. This will help you get the full measure of what they are saying so that you can respond efficiently during your conversation and better prepare a plan towards improvement together.

### 3. Reflect On The Future

Asking for feedback can be intimidating, especially if the person receiving feedback holds more power in the relationship. Mentors, remember that asking the mentee to share negative feedback puts the mentee in a vulnerable position. Mentees, in asking for feedback, you are being courageous and taking concrete steps towards your future. After your meeting, take time to reflect on the feedback that you and your mentor exchanged, remembering that the critique is meant to help you further develop. You may find the Feedback Matrix exercise at the end of this document to be useful during this process.

**Tip:** At the end of your meeting, thank your mentor for providing feedback and listening to what you have to contribute towards the relationship. This will end the conversation on an upwards note and remind you that receiving feedback is a good thing.

### 4. Take Positive Action

Feedback is only helpful when you take the next step and make a change to address areas for improvement. If you were previously unaware of an issue your mentor is raising, do not get defensive. Instead, ask for an example of where you fell short and if they have ideas for how you could improve. Return to your SMART goals framework and use this structure to establish checkpoints for incorporating the feedback you received into your progress timeline.

**Tip:** During your next feedback meeting, take some time to check in with your mentor to determine if the changes you have made are making a positive difference in your progress.

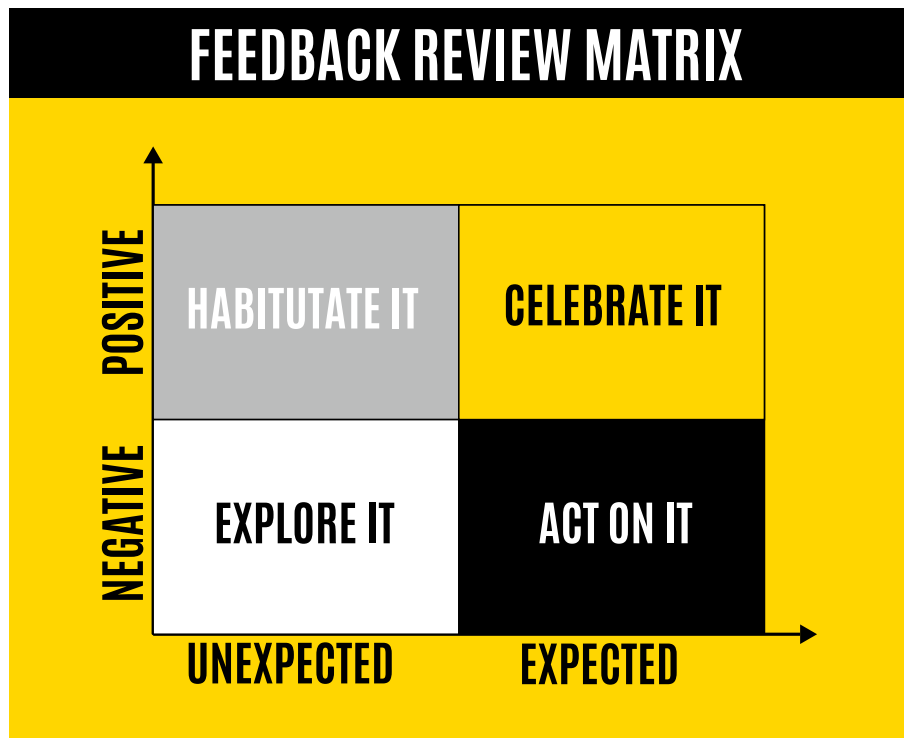
### Example

- At the beginning of their relationship, Gabi, a young professional, and her career mentor, Mx. Eng, decided that their meetings would last an hour on Tuesdays. However, Mx. Eng has had to cut their past two meetings short. Gabi feels she needs the full hour, so she emails Mx. Eng and lets them know that she would like to exchange feedback during their next face-to-face meeting.
- Before the two speak, Gabi takes some time and reflects on what she appreciates about the mentoring relationship. She also decides that her main piece of feedback will be centered around the desired versus actual length of their mentoring meetings.
- During the meeting, Gabi opens by thanking Mx. Eng for assisting them with their career questions and providing detailed critique on job applications. She then expresses her desire for the original hour-long meetings because it makes her feel best supported as a mentee. Gabi then asks Mx. Eng for their point of view and they explain that they did not realize Gabi felt that way. Mx. Eng then states that Tuesdays no longer work for their schedule, but that they have appreciated the mentoring relationship and would like to continue working with Gabi.
- After engaging in an active conversation with each other, Gabi and Mx. Eng decided to switch their meetings to Thursdays to avoid future scheduling conflicts. After this point is settled, Mx. Eng provides feedback on Gabi’s progress. She practices active listening and takes notes on the comments she receives, asking for clarification when needed. Both leave the meeting feeling satisfied; after the meeting, Gabi takes action to incorporate the feedback she received from Mx. Eng into her progress moving forward.



## Feedback Matrix

Acting on feedback is the next step towards development. Using the Feedback Matrix to organize the feedback you receive can help you understand what should be celebrated, what needs to be changed, and where you can build more self-awareness.



Using the matrix, feedback falls into four categories:

### 1. Positive and Unexpected

**Habituate It** - This is feedback which points out a positive behavior you may not have been aware of. Think about how you can turn this behavior into a habit or routine so that you continue to succeed in the future. For example, if you did a great job organizing yourself for a particular project without even realizing it, apply the same scheduling principles to your next assignment. You may have unlocked a brand new skill set that you can grow with.

### 2. Positive and Expected

**Celebrate It** - Take note of your successes and accomplishments as they come so that you and your mentor can celebrate the things you already do well. You should acknowledge that your hard work has paid off. Good job!

### 3. Negative and Unexpected

**Explore It** - After discussing this feedback with your mentor, explore it in detail outside of your meeting to gain a deeper understanding of where you could improve moving forward. You can also ask your mentor if they have any specific ideas for how you could alter your behavior or outlook. Reflect on potential spaces in your growth where you could foster more self-awareness and nurture positive change within yourself.

### 4. Negative and Expected

**Change It** - Design an action plan, set SMART goals, and continue exchanging consistent feedback with your mentor to help you change the problematic behavior or mindset.

→ [MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU](https://mentor.uiowa.edu)

\*Adapted from [MindTools](https://www.mindtools.com/)

# BEST PRACTICES FOR MENTEES\*

Mentoring relationships are flexible and diverse by nature; no two relationships will be exactly the same. Throughout the relationship, as a mentee you will be engaging in collaborative, honest dialogues with your mentor as they assist you in growing towards your goals. Consider the best practices below as tools to help you navigate this mutual process.

## 1. Focus On Achieving Learning Goals

Mentoring is meant to help you, as the mentee, learn more about your areas of interest. Creating, tracking, and evaluating learning goals with your mentor will help your growth stay focused.

## 2. Expect To Drive The Mentoring Relationship

Be prepared to ask for what you need, when (or even before) you need it. Mentors are meant to help you, so don't be afraid to ask for support.

## 3. Create SMART Goals That Will Contribute To Your Development

Clear goals lead to clear outcomes. Communicate about your goals openly with your mentor so that they can assist you in reaching them. Together, make sure your goals are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and timely.

- [Creating SMART Goals](#)

## 4. Be Authentic, Open, And Honest

In order to grow and develop, you have to be vulnerable and admit when something isn't going exactly right. You will miss learning opportunities and chances for the mentoring relationship to deepen if you pretend everything is perfect all of the time.

## 5. Prepare For All Mentoring Meetings

Having relevant notes, materials, and questions prepared for mentoring sessions will increase efficient communication and result in more meaningful learning.

## 6. Stay Connected And In Communication With Your Mentor

Talk to your mentor and decide which communication methods (email, face-to-face, video calls, telephone calls, etc.) work best for the both of you. Pick at least two to stay in consistent contact with each other.

## 7. Be Willing To Stretch And Step Out Of Your Comfort Zone

Your mentor will challenge you with learning opportunities, discussions, and questions that may take you outside your comfort zone. While possibly uncomfortable at first, these stretches will maximize your growth and learning.

## 8. Ask For (And Give!) Specific Feedback

Exchanging honest, regular feedback with your mentor will help you become more self-aware and advance towards your goals, while also allowing them opportunities to grow. Practice asking for specific feedback, receiving constructive criticism, and acting on what you hear.

- [Establishing Shared Expectations](#)
- [Practicing Feedback](#)

## 9. Focus On The Future

Mentoring creates momentum towards your future development and provides a foundation for your growth. With your mentor, clearly articulate your self-vision so that as a team, you can create strategies for future success.

## 10. Keep A Journal (Or Consider Other Reflective Practices)

In writing down conversation notes and mentoring progress, you will be able to track your goals, reflect on your learning, record insights, and better prepare for mentoring meetings. Pick a digital document or application or a paper journal, then commit to using it.

→ [MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU](https://mentor.uiowa.edu)

\*Adapted from The Center for Mentoring

# CLOSING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP - MENTEES\*

Closing the mentoring relationship may occur for several reasons, including reaching its natural ending or because the relationship is no longer serving the best interests of the mentee or the mentor. The latter may happen because you need to take a step back or because there was an unresolvable conflict.

Use this document as a conversation guide to help close your mentoring relationship. You are encouraged to make any necessary adjustments to prioritize what you think is best in your unique mentoring relationship.

## ***Pre-Set Timeline***

Your mentoring relationship may be on a pre-set timeline through a formal mentoring program or because you, as a pair, decided your connection was only going to last a specific length of time. Whether your relationship lasted a few weeks or several years, focus your last meeting around recapping your mentoring relationship and the development you both have experienced as a result of your time together. Discuss the outcomes of your SMART goals, various feedback you exchanged during your discussions, and other topics relevant to your personal mentoring relationship.

Thank your mentor for their investment in your growth both verbally during your conversation and by sending a written thank-you note through email or post. Although this specific chapter of your relationship may be ending, continue to reach out periodically to maintain the positive connection. You may desire further mentoring, a letter of recommendation, networking support, or other assistance in the future, and it helps to cultivate a rich network to ask for guidance.

## ***Example: Alina and Dr. Morales***

Alina is a third-year business undergraduate student who is moving through a formal mentoring program within the Tippie College of Business. During the month-long opportunity, she met weekly with Dr. Morales, a professor in the department. During their last meeting, Alina and Dr. Morales discussed their relationship as a whole, what they both had learned from their time together, and how they would like to keep in contact in the future, even if the program was coming to a close. After their conversation, Alina emailed a thoughtful thank-you note to Dr. Morales.

## ***Taking A Step Back***

You may need to take a step back from the mentoring relationship for a variety of personal or professional reasons. These may include: new time constraints on your project, an increased academic load, family or health issues, the birth of a child, or other life changes. If you feel the need to press pause on your mentoring relationship, take the initiative and contact your mentor as soon as you are able.

Discuss your changing context, provide them with the information you feel comfortable sharing, and discuss when/if you would like to continue the mentoring relationship. Be sure your new timeline is realistic with your new situation and keep your mentor updated as you feel more comfortable entering the mentoring relationship again. If you require additional assistance in closing out the mentoring relationship, or seeking out further campus support (counseling, emergency funds, etc.), please reference [Resolving Conflict Within the Mentoring Relationship](#) for a list of resources.

## ***Example: Amy and Ji-hoon***

Amy is a new hire within Student Affairs and Ji-hoon, her supervisor, is also her mentor. When she was first hired, Amy approached Ji-hoon to enter into a mentoring relationship with him focused around Amy's professional development through assisting with several extra projects. However, after three months, Amy's family situation changed and she no longer had the same amount of time or energy to invest in those side projects. She looked over her current responsibilities and decided that she needed to press pause on her mentoring relationship with Ji-hoon until her family situation settled down. As soon as Amy made this decision, she requested a meeting with him over email, explaining that she wanted to discuss taking a break from the additional work of being a mentee. During their meeting, they had an open and transparent conversation, with Amy explaining her new timeline and Ji-hoon working flexibly with her. Both left the meeting feeling comfortable and confident in their communication and in their paused relationship.

## ***An Unresolvable Conflict***

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, the mentoring relationship is not what you had hoped it would be. The mentor you thought would be best for aiding your professional, personal, and/or academic development, is not actually the right fit for you. This can happen for a variety of reasons, from incompatible communication styles or inappropriate behavior by the mentor. Enter the process with professionalism and know there are several resources to assist you in this transition.

Before ending the mentoring relationship due to a conflict, reference [Resolving Conflict Within the Mentoring Relationship](#) to make sure you have tried to work out your differences with your mentor. Additionally, seek out the advice of another trusted faculty member, peer in your program/department, or professional staff member to determine whether it is actually in your best interests to end the relationship. This is especially true if the relationship has a long history or if you are close to transitioning out of the University of Iowa.

The [Office of the Ombudsperson](#) (confidential office) and the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) (non-confidential office) may be especially useful if you wish to speak to professional staff members. Their contact information, as well as additional resources, can be found on [Resolving Conflict Within the Mentoring Relationship](#).

If you do decide to terminate the mentoring relationship, think about the most diplomatic, respectful way to express to your mentor why you would like to make this change. Refer to [Practicing Giving and Receiving Feedback for Mentors](#) and [Practicing Giving and Receiving Feedback for Mentees](#) for best practices on opening up an evaluation-based conversation.

Inform your mentor promptly about your decision, no matter how awkward this may be. During your conversation with your mentor, explain clearly, but politely, why you wish to end the mentoring relationship. If you owe them any work, be sure to discuss this and arrange a schedule to complete any outstanding obligations. Try to end the conversation on a positive note, and if you feel comfortable, thank them for attempting to be your mentor.

If you are changing research mentors, thesis advisors, or other roles where a more formal arrangement may be involved, be sure to complete or update any paperwork that your department or program may require. Ask your department or program head what their protocol for the process of ending a mentoring relationship is and complete all documents in a timely manner.

### ***Example: Julio and Carla***

If Julio is a transfer student and mentee in the second year of his graduate program. Earlier in the year, he entered into a peer mentoring relationship with a more experienced student in the program named Carla. At the beginning of their mentoring relationship, Julio was seeking support networking within the department and on campus; the two of them agreed to meet twice a month to discuss potential connections, learning opportunities, and more. However, after two months, it became apparent to Julio that Carla did not have the time to properly invest into their mentoring relationship. She would constantly reschedule meetings at the last minute, was not responsive to email or text communications, and always cut their time together short.

Even after Julio spoke with Carla about her inconsistent communication, she did not make any efforts to change her behavior. Julio decided that he wanted to end their mentoring relationship because he wasn't feeling properly supported and was frustrated with Carla. He spoke with a staff member in the Office of the Ombudsperson about the best way to end their relationship and received effective advice.

Before his meeting with Carla, Julio also took a few hours to go through [Practicing Giving and Receiving Feedback for Mentees](#), and thought about how he wanted to conduct that conversation. During their meeting, Julio clearly, but diplomatically expressed to Carla why he wanted to end the relationship and thanked her for her time. He left the meeting feeling like he made the right decision and communicated his needs transparently.

→ **MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU**

\* Adapted from Rackham

**FOR MENTORS**

# REFLECTION FOR MENTORS\*

Before engaging with a mentee, use this worksheet to take some time and reflect back on your own experiences with mentoring and how much time you can currently invest into a relationship. By clarifying your own strengths, experiences, and practical approaches, you will be able to communicate more effectively with mentees. This worksheet is a jumping off point, so keep thinking about questions you find important.

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## ***Reflection Questions:***

- What kind(s) of mentoring did you have as a student or professional?
- What did you enjoy about your mentoring experiences?
- What did you dislike about your mentoring experiences?
- What could have made those relationships and experiences a better form of support for you?
- How well did your mentor(s) help you accomplish your professional/academic/personal goals?
- How well did your mentor(s) prepare you for your academic or professional career?
- What do you wish your mentor(s) had done that they didn't do?
- What is the current mentoring culture in your department and/or profession?
- What kind of mentor would you like to be?
- What kind of mentoring relationship would you prefer? Formal or informal?

***The things I feel are off limits in my mentoring relationship include:***

\_\_\_ Disclosing our conversations to others

\_\_\_ Meeting in non-public places

\_\_\_ Sharing intimate aspects of our lives

\_\_\_ Meeting behind closed doors

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

***The amount of time that I can spend with my mentee is likely to be, on average (circle one):***

1 2 3 4 hours    each week /    every other week /    per month

Other Time:

\_\_\_\_\_

**→ MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU**

\*Adapted from Rackham and University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

# PERSONAL SWOT EVALUATION - MENTORS\*

Before you begin your role as a mentor, take a step back and ask yourself honestly where you are and how you are doing right now. Thinking deeply about the present will help you better envision your plan for the future. This simple SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) reflection will help you better understand how you can serve the mentoring relationship, assist your mentee in their growth, and expand your own capabilities.

---

What are my top three strengths – three things I feel good about and am proud of that I could bring to the mentoring relationship?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are three weaknesses or areas in which I could improve – three things I most want to work on or improve about myself?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the top three opportunities available to me at this moment – things I could do, act on, or take advantage of that would help me develop and reach my full potential as an effective mentor?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the top three threats I'm facing right now – well-defined obstacles in the world that could keep me from fulfilling my role as a mentor?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What are the three most important things I can do over the next three to six months to build on my strengths and overcome my challenges?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

→ [MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU](https://mentor.uiowa.edu)

\*Adapted from University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)



# FIRST MEETINGS CHECKLIST FOR MENTORS\*

It will be the responsibility of your prospective mentee to set up a first meeting and steer the conversation, but keep these topics in mind as you move through your initial discussion with them to ensure you are both on the same page about the mentoring relationship, potential timelines, and other important topics.

- ☐ Read through relevant materials on the mentoring relationship, your role, and establishing goals available through [mentor.uiowa.edu](https://mentor.uiowa.edu)
- ☐ Actively listen as your mentee explains their goals for meeting and what they hope to gain from the relationship - consider reading through their responses on the [Reflection for Mentees](#) worksheet together
- ☐ Discuss and record your mentee's short-term and long-term goals using the SMART goals framework
- ☐ Review your mentee's current progress towards their SMART goals
- ☐ Explore useful academic, professional, and/or personal developmental experiences in relation to your mentee's SMART goals
- ☐ Discuss and record options for completing these SMART goals and target dates for completion
- ☐ Amend the mentoring goals as needed to focus on your mentee's growth over time
- ☐ Discuss and record with your mentee the boundaries of your relationship
- ☐ Discuss and record any issues that may impact your mentoring relationship, such as time, lack of confidence, newness to the role, academic or professional deadlines, etc.
- ☐ Arrange a consistent meeting schedule for check-ins with your mentee and discuss preferred methods of communication outside of meetings (email, phone, etc.)
- ☐ Encourage your mentee to exchange feedback with you on a regular basis and determine a consistent schedule for these conversations
- ☐ Record topics discussed and feedback given at each meeting
- ☐ Request that all meeting records be kept private and in a safe place for future reference

→ **MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU**

\*Adapted from University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

# ETHICAL EXPECTATIONS OF MENTORS\*

While a mentoring relationship is reciprocal, the mentor is the more experienced individual who acts as a sponsor, role model, and guide for the mentee, a less experienced (and often younger) professional or student. The mentor is tasked with providing counsel, advice, support, information, and resources to the mentee as they become a more independent and well-rounded member of their field. As such, mentors have an obligation to their mentees to conduct themselves in a manner which is not only effective, but also ethical (Forehand, 2008; Johnson, 2003 cited in Johnson, 2017).

## Below are Nine Ethical Principles for the practice of mentoring.

### 1. *Beneficence*

Mentors strive to facilitate the professional, academic, and/or personal growth of their mentee(s), acting to understand their unique needs and demonstrating diligence in providing wisdom, support, and feedback.

### 2. *Nonmaleficence*

Mentors intentionally work to avoid harming, exploiting, neglecting, or otherwise disrespecting their mentee(s).

### 3. *Autonomy*

Mentors endeavor to bolster mentees' knowledge, independence, self-sufficiency, and maturity, facilitating the autonomy and creativity of their mentees.

### 4. *Fidelity*

Mentors keep promises and remain loyal to those they mentor in terms of attention, support, and honest evaluation. If the relationship requires renegotiation on the mentor's part, the mentor will initiate that conversation.

### 5. *Justice*

Mentors treat all mentees (and potential mentees) equitably regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, age, or other identities.

### 6. *Transparency*

Mentors provide mentees the information necessary to make an informed decision about entering into a mentoring relationship and encourage good communication about mutual expectations moving forward.

### 7. *Boundaries and Multiple Relationship*

Mentors honor the professional boundaries of the mentoring relationship and seek to protect the integrity of this bond.

### 8. *Privacy*

Mentors keep private information shared in confidence by the mentee(s); however, there are circumstances where your mentor is mandated to report information you shared with them. Although mentoring relationships are not under privileged legal protection, mentors avoid sharing sensitive information about the mentee without informed consent, unless a disclosure is necessary under University of Iowa policy.

### 9. *Competence*

Mentors continually work to evaluate and expand their competence in the mentor role, participating in activities such as training, formal educational opportunities, and consultation with colleagues. If the mentor is experiencing problems of competence, then the mentoring relationship is renegotiated or terminated.

→ [MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU](https://mentor.uiowa.edu)

\*Adapted from Johnson 2017 in Mentoring Processes in Higher Education

# BEST PRACTICES FOR MENTORS\*

Mentoring relationships are flexible and diverse by nature; no two relationships will be exactly the same. Throughout the relationship, as a mentor you will be fostering genuine dialogue with your mentee and assisting them as they grow towards their goal. Consider the best practices below as tools to help you navigate this mutual process.

## 1. Get To Know Your Mentee

Before beginning, speak with your mentee and establish a trusting, genuine rapport. Discuss their previous educational or career experience, what they hope to do in the future, and why they want to achieve their goals. Being open and approachable is especially important when a mentee is shy or comes from a cultural background with different norms regarding authority structures than the U.S. university systems.

## 2. Establish Working Agreements

You and your mentee must communicate clearly from the beginning about your roles and responsibilities within the relationship. Agree on ground rules, form a basic structure for engagement, and revise these agreements as needed. More information on mentoring agreements and developing shared expectations can be found in the [Sample Mentor Agreement](#).

## 3. Focus On Developing Robust Learning Goals

Mentoring is meant to teach and guide the mentee. Assess whether you can assist the mentee in achieving their goals and aid them in creating, tracking, and accomplishing robust targets.

## 4. Balance Talking And Listening

When speaking with a mentee, give them your full attention and encourage them to discuss their ideas. Mentoring isn't just about providing advice, but also a secure space for personal development and subject exploration.

## 5. Ask Questions Rather Than Give Answers

Nurture self-reflection within your mentee, take time to flesh out their thinking, and ask questions that allow them to express individual insights. Ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions usually start with "how/what/when/where/why" and encourages students to speak and share their experiences.

## 6. Engage In Meaningful And Authentic Conversation

Go beyond the surface. Share your own successes and failures, as well as what you are learning from your mentee and the relationship. Provide support in times of discouragement, as well as triumph.

## 7. Check Out Assumptions And Hunches

If you believe something is off-track, address the issue as soon as possible. Do not assume that only mentees who need help will ask for it or hesitate to reach out to mentees who are becoming distant. Simply stating "I want to check out my assumption that ..." will open up a broader conversation to clarify obstacles.

## 8. Support And Challenge Your Mentee

After creating a solid relationship, encourage your mentee to build their skills or try a new technique. Remind them that mistakes or failures are a productive part of the learning process.

## 9. Set The Expectation Of Two-Way Feedback

Set the expectation for regular, candid feedback early on in your relationship. Model how to ask and receive constructive feedback by asking your mentee for specific evaluations on your contributions as a mentor. Balance clear, concrete feedback with deserved praise and compassion.

## 10. Check In Regularly To Stay On Track

Stay connected and create an accountability plan for regular engagement.

Above all else, know that your mentees will remember how they were treated. Conduct yourself in a manner which models and encourages mutual communication, honesty, and respect. The role model you provide will have a lasting impact on how your mentee operates as an academic or professional in the future.

→ [MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU](https://mentor.uiowa.edu)

\*Adapted from The Center for Mentoring and Rackham

# PRACTICING GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK - MENTORS\*

Giving and receiving productive feedback are skills that you will need throughout your life. This process will help you grow as you move through your own professional development journey as a mentor. When you make the conscious decision to give and receive useful feedback on a regular basis, you will be able to continue on your path in a more informed way and gain more from your mentoring relationship.

Effective feedback identifies and reinforces behaviors which contribute towards your growth, and the mentoring relationship, positively while altering those which get in the way. Be prepared to work on yourself and help your mentee understand their role in the relationship better. The more practice you have with giving and receiving feedback, the better you will become!

## Giving Feedback

There are four basic parts to giving productive feedback.

### 1. Check Your Motives

Feedback is meant to assist the recipient in their growth; avoid being harsh or offensive. You will likely find your approach to be more effective if it is positive and focused on what could be done to improve in the future. This does not mean that every comment needs to be positive, but the discussion should be fair and balanced. If you are unsure if your critique is too tough, err on the side of caution.

**Tip:** Before entering into your mentoring meeting, take a moment to think about the positive aspects of your mentoring relationship and what your mentee has done well so far. Going through a mini-SWOT analysis, similar to your Self Evaluation, can be helpful in organizing your thoughts with regards to perceived strengths and weaknesses.

### 2. Make It Regular

Setting regular, private meetings with your mentee to give and receive feedback will help keep communication open between you both. However, if the need for feedback is more urgent than your scheduled check-ins, do not hesitate to reach out and express that desire. By providing frequent feedback, you will ensure that it is timely and closely related to the events it refers to. Set a timeline with your mentee to exchange feedback; for example, dedicating part of a monthly meeting to this process will help you both stay in top shape.

**Tip:** Think about other major deadlines that may exist in your mentee's timeline; are there any conference dates, submission times, or other relevant schedules to consider? Planning opportunities for feedback in relation to these other responsibilities will assist you in tracking areas where your mentee may require additional support.

### 3. Be Sincere

Feedback should be a conversation, not a lecture, and all feedback should be sincere and honest. If positive feedback is forced, it will lose its value and undermine your credibility. If negative feedback is forced, it can seem nitpicky. Remember that this is meant to be a two-way dialogue which enriches both you and your mentee, so engage them in a conversation. Ask questions to make sure they understand your input and actively listen when it is your turn to receive feedback.

**Tip:** It is recommended that you give and receive feedback face-to-face, since tone and message can be easily misinterpreted over text communications.

### 4. Be Specific

Limit your feedback to one or two main action items per meeting. After sharing your point of view, ask your mentee what their perspective is on the situation. Using phrases like "What is your reaction to this?" and "Do you have any additional context or perspective you would like to share?" can help you both achieve clarity and address gaps in communication. You can use the SMART goals framework to help you both understand what exactly needs to be done to improve the situation and establish a timeframe for change.

**Tip:** It can be helpful to take a few minutes before meeting with your mentee to write down the main ideas behind the feedback you will be giving. This can help you determine your desired outcomes from the conversation, as well as good places to start the dialogue.

## Receiving Feedback

There are four basic parts to receiving productive feedback.

### 1. Be Specific

Start on a positive note by asking about what you are doing well so far, then ask about one or two action areas that your mentee feels need improvement. You will receive better feedback if you ask specific questions such as “What’s one thing I could do to improve my communication style as your mentor?” and “Was the last round of critique I provided on your paper useful?”.

**Tip:** If you are unsure why your mentee is providing a specific type of feedback, then ask further questions such as “Can you please explain further?”. It is important to clarify any confusion over feedback in the moment it is given so that you do not jump to any incorrect conclusions.

### 2. Make It Regular

Setting regular, private meetings with your mentee to give and receive feedback will help keep communication open between you both. However, if the need for feedback is more urgent than your scheduled check-ins, do not hesitate to reach out and express that desire. By exchanging frequent feedback, you will ensure that it is timely and closely related to the events it refers to. Set a timeline with your mentee to exchange feedback; for example, dedicating part of a monthly meeting to this process will help you both stay in top shape.

**Tip:** When receiving feedback, actively listen and take notes on what your mentee is saying. This will help you get the full measure of what they are saying so that you can respond effectively during your conversation and better prepare a plan towards improvement together.

### 3. Reflect On The Future

Asking for feedback can be intimidating at first, but you can overcome this hesitation by adjusting your mindset. Remember that no one is perfect and that everyone is still growing. After your meeting, take time to reflect on the feedback that you and your mentee exchanged, remembering that the critique is meant to help you further develop. You may find the Feedback Matrix exercise at the end of this document to be useful during this process.

**Tip:** At the end of your meeting, thank your mentee for providing feedback. This will end the conversation on an upwards note and remind you that receiving feedback is a good thing.

### 4. Take Positive Action

Feedback is only helpful when you take the next step and make a change to address areas for improvement. If you were previously unaware of an issue your mentee is raising, do not get defensive. Instead, ask for an example of where you fell short and if they have ideas for how you could improve. You may find the SMART goals framework useful for incorporating the feedback you received into your growth moving forward.

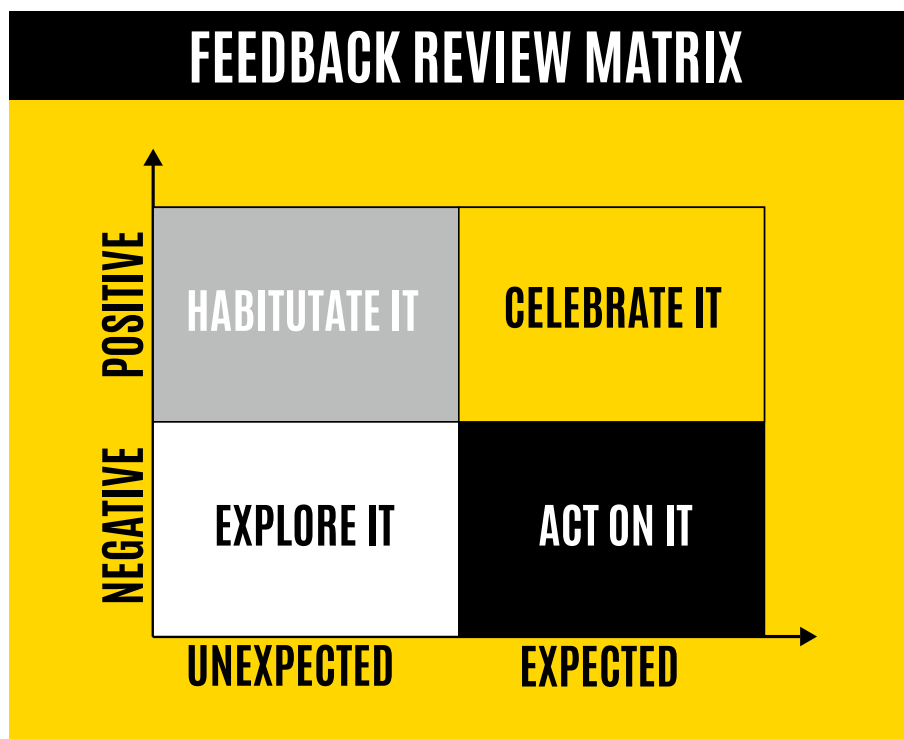
**Tip:** During your next evaluation meeting, take some time to check in with your mentee to determine if the changes you have made are making a positive difference.

## Example

- Dr. Patel is Robert’s research advisor; at the beginning of their mentoring relationship, the two of them decided that they would exchange feedback twice a month leading up to Robert’s dissertation defense. Lately, Robert has not been hitting his research deadlines and Dr. Patel wants to make sure that he is still on track with his project. Before their next meeting, she takes some time and makes note of what Robert has done well so far and the progress he has made. She also decides that her main piece of feedback will be centered around Robert submitting his section drafts after their agreed upon deadlines, rather than on time.
- During their meeting, Dr. Patel opens by mentioning that Robert has done an excellent job analyzing the data he has collected so far and specifically highlights a certain section where his writing skills shine. She then expresses concern that Robert has not been hitting his deadlines, and asks whether he believes their timeline needs to be adjusted a bit. Dr. Patel speaks with compassion and understanding, assuring Robert that she is there to help and wants to see his continued success.
- Robert feels comfortable enough to share that he is feeling burnt out with regards to his research and is discouraged, but that he did not mention it earlier because he felt like he could manage it. Dr. Patel thanks Robert for his candor and reminds him that the mentoring relationship is there to help him in his growth. Together, the two of them figure out a new series of deadlines using the SMART goals framework which support Robert’s further progress without feeling stifling and which still allow him to finish his dissertation in time. Dr. Patel also mentions that there are several mental health resources available on campus should he feel the need for additional professional assistance.
- After engaging in an active conversation with each other, Dr. Patel asks Robert if he has any feedback for her, which he provides. Dr. Patel practices active listening and takes notes on the comments she receives, asking for clarification when needed. Both leave the meeting feeling satisfied. After the meeting, Dr. Patel takes action to incorporate the feedback Robert provided into her mentoring moving forward.

## Feedback Matrix

Acting on feedback is the next step towards development. Using the Feedback Matrix to organize the feedback you receive can help you understand what should be celebrated, what needs to be changed, and where you can build more self-awareness.



Using the matrix, feedback falls into four categories:

### 1. Positive and Unexpected

**Habituate It** - This is feedback which points out a positive behavior you may not have been aware of. Think about how you can turn this behavior into a habit or routine so that you continue to succeed in the future.

### 2. Positive and Expected

**Celebrate It** - Take note of your accomplishments so that you can be proud of the clear, positive outcomes that your investment into the mentoring relationship has created.

### 3. Negative and Unexpected

**Explore It** - After discussing this feedback with your mentee, explore it in detail outside of your meeting to gain a deeper understanding of where you could improve moving forward. Reflect on potential spaces in your growth where you could foster more self-awareness and nurture positive change within yourself.

### 4. Negative and Expected

**Change It** - Design an action plan, set SMART goals, and continue exchanging consistent feedback with your mentee to help you change the problematic behavior or mindset.

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\*Adapted from [MindTools](#)

# CLOSING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP - MENTORS\*

Closing the mentoring relationship may occur for several reasons, including a pre-set mentoring timeline reaching its natural ending or because the relationship is no longer serving the best interests of the mentee or the mentor. The latter may occur because you need to take a step back from the mentoring relationship due to other responsibilities or because there is an unresolvable conflict in your relationship.

Use this document as a conversation guide to help close your mentoring relationship. You are encouraged to make any necessary adjustments to prioritize what you think is best in your unique mentoring relationship

## ***Pre-Set Timeline***

Your mentoring relationship may be on a pre-set timeline through a formal mentoring program or because you, as a pair, decided your connection was only going to last a specific length of time. Whether your relationship lasted a few weeks or several years, focus your last meeting around recapping your mentoring relationship and the development you both have experienced as a result of your time together. Discuss the outcomes of your mentee's SMART goals, various feedback you exchanged during your discussions, and other topics relevant to your personal mentoring relationship.

Thank your mentee for their investment in the relationship; although this specific chapter of your relationship may be ending, continue to reach out periodically to maintain the positive connection.

## ***Example: Serenity and Scott***

Serenity is a first year student taking part in a peer mentoring program to help her get acclimated to campus life. She was matched up with Scott, a third year student at the university. During the three week-long program, Scott met with Serenity three times to speak with her about balancing school and extracurriculars, student leadership opportunities, class scheduling, and more. During their last meeting, they recapped what they had both learned during their time together, as well as concrete ways that Serenity could apply her new knowledge in the future. Scott encouraged Serenity to keep in touch and closed the meeting by stating that she could always reach out if she required any further assistance.

## ***Taking A Step Back***

You may need to take a step back from the mentoring relationship for a variety of personal or professional reasons. These may include: new time constraints on your project, an increased academic load, family or health issues, the birth of a child, or other life changes. If you feel the need to press pause on your mentoring relationship, take the initiative and contact your mentee as soon as you are able.

Discuss your changing context, provide them with the information you feel comfortable sharing, and discuss when/if you would like to continue the mentoring relationship. Be sure your new timeline is realistic with your new situation and keep your mentee updated as you feel more comfortable entering the mentoring relationship again. If you require additional assistance in closing out the mentoring relationship, or seeking out further campus support (counseling, emergency funds, etc.) please reference [Resolving Conflict Within the Mentoring Relationship](#) for a list of resources.

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\* Adapted from Rackham



## **Example: Dr. Chao and Rosa**

Rosa is a third year graduate student and Dr. Chao is her mentor; as part of their relationship, Rosa attends various professional networking events around campus with Dr. Chao. However, after three months, Dr. Chao transitions from being a faculty member to being the head of her department. As a result of this change, she no longer has the time to attend most of the networking events. After evaluating her current responsibilities, Dr. Chao decided that she needed to press pause on her mentoring relationship with Rosa, at least until she became accustomed to her new job role.

As soon as she makes this decision, Dr. Chao emails Rosa to set up a meeting, explaining that she wanted to discuss stepping away from their relationship for a moment. During their meeting, the two had an open and transparent conversation, and Dr. Chao explained her new responsibilities and timeline for re-entering the relationship. She also recommended that Rosa reach out to Dr. Yang and Dr. Musa, two other faculty members in the department who would have time to attend the networking events with Rosa. Both left the meeting feeling comfortable and confident in their communication and in their paused relationship.

## **Unresolvable Conflict**

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, the mentoring relationship is not what you had hoped it would be. You and your mentee may not be the best fit, for a variety of reasons, from incompatible communication styles or inappropriate behavior by the mentee. Enter the process with professionalism and know there are several resources to assist you in this transition.

Before ending the mentoring relationship, reference [Resolving Conflict Within the Mentoring Relationship](#) to make sure you have tried to work out your differences with your mentee. Additionally, seek out the advice of another trusted faculty member or peer in your department to determine whether it is actually in your best interests to end the relationship. This is especially true if the relationship has a long history.

The [Office of the Ombudsperson](#) (confidential office) and the [Office of the Dean of Students](#) (non-confidential office) may be especially useful if you wish to speak to professional staff members. Their contact information, as well as additional resources, can be found on [Resolving Conflict Within the Mentoring Relationship](#).

If you do decide to terminate the mentoring relationship, think about the most diplomatic, respectful way to express to your mentee why you would like to make this change. Refer to [Practicing Giving and Receiving Feedback for Mentors](#) and [Practicing Giving and Receiving Feedback for Mentees](#) for best practices on opening up an evaluation-based conversation.

Inform your mentee promptly about your decision, no matter how awkward this may be. During your conversation with your mentee, explain clearly, but politely, why you wish to end the mentoring relationship. If they owe you any work, be sure to discuss this and arrange a schedule to complete any outstanding obligations. Try to end the conversation on a positive note.

## **Example: Eleanor and Michelle**

Eleanor is a second year undergraduate student. Earlier in the year, she entered into a mentoring relationship with a first-year graduate student named Michelle. At the beginning of their relationship, Eleanor was seeking support with scholarship applications. However, after two months, it became apparent to Michelle that Eleanor was not taking the work seriously. She constantly rescheduled meetings at the last minute, was not responsive to email or text communications, and always cut their time together short.

Even after Michelle spoke with Eleanor about her inconsistent communication, and expressed a genuine desire to accommodate her needs, Eleanor did not make any efforts to change her behavior. Michelle decided that she wanted to end the mentoring relationship because she did not feel like it was an effective investment of her time or energy. She spoke with a staff member in the Office of the Ombudsperson about the best way to end their relationship and received useful advice.

Before her meeting with Eleanor, Michelle went through [Practicing Giving and Receiving Feedback for Mentors](#) and [Practicing Giving and Receiving Feedback for Mentees](#), and thought about how she wanted to conduct that conversation. During their meeting, Michelle clearly, but diplomatically expressed to Eleanor why she wanted to end the relationship and thanked her for her time. She also suggested alternate resources on campus, such as the Writing Center, if Eleanor was seeking out more flexible support during her application process. She left the meeting feeling like she had made the right decision.



# RESOURCES

# ACTIVE LISTENING FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES\*

When engaging in conversation with each other as mentor and mentee, it is important to actively listen. This technique is meant to help encourage mutual understanding and respect within your relationship. Apply the five tips below to nurture fruitful and effective discussions between you both.

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## **1. Pay Attention**

Give the speaker your undivided attention and acknowledge that you are really hearing what they have to say. Acknowledgment can be as simple as an “uh huh” or nodding. Look directly at the speaker, don’t mentally prepare responses, and avoid distractions. Taking notes is acceptable, as long as it doesn’t completely transfer your attention.

## **2. Demonstrate That You’re Listening**

Use your own body language to show that you are engaged in the conversation. Nod, respond to points with facial expressions, display an open body posture, and encourage the speaker to continue with small verbal interjections. Take into account any cultural differences and norms in body language as well.

## **3. Reflect Back and Summarize**

As a listener, your role is to fully understand what is being said. Paraphrasing using starters like “What I’m hearing is...” and “It sounds like what you are saying is...” is a great way to reflect back and summarize the speaker’s comments. You can also ask questions like “What do you mean when you say...” and “Is this what you mean?” to request clarification.

## **4. Don’t Interrupt**

Interrupting can disrupt the speaker’s flow and limit your full understanding of the message being shared. Allow the speaker to finish each point before you begin asking questions and summarizing their statements.

## **5. Respond Respectfully**

As the listener, you are gaining information and perspective. After the speaker finishes, be candid, open, and genuine in your response. Assert your opinions and feedback, but don’t be overly harsh. Treat your conversation partner the way you would want to be treated.

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\*Adapted from [MindTools](#)

# RESOLVING CONFLICT WITHIN THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

If you are comfortable and confident in doing so, the first step in resolving conflict within your mentoring relationship would be to speak with your mentee or mentor directly, but diplomatically. Refer to [Practicing Giving and Receiving Feedback for Mentors](#) and [Practicing Giving and Receiving Feedback for Mentees](#) for best practices on opening up an evaluation-based conversation.

If you are part of a formal mentoring experience, then the next level of support would be to contact the individual or department who oversees that program and express your needs/concerns. Another source of assistance would be to go to other mentors or advisors in your life to ask if they have any insight into your mentoring relationship and the issue you are having.

If you require further external support to resolve the issue, please refer to the resources below. This nonexhaustive list is meant to help you navigate next steps. Remember, you always have the option to terminate the mentoring relationship if it is not serving your best interests; see [Closing the Mentoring Relationship for Mentors](#) or [Closing the Mentoring Relationship for Mentees](#) for more details. The University of Iowa's nondiscrimination statement are below for your reference.

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## Nondiscrimination Statement

As an institution, the University of Iowa is committed to creating a respectful and inclusive community for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, ethnic, religious, or other identities. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University's Human Rights policy. For more information on nondiscrimination at the University of Iowa, please contact the Office of Civil Rights Compliance.

## Sexual Harassment Statement

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the wellbeing of students, faculty, staff, and community members. All members of the UI community must uphold the UI mission and contribute to a safe environment that enhances scholarship and professionalism. It is encouraged that you report any incidents of sexual harassment immediately, although the choice is always up to you. For assistance on formal reporting, please contact the Office of Civil Rights Compliance.

## Confidential Resources

The resources listed here are confidential, which means that you will be able to talk to someone about your experience and it won't be filed in a formal report. Your concerns as a visitor will not be discussed with anyone without your permission; the only exceptions to this rule are when there is a risk of physical harm to someone or if they are ordered by a court to disclose information.

### Office of the Ombudsperson

The Office of the Ombudsperson is a resource for any member of the university community with a problem or concern. They provide neutral, independent, and informal conflict resolution, mediation services, and advocacy for fair treatment and fair process.

**Phone:** 319-335-3608

**Email:** [ombudsperson@uiowa.edu](mailto:ombudsperson@uiowa.edu)

**Website:** [ombudsperson.org.uiowa.edu](http://ombudsperson.org.uiowa.edu)

### University Counseling Services (UCS)

UCS offers a variety of counseling services including individual, group, couple, and relationship counseling. They also offer referral services and psychological consultation regarding mental health concerns one may have about a University of Iowa student or situation. With the exception of testing, all services are provided free of charge.

**Phone:** 319-335-7294

**Website:** [counseling.uiowa.edu](http://counseling.uiowa.edu)

### DVIP & RVAP

#### Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Crisis Services

The Mission of DVIP & RVAP is to provide comprehensive support services to victims of domestic and sexual abuse, dating violence, stalking, and human trafficking, focusing on immediate and long-term safety, empowerment, dignity, and hope.

**Free and confidential hotline:** 800-228-1625  
800-373-1043

**Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline:** 800-284-7821

**Website:** [dvipiowa.org](http://dvipiowa.org)

### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

EAP provides integrated services to faculty, staff, and their family members to promote well-being. The program offers confidential, short-term counseling, consultations, and information and referral to community resources.

**Phone:** 319-335-2085

**Email:** [eaphelp@uiowa.edu](mailto:eaphelp@uiowa.edu)

**Website:** [hr.uiowa.edu/employee-well-being/employee-assistance-program](http://hr.uiowa.edu/employee-well-being/employee-assistance-program)

## Non-Confidential Resources

The resources listed here are non-confidential, which means that if you speak to someone about your experience a formal report will be filed and an action of some kind will occur at the institutional level.

### Office of Civil Rights Compliance

The Office of Civil Rights Compliance sexual misconduct team investigates complaints and provides resources and support for issues related to sexual misconduct, harassment, and discrimination.

**Phone:** 319-335-0705

**Email:** [ocrc-titleIX@uiowa.edu](mailto:ocrc-titleIX@uiowa.edu)

**Website:** [ocrc.uiowa.edu/sexual-misconduct](http://ocrc.uiowa.edu/sexual-misconduct)

### Office of the Dean of Students

The Office of the Dean of Students can assist you with situations where violations of the Code of Student Life have occurred.

**Phone:** 319-335-1162

**Iowa Sexual Abuse Hotline:** 800-284-7821

**Email:** [dos@uiowa.edu](mailto:dos@uiowa.edu)

**Website:** [dos.uiowa.edu](http://dos.uiowa.edu)

→ [MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU](http://MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU)

# SAMPLE MENTORING AGREEMENT

Consider using this sample mentoring agreement, or an original one that you, as mentor and mentee, create together. Your mentoring relationship will be strengthened if you believe that your mentoring relationship will be strengthened by having a written, mutual agreement of your responsibilities, roles, and expectations.

## Introduction

As mentor and mentee, we are voluntarily entering into a mentoring relationship from which we expect mutual benefits and investment. We want this to be a rewarding, rich experience with our time together focused on the professional/personal/academic development of the mentee and the growth of our relationship. With this goal in mind, we have agreed upon the terms and conditions of our relationship as outlined in this agreement.

## Goals

We hope to achieve...	To accomplish this we will...

## Privacy

Mentors and mentees will keep information shared through the mentoring relationship private. However, mentors or mentees who are university academic or administrative officers (AAOs) have reporting obligations related to information disclosed about sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, or any protected class discrimination. Information disclosed about these issues will be shared with the Office of Civil Rights Compliance.

→ MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU

\*Adapted from University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

### ***Frequency of Meetings***

We will attempt to meet at least \_\_\_\_\_ time(s) a week / every other week / per month for \_\_\_\_ hour(s). If we cannot attend a scheduled meeting, we agree to notify one another in advance.

### ***Duration of Relationship***

We have determined that our mentoring relationship will continue as long as we both feel comfortable or until: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***No-Fault Termination***

We are committed to frequent, open, and honest communication in our relationship. We will discuss and attempt to resolve any conflicts as they arise. If, however, one of us needs to terminate the relationship for any reason, we agree to abide by one another's decision.

***Mentor Printed Name*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Mentor Signature*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Date*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Mentee Printed Name*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Mentee Signature*** \_\_\_\_\_

***Date*** \_\_\_\_\_

→ **MENTOR.UIOWA.EDU**

\*Adapted from University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL)

## REFERENCES



# REFERENCES

The sources below were referenced when creating the materials on the **Mentoring@Iowa** website, as well as the information in the **Mentoring Handbook**.

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