

# Role of a Mentor

## Aim of Workbook

An Introduction to the role of an ITT mentor and the skills required

## Learning Outcomes

Participants will:

- Identify skills and attributes of a mentor
- Reflect on own personal skills
- Consider different roles an ITT mentor can adopt
- List the responsibilities of an ITT mentor
- Action plan one development need

### Role of a Mentor

Mentoring is a very human activity. It is likely we have already been mentors even if we weren't given that title.

The name 'mentor' is derived from Homer's epic novel, *The Odyssey*. The character of Mentor watches over the young Telemachus after his father has disappeared. Through the goddess Minerva, he offers him advice and helps him realise his aspirations and true potential.

A mentor is a guide, a compass which shows you the direction to take based upon your own desire to change and become more effective in your career.

A mentor should be like an advisor, someone who is there to support you; they should be loyal, show an interest in you, can be trusted and, most importantly, be able to pass on their experience in areas that you know little or nothing about.

Mentoring is valid from both those who are senior to you and those who are on an equal footing, but should be someone who can help you to make progress in your career and navigate your way through the good and difficult times.

A mentor can be both an example to which to aspire and a wise, experienced person who helps you to achieve your potential.

Mentoring is ultimately designed to show you ways to view the world in a more positive way and prosper in the face of the challenges ahead.

## Role of a Mentor



**'Many people can remember being helped by someone who took interest in their welfare, shared their experience and knowledge with them, and enabled them to develop'**

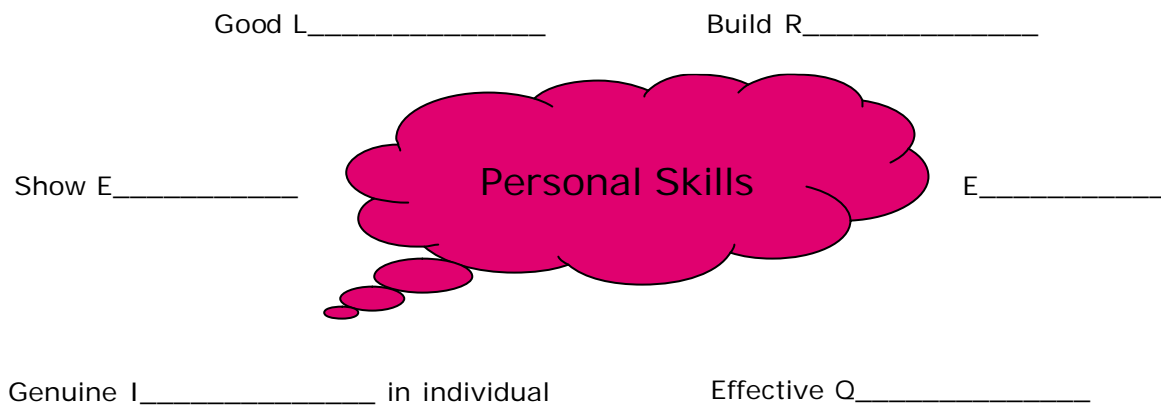
Alfred G, Garvey, B and Smith R (1998) *The Mentoring Pocketbook* Arlesford Management Pocketbooks Ltd, p11.

**TASK:** Think of one person who has made a difference to your life/ teaching.

What were the key qualities of the person who 'mentored' you?

## Role of a Mentor

Think about the help you received. Identify 3 ways in which good interpersonal skills contributed to what you were trying to achieve.



A good mentor is someone that is approachable, someone that you are able to trust, has the quality of empathy and is non-judgemental. When dealing with a trainee it is important that the mentor has good listening skills and is able to look beyond the initial disclosure to see if there may be other factors involved.

Mentoring is essentially about helping people to develop more effectively. They also assist a trainee to generate change in themselves, rather than doing things for them

## Role of a Mentor

The following list identifies core competencies required of a mentor. These were produced by a group of teachers (Source: Lifelong Learning UK (formerly FENTO), March 2006)

- good at own job
- rigorous, challenging
- doesn't blame
- gives honest answers
- easy to approach at any time
- knows what he or she is talking about
- knows organisation's routines
- actively questions the person being mentored
- enabling, caring, open and facilitative
- gives constructive and positive feedback
- provides subtle guidance but ensures person being mentored makes the decisions
- interested in the person being mentored on a personal / professional level – genuine concern
- willingness to debate, argue and discuss
- puts the mentee first
- well organised, patient and understanding
- enthusiastically persuasive
- down to earth and realistic
- shows an understanding of the mentee's perspective
- excellent communication skills

**Activity:** Look at the list above and identify which apply to you.

## Personal skills self-evaluation

**Activity:** Complete the personal skills self-evaluation form, courtesy of HudCETT overleaf.

Assess your own potential as a mentor by indicating ✓ on the continuum whether each item 1 - 10 is:

- a strength, or
- an area identified for further development

Your thoughts from this exercise can feed into your own personal action plan/ continual professional development (CPD).

An area for further development		A strength		
1	Are you a good role model? Someone to be respected because of their professionalism / ability / experience			
2	Are you an enthusiast? Someone who creates interest, makes a subject fascinating			
3	Are you an identifier of need? Someone who can help the trainee to identify needs, set appropriate targets			
4	Are you a teacher-guide? Someone who can show the trainee how to improve, share skills, discuss issues			
5	Are you a problem solver? Someone who can help the trainee to develop skills and overcome problems			

## Role of a Mentor

An area for further development		A strength		
6	Are you a manager of conflict? Someone who is a good negotiator, aware of institutional and professional politics			
7	Are you a career adviser? Someone who can help the trainee to consider career pathways and profiles			
8	Are you a supporter? Someone who listens and counsels, encourages and is accessible			
9	Are you good at constructive feedback? Someone who is detailed and non-judgemental			
10	Are you a networker? Someone who is able to network and access resources and further support			

(Adapted from Smith P and West-Burnham J (1984) *Mentoring in the Effective School*. London: Routledge)

**Task:** Note down what skills you feel you can bring to mentoring and any areas for development.

If you wish, further information/ tools can be found: -

- List of attributes/competencies of excellent teachers – p.109 -111, FENTO Mentoring towards Excellence
- Additional self assessment skills questionnaires –
  - 1) FENTO Mentoring towards Excellence, p120 -122
  - 2) Parsloe, E (2001) The Manager as a coach & mentor, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, London CIPD .66-69

## Role of a Mentor

There have been many debates about the differences between mentoring and coaching. There does appear to be similarities between the concepts and what is expected of both. This is supported by Dfes sponsored research – Mentoring & Coaching CPD Capacity Building Project led by Centre for Use of Research and Evidence in Education (CUREE) who offer a national framework for Mentoring & Coaching. They identify ‘mentoring & coaching have much in common changing emphasis in response to context and purpose’. They also suggest that both, mentoring and coaching involve taking people through a ‘structured process’. Whatever we call the supporting process, the ultimate aim is to ensure we **help the individual perform at their best**.

In the **Teacher Education context**, when you are mentoring you will find yourself in a variety of roles – see table below (courtesy of Lewisham College). The challenge as a mentor is being able to respond appropriately to the situation being presented or discussed.

### A Mentor’s Role(s)

An effective mentor actually adopts many different roles:

Role	What this involves...
Adviser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Inducting your participant into professional practice</li><li>• Offering advice on planning, teaching, assessment, verification, tutoring, the management of learning, and classroom management and challenging behaviour</li></ul>
Assessor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observing your participant teach and providing verbal and written feedback that helps them put your advice into practice</li><li>• Contributing commentary on your participant’s practice for a select number of the programme’s unit assessment elements</li></ul>
Broker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brokering your participant’s relationship with other colleagues who can support their development</li></ul> <p>For example, arranging for your participant to observe other experienced teachers</p>

## Role of a Mentor

Coach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping your participant to develop their skills</li> </ul> <p>The ultimate aim is your participant's independence and self-sufficiency. For example, you would never write a scheme of work for your participant, but you would provide an exemplar, ask them to draft their own SOW and then coach them on how to improve it</p>
Collaborator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in partnership with your participant and their tutors to plan your participant's professional development</li> </ul> <p>The centrepiece of this process is your participant's ILP. Open and regular contact with your participant and their tutors will be essential to making this collaborative process effective</p>
Confidant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listening - acting as a non-judgemental 'sounding board'. Starting a new job, career or course can be stressful and your participant may need 'space' to share their fears and worries</li> <li>• Discussing your participant's work, their role and specific problems or situations</li> <li>• Respecting confidentiality and not divulging any <u>privileged</u> information to a third party without explicit permission from your participant</li> </ul> <p>Naturally, programme information such as the ILP and observations of teaching are open to your participant's programme tutors, but privileged beyond this. In addition, there are some rare and special circumstances where confidentiality can never be offered. You will need to make this clear</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making explicit the boundaries of the mentoring relationship</li> </ul> <p>A mentor's promise of confidentiality does not give the participant permission to involve the mentor in unprofessional discussions about colleagues, or to treat the mentor as a personal counsellor</p>
Guide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping your participant identify their professional development needs</li> <li>• Supplementing organisational and departmental induction</li> </ul> <p>Advising on systems, rules and regulations - how the organisation works</p> <p>Signposting and introducing to key colleagues who support their role</p>

## Role of a Mentor

Role Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Being observed by your participant</li></ul> <p>New teachers in particular will value the chance to see you (and other experienced colleagues) in action so that they can emulate the qualities you demonstrate</p>
Resource Facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Helping your participant access rooms, keys, photocopying, OHPs, videos, e-learning resources and other teaching aids</li><li>• Sharing resources</li></ul> <p>Note that this should quickly become mutual - the mentor should get some back in return</p>
Reflective Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflecting on and developing your own practice as a mentor</li><li>• Contributing to the development of mentoring on the programme</li><li>• Learning from your participant as a fellow teacher</li></ul>
Subject Specialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identifying and supporting your participant's development needs in relation to the currency of their specialist knowledge and vocational skill</li><li>• Supporting the development of your participant's specialist pedagogy</li></ul> <p>Your input as a fellow subject specialist is particularly important within the context of the programme</p>

Adapted from the University of Greenwich's *Information for Mentors*

**Task:** having read through the above list, identify which roles you have used when supporting someone.

## Role of a Mentor

**Task:** Either on your own or in a small group produce a list of responsibilities that an ITT mentor has when supporting a teacher trainee.

**Check** your list against your own provider's specifications of what they expect their ITT mentor's to do. Is there anything you have missed? What is this? Will you need further advice?

**Final Task:** Having worked your way through this pack, action plan one development need, whether it is mentoring skills or knowledge and record in your own CPD file.