

# The merits of mentoring

**A**s you progress through the stages of your professional qualification you will find there are times when you could use a bit of advice or guidance on the best way to tackle new problems, or make the most of the opportunities available. Mentoring – building a relationship with a more experienced, senior professional at the top of his or her game – can be an invaluable source of inspiration.

Typically, an ideal mentor is someone who:

- You respect and admire in a relevant field.
- You have a comfortable, easy rapport with.
- Has reached a level that you aspire to.
- Is considered an expert and forward-thinking in their field.
- Is perhaps from a similar background as you (personally or professionally) so you can identify with one another.
- Will commit to your development and is keen to impart knowledge.
- Is positive and upbeat.
- Is not afraid to offer honest, constructive feedback and advice.
- Is not directly in charge of you or supervising your work.

## How does mentoring work?

There's no set pattern to how mentoring will run and it'll be different for each individual pairing. Some organisations and institutes offer official, carefully-structured mentoring schemes, but



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others will work on a more informal basis. Generally speaking, a mentor will offer the following benefits to their pupil:

- Career advice and guidance on professional development.
- Introduction to useful contacts and organisations.
- Exposure to innovative ways of thinking.
- Constructive criticism and feedback on

particular projects/career choices.

- Suggestions on how to build on strengths and overcome weaknesses.
- The opportunity to increase knowledge and develop new skills.

## Finding a mentor

Think carefully about what you want to get out of a potential mentor and always make sure the mutual expectations of both parties are clearly aligned. Don't be too over-zealous with a prospective mentor by demanding too much time and attention from them. Instead, talk openly about your aspirations and why you feel their guidance would be beneficial. Hopefully, through honest discussion from the outset, you can come to a mutually agreeable structure and time commitment. **PQ**

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