



VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF
WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

ALUMNI AS MENTORS PROGRAMME MENTOR GUIDE



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MAI I TE IHO KI TE PAE

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HAERE MAI AND WELCOME

Thank you for volunteering as a mentor.

Career mentoring is a valuable activity, and we hope it will prove to be an enjoyable and constructive experience for you and your mentees.

Alumni as Mentors is a collaborative effort of Te Ratonga Rapu Mahi—Wellington Careers and Employment and the Alumni team.

SUPPORT AND CONTACTS

We are here to support you and the mentees so that your mentoring partnerships can succeed. If you have any questions, concerns, or would like access to further mentoring resources, contact the Alumni as Mentors team.

✉ alumniasmentors@vuw.ac.nz

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Note: Unfortunately, we cannot reimburse Alumni as Mentors participants for travel or other costs incurred.

THE PROGRAMME

OUR PURPOSE

The purpose of the Alumni as Mentors programme is twofold: to support and strengthen our students' employability skills and prepare them for their future careers, and to facilitate and encourage the valuable contribution that alumni can make to the University's community through meaningful connections with students.

OUR APPROACH

Participant-driven mentoring: We encourage mentees to lead their mentoring partnerships, starting with initiating the mentoring connection. As they are provided with the agency to approach a mentor of their choice, we expect mentees to be well engaged and proactive in their partnerships and to have considered how their own goals and needs align with the mentor's stated experiences and expertise. Mentors, in turn, can evaluate the match between the mentee's needs and their own skills and experiences and make the decision to accept or decline the requests.

Flexibility: The flexible programme aims to suit a range of mentoring needs and goals, and it is up to each pair to set their own expectations for the focus and level of engagement in the partnership. However, we recommend at least three or four one-hour meetings over the formal mentoring period—long enough to get to know each other and to assist in some aspects of the mentee's career development.

Support: We aspire for mentors and mentees to feel well prepared for, and supported during, the partnerships. Mentees are required to participate in mentee training, and mentors can attend mentor training at any stage of their engagement with the programme. Mentors and mentees have access to resources and can contact the team for additional assistance throughout the year. The programme team also regularly requests updates from partners to assist in providing support when needed.

THE PROCESS AND WHAT TO EXPECT

We give mentees and mentors the ability to manage their own mentoring connections and programme engagement through a dedicated mentoring platform. Students accepted onto the programme can browse available mentor profiles and request mentoring connections from mentors, who, in turn, can accept or decline requests (if they believe they are not the right match or if timing isn't right). The programme team is available to assist if students are unable to identify suitable mentor matches and to provide support with ongoing partnerships.

As a mentor, you can expect to:

- ▶ be contacted by student mentees looking for your advice and insights related to your professional experiences and skills
- ▶ accept or decline these requests based on your availability and whether you believe you will be able to assist with their needs
- ▶ make yourself available to mentees whose requests you have accepted to help with career decisions and planning
- ▶ have access to support from programme staff to answer questions or address concerns relating to the platform and your mentoring partnerships.

MANAGE YOUR AVAILABILITY

You determine your own capacity for mentoring. Choose to mentor only one student at a time or make yourself available to multiple students simultaneously (if the latter, consider offering to introduce your students so that they can learn from both you and each other).

Mentees can access the platform and available mentors throughout the year but, as a mentor, you are able to control your visibility on the platform. If you are temporarily unable to mentor, change your availability settings to hide your profile. When your circumstances change, you can readjust your availability.

If you do not engage in the platform for an extended period, the administrator may deactivate your profile. You can easily request to reactivate your profile when you are able to re-engage with mentoring.

THE MENTEES

Mentees in the Alumni as Mentors programme are final-year students at Te Herenga Waka—Victoria University of Wellington. The programme is open to students from across disciplines completing undergraduate and postgraduate studies. The students range widely in professional experience, but they have all identified areas in which they would like a mentor's support to prepare for their careers.

HELP THE RIGHT MENTEES FIND YOU

The answers you provide in the application form are used to generate your mentor profile and to recommend you to students with overlapping needs. If you receive many requests from students whose career goals and needs are not a good fit for you, consider reviewing your answers to capture the attention of mentees whose needs and motivations better align with the help you can provide.

There is also a free text field in the application form where you can specify information you would like to communicate to potential mentees, including any preparation work you would like from a mentee ahead of a partnership, or details of who might be a suitable mentee for you.

MAKE CONNECTIONS AT EVENTS

All mentors are welcome to attend programme events, held in person and online. Unconnected mentors may find the events a good opportunity to meet students who have not yet started a mentoring connection; for example, if they feel shy about sending a mentoring request. Already-connected mentors may also choose to attend together with their mentee(s) to encourage networking skills development.



MENTORING SKILLS

WHAT IS CAREER MENTORING?

Career mentoring can be broadly defined as a professional partnership between someone experienced (mentor) and a novice (mentee). It is a voluntary and reciprocal learning relationship that offers professional and career development for the mentee, and opportunities for the mentor to grow through sharing their knowledge. It is typically mentee driven.

COACHING VS MENTORING	
COACHING	MENTORING
Task oriented Focus on concrete issues, led by content expert	Process/relationship oriented Wider focus, based on developing a positive relationship
Performance driven The purpose is to improve performance	Development driven The purpose is individual development
Coach and task driven Agenda set by expert coach and task at hand	Mentee driven Agenda set by the mentee

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM YOUR MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

Each mentoring partnership is unique, and mentees and mentors will vary in their individual expectations of the partnership. The following are some general expectations for both mentees and mentors. It is important to discuss specific expectations with your mentee at the start of the partnership and agree on what will work for both of you.

WHAT YOUR MENTEE CAN EXPECT FROM YOU	WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM YOUR MENTEE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Share your knowledge, experience, and offer career advice▶ Help them gain insight into potential career routes▶ Help them develop career skills▶ Provide support with their CV and interviewing skills▶ Offer networking opportunities where possible	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Take the lead in the partnership▶ Contact you and maintain communications regularly▶ Respond in a timely manner▶ Respect and deliver on the arrangements▶ Ensure the focus of the mentoring is careers related

Key expectations to discuss at the start of your partnership include communication (what channels to use), frequency of contact, and how to respond to changes in your circumstances (for example, last-minute meeting cancellations, dealing with competing priorities, and other commitments). Clear expectations make it easier for mentees to drive the partnerships.

It is common for mentees to have concerns about being a burden to their mentor, appearing naïve, lacking in direction, or not knowing what kinds of questions they can ask. These students may benefit from their mentor allaying these concerns while maintaining a professional relationship. Most mentees are just starting their career journey and, for some, this may be the first professional relationship they have established.



WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?

A good mentor is honest and encouraging, but also willing to offer constructive criticism. Good mentors will share their experiences and give their opinions but will also encourage mentees to form their own ideas. Good mentors will balance sharing their knowledge and insights with asking a variety of open-ended questions to encourage their mentee to self-reflect.

ROLES YOU MIGHT TAKE ON AS A MENTOR

Sounding board: Offering the opportunity to try out new ideas in safety

Listener: Giving time and space to help your mentee problem-solve

Coach: Giving encouragement and feedback

Networker: Helping to develop connections

Role model: Providing examples to learn from

Constructive critic: Providing friendly criticism that helps your mentee grow

Insider: Providing organisational or sector knowledge

Change agent: Challenging the status quo

Visionary: Being inspirational

A good mentor will also be responsive to their mentee's needs and will consider how their role as a mentor may change as the needs or the partnership goals change. Consider the mentoring roles you naturally take on in the partnership, how they align with the mentee's needs, and whether there is an opportunity for you to build skills in other roles through the partnership.

Overall, your role as a mentor will be to help your mentee identify and achieve their objectives. One way of doing this is to follow a three-point model, as outlined in the graphic below.

THREE-POINT MENTORING MODEL	
Evaluate Identify strengths and weaknesses in order to identify personal development needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Review your mentee's career-related activities to date ▶ Consider areas for development ▶ Evaluate your mentee's current skills and experience
Facilitate Help with access to learning opportunities, influential people, or resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Identify learning or employment opportunities ▶ Identify the resources your mentee will need to take up these opportunities (and provide access if possible)
Stimulate Encourage and motivate your mentee's self-development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Help your mentee focus on key areas they want to develop and suggest possible ways of developing them ▶ Support and encourage your mentee ▶ Recognise and celebrate your mentee's success ▶ Share your knowledge and networks

PREPARING FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP

STAGES OF A MENTORING PARTNERSHIP	
Initiating Building rapport Developing trust	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Get to know your mentee▶ Let your mentee get to know you▶ Discuss expectations▶ Discuss mentee's goals
Cultivating Establishing goals Developing and executing an action plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Help your mentee establish goals▶ Guide your mentee through the execution of these goals▶ Discuss progress, career options, attend events together, introduce the mentee to professional networks, share professional experiences
Evaluating Reflecting on lessons learnt Celebrating achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Reflect on progress made by both you and your mentee▶ Acknowledge the successes and accomplishments achieved over the course of your mentoring partnership

At, or before, your first meeting, it is important to begin by setting down expectations and agreeing on ultimate outcomes or goals. Mentors and mentees need to be clear about what they can offer and hope to achieve. We encourage mentees to reflect on what they would like to achieve through mentoring *before* they make a mentoring request. Setting goals to work towards together based on these reflections will give your partnership structure and help you identify possible tasks, activities, timeframes, and deadlines.

Take a moment to reflect on your own goals for the partnership. Beyond the rewards of helping to shape another's growth and assisting in their career journey, is there anything you wish to develop? Do you want to become a better mentor, communicator, listener, or leader? Are you seeking greater self-awareness and fresh perspectives? You will get more out of mentoring if you keep your goals in mind from the start. If you feel comfortable sharing your goals, it can be encouraging for your mentee to know that you also wish to learn from the experience.

You may wish to use an informal mentoring agreement to clarify expectations, goals, and outcomes (there is an informal agreement template on the mentoring platform). We also suggest that you or your mentee adds these goals using the goals function in your joint Connection Plan on the mentoring platform, to keep track of progress in a shared space.

FIVE QUESTIONS TO GUIDE THE MENTORING PROCESS

1. What do you really want to be and do?

This question is about aspiration and purpose. The question is also meant to get at the goals and broader aspirations of an individual. The answer to question one should uncover the individual's motivation—what is it they do or wish they could be great at doing?

2. What are you doing well that is helping you get there?

This question helps identify core strengths and the ability to execute the goal. What is someone naturally good at doing? What is it that someone does better than the average person that can help achieve their aspiration?

3. What are you not doing well that is preventing you from getting there?

This is about facilitating an honest and critical assessment of the challenges or weaknesses in a person that is slowing their ability to achieve their goals.

4. What will you do differently to meet those challenges?

Use this question to probe whether the person has the aptitude to change behaviour. People have a tendency to practise and repeat what they are already good at doing.

5. How can I help? Where do you need the most help?

The answers to the first four questions, matched against areas where you as a mentor have particular strengths, relationships, or learning resources, should help determine how you can best help someone to achieve the goal.

SUGGESTIONS FOR MENTORING ACTIVITIES

MENTORING ACTIVITY IDEAS
Review your mentee's CV
Hold a mock interview
Draft a career plan
Attend an event together
Discuss job openings
Arrange a workplace visit

In addition, you may consider covering some of these topics in your meetings:

About you:

- ▶ What is your educational background?
- ▶ What, if any, part-time jobs and extracurricular activities did you do while at university?
- ▶ What is your career history?

Your current job:

- ▶ What are your main responsibilities?
- ▶ What is a typical day like?
- ▶ What do you like and dislike about your job?

About the organisation you work for:

- ▶ How would you describe your organisation's culture?
- ▶ How do you compare to your competitors?

About the field or industry:

- ▶ Do you anticipate any changes or trends?
- ▶ How do salaries compare to other industries?

Job search techniques:

- ▶ How did you find your first job?
- ▶ Where should your mentee look for jobs in your field? What are typical application processes?
- ▶ How can your mentee build their network of contacts within your field?
- ▶ Offer to give feedback on their CV, application forms, or cover letters.
- ▶ Offer the opportunity to practise interviewing techniques or participate in a mock interview.

Thriving in working life

- ▶ What habits, strategies, or tools do you use to manage your work–life balance?
- ▶ Share how your work has changed because of the pandemic and whether there have been changes to more remote or flexible work.
- ▶ Share how you cope with or manage uncertainty or ambiguity.

EXPLORE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you are looking for help with something not covered in this guide, review the resources available on the mentoring platform. These include topics such as:

- ▶ how to use the mentoring platform
- ▶ mentoring skills
- ▶ mentoring worksheets
- ▶ preparing for mentoring
- ▶ ‘what-if’ scenarios and previous partnership stories.

You can also contribute to the discussion forum, share articles you have found helpful, and ask your alumni community for advice.

We welcome requests for new resources. Email us at alumniasmentors@vuw.ac.nz



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