



# MENTOR HANDBOOK

2024 — 2025



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# WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is an intentional, outcome-driven relationship designed to foster the growth and development of your mentee. Overall, the relationship is based on a mutual willingness to learn and share.

### **A good mentor:**

- Has strong communication skills
- Stimulates the mentee's own thinking and reflection and supports their personal development
- Is available and willing to connect with their mentee, giving appropriate guidance and feedback
- Is open-minded, flexible, compassionate, and encouraging

### **Your responsibilities:**

Depending on the particular goals of the mentee, as a mentor, your responsibilities may include:

- Helping to set short-term learning objectives and short-term and long-term goals
- Recommending and/or creating specific learning or development opportunities
- Transferring substantive knowledge related to your academic field of study (through facilitated group learning or one-on-one sessions)
- Relaying and modeling the best practices, values, and culture within your field of student, including challenging aspects
- Recognizing strengths and areas for development

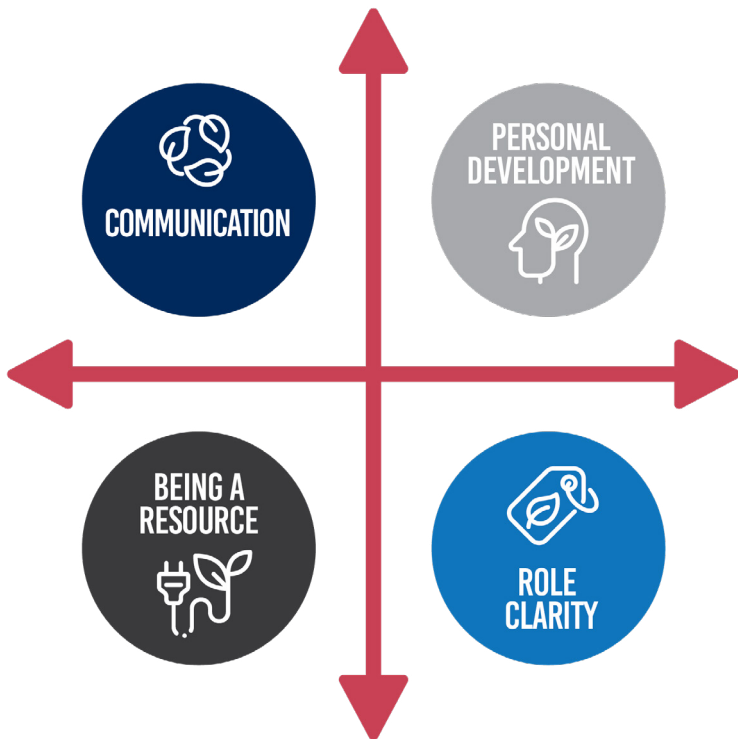


### **A mentor is not:**

- A tutor
- A counselor
- A teacher

# MENTORSHIP COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

There are four primary mentorship competencies that you can use to think about how to be an effective mentor.





### **Communication**

- Consistently practice effective communication skills
- Establish good rapport
- Use active and reflective listening and provide constructive feedback



### **Personal Development**

- Support and guide your mentee's learning
- Help your mentee set realistic expectations for success
- Encourage reflection and enable your mentee to learn from their experiences



### **Being a Resource**

- Connect your mentee to opportunities, people, resources
- Share your knowledge with your mentee
- Act as a tour guide of your area of expertise



### **Role Clarity**

- Clarify your own values, beliefs and attitudes and seek to use these to support your mentee
- Understand the impact of personal biases as well as your own limits
- Understand your role, purpose and expectations as a guide and as a resource

# MENTORING EXPECTATIONS AND ROLES

## **As a mentor, you always want to:**

- Treat your mentee with respect and sensitivity
- Focus on sharing your knowledge and insight
- Support your mentee in achieving their learning goals

## **Advisor**

- You can act as a sounding board and facilitator
- You use sensitivity and discretion
- You are not responsible for fixing problems directly

## **Protector**

- You act as a safety net — someone who supports your mentee
- You try to create a safe environment
- You refer your mentee to appropriate services or staff

## **Developer**

- You give structure and direction to the mentee
- You provide guidance based on observations during your interactions with the mentee
- You empower the mentee to handle their problems independently
- You should avoid telling the mentee what to do

### Broker

- You can identify skills or competency gaps through an objective lens
- You can identify and facilitate development opportunities

### Challenger

- You can positively encourage the mentee to meet high standards for academic conduct

### Clarifier

- You can provide needed support and enhance your mentee's self-esteem
- You can clarify organizational values within your area of expertise (academic and/or co-curricular)

### Affirmer

- You give needed support
- You exhibit empathy and understanding
- You should not discount your mentee's feelings or concerns







# BEST PRACTICES WITHIN MENTORSHIP RELATIONSHIPS

Successful mentoring requires a reciprocal and comfortable relationship between a mentor and a mentee. Both a mentor and a mentee must work together to be open-minded and respectful of one another.

## **Mutual benefit and mutual respect**

- The mentoring relationship is designed to foster the growth and development of the mentee; however, the relationship should be defined from the beginning as mutually beneficial
- Some goals that you may have as a mentor include: contributing to the mentee's academic development – sharing skills that are useful in your field of study and influencing the mentee's experience beyond the classroom

## Confidentiality

- You want to build trust with your mentee, but we recommend using sensitivity and discretion instead of promising confidentiality.
- There might be times when you are concerned for your mentee, yourself, or someone else. In this situation, you must connect with someone who can help.

## Professional communication, honesty, and feedback

- Your mentee will look to you to set the tone for acceptable levels of professionalism – remember you should be friendly, not friends. We invite you to think about the importance of professionalism and being friendly, while still maintaining the boundaries of your professional role; in other words, please know you can be friendly, without being their friend. For example, your relationship with a personal friend will and should be different from the one with your mentee; this will reflect in how you communicate, hold yourself in conduct, and engage in best practices.



# BUILDING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

## **Help your mentee set goals**

- Setting goals with your mentee at the start of your mentoring relationship is critical as it informs the direction the relationship will take.
- If your mentee is not clear on their goals, setting these goals can be the topic of your first mentoring meeting. You may ask questions like:
  - What made you sign up for the mentoring program?
  - What specific concerns or questions do you have?
  - How may I help you?
- There are resources to help you and your mentee set goals at the bottom of this document

## **Set expectations with your mentee:**

- Work with your mentee to agree on how and when you will communicate with one another and renegotiate as needed
- If your mentee is unresponsive, contact staff or program coordinators. Remember that students sometimes get overwhelmed

### **Share your story:**

- Tell your mentee about yourself (you can choose how much personal information to share; a mentor is a guide and a resource, but does not need to be friends)
- Share any challenges or mistakes you've made and present them as learning opportunities
- Share your university experiences: what did it take for you to get where you are?

### **Get to know your mentee:**

- Ask thoughtful questions about your mentee's interests and experience
- Ask what their University of Toronto experience is like
- Use active listening skills: reflect back what the mentee says, avoid interrupting, and show interest in your voice and body language

### **Offer options rather than solutions:**

- Avoid offering solutions to your mentee's concerns or challenges and instead help your mentee explore various options
- Share your own related experiences

# ACKNOWLEDGING OUR LIMITATIONS AS PEER MENTORS

In addition to the support you will provide your mentees during (based on program type), you will be in contact with your students online, on campus, and perhaps even out and about in the city. It is important that you remember to set boundaries with your students in and outside of your sessions or meetings.

You must strive to maintain an appropriate relationship in all situations: remember that you are your students' mentor, not their friend or their potential romantic partner. You cannot effectively mentor someone and have the equality of relationship on which friendship or a romantic relationship depends. Also, because of the power differences between you and your mentees, your friendly or flirtatious gestures could easily be misunderstood or seen as offensive.

## **Group guidelines and a mentoring agreement**

- Work with your mentees to develop group guidelines that can inform expectations during a facilitated workshop or group mentoring event
- Work individually with your mentee to complete a mentoring agreement that outlines your responsibilities

## Things to remember

- You are not a tutor. Please do not cover course material or comment on students' papers during your sessions or individual meetings. Instead, help them access tutoring, writing instruction and academic guidance. Your job is to advise your mentees on how they can become more successful students.
- We expect that you will develop your listening skills and that you will use these to assist and support students who are experiencing difficulty.
- We neither expect, nor want you to attempt to solve students' problems for them they need you to listen to them while they work out their own solutions and to refer them to appropriate services on campus.
- Keep program staff or coordinators informed about all issues and concerns.
- We expect that you conduct yourself in an appropriate manner with your students; you must treat all the students in your sessions and individually with respect.

# MENTORING AGREEMENT

## (FOR ONE-ON-ONE MENTORING)

The mentoring partners listed below agree to enter into a mentoring relationship.

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**Mentee Name:**

Signature:

Date:

**Mentor Name:**

Signature:

Date:

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To get the most out of your mentoring experience, you should talk about the expectations and goals that you and your mentor have for the mentoring relationship.

### **Agree on Expectations: How will the relationship work?**

1. Meeting together: What works best? Will we meet:  
In-person   Zoom   Phone   Email
2. In general, how often would we like to meet/interact (e.g., once per week, every other week, etc.)? Renegotiate as needed.

3. If a message is received, we will get back to each other within:  
24 hours   1-2 days   Other
4. If we can't make an expected meeting/interaction, how will we get in touch?

**Agree on goals: what do you hope to gain from the relationship?**

1. What are the mentee's goals for this mentoring relationship?  
What are the 3 things you would like to learn or develop as a result of interacting with your mentor? (See Goals-setting worksheet below)

MENTEE'S GOALS	
1st Goal	
2nd Goal	
3rd Goal	



2. What are the mentor’s goals for this relationship? What would you like to share with or impart to your mentee?

MENTOR'S GOALS	
1st Goal	
2nd Goal	
3rd Goal	

3. What actions can you both take to achieve these goals?

**Agree on privacy, confidentiality and trust:**

- 1. We both agree to protect each other’s privacy and abide by the boundaries of the mentoring relationship.
- 2. We both agree to abide by and appreciate that we will treat our conversations with sensitivity and discretion. Only sharing information up when needed.
- 3. We agree that if either of us wishes to leave the program early, we must advise the program coordinator and/or communicate directly with each other.

# GOAL SETTING

## Purpose of goal setting:

Setting goals will help you strive to achieve. Although goal setting is often challenging, it will increase efficiency and effectiveness in your mentoring relationship.

Goals are important because they:

- Guide and direct behavior
- Provide clarity
- Reflect what the goal setters consider important
- Help improve performance
- Increase the motivation to succeed
- Instill pride and satisfaction in achievements
- Provide challenges and standards
- Bolster self-confidence and decrease negative attitudes

## Set goals that are SMART:

**Specific:** use detailed information in plain language (i.e., names, dates, places, amounts - whatever details are necessary to make it clear). What do you want to achieve?

**Measurable:** quantifiable ways to know goals are working or if goals have been completed. Establish criteria for how to achieve a goal.

**Accountable:** indicate your role in achieving each aspect of the goal. Be proactive in taking action that will result in reaching the desired goal.

**Realistic:** ensure the suggested goals are practical and achievable. Strive for attainable goals and consider the resources and constraints relative to the situation.

**Timetabled:** include dates of when things need to be completed and allow reasonable time to complete each goal.



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: COMMUNICATION BLOCKERS

Mentors must be good communicators. But, sometimes when we think we are actively listening, we're really not. These are some examples of some common listening habits that may inadvertently block communication.

IF YOU...	YOU ARE...
Tend to offer advice on problems before hearing the whole story or without being requested	Advising or ordering
Spend your energy on trying to identify the speaker's motivations or underlying reasons for their behaviour	Analyzing
Try to assess yourself against the person you are talking to	Comparing
Identify ways to blame the speaker for their situation or disapprove of other people's conduct or standards of behaviour, or give advice on how general moral standards should be improved	Criticizing or moralizing

YOU ARE...	
Tend to drift off mid-way through the conversation or if a statement by the speaker suddenly takes you away from the conversation and back to an old memory	Day dreaming
Refuse to accept what the other person is saying, or you try to prove or rationalize your opinions and ideas	Debating
Become agitated or argumentative when someone disagrees with or criticizes you	Debating
Become agitated or argumentative when someone disagrees with or criticizes you	Defending
Quickly change the subject or continually make a joke if the topic is uncomfortable or upsetting to you	De-railing
Distracting the speaker by constantly interrupting their thoughts	Dominating
Let your mind wander and only catch the basic emotions of the speaker, or if you block out certain things	Filtering
Take everything you hear and refer it back to a personal experience before a speaker can finish	Identifying
Don't pay attention because you thought what the speaker said earlier was dumb	Judging
Ascribe (negative, judgmental) characteristics to the speaker based on some aspect of their story	Labeling

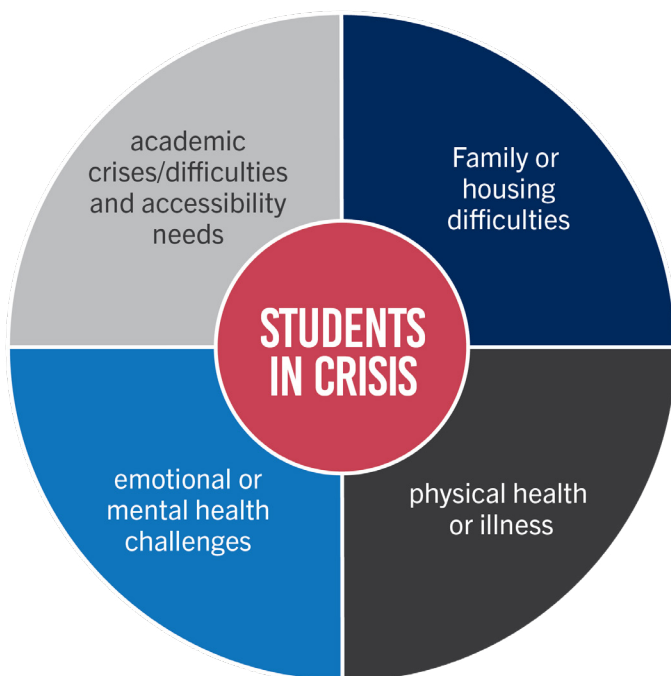
IF YOU...	YOU ARE...
Focus on facts over feelings	Using Logic
You make assumptions about what the other person thinks or is about to say	Mind-reading
You reduce the importance or play down the seriousness of what the speaker is saying	Minimizing
Constantly agree with what's being said in order to come off as nice or supportive, even though you're not really listening	Placating
Tell the speaker you think they acted correctly or did exactly the right thing	Praising
Interrogate the speaker without also acknowledging what they're saying	Questioning
Try to reduce the speaker's worry by telling them that things will be okay	Reassuring
Go over in your mind everything you are about to say next, rather than listening intently to everything that is being said	Rehearsing
Can find something to disagree with in every conversation or you use sarcastic or acerbic remarks to dismiss another's point of view	Sparring
Focus on telling the speaker about the consequences of their actions	Warning

*Adapted from The Communication Skills Book, New Harbinger, 2nd ed. 2003. McKay, Davis and Fanning.*

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: STUDENTS IN CRISIS OR DIFFICULTY

Mentors are often in positions to identify students who are in difficulty. Recognizing the signs of emotional distress and responding with interest and concern can be important in helping students find solutions to their challenges. The role of a mentor, though, is NOT to solve problems for other students. A mentor acts as a resource – to connect students to appropriate resources.

## Understanding students in crisis or difficulty



## How to identify students in difficulty

When identifying a student who may be in difficulty, it is important not to look at a single or isolated behaviour – instead, look at “clusters of signs.”

- 1 A stated need for help
- 2 Changes in behaviour
- 3 Marked changes in mood
- 4 Obvious changes in appearance
- 5 Difficulties communicating and/or apparent distortions of reality
- 6 Significant changes in identity or relationships
- 7 Health concerns
- 8 Serious academic concerns
- 9 Violence

# SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE IMMEDIATE REFERRAL

## Direct or Indirect Reference to Self-Harm or Suicide

- Take reference to committing suicide seriously: contact a person who is trained in suicide prevention
- Contact Campus Police (416-978-2222) or Toronto Police (911) –both operate 24/7
- Contact a staff person – Student Life staff at colleges and faculties
- Extra help: SAFETalk training (Contact: [mentorship@utoronto.ca](mailto:mentorship@utoronto.ca))

## Harm to Others

- Physical violence causing bodily harm and specific threats should be reported to appropriate staff
- Contact U of T Campus Police (416-978-2222) or Toronto Police (911)
- Contact the Community Safety Office (416-978-1485) – operates during University operating hours (8:45-4:30)



# RESOURCES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Resources at the University of Toronto often change. As soon as we print a list of resources, it is typically already outdated. Instead, we have outlined strategies to find appropriate resources for the students you are serving.



**Not sure where to start? U of T has its own resource finder called “Navi.”**

“Navi, short for navigator, is a chat-based virtual assistant. Navi can provide information on many topics, including admissions, financial aid, getting involved, careers, convocation and more. Additionally, Navi can provide more specific information regarding mental health resources. All you have to do is click on the chat button and tell Navi what you need help with.”

Simply search “Navi U of T” on the internet and the wayfinder should pop-up. Alternatively, you can visit: [prod.virtualagent.utoronto.ca](https://prod.virtualagent.utoronto.ca)

To learn more about Navi, visit the Office of the Vice-Provost, Students website: [viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/news-initiatives/navi](https://viceprovoststudents.utoronto.ca/news-initiatives/navi)

## Tips for Making a Referral

### 1. Identify the Need:

- a. Actively listen to the student you are supporting. Pay attention to what the person is expressing. What type of support do they need?
- b. Clarify the issue. Ensure that you understand the specifics of what is needed. Ask open-ended questions to learn more about their situation.

### 2. Determine the Appropriate Resource:

- a. Know your resources! Be familiar with available resources on campus, such as the Registrar's Office, Health and Wellness, Career Services, etc. Not sure where to start? Ask Navi! If it is not an emergency, you can also let the student know that you will do some research and get back to them with options.
- b. Match the need of the student with an appropriate resource and give options when possible. For example, if your mentee is struggling with a course, you may suggest connecting with a Learning Strategist, going to their TAs office hours, or finding a tutor.

### 3. Explain the Referral Process

- a. Inform your mentee why you are making the referral and how it can help them. This might help manage any anxiety or stress the student might have about getting connected to the resource.
- b. Offer specific information on how to access the resource. You will want to include contact information, office hours, and outline any additional procedures they might need to complete (ie. an intake form).

#### 4. Facilitate the Referral (3 possible pathways)

- a. You might give the student the information to access the resources on their own.
- b. The student might reach out to the resource while you are together (ie. giving the resource a call or sending them an email)
- c. You might introduce them to the resource (ie. walk over to the office together or write an introductory email between the student and the resource)

#### 5. Follow-up:

- a. Check back in with the student to see if they have been able to access the resource and if they are getting the help they need.
- b. Remind them that you are available to offer further assistance if needed.



