

Users' Guide

IAH MENTORING SCHEME

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Furthering the understanding, wise use and protection of groundwater resources throughout the world
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INTRODUCTION

At some point in their professional careers or personal lives, most people will have used their skill and experience to guide someone else - for example, talking to a young relative about which college to choose, or giving a friend some advice about their job. This could be called mentoring.

Mentoring is a relationship between two people - the mentor who has “been there, done that” and who is willing to share that experience with the mentee. The goal is to develop the mentee professionally and/or personally. Thinking specifically about our association, mentors could provide:

- Scientific advice and technical knowledge.
- Guidance on career options and pathways. This might include guidance on job types, interviews, networking or educational and training options.
- Practical experience and information, for example, about specific regions of the world or specific aquifer types.

The desire for the International Association of Hydrogeologists (IAH) to develop a mentoring scheme for its members comes largely from the membership itself. Given the global reach of the association and the many and varied academic and professional environments in which our members work, it is not envisaged that the IAH scheme will provide the level of mentoring required for Chartered Engineer or equivalent status. Many members of IAH achieve this status through national professional institutions. Even so, IAH aims that its mentoring scheme will be of benefit to many of its members in the years to come.

This short guide is both for mentors and mentees. It contains general notes and some specifically aimed at those taking on each role.



SCHEME STANDARDS

It is first necessary to set out what all parties to the scheme will provide:

IAH will:

- Provide training guidance for new and experienced mentors
- Provide regular opportunities for mentors and mentees to join the scheme
- Match mentors and mentees using published criteria
- Provide guidance for mentors and mentees to enable both parties to achieve maximum benefit from their mentoring relationship
- Provide opportunities for training and meetings at congresses and conferences and other appropriate occasions, and on-line to exchange views and experiences
- Provide advice for mentors and mentees about how to resolve any difficulties
- Monitor the scheme during its operation
- Evaluate and report on the scheme at agreed points

All mentors will:

- Meet the IAH Mentor person specification
- Agree to work within the IAH framework
- Complete a Mentor Profile
- Agree to take part in a feedback/evaluation process at the end of the mentoring relationship

All mentees will:

- Complete a Mentee Profile
- Agree to work within the IAH framework
- Agree to take part in a feedback/evaluation process at the end of the mentoring relationship

Anyone is of course still free to pursue their own mentoring arrangements outside the scheme.

HOW TO GET THE BEST FROM THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

1. Set the ground rules between yourselves and keep to them. Some examples are:

Frequency of contact

- How much time can you commit to this relationship?
- How often will you “meet”?
- Will this vary over the duration?
- How long can you spend in each meeting?
- Will the mentor be available between “formal” sessions?

Method of contact

- Mentor and mentee may be in different parts of the world, but you might still be able to arrange to meet in person, at an IAHR congress or other conference, for example.
- Otherwise, will you meet via email, phone, Skype, conference call?
- Who will initiate the call?

Duration of partnership

- How long will your mentoring partnership last?
- Will you set regular intervals to review whether you’re both happy with how it’s going, or will you review progress informally on an ongoing basis?

Confidentiality

How will you approach confidential business information?



There’s no “best” time, place or frequency for meetings – arrangements should just be mutually convenient and comfortable.

2. Clarify the mentee’s goals

Make sure from the beginning that both of you are really clear about what the mentoring partnership is for.

Is it:

- Help with setting long-term and short-term goals?
- Advice about advancing the mentee’s career?
- Help with networking?
- An impartial sounding-board for the mentee’s ideas?
- Advice on the application of specific techniques or methods in hydrogeology?
- Something else?



Review this as often as necessary - it’s fine for goals to change.

3. Take the initiative

If it’s time to schedule a meeting don’t wait for each other to initiate. Ask for what you want and need (without being demanding!).

4. Commit to the process

However informal and friendly the mentoring meetings become, treat the process with professionalism.

5. Build sustainable improvements, not quick fixes

Use the mentoring session to exchange views, ideas and strategies, not just immediate answers to a problem. A simple answer to a problem is rarely as valuable as an understanding of how to approach such problems in the future.



6. Evaluate the process

Regularly check with each other that all's going well.



If either of you are finding it hard to keep up the commitment, or you realise that you are no longer getting on well with each other - tough though it might be, you'll need to talk about it. Otherwise the mentoring meetings will be a waste of time; or, even worse, the relationship will founder with both of you feeling frustrated and resentful.

HOW TO END THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP



It is important that there is an actual conclusion – not just a vague drifting with longer and longer between sessions, with nothing much being discussed.

A formal conclusion (albeit informally conducted) allows mentor and mentee to reflect on the process as well as the outcomes, and to acknowledge each other's contributions. It may also allow the mentor to consider taking on another mentoring relationship.

It will usually happen when the mentee decides they have reached the mentoring goal(s) which they set out to achieve. The mentee now feels more confident and ready to progress without the mentor's support.

- At the end of your final formal meeting, review your mentoring relationship and what you value about it:
- What were the original goals and were they achieved?
- Did the goals change, and were the new ones achieved?
- What problems did you have and how did you resolve them?
- Would you be a mentee, or offer to be a mentor again in future?

Complete and submit the Mentoring Completion Form.



You might now agree to meet socially or simply call a halt.

TROUBLESHOOTING

It's important to remember that by far the majority of mentoring relationships are well-managed and fruitful. Agreeing, and being very clear about, the ground rules from the start will reduce the likelihood of problems. Being honest and open about how things are going will make it easier to deal with any problems that do crop up. For example, if you don't feel the relationship is working, it will be much better to say that, as pleasantly as possible, than simply stop returning calls or answering emails about the next meeting date.



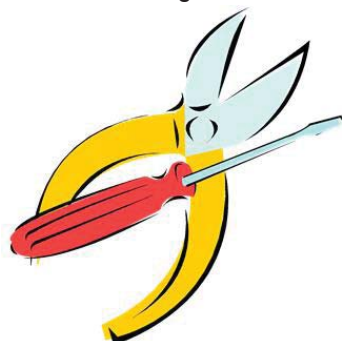
What if we have a personality clash and don't get on?

If you are able to talk about it, find a way to put personality differences aside and focus on expertise and experience. If you are unable to resolve issues, or do not want to continue in the relationship, there is no disgrace in accepting that. In this case, contact the IAH Secretariat so that they can record the termination and help you find another mentor/mentee, if appropriate.



What if I, as the mentor, feel out of my depth?

You are not expected to be an expert on everything. If it's a matter of hydrogeological information or technical expertise, refer the mentee to another appropriate person if you know that another IAH mentor will be more able to respond. If you don't know someone suitable, or you prefer to do it this way, refer the mentee back to the Secretariat who will try to do this for you. If your lack of confidence is more about your ability to manage the process, contact the IAH Secretariat for guidance.



What the mentee/mentor tells me something I shouldn't hear about?

Depending on the nature of the information, decide what to do with it. Refer to your groundrules, and remind the other person what is and isn't appropriate to talk about. In the unlikely event that it has legal implications, take appropriate action in consultation with the IAH Secretariat.



What if my mentee has personal problems?

If conversations about work problems lead into personal or family problems (that you are unable to help with or it is inappropriate for you to talk about) refer the mentee to their organisation's welfare personnel, if available, or to some other more focused professional help.



What if my mentor doesn't seem able to understand my situation, or to offer me helpful guidance?

It's best to be honest about how the process is (or isn't) working for you. Talk to your mentor about your disappointment, and ask for what you need (less advice; more clarity; more time, whatever). If this does not improve, then you should consider ending the relationship, but do so by the formal but friendly process we describe. The Secretariat will endeavour to re-assign you to a new mentor.



NOTES FOR MENTORS (GIVERS OF ADVICE)

To be an effective mentor, you need:

- experience relevant to the mentee – it might be technical, management, career or simply life experience
- time to make yourself available
- interest in your own self-development and still willing to learn
- confidence – in yourself, and the process
- ability to ask good questions, that will challenge the mentee to think for them self
- active listening skills
- ability to give constructive feedback

Mentoring is about structured development – you don't have to tell the mentee everything you know about a subject, at every opportunity. You are not trying to turn the mentee into a clone of yourself!

You will be transferring appropriate information, competence, and experience to your mentee, so that they can make good use of it, and build their confidence accordingly. You will often be using your broad experience to offer the mentee technical, career or training options for their consideration that they may not have thought of themselves.



As a mentor, you are there to encourage, nurture, and provide support, because you've already "walked the path" of the mentee.



You should make clear the personal rather than institutional (your own organisation, IAH, or others) nature of the specific advice you are giving.



Take care with regard to the endorsement of specific products or courses. You can, of course, mention them and provide reference points, but leave it up to your mentee to conduct his/her own research as required.

MENTORS - MANAGING THE MENTORING PROCESS

There is no one right, or perfect, way to conduct the mentoring process. Different mentors have different strengths and work in different ways. Whatever approach or style you use, you may find it helpful to work within a framework. Here is a simple, three stage model:



You could work through the stages by making them your schedule or agenda for a mentoring meeting.

Stage 1: EXPLORING GOALS

This stage may take some time – but investing time here will pay dividends later in the meeting and later in the relationship. If an issue is something significant, related to changes in personal or professional attitudes and behaviour, you may find that you need to explore it on and off for several months or longer. If it is a practical topic, related to knowledge or skills, it may take just a few minutes or a few hours to reach agreement on the goals.

Resist the temptation to give advice or tell the mentee what to do (there are occasions when advice and direction are helpful, but not at this stage).

Keep your questions and statements open; for example:

- ‘What would you like to talk about?’
- ‘Tell me about your experience of...’
- ‘Let’s explore this issue some more.’
- ‘What I understand you to be saying is.... Does that seem right?’
- ‘Shall we start by recapping on our last meeting?’



If you (or your mentee) become aware that you keep re-iterating the issue, making no progress, it is time to talk about the process and investigate why you are not moving on. For example, it could be reluctance to take action, or lack of real commitment to the mentoring process, on either side?



Stage 2: GENERATING INSIGHT

Reaching new understanding is key to successful action in the next stage. It should not be rushed, although it can happen quite spontaneously during a Stage 1 discussion. The timescale will depend on the nature and complexity of the issue and the quality of the mentoring discussions.

The mentee might get their insight in a number of ways, depending on the individual and the importance of the issue in hand. New ideas often release energy, it can be exciting. Once your mentee begins to see things differently, offer encouragement. Progress can be rapid but again - don't rush.

On the other hand, arriving at a new way of looking at things can sometimes be uncomfortable: the mentee may be resistant. Then progress can be slow or erratic and you might need to return to Stage 1. Challenge positively, and offer constructive criticism of current behaviour, perceptions and attitudes that may be causing problems.

At this stage it can be useful to share stories and experiences of your own, to help the mentee consolidate their understanding. But don't share too soon, as this risks taking the mentee away from their own agenda.

Reflect back and clarify what the mentee has learned and the implications of new developmental needs, goals and aspirations.

Stage 3: PLANNING ACTION

Arriving at an action plan (or plans) should be quite straightforward if you haven't rushed through the first two stages. Generally people find it easier to commit to, and follow through, their plans when they feel they "own" them, so give advice and direction sparingly. Make sure the mentee sets themselves achievable, but challenging, targets and timescales.

Not every mentor meeting will end in an action plan. As long as the mentor has made some progress towards understanding their issue and has agreed to commit to further work, that will be a successful conclusion. Sometimes, of course, the mentee may change their mind about the importance of a particular goal. A positive decision to drop it would also be a success (but just make sure that they are not shying away from something that is actually important to them.)

Helpful questions and statements here might be, for example:

- 'Let's look at the pros and cons of this option.'
- 'How can I help you do this?'
- 'Now that you've decided to do Y, is there anything you need to do first?'

Don't forget to affirm and celebrate progress.

ADVICE FOR MENTEES (RECIPIENTS OF ADVICE)

As a mentee - a trusted mentor can help you to:

- Gain valuable advice Mentors can offer valuable insight into what it takes to get ahead. They can be your guide and “sounding board” for ideas, helping you decide on the best course of action in difficult situations. You may learn shortcuts that help you work more effectively and avoid “reinventing the wheel.”
- Develop your knowledge and skills Mentors can help you identify the skills and expertise you need to succeed. They may teach you what you need to know, or advise you where to go for the information you need.
- Learn new perspectives You can learn new ways of thinking from your mentor (and your mentor can learn from you).
- Build your network Your mentor can offer an opportunity to expand your existing network of personal and professional contacts.
- Advance your career A mentor helps you stay focused and on track in your career through advice, skills development, networking, and so on.

PLANNING YOUR DEVELOPMENT

You should enter into the partnership with your mentor with some idea of what you want to achieve. You may find the following structure helpful to get your thoughts in order. Of course, you might actually use the mentored sessions to do this.

1) IDENTIFY YOUR GOALS

Clarify for yourself what it is you would like (or need) to achieve in order to progress in your career, or develop your experience and expertise. For example, it might be a decision you need to make; or a challenging situation you want to resolve; a situation in which you need to be influential, or further professional training. Of course, you may well have more than one goal.

Use specific and positive language that assumes you will achieve success. For example:

“My Director will agree to change the way we do XYZ so that we free up resource to do ABC.”

rather than

“I want to try to get my Director to agree to my proposals.”



2) IDENTIFY WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Consider the knowledge, skills and attributes that you will need in order to achieve the goal. Review your past performance. Use your appraisal records, if you have them. Ask trusted colleagues for feedback, if appropriate.

3) IDENTIFY SOME ACTIVITIES WHICH WILL RESULT IN THE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENT

Start with a few (2 or 3) activities which will provides tangible and short-term benefits. They should build upon, or modify your strengths; eliminate, or reduce the effects of, any weakness; and help you to develop new strengths.

Some people find it helpful to use a template, such as the one below, to help with personal development planning.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN			
Goal One:			
To achieve this goal I need to develop the following Knowledge/Skills/Attributes:	Development Activities	Desired Result (How will I know I did it?)	Target Date
1.			
2.			
3.			
Goal Two:			
Knowledge/Skills/Attributes I want/need to develop	Development Activities	Desired Result (How will I know I did it?)	Target Date
1.			
2.			
3.			
Goal Three:			
Knowledge/Skills/Attributes I want/need to develop	Development Activities	Desired Result (How will I know I did it?)	Target Date
1.			
2.			
3.			

AND FINALLY... MAKING MENTORING WORK FOR YOU

We are aware that this is a big step for the Association, but believe this is clearly in step with the changing needs of our members, who have made mentoring one of the clear priorities for the future development of IAH. This simple “Users’ Guide” has been prepared so that we have a framework within which to operate from the beginning. We wanted to avoid finding ourselves searching around for guidance if anything did go wrong; far better to have this simple guidance in place from the start, even though we expect to the scheme to operate in an informal and friendly way.

We have decided to incorporate the guidance to both givers and receivers of advice into the same short document. This has been done so that you can see both sides of the story and be aware of what your mentoring partner has been told about the scheme and thereby increase your confidence in the mentoring partnerships that will be established.

We wish you well in the development of fruitful mentoring partnerships, and we look forward to hearing how you are progressing. We also welcome any comments you may have on this User’s Guide, so that we can make any changes needed in the light of the specific experience of mentoring within IAH. Questions or comments can be emailed to mentoring@iah.org.



Good luck!