

# CAASTRO

ARC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE  
FOR ALL-SKY ASTROPHYSICS

**CAASTRO MENTORING GUIDE**



## INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME VIDEO — BRYAN GAENSLER

### **CAASTRO is the ARC Centre of Excellence for All-sky Astrophysics**

By answering fundamental questions about the nature of the Universe, by developing innovative ways of processing enormous data-sets, and by providing a diverse set of opportunities for students and young researchers, CAASTRO aims to establish Australia as the world-leader in wide-field astronomy. CAASTRO is uniting the world's top astronomers in a focused collaborative environment and is changing the way we understand the cosmos.

CAASTRO is delighted to welcome you to our mentoring program. You will have been matched as a mentor, mentee, or even perhaps both. It is extremely likely that your mentor/mentee is from another CAASTRO Node and is in another state. This has been done deliberately to encourage wider networking and collaboration across the universities and organisations within CAASTRO. We are keen for you to meet regularly with your mentor/mentee. We ask that as a minimum you try and meet once a year in person, perhaps at our Annual Retreat, and at least twice a year using the CAASTRO video-conferencing system. This is of course only a guide and you can meet more often than that if that works for both of you.

The CAASTRO Mentoring e-book is a guide to how mentoring works, and provides you with a template to document what you plan to achieve from the mentoring program. If you are enthusiastic you may return your Mentoring plan to the CAASTRO Education and Outreach Officer, Dr Wiebke Ebeling at [wiebke.ebeling@curtin.edu.au](mailto:wiebke.ebeling@curtin.edu.au), however this is not compulsory. The templates are available for use on the CAASTRO wiki.

If you have any questions during the program, then please contact Kate Gunn at [coo@caastro.org](mailto:coo@caastro.org) with any questions or concerns. We hope you enjoy this program, and it is beneficial to your future career.

This ebook has been designed by Learning Solutions from the University of Sydney on behalf of CAASTRO, using some material originally created for the Go8 Future Research Leaders Program

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND BENEFITS OF MENTORING



Mentors can provide guidance during times of change or growth in any aspect of a career. Some mentoring relationships are focused on particular skills (eg leadership, teaching, or research) and some are set up around a certain career stage. While mentors are frequently people who mirror the mentee's career goals and trajectory, there is also value in seeking mentors from different environments and with different experiences.

## DEFINING MENTORING VS COACHING

### Mentoring –

- indefinite relationship-based activity with several specific but wide ranging goals.
- does not have to be a formal process.
- generally provided by someone who is a subject matter expert in a specific discipline or industry
- agenda is open and continues to evolve over the longer term.
- Mentoring seeks to build wisdom – the ability to apply skills, knowledge and experience to new situations and processes.

### Coaching –

- focus is on the future and creating solutions and sits within a certain context (such as work, your career or the task at hand)
- usually takes place on a one-to-one basis and has a very specific purpose.
- usually a planned program with a much shorter timeframe than in mentoring, so the learning goals are usually determined in advance.
- Types of coaching: developmental, performance, team, transitional and onboarding.

At first thought, you may not be able to identify the difference between coaching and mentoring, partly because they do have some things in common. They are both means of helping an individual to grow and develop and they both involve interpersonal relationships. Both of them can vary in the level of formality, the length of duration, and the desired goals and outcomes. In fact, some coaches may play a mentoring role as well, though mentors will not be coaches unless they have a formal role in relation to the employee.



## BENEFITS OF THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Mentorship should be seen as developmental rather than remedial. It brings benefits to both parties and can assist even high-performing mentees to achieve their goals.

### For the mentee, the relationship can offer:

- The opportunity to reflect on and enhance professional skills and knowledge
- Insights into the professional communities in which the mentee hopes to operate
- A chance to explore potential career options and strategies
- A greater sense of career direction
- Increased confidence and job satisfaction.

### For the mentor, the relationship can provide:

- An opportunity to reflect on accumulated knowledge and insights
- Satisfaction from guiding and supporting a colleague at the start of their career
- Ongoing development of their own professional knowledge and skills through mutual discussion and enquiry
- New insights and perspectives from those entering the discipline and research area, An opportunity to build and / or demonstrate leadership skills.



## REFLECTION EXERCISE:

### Who have your mentors been?

- You may have had a person in your life that fits the role of a mentor. You may not have thought of them as a 'mentor' at the time, however in hindsight the title now seems accurate. Who was this person and what now makes you think they could be thought of as a mentor?
- Do you remember any conversations in your life that have represented a turning point? Who were they with? What was it about the conversation that made it so fruitful?



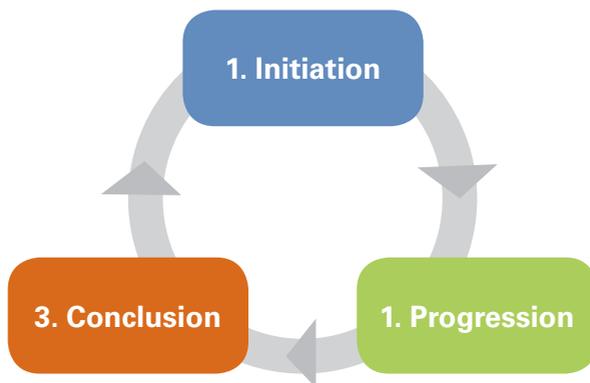
## READING

Download 'Nature's Guide for Mentors'

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v447/n7146/full/447791a.html>

Having a good mentor early in your career can mean the difference between success and failure in any field. Adrian Lee, Carina Dennis and Philip Campbell look at what makes a good mentor.

## 2. THE 3 STAGES OF A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP



### A. INITIATION — THE FIRST MEETING

This is the “roles and goals” stage and typically lasts one or two meetings. Mentor and mentee will start to build rapport and trust and will work towards defining the goals of the mentoring relationship. This is also the time to clarify any uncertainty about the guidelines for and boundaries of the relationship.

#### **Tips to get you started:**

Take some time in the first meeting to agree on some structural aspects of the mentoring relationship (it helps to manage expectations on both sides and it can avoid an uncomfortable clash later on).

Key to success: a good relationship. At the first meeting an open and honest discussion of backgrounds and experiences helps to build the relationship and assists with getting to know each other.

#### **REMEMBER:**

Mentors should work with mentees to clarify:

- The mentee’s goals for the mentoring relationship
- Boundaries around subject matter for discussion or assistance to be provided by the mentor
- An agreement about confidentiality
- How often the meetings will take place (preferable diarise them all at the beginning even if they have to change later), the method of meeting (eg phone, video or in person) and guidelines for ad-hoc contact. In the case of this program as many of the meetings as possible should be by video or face-to-face.
- How obstacles and problems are to be addressed
- An end date for the mentoring relationship.

## B. PROGRESSION

- In this stage, mentor and mentee continue to build rapport and trust. The mentee begins to progress towards his or her goals and the mentor works to support that progress. This work will of course include meetings but it can also take the form of a quick email or phone call to check in after a significant event or milestone. It could mean that the mentor refers the mentee to a useful article or publication, or suggests that the mentee contact a particular research group or other resource.

### REMEMBER:

- Mentors and mentees should also revisit the mentoring goals and milestones every few meetings to check on progress and to identify and address any barriers to achieving those goals.
- Some mentees may refine their goals as the relationship progresses and some could abandon the original goals altogether and define new ones. This should not be seen as a setback or as something to be avoided – it is in fact a positive sign that the mentee is thinking through their issues and challenges and gaining clarity on their priorities.



**Roadblock:** What do you do if the relationship stalls after a few meetings?

It is important to maintain momentum, even if it means that the mentor or mentee takes control of the scheduling of meetings. If this happens, it may signal the need for mentor and mentee to discuss the progress of the relationship and to analyse what is working for them and what is not.

### Mid-point evaluation

Most mentoring relationships will benefit from a mid-point evaluation. This could be as simple as a brief conversation at the beginning of a meeting, but it is a valuable tool to help both parties make the most of the time that they are devoting to the relationship.

#### Sample questions include:

How effective is the communication in our meetings?

What are we doing well?

What could be done better?

How could we use our time more effectively?

Are we making satisfactory progress towards our goals?

Where do we go from here?

## C. CONCLUSION

The mentoring relationship will conclude once the mentee has achieved his or her goals, or once the agreed term has expired. It is important to conduct an evaluation of the relationship to help both parties acknowledge and celebrate successes, and to capture any learnings that may assist them to make future mentoring relationships even more positive.

In addition to any formal evaluation process, mentor and mentee should take some time to discuss some of these points.

- Reflect on the mentee's progress towards the goals you set at the beginning of the relationship and appreciate the difference between the mentee then and now. What changes does the mentee feel have been most significant?
- Talk about the memorable moments of the mentorship. What will the mentee take away that they find most valuable? What will the mentor take away?
- What challenges lie ahead for the mentee?
- What support does the mentee need in the future?

Some mentors and mentees continue the relationship in a less formal sense – perhaps meeting occasionally for coffee or communicating via email. Others move on to new and productive mentoring relationships in other fields. Mentees can also consider taking the step of becoming a mentor themselves.

For more information on a Mentoring agreement please refer to the CAASTRO intranet or contact [coo@caastro.org](mailto:coo@caastro.org)

# 3. SETTING GUIDELINES

It is important to clarify the guidelines for the mentoring relationship at the first meeting. These might include:

- Setting limits on subject matter to be discussed (eg a mentor might not feel comfortable offering advice on interpersonal issues with the mentee's colleagues) and confidentiality
- Setting limits on the duration of meetings (an hour is a reasonable time but it is not set in concrete)
- Clarifying that there should be no expectations around sourcing career opportunities or acting as a referee.

Most mentors and mentees find it useful to meet more frequently at the start of the relationship, and then less frequently once the relationship is more settled. So they might meet monthly for the first few meetings, then quarterly after that.

Mentors should also be clear about referral points for issues that they do not feel comfortable addressing. A mentor is not expected to solve every problem for a mentee, but it does help to know where to go for assistance.

These guidelines may change by mutual agreement as the relationship develops, but both parties will feel more comfortable if some boundaries are set at the first meeting.

## SETTING GOALS

- The act of putting a goal down on paper is a big step towards achieving it.
- Key to success: Define goals and milestones will also help to measure success and to evaluate the mentoring relationship at the end of its term.
- It may be a cliché, but if you don't know where you want to go then you won't know when you get there.
- Encourage mentees to define ambitious, inspiring goals that can also help them understand the reality of achieving those goals.

The mentee's short and long term goals will naturally drive much of the structure of the mentoring relationship.

### Examples:

- If one of the goals for the mentoring relationship is to build the mentee's skills and confidence in networking it may be appropriate for the mentor to set some specific tasks around people to contact. In this case, the mentor might work with the mentee as to how that contact might successfully occur and might then debrief the efforts next time.
- If one of the mentee's goals is to balance time for research with the demands of teaching, then the discussion may involve reviewing strategies for time management, communication and delegation.

The most effective mentoring relationships are ones in which the participants work as partners. Both mentor and mentee have responsibilities and each must take an active role in ensuring the relationship continues and flourishes.

# 4. RATE YOURSELF AS A MENTOR / MENTEE

## How well would you rate yourself as a mentor?

- Am I supportive and respectful of the mentee's own skills, expertise and qualities?
- Do I share experience and knowledge of the discipline
- Do I share new ideas, expertise, models of good practice, lessons learn
- Am I probing to provide opportunities for the mentee to reflect, explore and evaluate, rather than simply giving advice and instruction on how things might / should be done
- Am I providing constructive, realistic and relevant feedback with due recognition of the individual's context and background
- Am I providing strategic advice on the mentee's development, career aspirations and strategies
- Am I making time for meetings and review any paperwork / documents prior to scheduled meetings
- Am I celebrating success with the mentee?
- Am I encouraging and inspiring the mentee to reach their goals?

## How well would you rate yourself as a mentee?

- Am I keen to learn, explore ideas and seek guidance / feedback?
- Am I reflecting on and acting the feedback provided by my mentor?
- Am I respectful of the mentor's knowledge, skills and reputation whilst acknowledging that this may not be the only model for success?
- Am I able to recognise and acknowledge the mentor's contribution?
- Am I communicating my needs and expectations and providing feedback to the mentor?

# 5. SUCCESS TIPS FOR MENTORS



**ROADBLOCK:** It is important that mentor and mentee address any concerns or issues as they arise. These are a common part of mentoring relationships and need to be managed promptly within the framework of honest and respectful communications. Most issues can be resolved, but it should be acknowledged that some mentoring relationships may not continue to the agreed term.

## Tips for sustaining the mentoring relationship are:

- Treat the mentorship as a priority. Do not cancel meetings – you need to maintain the momentum and connection.
- At the end of each meeting, agree on a time for the next meeting.
- If you have concerns or issues, share them with your mentee in an honest but sensitive fashion. Hidden issues will fester and poison the relationship.
- Try to create a relationship where both parties benefit.
- Recognise that the relationship will change over time as the mentee learns and grows.
- Look for additional learning opportunities. The mentee, might, for example, shadow the mentor for a day or attend meetings as an observer.
- Occasional, spontaneous contact – a quick phone call or email – will be appreciated.
- Aim for a learning process that is reflective and open to new experiences. This is important for both parties. See yourself as a facilitator of learning, rather than the expert or source of answers.
- Share your own experiences but try to do so in a way that is useful for the mentee. Respect the fact that the mentee will have a different background and experience and that some options or suggestions may not be valuable for them.
- Spend as much time as possible in coaching mode – ie, “asking” not “telling”.
- Remember that the mentee is steering this process so resist the temptation to control the relationship.
- Build the mentee’s confidence; encourage, inspire and challenge.
- Enjoy the privilege of mentoring and seek feedback to improve your skills.

# 6. MANAGING COMMON PROBLEMS



Reflection: What are some of the common issues that you may have encountered in previous mentoring relationships? How did you overcome and/or resolve those issues?

Like all relationships, mentoring comes with its share of unanticipated issues. Some may even result in the termination of the relationship.

The key to overcoming obstacles is to make sure both mentee and mentor understand that they are a common part of mentoring and to be prepared to deal with them promptly.

If one person is upset or struggling with some aspect of the relationship he/she should let the other person know. Then be prepared to discuss the nature of any problem, why it is an obstacle and then work together to resolve the issue. If the problems continue, the relationship should end.

Here is a list of common problems and some suggestions for managing them.

## PROBLEM 1: TIME AND EFFORT

No one ever has enough time to do everything that they want to in their job, and mentoring can sometimes seem a lesser priority than the urgent everyday issues that we need to deal with.

## PROBLEM 2: DIFFICULTIES IN BUILDING TRUST

It can be difficult to build rapport and trust with the mentee if the two of you haven't spent much time together before.

## PROBLEM 3: FEELING THAT YOU HAVE TO BE THE SOURCE OF ALL ANSWERS

Many mentors feel that they always have to have a solution to every issue that the mentee raises.

## PROBLEM 4: ASSUMING THAT THE MENTEE'S EXPERIENCES WILL MIRROR YOURS

It can be easy to assume that the mentee will follow in your footsteps and will benefit from making the same choices that you did.

# 7. SKILLS FOR MENTORS

## — ACTIVE LISTENING



Active listening is the technique of focussing on the speaker and on what is being said. It doesn't mean waiting for your turn to talk or concentrating on what you want to say next. Active listening ensures that mentors and mentees will make the most of the conversations during their meetings.

### Some tips for active listening are:

- Listen for more than just facts. Listen behind the words for ideas and themes. Ask yourself, "Why am I being told this? Where does it lead? Why is this important to my mentee? What else is going on here?"
- Judge content, not delivery. Sometimes a verbal style different to our own can make us switch off. Focus on what is being said, not how it is being said.
- Listen optimistically. Don't let judgements about the person or their previous performance colour your perceptions of this message.
- Don't jump to conclusions. Don't presume you know what the speaker is talking about halfway through their sentence. You will find that you wander off into your own thoughts and you may miss something important.
- Concentrate. Don't let distractions interrupt your listening. Don't let your thoughts wander, focus on analysing what is being said.
- Work at listening. Give the speaker feedback in terms of nods, smiles, and body language such as leaning slightly forward. Ask questions to clarify things you're not sure of. Some people find it helps to take notes, but always ask for permission first.
- Use non-verbal and minimally verbal prompts (nodding, "uh-huh") to encourage the person to keep talking.
- Summarise and / or paraphrase to check for understanding.



### REFLECTION EXERCISE:

#### Active Listening

The next time you are in a meeting with a small group of people, focus your attention on (1) the message you're giving and (2) each person in the audience: their mood, their words, their facial expressions, and their nonverbal behavior. You may be tempted to focus on the message only, or on yourself and how you're delivering the message. Instead, try focusing on the message and each person in the audience. Being able to both talk and listen is the mark of a master communicator. This ability will give you access to understanding people and will allow you to connect with them in very powerful ways.

# 8. SKILLS FOR MENTORS

## — GIVING AND RECEIVING FEEDBACK

Feedback is vital for both mentor and mentee. A major part of the mentor's role is to provide specific, timely and thoughtful feedback to the mentee. The mentee is responsible for providing "feedback on feedback"; responding to the mentor with comments about the method, frequency and quality of the feedback, along with requests for specific assistance to help them in their development.

In the academic world, the practices of critical thinking and critical analysis can lead to the belief that criticising people is acceptable. Feedback is very different to criticism and the distinction between the two should be clearly understood.

Criticism can be seen as judging someone by a set of standards and can sometimes be an attempt to control that person. It does not look to improving future outcomes. On the other hand, feedback is:

- Aimed at positive future outcomes
- Intended to solve a problem or to help a person improve in some way
- Separated from emotions.

### IN GIVING FEEDBACK, SOME MENTORS CHOOSE TO FOLLOW THE FOUR ASKS MODEL.

In this model, we ask 4 things:





## REFLECTION EXERCISE

Think about a time recently when you were given constructive feedback – were there any barriers to receiving this feedback? What were your emotions? What happened initially? What happened over time with the information? Did it trigger any changes in your behaviour or thinking?

Mentors will inevitably need to offer constructive feedback at some stage of the mentoring relationship. When this happens, it will be useful to keep the following guidelines in mind.

Constructive feedback should be:

- Specific and detailed
- Free from emotion
- Focused on observable behaviours, not assumptions.



When giving constructive feedback, always ask the mentee to share their thoughts or comments afterwards.

**RECEIVING FEEDBACK GRACIOUSLY IS A SKILL THAT ALSO NEEDS TO BE PRACTICED.**

**REMEMBER THE “FIVE PS AND A T” MODEL.**

# 9. COACHING SKILLS FOR MENTORS



Many of us use coaching techniques in other aspects of our roles without consciously labelling them as such. Coaching skills are an essential tool for mentors, and mentors should aim to spend as much time in “coaching mode” as possible.

Coaching in its simplest form is the process of facilitating self-directed learning. It can be summarised as “asking not telling” and focuses on identifying the gap between the current state and the desired goal, then deciding on a solution to bridge that gap.

## Coaching is not:

- Telling someone they are wrong
- Judging
- Making the mentee do things your way
- Counselling or therapy.

Coaching is about helping the mentee to access their own resources and to create a plan to move towards their goals.

Obviously there are times when it is neither appropriate nor helpful to coach the mentee. Mentors should imagine a continuum of behaviour, with one end representing coaching and the other mentoring in its most narrow sense.



In a typical mentoring meeting the mentor will move along the continuum depending on the mentee’s needs. Mentors should aim, though, to spend as much time towards the coaching side as possible. One guideline is the 80 / 20 rule: the mentee should be talking for around 80% of each meeting and the mentor for 20%. Some mentors also use the acronym WAIT, or “Why Am I Talking?”

If the mentee is asking for a simple answer or a concrete fact, then of course the mentor should provide that. And if the mentee just doesn't have the knowledge or experience to find an answer on their own then persisting with a coaching approach will only cause frustration. However, where there is an opportunity for the mentee to learn by exploring an issue and generating options, the mentor can move into coaching mode. Over time, this will help the mentee to become more resourceful and more confident in their own problem-solving abilities.

One standard model for coaching is the GROW approach to structuring a coaching opportunity. GROW represents the four stages of a coaching conversation:

- |                               |                                |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Goals -What do you want?   | 3. Options –What might you do? |
| 2. Reality –What is happening | 4. Wrap-up –What will you do?  |



As coaches, we should encourage our mentees to question the immediate goal or issue; to gain more information about the reality or current challenge and what alternatives have already been explored; to identify some options for moving from the reality to the goal; then to wrap up the conversation by agreeing with the mentee on next steps.

# 10. EVALUATING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

One distinguishing feature of structured mentoring relationships is the end date. Both parties enter into the mentoring partnership knowing that there will be a conclusion to the formal program, although many mentors and mentees continue to meet on a more casual basis.

Evaluation processes can take the form of surveys, interviews or focus groups but they are vital to the continuing improvement of the mentoring program within a unit or organisation. It is important to examine unsuccessful relationships as well as successful ones in order to learn what is needed to increase the number of effective partnerships.

# FURTHER INFORMATION

## BOOKS

- Collins, J. and Porras, J. (1996) "Building Your Company's Vision", Harvard Business Review, Vol. 74, Iss. 5, pp65-77.
- Collins, J. and Porras, J. (2002) Built To Last
- Lee, A., Dennis, C. and Campbell, P. (2007) "Nature's guide for mentors": Nature, vol. 447, June, 791 – 797.
- Rolfe-Flett, Anne (2002) Mentoring in Australia, Prentice Hall
- Fisher, Kate (April 2004) "Critical self-reflection: what is it and how do you do it?" Southern Cross University, Lismore.
- Debowski Shelda (2008) "Mentorship" Chapter 4 of the Induction Module – Future Research Leaders Program, Group of Eight Universities.

## WEBSITES

- [www.coachingnetwork.org.uk](http://www.coachingnetwork.org.uk)
- [www.mentoring-works.com](http://www.mentoring-works.com)
- [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)
- [www.mentoring-australia.org](http://www.mentoring-australia.org)
- [www.australianmentorcentre.com.au](http://www.australianmentorcentre.com.au)
- [www.womensmentoring.com.au](http://www.womensmentoring.com.au)
- [www.mccarthymentoring.com](http://www.mccarthymentoring.com)
- [www.horizonsunlimited.com.au](http://www.horizonsunlimited.com.au)
- [www.mindtools.com](http://www.mindtools.com)

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Need further information or have a question about the CAASTRO mentoring program?

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