

AdvanceHE

+ **Aurora Mentoring Handbook**

Key information for mentors of Aurora delegates

The Aurora Support Team



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Mentoring with Aurora

Welcome

Thank you for becoming an Aurora mentor. We are delighted to welcome you to the Aurora community and value your contribution to addressing the underrepresentation of women in leadership across higher education.

Mentors play a significant role in the Aurora experience. As a mentor, you will support your mentee to reflect on and apply their learning within their role and organisational context. You will also provide opportunities for them to learn from your experience, insights and understanding of institutional culture.

Aurora is Advance HE's leadership development initiative for women in academic roles up to senior lecturer level and in mid-level professional services roles. The programme is designed to inspire and encourage women working in higher education to explore leadership as part of their career and to develop their confidence and capability as leaders.

Although progress has been made, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles across higher education. Addressing this imbalance involves enabling women with leadership potential to develop the aspiration, skills, knowledge and opportunities needed to pursue leadership roles.

Each Aurora cohort includes several interconnected elements designed to provide participants with a practical, engaging and inspiring learning experience. The programme includes:

- + Welcome and Introduction Webinar;
- + Four development days;
- + Two action learning sets, one of which is self-hosted by delegates
- + A series of optional networking events.

The mentor's role is to encourage and support the participant, provide insight into institutional processes and culture, and help them explore potential challenges and pathways to success. Each participating institution is responsible for coordinating mentoring relationships through its Aurora Champion. Mentors and participants can also work with the Aurora Champion to identify and address institutional barriers affecting women's career progression.

Mentoring is a core component of Aurora and supports participants to continue their learning and development throughout the programme. Many institutions already have well-established formal or informal mentoring schemes. The information in this handbook is

intended to complement existing guidance and may also support the wider development of mentoring within your institution.

Where an institutional mentoring scheme is already in place, its established protocols and procedures take precedence. Where no such scheme exists, this handbook provides core guidance, together with a Toolbox of practical resources. The Toolbox materials can be adapted to reflect your institutional context and the specific needs of the mentoring partnership. The Toolbox resources are available at the end of this handbook.

Setting up a Mentoring Scheme

If you would like to set up a mentoring scheme in your institution and are not sure how to do this, [Advance HE's Consultancy Services](#) can support you with this work.

History

Aurora was created in 2013 in response to the Leadership Foundation stimulus paper '[Women and Higher Education: Absences and Aspiration](#)' written by Professor Louise Morley (January 2013), which showed that there were fewer women in the most senior positions in higher education than ten years previous. The paper identified areas that could be addressed to change this. Many influential stakeholders at the time including vice-chancellors, HEFCE (now The Office for Students) and the Equality Challenge Unit (now Advance HE) agreed the situation called for action, and the feedback from the sector told us they would like to encourage more women to plan for leadership roles at an earlier point in their careers.

When Aurora was launched, it provided the first development activity specifically for women. We wanted to distinguish it from other leadership development programmes and chose a model which blends formal development and education, self-directed study, mentoring, and takes a partnership approach with institutions.

Aurora is the name of the Roman goddess of the dawn, who in myth reinvents herself each morning. The concept of the dawn or fresh start, combined with the symbolism of a woman who is flexible and responsive to change, seemed an appropriate metaphor for what we are trying to achieve with this programme.

What is Aurora?

Aurora is Advance HE's [award-winning](#) leadership development initiative for women. It is run as a unique partnership, bringing together leadership experts and higher education institutions to take positive actions to address the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in the sector.

Led by a team of leadership experts, participants explore four key areas associated with leadership success: Identity, Impact and Voice; Core Leadership; Politics and Influence; and Adaptive Leadership Skills.

Since its launch in 2013 more than **16,000 women** from nearly **200 different institutions** across the UK and Ireland have participated in Aurora.

Aurora seeks to support women and their institutions to fulfil their leadership potential through thought-provoking activities, collaborative problem-solving activities and motivating stories, supported by inspirational women role models. Participation embeds strong networks of early career women across the sector to share best practice, insights and experiences.

Who is Aurora for?

Aurora recognises that women are not a homogeneous group. Their experiences of leadership, career development, opportunity and exclusion may be shaped by the interaction of multiple aspects of identity and circumstance. These may include race and

ethnicity, disability, sexuality, age, faith or belief, socioeconomic background, caring responsibilities, gender identity, employment status, career pathway, nationality and migration experience. Effective mentoring takes account of the whole person without making assumptions or expecting the mentee to disclose personal information.

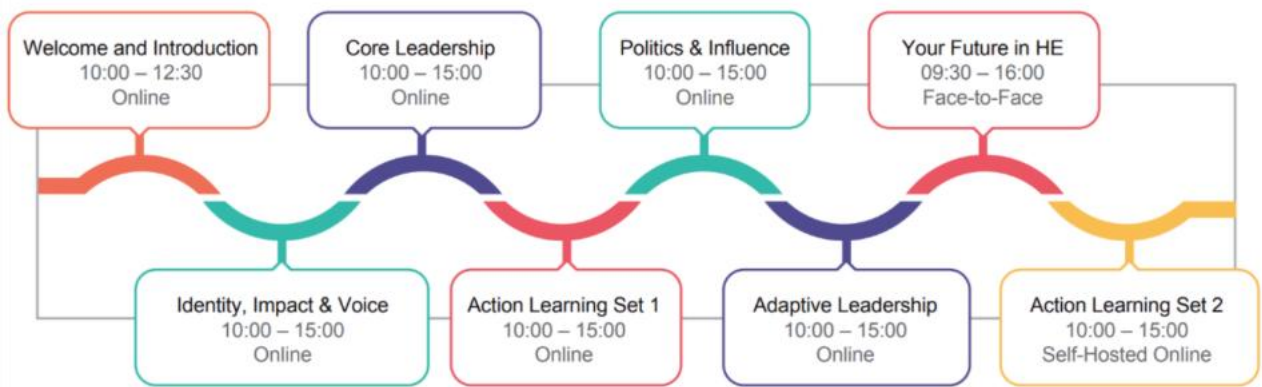
Aurora Journey

Development Days

Aurora is a collaboration between institutions and Advance HE, consisting of a welcome and introduction webinar, four development days, two action learning sets, a face-to-face day* and a mentor allocated by the institution.

Participants will be asked to:

- + Commit to a Personal Development Plan to work on their personal development
- + Proactively seek to implement the learning from the programme in their organisations
- + Attend the Welcome & Introduction webinar, which will outline the Aurora journey, plans and expectations
- + Attend each of the development days, and the two action learning set days (first one held by AHE and the second self-facilitated)
- + Complete any prework assigned and outlined in the Aurora Workbook
- + Undertake self-directed learning throughout Aurora, aligned with developing interests and where time allows;
- + We recommend you work with a mentor throughout the programme;
- + Be willing to access leadership opportunities and champion for change.



Modules

Welcome and Introduction Webinar

The Welcome and Introduction session is an integral part of the programme. It will give you an opportunity to meet your fellow Aurorans and start forming crucial relationships for your development. We will invite you to share your individual objectives for taking part in Aurora and will discuss how the Aurora journey can support achieving those. We will be joined by a guest speaker who will share with us their experiences of being a female senior leader.

Identity, Impact & Voice

Identity, Impact and Voice will launch you into your leadership journey by focusing on what ‘makes you, you’ and the people who have inspired you. We will also discuss how your identity impacts your leadership in positive ways. Lastly, we will be thinking about what it means to be on the receiving end of you, how you show up and how you might flex your communication style to have a greater impact on all those around you.

Core Leadership

Core Leadership is all about you – who you are, what matters to you, and how to mobilise the tools in your REAL leadership toolbox. Working together, supporting each other, we explore purpose and values and what these mean for leaders. Articulating the what and the why of your leadership brings clarity about you and what you represent. Sharing our stories and experiences, we explore leadership in HE, further developing your network.

Action Learning Set 1

Hosted by Advance HE, delegates will be introduced to the peer-to-peer support process of Action Learning Sets (ALS). This is a widely used and reliable model for helping people form supportive groups, develop their listening and communication skills and solve their own issues within their career. Following an introduction to the process of ALS, delegates will be allocated to groups of 4-5 delegates from a mixture of institutions and areas of higher education, where they will spend the duration of the session developing those skills through an experiential learning process.

Politics & Influence

This development day invites participants to look at their individual leadership against the backdrop of their institutions’ cultures and politics. Individuals are invited to examine their levels of emotional intelligence and personal influence, emerging with an enhanced ability to amplify the profile they want to nurture. Participants will be encouraged to think about building coalitions, developing networks and making lasting, mutually supportive connections.

Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership day will introduce an approach to leadership which focuses on leading change. Through introducing the concepts of leading without authority, collective leadership and working with multiple leadership intelligences, we will equip participants with skills and abilities needed when navigating complex changes in the current global and national higher education and research contexts.

Your Future in HE

This face-to-face day will begin with a panel of expert speakers discussing ‘The Future of HE’ followed by a Q&A. With plenty of time for networking, delegates will explore the key leadership themes from the online development days in smaller groups. Sharing

experiences and aspirations, examining the challenges women face as leaders and identifying the practical steps that can be taken to achieve their goals.

Action Learning Set 2

For this final session, delegates reconvene and host their own Action Learning Set group online, where they continue to support each other using the ALS process, further developing their communication and listening skills.

Network and Exchange Sessions

Aurorans are invited to join our alumnae community, which provides opportunities to connect with current and past participants from both the UK and abroad through our [Advance HE Connect Platform](#). Aurorans will have access to the international Aurora Community for online networking. We also host our free virtual Aurora Community: Network and Exchange events each month, allowing participants to meet other Aurorans and discuss key topics and issues. This will include highly requested themes such as effective communication, influence, and life transitions, and will be supported by panel discussions and guest speakers.

Mentoring commitment

The Aurora programme runs for approximately six months, and during that time, we recommend that mentors meet with their mentee between four and six times, each for 40 minutes to an hour. Mentees are expected to set up and agree on the agenda for each meeting at a mutually convenient time. These meetings can take place in person or virtually. The mentor is not required to complete any paperwork or report back to the Aurora team.

The role of the mentor is to encourage the development of mentees by providing information, advice, guidance, and support. Ideally, the mentee will bring topics to the meeting which align with the Aurora programme, and the mentor facilitates the learning process through questioning, examples and information. The mentor acts as a guide and sounding board but has no responsibility for mentees' actions and decisions.

Many institutions have well-structured mentoring protocols, and we are happy for those to be made available to Aurorans who need a mentor. In such cases, the institutional scheme procedures and requirements will apply. However, if the institution has limited experience and capability, we set out in this document some tools and approaches that can be used.

In the subsequent parts of this document is information about becoming a mentor, information about the process and key steps, plus sample documents and crib sheets that might be useful for less experienced mentors.

Roles and Responsibilities

Aurora Champion

Aurora champion/s are the face of Aurora within their institutions. They are the lynchpin linking participants, role models and mentors, and leading their institution's engagement with Aurora. The role of the Champion is to:

- + Identify and select participants to attend Aurora
- + Brief the participants on Aurora and the commitment expected of them
- + Ensure that each participant has access to an appropriate mentor
- + Support the mentors and participants at their institution
- + Ensure all delegates receive Aurora event details
- + Support the participants in using their new skills
- + Manage transfer requests
- + Provide opportunities for Aurora participants to share their experience and learning
- + Be the first point of contact for mentors.

Aurora Admin

Some institutions have chosen to support the Aurora Champion with an Aurora Admin(s) - the point of contact for the administrative and booking details. As a mentor you may receive communication from them.

Aurora Mentor

Aurora mentors bring a range of identities, backgrounds and experiences to the relationship. Ideally, the mentor will have greater seniority or relevant experience and an understanding of organisational culture and internal dynamics.

Mentors need to be able to build a positive and trusting relationship with their mentee, dedicate sufficient time to the mentoring partnership, listen actively, and ask thoughtful, open questions that encourage reflection, learning and problem-solving. Their role is to facilitate learning and support the mentee's continuing personal and professional development.

Aurora Mentee

The Aurora participant, as the mentee, owns and drives the mentoring process. Their commitment and active engagement are central to developing a productive mentoring relationship.

Mentees enter the relationship with a willingness to learn and take ownership of the process, participating actively and constructively as an equal partner. They remain responsible for their learning, reflection, decisions and actions.

Clear expectations help establish mentoring as a developmental partnership rather than a teaching relationship. Mentoring does not involve the passive transfer of the mentor's experience and knowledge, nor does it provide patronage, preferential treatment or special access through the relationship.

The mentee is responsible for arranging meetings and agreeing the practical details, including the timing, location or online platform. Where meetings take place in person, a private and appropriate space that supports confidentiality, accessibility and the safety of both parties is preferable.

Becoming a Mentor

Benefits of Mentoring for Mentors

The benefits you gain from your mentoring experience will be unique to you, as they will depend on your relationship with your mentee. However, there are some key benefits that you could gain from your mentoring experience:

- + Honing your mentoring and listening skills
- + Insight into another area of the university/department/team
- + An opportunity to network with other professionals
- + Understanding of how mentoring can assist development
- + Encouraging self-reflection
- + Development of skills and knowledge
- + Sense of achievement from helping your mentees achieve their goals
- + Leadership development

Defining Mentoring

‘Mentoring is about forging a relationship where a more experienced and knowledgeable individual provides guidance, support and advice to a less experienced person who is at an earlier stage in their career or development’ (Clutterbuck, 2012). The support and guidance provided enables the mentee to develop a more rounded insight into their skills and aptitudes and take responsibility for their own development.

Role of a Mentor

Mentors may find it helpful to reflect on what their role might look like in practice.

This may include supporting mentees to distinguish between areas where they can exercise influence and barriers arising from organisational practices, cultures or wider systems. Effective mentoring can foster individual agency while recognising that responsibility for addressing structural inequality does not rest with the mentee. Where appropriate, mentors may help mentees explore sources of support, suitable routes for raising concerns, and potential collective or organisational responses.

Key Tasks

- + Create a supportive and psychologically safe environment that enables mentees to reflect openly, discuss challenges, and explore opportunities for growth and development.
 - + Provide information, advice, guidance and support for mentees to:
 - + Facilitate mentees’ engagement and progress towards a successful career
-

- + Help identify personal, interpersonal, organisational and systemic barriers, explore their impact and consider appropriate sources of support or action.
- + Build confidence
- + Raise motivation levels and aspirations
- + Offer relevant experience and perspectives while supporting the mentee to develop an authentic approach to leadership that reflects their own values, identities, strengths and aspirations.
- + Engage in training and development opportunities to ensure high-quality provision of mentoring
- + Promote and support the key aims and values of the institution of which they are part

The Mentor aims:

- + To uncover opportunities for learning
- + To provide a safe, objective, non-judgmental, and confidential space for the mentee
- + To provide guidance and advice, particularly when the mentee has become stuck or is about to make a mistake that will do long-term damage to their career

Offer relevant experience and perspectives while supporting the mentee to develop an authentic approach to leadership that reflects their own values, identities, strengths and aspirations.

- + To support mentees in managing their own learning
- + To encourage self-directed reflection, analysis and problem solving
- + To promote high-quality decision making
- + To be a sounding board – to challenge assumptions, ideas & behaviours
- + To motivate the mentee to achieve objectives
- + To inspire

Adapted from Klasen, N. & Clutterbuck, D. (2002), Implementing Mentoring Schemes

The Mentor helps the Mentee to:

- + Practice, evaluate and adapt their ideas and processes in a sheltered way so that they emerge as confident and competent individuals within their profession.

- + Develop and enhance the self-awareness and interpersonal skills that will enable them to function better in the world of work.
- + Develop a professional perspective that will enable them to locate their work performance in the wider context of the work-place and the community.
- + Develop powers of self-evaluation and a capacity for independent learning, which together enable mentees to maximise their gain from all learning events and to seek out future learning opportunities on their own.

Adapted from Klasen, N. & Clutterbuck, D. (2002), Implementing Mentoring Schemes

Key Personal Qualities that Support Effective Mentoring

Attitude

- + **Enthusiastic** – genuinely interested in the mentee and their concerns, needs, goals and aspirations.
 - + **Open** – prepared to share their own experience of similar issues, being honest about themselves and encouraging honest reflection from the mentee.
 - + **Empathic** – able to appreciate how the mentee thinks, feels and experiences the world.
 - + **Inclusive** – values and respects diversity, recognising that women's experiences are shaped by intersecting identities such as race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, age, faith, socioeconomic background, caring responsibilities and other aspects of identity.
 - + **Culturally aware and curious** – seeks to understand the mentee's unique context and avoids making assumptions based on their own experiences.
 - + **Positive in outlook** – able to appreciate the mentee's perspective, identify strengths and possibilities, and support solution-focused thinking.
 - + **Committed to supporting the leadership and career development of women from diverse backgrounds and experiences** – recognising that barriers and opportunities may vary for different individuals and groups.
 - + **Flexible and open-minded** – adapts their approach to meet the mentee's needs and circumstances.
 - + **Reflective** – willing to consider their own assumptions, biases and perspectives, and learn from the mentoring relationship.
 - + **Has sufficient time available** to build and sustain an effective mentoring relationship.
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Skills

- + **A good listener** – able to focus fully on what the mentee is saying and understand both their words and the context that shapes their experiences.
- + **Motivating and encouraging** – able to channel the mentee's energy into constructive action, new challenges and opportunities for growth.
- + **Able to offer an appropriate balance of challenge, encouragement and support.**
- + **Uses a supportive and developmental communication style** that enables the mentee to explore options, build confidence and identify their own solutions.
- + **Creates psychological safety** – fosters an environment in which the mentee feels respected, heard and able to discuss successes, concerns and challenges openly, without pressure to disclose experiences of discrimination, trauma, disability, health, family circumstances or identity.
- + **Able to work across difference** – builds effective relationships with people whose backgrounds, identities and experiences may differ from their own.
- + **Identity-aware questioning** – invites the mentee to consider how their identities, experiences and context may influence a situation, without presuming that identity is relevant or asking the mentee to represent a wider group.

Experience and Knowledge

- + Brings relevant experience and perspectives while supporting the mentee to develop an authentic approach to leadership that reflects their own values, identities, strengths and aspirations.
- + Has knowledge and experience of their organisation and an understanding of its culture.
- + Understands that career progression and leadership experiences are influenced by organisational, cultural and systemic factors, as well as individual choices and actions.
- + Has the endorsement of their Aurora Champion.
- + Has sufficient higher education sector experience to offer informed advice, insight and support.

The role of the mentor therefore relies on applying a flexible, inclusive and adaptive approach, creating a psychologically safe environment in which the relationship can thrive and the mentee can realise their potential.

Mentors may sometimes use language that does not land as intended or make an incorrect assumption. Effective mentoring does not require perfect knowledge, but it does require openness, accountability and a willingness to repair. Listen to the impact, acknowledge it without becoming defensive, apologise where appropriate, and agree on how to move forward.

Key Mentoring Skills

Mentoring draws on key communication skills that are also valuable in many other contexts. Their primary purpose is to facilitate the mentee's thinking, rather than to provide ready-made solutions or answers.

The mentor's focus remains on supporting the mentee's growth and development. Offering too much information or advice can limit independent thinking and leave the mentee feeling overwhelmed. Instead, mentors can create space for reflection, exploration and discovery.

Modelling behaviours such as asking for feedback, acknowledging uncertainty and being open about not always having the answer can also be valuable. This reassures the mentee that gaps in knowledge exist at every level and that learning and development continue throughout a person's career.

Questioning

The questions a mentor asks can significantly influence the direction and quality of a mentoring conversation. Using a range of question types can encourage reflection, deepen understanding and help the mentee explore different perspectives. Examples include:

Open: "Which areas are you finding easier or more difficult?"

Inquiring: "What factors do you feel contributed to that?"

Probing: "What do you mean by...?"

Reflecting: "You described it as a 'mountain'. In what way?"

Hypothetical: "What might you do if...?"

Comparative: "What are the relative benefits of each option?"

Closed: "Who needs to be involved?"

The following communication strategies can support an effective mentoring relationship:

Using open questions: Beginning questions with *how*, *why* and *what* can encourage fuller responses and deeper reflection.

Summarising: Drawing together the main points covered during the conversation.

Clarifying: "Can you explain what you mean by...?"

Reflecting: “Am I right in thinking that you are saying...?”

Noticing non-verbal communication: Paying attention to body language and tone of voice, while checking observations rather than making assumptions. For example: “I noticed a change in your expression when you mentioned that. Would you like to say more?”

Allowing silence: Giving the mentee time and space to consider ideas, questions and possible responses.

Building on ideas: Inviting the mentee to expand on a thought or approach. For example: “That is an interesting approach. Could you tell me more about how it might work?”

Offering positive feedback: Providing genuine, specific feedback supported by relevant examples.

Listening actively: Giving the mentee full attention and creating space for them to do most of the talking. Further guidance on active listening is provided below.

Closing positively: Ending the session by recognising progress, summarising key insights and clarifying any actions the mentee wishes to take.

Active Listening

Active listening is a fundamental mentoring skill. It involves giving the mentee sustained and focused attention, concentrating fully on what they are communicating rather than simply hearing their words.

Active listening draws on verbal and non-verbal cues and creates a safe, supportive space in which the mentee can share their experiences without interruption or judgement. It also involves allowing time for reflection, checking understanding and resisting the urge to offer immediate solutions.

Appropriate Support

Within mentoring, support involves demonstrating empathy rather than sympathy. An empathetic approach enables the mentor to understand and acknowledge the mentee’s perspective while maintaining appropriate boundaries.

The aim is to help the mentee feel heard, respected and empowered to explore their options and decide how they wish to address the situation they face.

Action Planning

As the mentee progresses through Aurora, it may be helpful to explore what they are learning through the development days and action learning sets, and how they might apply this learning within their role or institution. Reviewing new insights and knowledge can help the mentee identify key lessons and decide on their next steps.

Encourage the mentee to record any actions they wish to take so that progress can be reviewed at the next meeting. Over time, these reflections and agreed actions can form the basis of a practical action plan.

The Toolbox includes **Session Prompt Questions** to help begin conversations about each of the scheduled Aurora sessions.

Defining the process

Building the Relationship

In the first discussion, devote time to establishing the relationship and building trust. The Toolbox includes a **First Meeting Checklist**, which identifies rapport-building through an appropriate exchange of personal information as the first step.

Steps two, three and four focus on how the mentor and mentee will work together. These steps help establish clear expectations and create the foundations for a collaborative partnership. The questions provided are examples and can be adapted to reflect the needs and preferences of both parties.

Establishing Boundaries

Use the first meeting to discuss and agree on the boundaries of the mentoring relationship. Some arrangements may already have been established by the Aurora Champion or HR, and a Sample Mentoring Agreement is available in the Toolbox for additional guidance. This provides examples of the areas that mentors and mentees may wish to cover when setting boundaries.

Discuss whether either person has any access, communication or scheduling requirements that would support their full participation. These might relate to meeting format, platform accessibility, captions, breaks, advance access to questions or materials, the pace of conversation, or flexibility around caring responsibilities, health, disability, religious observance and working patterns. Neither the mentor nor the mentee is expected to disclose a diagnosis or personal information when requesting an adjustment.

A helpful question for the first meeting might be:

Is there anything we can agree about the format, timing or way we communicate that would make these conversations more accessible and effective for you?

A formal written agreement is not essential, as these matters can also be agreed verbally. However, it is important to establish the scope of the conversations, the anticipated frequency and type of contact, and the agreed boundaries of confidentiality.

At this stage, agree on a timeframe for the relationship, initially aligned with the duration of the Aurora programme. There is no expectation that the mentoring relationship will continue beyond this period. However, the mentor and mentee may jointly decide that continuing to meet would be valuable and appropriate, either as an extension of the existing arrangement or as a redefined mentoring relationship.

Working Together

Meeting frequency and responsibilities

Over the course of the programme, mentors and mentees are expected to meet between four and six times, with each meeting lasting approximately 40 minutes to one hour. Ideally, meetings will take place at intervals of two to four weeks and, where possible, between the formal Aurora sessions.

The mentee is responsible for arranging the meetings and setting the agenda. They may also have specific aims for the mentoring relationship, which can be shared at the outset. If the mentee does not have a particular topic to explore during a meeting, the conversation could focus on learning from a recent Aurora session. Session Prompt Questions are provided in the Toolbox to help mentors begin and structure these discussions.

Steps two, three and four focus on how the mentor and mentee will work together. They are designed to establish clear expectations and support the development of a collaborative partnership. The questions provided are examples and can be adapted to reflect the needs of both parties.

Mentors are encouraged to remain attentive to differences in seniority, status, identity, institutional knowledge and access to networks within the relationship. This involves considering how such differences may influence trust, disclosure, challenge and decision-making, while avoiding the imposition of their own values, career choices or definitions of success.

During meetings, the mentee will usually do most of the talking, with the mentor offering questions, reflections, perspectives and encouragement where appropriate. The mentee remains responsible for their own learning and for any decisions they choose to make. Mentors are encouraged to avoid giving directive advice, except where matters of safety, security or compliance arise.

Effective Endings

Bringing the mentoring relationship to a close

As the mentoring partnership enters its final two sessions, both parties can begin planning for an appropriate ending. Acknowledging the approaching conclusion at the penultimate meeting allows time for reflection, mental preparation and any important conversations. Mentoring relationships can become personal and emotionally significant, so bringing the partnership to a close requires care and sensitivity.

The final meeting provides an opportunity to review progress against the original objectives, recognise what has been achieved through the mentoring partnership and participation in Aurora, and share reflections on the experience. Exploring both the outcomes of the mentoring and the relationship itself can help create a meaningful sense of closure.

If both parties see value in remaining connected, they can discuss what a future relationship might look like. For some, the mentoring relationship will come to an end. For others, it may evolve into occasional informal contact, a professional connection or friendship. The mentor and mentee may also agree to continue with a mentoring arrangement where this remains appropriate. In this case, both parties can revisit the purpose of the relationship and agree a new timeframe, expectations and boundaries.

Occasionally, a mentoring relationship may not work as hoped for one or both parties. In these circumstances, the Aurora Champion can provide support and guidance. An honest conversation and a carefully managed ending can help both parties bring the relationship to a respectful close without blame. Reasons may include compatibility issues or changes in personal or professional circumstances, and each situation will be approached with sensitivity.

Additional Support

Training

Advance HE has developed [Becoming a Mentor workshop](#), specifically to help mentors begin their mentoring practice.

More information about the [programme and booking information](#) can be found on our website.

FAQs

What if we face a problem or I have a concern?

Refer in the first instance to the Aurora Champion. If you do not have a Champion contact your institution's Learning and Development function, or an alternative service.

What if the mentee fails to attend meetings?

If there has been no communication from the delegate after two attempts, please refer this to the Aurora Champion.

What can I do if they ask me to give them a reference or act as their sponsor?

Ideally, any references would come from an HR Department. There is no expectation for an Aurora Mentor to provide this level of support. However, we will leave it to the discretion of each mentor and institution.

What if I have to terminate the mentoring due to change of role/ illness etc?

Please alert the delegate and Aurora Champion so that an alternative mentor can be sourced.

Toolbox

Sample Aurora Mentoring Agreement Mentoring

This agreement is between:

_____ Mentee Start Date _____
 _____ Mentor End Date _____

We both agree to regular contact as agreed and commit to the responsibilities outlines below:

- + We will respect each other's identities, names, pronouns, perspectives and lived experiences.
- + We will avoid assumptions and remain open to correction and learning.
- + We will discuss access and communication requirements and review them if circumstances change.
- + We will agree how to address misunderstandings, discomfort or unintended impact.
- + We will recognise the boundaries of the mentor's expertise and identify other sources of support where appropriate.
- + We will not expect either person to educate the other about an entire community or identity group.
- + We will treat personal information about identity or circumstances as confidential, subject to the agreed limits of confidentiality.

The Mentee will:	The Mentor will:
Be responsible for making arrangements, booking an appropriate venue and setting the agenda	Protect the required time and be available as agreed, giving the Mentee their undivided attention for the duration of the meeting
Engage in the process and notify the Mentor of the meeting agenda in good time	Not discuss the contents of the meeting without consent with any other party unless they have serious urgent concerns about the safety or legality of the mentee
Not ask the Mentor to act on their behalf in any capacity outside of the mentoring relationship	Give honest feedback in a constructive and respectful way
Give suitable and helpful developmental feedback to the Mentor on how the process might be improved	Act in accordance with best practice throughout the mentoring relationship

Dates and venue/mode of communication to be mutually agreed and both parties agree to give at least 48 hours' notice of cancellation or rescheduling, unless due to illness.

No-Fault Termination

We are committed to open and honest communication in our relationship. We will discuss and attempt to resolve any conflicts or issues as they arise. However, if one of us needs to terminate the relationship for any reason, we agree to abide by one another's decision.

Confidentiality

Mentoring conversations will normally remain confidential. At the outset, both parties are encouraged to agree the boundaries of confidentiality and identify any circumstances in which information may need to be shared. These may include an immediate risk of serious harm, safeguarding concerns, or a legal or organisational requirement.

Wherever possible, the person concerned will be informed before any information is shared. Mentors are expected to act in accordance with their institution's relevant safeguarding, dignity at work, equality and data-protection procedures.

The mentor's role does not automatically extend to acting as an investigator, counsellor, HR adviser or formal advocate.

Signed _____ Mentor Date

Signed _____ Mentee Date

First Aurora Mentoring Meeting Checklist

As part of your first meeting, consider the areas below in your conversation.

		Sample questions to consider/use
1	Personal Build rapport by introducing yourself and gaining an understanding of the background of the mentee.	What have been the key milestones in your career to date? What has been your greatest achievement in your career so far? What are your aspirations for the future? What do you hope to gain from Aurora and the mentoring relationship? Give a brief summary of the mentor background, sharing appropriate levels of information.
2	Professional Discuss the roles and responsibilities for both mentor and mentee. Define the scope of the relationship.	What do you both think mentoring is? What is expected from each of us? What is not part of the relationship? What is the purpose and aim of the relationship? What is confidential, what is not? What does confidentiality mean to both parties? Role of respect and acceptance of difference? Go through any Mentoring Agreement being used
3	Procedural Define and agree expectations for meetings, paperwork and timings.	When and where will you meet? What notice is required for cancellation? Where will you meet and for how long? Discuss role of personal responsibility and commitment
4	Psychological Discuss how you can best work together. Agree rules of confidentiality, giving feedback and how sessions will run.	How do both parties work best? What does the mentor need to know to get the best out of the mentee? What level of challenge, honesty and amount of disclosure is appropriate and relevant? How do you prefer to give and receive feedback, and what approaches best support the mentee's learning and development? What if you encounter issues or problems?

During the first meeting, it is important to build rapport while establishing a formal working relationship led by the mentee. The meeting is neither an informal 'chat' nor a teaching

session. The mentor acts as a resource throughout the relationship, with the mentee taking primary responsibility for shaping the focus, setting the direction and maintaining momentum.

Session Prompt Questions

If your mentee is finding it hard to set an agenda for discussion you can focus the meeting on a previous recent session they attended to maximise the transfer of learning and application to the workplace.

General questions	What was the most important thing you learned from the training session? What is most useful in our context? How will you apply what you have learnt? What questions do you have? Where has the course helped your approach? Tell me about a recent experience that went well? What do you think caused it to go well? What did you learn from that experience?
Identity, Impact and Voice	What resonated for you from the session? Who do you see that uses their voice with impact? What do they do and not do? How can you enhance your visibility? <i>You might share your own experiences or journey in respect developing your identity impact and voice in your area.</i>
Core Leadership	What do you feel are the key skills you need to develop to continue your leadership journey? What makes these skills important for you? How will these skills help you? What sort of strategy do you feel is needed/appropriate? What is your vision? <i>You could share which skills you feel you have developed over your career and why these were most important for you. Explain also how you achieved that change.</i>
Politics and Influence	How can you build your networks? What sort of coalitions will it be most important for you to build? How can you leverage influence?

	<i>Give examples from your own experiences of where you have seen networks and connections make a real impact? Perhaps also give examples where a failure of connection help others back.</i>
Adaptive Leadership	What did you find most significant about Adaptive Leadership? Where have your experienced significant challenge? How did you deal with that challenge? What skills helped you at that time? How would you summarise your own attitude to risk? <i>Give examples of challenges and risks faced by you or the institution and how they were approached.</i>

Contact us

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