

**CHALMERS**

# Guide for mentors

Guidance for mentors on the Chalmers mentoring programme



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## 2 How to use this guide

This Guide for Mentors has been produced to help you in what should be a stimulating role as mentor in a mentoring programme at Chalmers. You may already be a mentor for another organisation, or you may have heard the word 'mentor' but are not really sure what it means. This guide aims to give you the tools and information you need to help your mentee grow and develop. It includes tips and guidance that we hope will help you during the course of the programme. We recommend that you read the whole guide once all the way through and then use it to assist you and for reference as you go through the programme.

The Guide for Mentors is in three sections:

### *Overview of the mentoring programme*

This section sets out the overall aims and objectives, gives a brief description of each stage in the process that you will follow when you are part of the programme and outlines the benefits to you as a mentor.

### *The role of the mentor*

This section is the core of the guide. It makes clear your role as mentor, and answers questions such as "What do I do?", "How should I act?" and "What is expected of me?".

### *Tools for mentorship*

Finally, the guide contains tools for you to use when working with your mentee. It includes suggestions for topics you and your mentee can explore and questions you can ask them.

### 3 Overview of the mentoring programme

*This section gives a brief description of the mentoring programme, setting out the aims and objectives and the various steps of the programme and illustrating the benefits of being a mentor.*

#### 3.1 Aims and objectives of the mentoring programme

The mentoring programme aims to support students in their professional development and create good relationships between students and industry. A summary of the aims is as follows:

- Facilitate the transition from academia to industry,
- Foster an environment for students to make conscious choices,
- Give students and alumni opportunities to develop networks,
- Lead to personal and professional development for both students and alumni,
- Give alumni an understanding of the modern-day Chalmers.

#### 3.2 How the mentoring programme is structured

What is the mentoring programme? You probably know something about it as you have chosen to become a mentor. But what is expected of you? How does it work? See below for an overall description of the process you will follow as a participant in the mentoring programme.



##### 1. Application and selection

Congratulations, you are now part of a mentoring programme at Chalmers! You became a mentor because you submitted an expression of interest to our programme managers, who felt from your profile that you would be a good mentor. It means you are someone who has a great deal to offer and much that others can learn from.



##### 2. The matching process

Mentees are matched with mentors by the programme managers. Your mentor profile was placed alongside students' mentee profiles and you were matched with a student considered to be suitable on the basis of four core criteria – competence, career, special requirements and personality.



##### 3. Introduction to the programme

The mentoring programme starts with a combined meeting for all mentees and mentors. You will be given information about how the programme is organised and what is required of you as a mentor and suggestions for things that you and your mentee can do and talk about.



##### 4. Meetings

The main element of the programme is one-to-one meetings that you and your mentee will hold approximately once a month. You decide for yourselves where and when to meet, and your conversations should focus on topics determined by the needs and wishes of the mentee. To complement this, there will be a combined follow-up meeting and a social gathering giving you the opportunity to meet other mentors and mentees and share your experiences of mentorship.



### *5. Evaluation and end of programme*

At the end of the programme, after just under a year, there will be a combined closing meeting for both mentees and mentors. In advance of this, you will be asked to complete an evaluation form to help develop and improve the programme.

### *3.3 Benefits of being a mentor*

There are many benefits to being a mentor:

- As a mentor, you have the opportunity to share your experience and knowledge and help another person to grow and develop,
- Mentoring helps to enhance your coaching ability and your ability to empathise with others,
- The programme provides insight into developments at Chalmers, the nature of our courses for engineers and architects and how the students of today think. This is also your opportunity, as a former student, to give something back to Chalmers,
- Being a mentor can make it easier for your own business to recruit,
- Being a mentor means holding mutual discussions around personal and professional development that give you the opportunity to reflect on your own aims and aspirations,
- The programme gives you lots of opportunities to develop networks at Chalmers with students and other alumni.

## 4 The role of the mentor

*As a new mentor, you will no doubt have lots of questions. This sector clarifies what your role as mentor is and what is expected of you in that role.*

### 4.1 What is a mentor?

Mentoring is a means of transferring the experience of one person – the mentor – to another, less experienced person – the mentee. Mentoring is a form of personal and professional development for both the mentee and the mentor, whereby the mentor invests time, energy, personal experience and knowledge into helping another person to grow and develop. The mentor can help the mentee develop self-confidence and skills and progress in their career.

### 4.2 The various roles of the mentor

*Mentorn en praktisk vägledning [‘The mentor: a practical guide’]* by Hultman and Sobel (2005) describes a number of different roles a mentor may have.<sup>1</sup> These are divided into the Overviewer, the Conversation Partner, the Inspirer and the Trainer. Irrespective of which role you have as a mentor, it is important that you know how to listen, that you and your mentee are happy in each other’s company and that you are both committed to getting a positive outcome from your mentoring relationship.

#### *The Overviewer*

In the Overviewer role, you will be helping the mentee both to see the overall picture and to pick up on important details. As an outsider, you will be able to make out situations and patterns that the mentee cannot see for themselves as they are right at the centre of the action. The Overviewer challenges the mentee and helps them get fresh perspectives on issues and problems by examining them closely.

#### *The Conversation Partner*

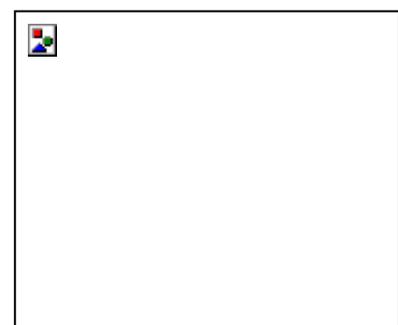
A major part of the mentor’s role is to be a Conversation Partner who can function as a sounding board for the mentee. In this role, you will be an active listener and act as the mentee’s advisor. It is important that mentors ask questions rather than answer them. By asking open questions and responding to questions by asking new ones of your own, you will help the mentee find the answers to their questions by themselves.

#### *The Inspirer*

Being an Inspirer means that you cheer your mentee on and help to motivate them. Encouraging and believing in your mentee increases their self-esteem and self-confidence, both very valuable assets as they embark on their working life. It is also important that you act as a role model for your mentee and show, through your words and deeds, that you live by your own values.

#### *The Trainer*

It is very important that mentors acting as Trainers are open and honest. To enable the mentee to get the most from the mentoring, you should give them feedback on what is working well and what can be improved. By creating challenges and learning opportunities, you will help your mentee grow



<sup>1</sup> Hultman J. & Sobel L., *Mentorn: en praktisk vägledning [‘The mentor: a practical guide’]*, 2005

and develop. The Trainer role also means providing your mentee with useful contacts that may be valuable to them in the future. As a Trainer, you open the door for the mentee but you do not go in front of them – your role is to go alongside them or follow them. In the mentoring relationship, it is the mentee who is the principal participant and it is primarily their needs that are to be addressed. The Trainer is mainly there to help the mentee with their development.

### 4.3 One-to-one meetings

It is the mentee's responsibility to prepare for all their conversations with their mentor. The mentee should never come to a meeting unprepared, and the content of the conversation must reflect their personal goals for the programme. The mentee may ask you questions about your place of work, ask for constructive feedback on their skills or seek advice in respect of important career choices. The mentee is advised to submit their questions to you by email a few days ahead of each meeting so that you have time to think about the topic of the conversation.

In her book *Mentorskap* [*'Mentorship'*], Gunilla Ahlström suggests that mentors ask clarifying questions during the conversation to help the mentee gain their own insights.<sup>2</sup> Suitable questions might be:

- What are your thoughts on that?
- How do you feel about that?
- What did you do?
- Do you want to tell me more?
- Can you say more about that?
- Have I understood you correctly?
- What happened then?
- How?
- Why?

#### 4.3.1 The initial meeting

Your first one-to-one meeting with your mentee can take place at your place of work or at a neutral venue where you will not be disturbed. You should assume your meetings will last one or two hours, but it is a good idea to allow extra time for your initial meeting.

We recommend that you have your initial meeting about two weeks after the introductory meeting so that you get underway quickly. If both your diaries are full, plan your meetings a few months ahead and make sure you give priority to any meetings you schedule. The initial meeting is a good time to get to know one another and to tell each other a bit about yourselves, including your home background, studies or position, work, leisure interests and strengths and weaknesses. Show that you trust your mentee and give as freely of yourself as you can to ensure you develop a strong partnership. Make sure you are aware what your mentee's aspirations and expectations are in respect of the mentoring and what their goals are.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ahlström G., *Mentorskap – erfarenheter för personlig och professionell utveckling* [*'Mentorship – experiences for personal and professional development'*], 2002

<sup>3</sup> Hultman J. & Sobel L., *Mentorn: en praktisk vägledning* [*'The mentor: a practical guide'*], 2005

*Points to discuss at your initial meeting:*

- What do we think we can learn from each other?
- What are our expectations and goals for our mentoring relationship?
- Where and how often shall we meet, and for how long?
- How formal do we want our meetings to be?
- Is there anything we shouldn't talk about?
- Which aspects of our discussions will stay between us and which do we want to talk to others about?
- When and how will we check whether the mentorship relationship feels right for both parties?

We recommend that you and your mentee briefly note down your expectations and objectives and anything else you agree in a simple 'contract'. The contract will help you remember what you wanted from the mentoring programme as you go along.

#### *4.4 What is expected of a mentor?*

A big part of being a mentor is about being available for another person and sharing your experiences and knowledge. The role of the mentor means highlighting different options and different consequences and asking the mentee what they think and feel. A student often has many decisions to make where they can easily lose their way. Losing their way often means having to find a new way. With a mentor on hand to talk to, a mentee can be encouraged to lose their way but not get completely lost.

<i>A mentor...</i>	<i>A mentor is not...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is a selfless teacher</li><li>• Makes time for their mentee</li><li>• Is available</li><li>• Motivates</li><li>• Is respectful and keeps an open mind</li><li>• Communicates openly and honestly</li><li>• Is prepared to share personal and professional advice when requested by the mentee</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Available all the time</li><li>• Solely responsible for a mentee's development</li><li>• Perfect</li><li>• Somewhere for the mentee to offload all their problems</li><li>• A guarantee of success</li></ul>

Above all, being a mentor means giving time and commitment to your mentee and discovering how stimulating it is to see another person grow and develop. It is important that you are aware from the start that you need to prioritise the mentoring and make yourself available for your mentee.

One of your tasks as mentor is to help the mentee formulate, or reformulate, their personal goals. The mentee should start to formulate their goals themselves before you meet, but as a mentor you

have the important task of helping the mentee to get a clearer understanding of their goals and of your role in their development. You can also make it easier for the mentee to identify their visions and understand their reality and harness the tension and drive between them.<sup>4</sup>

For a mentee, the value of having a mentor is in having the benefit of your experience and your perspective. By listening to your mentee and giving them feedback, you can help your mentee grow both at the personal and the professional level. As a mentor you can support your mentee by providing fresh perspectives and suggesting alternative ways of dealing with problems, advising them on their career and helping them formulate and set up their own goals and expectations for the future.

#### 4.5 End of the programme

The formal mentorship ends after the programme's closing meeting. You can of course continue the relationship by yourselves if you and your mentee feel it would be worthwhile. If you decide to continue, we recommend that you look back at the programme together and ask yourselves: Where were we a year ago? What has happened? Where are we now? What did we get from the programme? Is it enjoyable? We suggest you then say goodbye to each other and ask yourselves again at a later date whether you want to continue your relationship. That will enable both parties to bring the relationship to a close in a positive way.<sup>5</sup>



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<sup>4</sup> Ahlström G., *Mentorskap – erfarenheter för personlig och professionell utveckling* ['Mentorship – experiences for personal and professional development'], 2002

<sup>5</sup> Hultman J. & Sobel L., *Mentorn: en praktisk vägledning* ['The mentor: a practical guide'], 200

## 5 Tools for mentorship

*To make your role as mentor easier and help create a good relationship between you and your mentee, we have put together the following tips and advice that we hope will be useful during the mentoring process.*

### *5.1 Suggested personal goals for your mentee*

Your mentee should set personal goals for the mentorship during the initial stages of the programme. The goals should relate to the overall aims and objectives of the programme and fit with the mentee's life and the stage they are at in their career. Here are some examples of possible mentee goals.

*My goals for the mentoring programme are to:*

- Get help from my mentor with planning my career and creating a 5-year plan for my career,
- Get help with how to present myself in a job interview, have a pretend interview with my mentor and try to improve my performance on the basis of my mentor's feedback,
- Get help with writing a good CV,
- Extend my industry network. Use my mentor's tips and existing network to make new relationships with industry that may be useful in my future career,
- Identify my strengths and weaknesses and seek tips and advice on how I can exploit my strengths and improve in my areas of weakness.

One method we recommend for establishing personal goals for mentoring is the SMART method. Each letter in the word SMART represents an aspect of the written goal. It should be:

S = Specific

M = Measurable

A = Attainable

R = Realistic

T = Timely

#### *Specific*

Your goals must be genuine and incorporate the outcomes you want to achieve. Being specific is important for helping you to focus your actions and clearly define where you are going. To establish a straightforward goal that will work, you need to ask 'What?', 'Why?' and 'How?' questions.

#### *Measurable*

It is important that your goals are measurable; otherwise, it is difficult to know whether or not a goal has been achieved. It is crucial that you measure your progress as you work towards your goal, so you should have a method in place to continuously monitor how you are doing throughout the course of the programme.

#### *Attainable*

When you have identified the goals that are most important to you, you must take care not to set goals that are too difficult to attain. This is particularly important if you are not used to setting goals and working towards them until you have achieved them. A goal should neither be too simple nor

too difficult. It needs to be somewhere in the middle, requiring some effort on your part but not too much.

#### *Realistic*

For the goals to be realistic, you need to be willing and able to work to attain them. A goal must be realistic in terms of where you are in your life right now. Set the goal high enough so that it is satisfying to achieve it.

#### *Timely*

The goals must be time-bound and apply to a fixed period. It is easier to work towards something if you have a clear deadline. If the goal is not time-bound you may not start the work at all, as, without a deadline, there is no pressure on you to take action straightaway.

## *5.2 Suggested topics of conversation*

One of the most important factors for successful mentorship is a good relationship between you and your mentee. There is no set formula for a good relationship or how to develop one. Start by thinking about what *you* would want to talk about if you were in your mentee's position. It is the mentee's task to plan what you talk about, but the following are some suggestions to guide you in your conversations.

#### *Education and specialisation*

- Discuss the choices the mentee will have to make during their education and the pros and cons of each choice.
- Is your mentee's choice of master's programme important?
- What are your best study tips?

#### *Work-life balance*

- Talk about what you do to maintain a balance between your work, your family and your interests. What tips and advice can you share?
- What are your interests outside work?
- What is important in life?

#### *Establish professional relationships*

- Introduce the mentee into your company or organisation.
- What can the mentee do to create better relationships with industry?
- What do you recommend your mentee do to build up networks in industry and make best use of them?
- Is there anything specific your mentee should think about when initiating professional relationships?

#### *Career development*

- Talk about the highpoints in your lives and what lay behind these successes. As a mentor you can share your experiences of success and failure.
- Discuss what the mentee wants to achieve in life and why, what their professional and private goals and visions are and their strategy for achieving these.
- What are the most valuable insights you have gained during your career? How can the mentee use them during their career?
- What strengths do you see in your mentee? Weaknesses? Areas for improvement? How can the mentee use their strengths and improve in their areas of weakness?

- If you were your mentee, how would you have planned your career?
- What short-term goals can you think of for your mentee that are realistic and attainable? Long-term goals?

### 5.3 Trust and confidentiality

To ensure that the relationship between mentor and mentee is one of trust and complete openness, it is important that everything said during their conversations remains between the two of them, unless otherwise agreed in respect of a specific issue.