



# **Mentoring Program Guidelines & Resources** *for Mentees*

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## Introduction

This booklet is provided to participants in the Women in Technology (WIT) Mentoring Program as a means of providing you with all of the basic information you need to participate effectively in the program. The guide contains:

- An overview of the program's aims and structure
- Contact details
- Guides to help you establish effective mentoring relationships
- Support resources

An electronic version of this document is available on the WIT web site at [www.wit.org.au](http://www.wit.org.au) along with many other tools and resources related to effective mentoring.

## Program Details

### Program Aim

To provide WIT members with access to mentoring relationships which foster personal and professional growth through the provision of knowledge, experience, support and guidance.

### Program Objectives

- To establish an ongoing program that allows WIT members to access mentoring relationships at any time
- To establish a program that requires minimal resources to ensure its continued operation
- To establish a program that effectively engages regional members

### Program Structure

The program is run in two separate streams:

- Information Communication Technology (ICT) & Engineering
- Biotechnology

Each stream has its own industry coordinator. These coordinators meet on a regular basis with the Program Manager to review activities, update resources and share learnings.

### Program Contacts

The industry co-ordinators are the main point of contact for program participants. If you have any questions, concerns or feedback you should contact them via the email addresses below.

ICT & Engineering – Faith Rees [mentoring@wit.org.au](mailto:mentoring@wit.org.au)

Biotechnology – Dr Paige Hilditch-Maguire [mentoring@wib.org.au](mailto:mentoring@wib.org.au)

If you would like to escalate an issue regarding the program as a whole you can contact our Program Manager, Jenine Beekhuyzen at [Jenine@wit.org.au](mailto:Jenine@wit.org.au)

## Program Schedule

Each of the streams will have a schedule of regular matching workshops that will be advertised to unmatched participants as they arise. The dates below are some common activities designed to provide support and networking opportunities for all program participants

Date	Activity
3 May	General event – Guest presentation by Gilly Johnson, Australian Mentor Centre
12 July	General event – Guest presentation by Jenine Beekhuyzen, Griffith University, Art of Networking
1 November	General event – Guest presentation by TBA
12 December	Closing event for mentoring program 2006

## Participant Responsibilities

### Mentors

- Fulfill obligations agreed within your mentoring agreement
- Provide feedback on your relationship as requested by Program Coordinators
- Participate in program events where ever possible
- Complete program evaluation at the end of the year or at the end of your relationship.

### Mentees

- Fulfill obligations agreed within your mentoring agreement
- Lodge a copy of your mentoring agreement with your Program Coordinator
- Initiate contact to arrange your first meeting
- Provide feedback on your relationship as requested by Program Coordinators
- Participate in program events where ever possible
- Complete program evaluation at the end of the year or at the end of your relationship.

# What is Mentoring?

The material in this section has been adapted from Darwin (2000) and Rolfe-Flett (1996).

Mentoring is hard to define, as everyone has different ideas about who mentors should be, and what characteristics they should have. It's a good idea to talk through your meaning of the term with your mentoring partner. Discussing where you are both coming from is the first step in opening your mind to the perceptions of others. As mentoring is situational, depending on many contextual factors, developing an understanding of what you mean by the term is a first step to working within the relationship.

## Definitions of Mentoring

- A wise and trusted guide (The Macquarie Concise Dictionary, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)
- A career friend, knowledgeable about your field you advises and encourages (Wareing, Imogen [1992] *Career Strategies for Women Survey*, Imogen Wareing and Associates)
- A mentor is simply someone who helps someone else learn something that the learner would otherwise have learned less well, more slowly or not at all (Bell, Chip [1996] *Managers as Mentors* Berrett-Koehler)
- A mentor is someone such as a teacher, supervisor, co-worker or friend, who either knows more than you or has more experience than you, is an inspiration, and is willing to share their wisdom (Shea, 1992)

## Comments from Mentees about Mentors

Regardless of the goals of your mentoring relationship successful mentors seem to share some basic characteristics. Listed below are characteristics that mentees have indicated make a successful mentor.

- they want to make a difference
- they are willing to share their personal and professional experiences
- they offer support in a non-judgmental way
- they act as though people really matter to them
- they are skilled, experienced and knowledgeable
- they give sound advice
- they listen well
- they ask relevant questions
- they encourage successful behaviour
- they challenge you
- they are passionate

## Your Role as a Mentee

Your role as a Mentee is to be an enthusiastic and committed participant in your mentoring relationship. You will only get back what you put in. You will need to work to find the answers you are looking for. Your mentor is there to provide guidance and support not to give you definitive answers. By all means use their knowledge, experience and expertise but realise that they are not you and you need to adapt this information to suit your individual circumstances.

## Characteristics of a Mentee

Most manuals concentrate on what it takes to be an effective mentor, however, a successful relationship also requires an effective mentee.

Effective Mentees have the following essential skills:

- They ask questions
- They share knowledge and experience
- They are willing to fail in order to succeed
- They do their homework
- They are committed and focused on attaining their goals
- They open doors
- They are honest

## Mentoring Tips

The following tips will assist you in developing a successful and rewarding relationship:

- Maintain regular contact
- Don't expect to get all the answers
- Respect confidentiality
- Don't be overwhelmed by your Mentor's title, experience or knowledge
- Be honest
- Regularly monitor the progress of the relationship

## Avoiding the Risks

Although there are relatively few risks associated with mentoring it is worth noting some of those that may occur and putting in place some risk mitigation practices.

### Mismatches

When a mismatch occurs it will become obvious that the mentor and mentee are not suited to each other. There is no one at fault in this situation—sometimes it just happens. Your personal styles may clash, or you may just not be able to find suitable times and places to meet. The reasons can be many and varied.

When a mismatch reveals itself, it is up to the two of you to decide whether the relationship is worth saving and working through your differences, or whether terminating the relationship and finding an alternative partner would serve both interests.

### Competition or Rivalry

It may seem childish but rivalry between a mentor and mentee can ruin a relationship. Be on the lookout for any actions taken by your mentor that may signal they are feeling a level of competition with you. This may be particularly evident if you work within the same organization or industry.

If rivalry is a problem, rarely can this effectively be deal with so that it does not impact upon the relationship. Discuss the issue honestly and determine the best course of action together.

### The Perception of Failure

“(those) who try to do something and fail are infinitely better than those who try to nothing and success.” Lloyd James

There is no such thing as failure—unless you don't put anything into the relationship in order to make it succeed. When you elect to become a mentee, you have considered the role ahead and you have given your commitment to work towards a goal of your choosing.

Whether they actually develop and grow within their career/business is essentially up to you. Your mentor can't do it for you. All you they can do is help you to find the right questions and the right answers for you.

# Getting Started

## Preparation

The following steps are not essential in your preparation for the first meeting with your mentor, however, we believe they will be useful in ensuring an effective start.

- Complete the *Mentor Wants & Needs Form*
- Review the mentoring agreement and prepare your input
- Complete the *Receiving Feedback Worksheet*
- Do you have a professional development plan? If not decide whether you want your mentor to assist in building one or whether you would prefer to complete at least part of this activity before you enter your relationship. If you want to make a start you can use the Career Planning tools available on the WIT website – they cover everything from understanding your core values to setting development goals.

## The First Meeting

In your first meeting there is a lot of ground work to cover so allow a reasonable amount of time to ensure that you are both comfortable with the outcomes. We recommend covering at least the following items:

- Complete and sign your mentoring agreement. As the Mentee you are responsible for submitting a copy of this agreement to your Program Coordinator.
- Discuss program expectations.
- Discuss communication and feedback styles and preferences.
- Generally get to know each other.
- Set a date for the second meeting and agree its content.

## The Second Meeting

By now you should know quite a lot about each other and should be preparing to get down to work. To some extent the agenda for your second meeting will be determined by what you achieved at the first meeting. Here's what we recommend:

- Generally catch up
- Discuss your Professional Development Plan. Let your Mentor know what you are expecting of them eg. help in completing the plan or help in implementing it.
- Provide feedback on your progress to date. This is a great way to practice your feedback techniques and increase your understanding of each other's styles.

At the end of this session you should be comfortable with where things are headed and be ready to start work.

## Reviewing the Relationship

Successful mentoring relationships are constantly reviewed by both participants. You need to check in with each other to make sure you are still on the right track. You might want to agree certain check points at which you will do this or you may choose to make this a standard agenda item for every meeting. You can use the *Relationship Evaluation Form* provided or you can determine your own evaluation criteria.

To monitor the effectiveness of the program and how relationships are progressing WIT will also check in from time to time and ask you to complete a brief questionnaire regarding your progress. Tracking stages of the relationship is an important element of developing and improving the program, therefore, we strongly urge you to make time for this task.

## Ending the Relationship

Most mentoring relationships are established for a specific purpose or time frame. Preparing an initial mentoring agreement helps to ensure that both parties can easily recognise when the relationship has reached the end of its lifespan. Of course, things do not always go according to plan.

*What if you have achieved your original goal but you both want to continue the relationship?*

You need to acknowledge that you have achieved what you set out to do and celebrate your success. You can then decide whether you want to set a further goal and establish a new agreement or whether you would just like to continue your relationship on a less formal level.

*What if it just doesn't work out?*

As previously noted mismatches occur all of the time for a variety of reasons. The first thing to do is to discuss the issue openly and honestly with your Mentor. Then the two of you can decide whether to it is worth trying again or if you would like to end the relationship and try an alternative match. If you are not comfortable holding this discussion you can contact your Program Coordinator and they will help you identify a suitable solution.

*What if your circumstances change?*

One of the issues often seen as failure is a change in your circumstances which affects the amount of time you have available to work with your Mentor.

Circumstances change—that's life. The first thing to do is to talk to your Mentor and see if there is anything you can do to work around the changes. If not, offer to assist them in finding an alternative mentor or to develop another plan that will meet their needs. They may be willing to wait until your circumstances change again.

## Program Responsibilities

When you have agreed that your relationship has finished for whatever reason you need to:

- Notify the Program Coordinator so that we can update our records
- Complete the *Program Evaluation* form enclosed with this document or on the web site.

## Program Evaluation

WIT has been facilitating informal mentoring relationships almost since it began in 1997. We know that many of these relationships have been very successful but we don't know why. Until the introduction of the formal mentoring program in 2005 WIT did not capture information on these relationships. We know that we missed out on some wonderful success stories and some great information about the needs of our members. To ensure that we don't continue to make that mistake it is extremely important that you complete a *Program Evaluation Form* at least once a year.

The forms should be completed at the end of each mentoring relationship. If your relationship is ongoing then we will ask you to complete a form at the end of the calendar year.