Academic Advisor

Mentoring Program Handbook

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# Acknowledgements

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# Why Mentor?

Remember the first day you came to work as an academic advisor, maybe everything was new, your office, the colleagues and stacks of new tasks were waiting for you. If you were lucky you were part of a team with other academic advisors, and your team members helped you mastering your new job. In a chain student guidance meeting you would meet more academic advisors from different departments, but it took probably quite a while before you would discuss work related issues with them, or ask for advice.

We believe that mentoring would have helped you during the first year of your job. [Mentoring](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/how-to-start-a-mentorship-program-4582328) is defined as a formal or informal relationship established between an experienced, knowledgeable employee and an inexperienced or new employee. To understand why mentoring is used so extensively today, it can be useful to know a little about its history.

It is widely cited that the concept of mentoring originated with the character of Mentor in Homer’s Odyssey. In this Ancient Greek epic poem, dating back around 3000 years, Odysseus entrusts his young son Telemachus to the care of Mentor, his trusted companion, when he goes to fight in the Trojan War. Mentor was older and wiser and experienced in ways in which Telemachus needed instruction. Mentor's advice was both supportive and challenging. His values, integrity and personal commitment provided a sense of possibility and potential. Unexpectedly, Odysseus is away for decades and during that time Mentor nurtures and supports the boy.

Other historic examples of mentoring relations are Socrates who was mentor to Plato, or Robespierre mentoring Napoleon, and fictional examples are Yoda who mentored Luke Skywalker and Dumbledore mentoring Harry Potter. As you can see from all these examples, over time the Odysseys character’s name, “Mentor,” became synonymous with trusted friend, advisor, teacher, and wise person.

How would a new academic advisor at the TU/e benefit from mentoring? Let’s make one thing clear. Mentoring is not about daily tasks, rules and regulations nor about DPO issues. But mentoring is about the onboarding[[1]](#footnote-1) process, different styles of advising, self-care, reflecting on the differences that a newbie encounters and what is needed for the new employee to grow in the function of academic advisor. The supportive mentoring relationship from an experienced colleague of a different department will benefit the mentee in learning the ins and outs of the new position and facilitates interdepartmental cooperation. Since mentoring promotes self-reflection and problem-solving in the mentee, it is an excellent addition to other forms of professional development. The meetings are a safe place to discuss experiences, thoughts and doubts as the mentor is there to support, but not the supervisor and neither a colleague sharing the daily responsibilities with.

From research, we know multiple benefits of mentoring at three different levels. First, the organization profits because e[mployees who experience mentoring are retained](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/top-ways-to-retain-your-great-employees-1919038), learn more quickly, and [assimilate into the company culture](https://www.thebalancecareers.com/what-makes-up-your-company-culture-1918816) more effectively. Second, having a mentee encourages knowledge-sharing and learning to look at things from the perspective of the mentee. Compared to non-mentors, mentors report greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment, have greater career success and perceive increased work-related fulfillment[[2]](#footnote-2). Finally, compared to non-mentored employees, mentored employees feel more satisfied and committed to their career and feel more positively about the organization.

“We know that … consistent mentoring programs … help improve advisors’ performance and heighten their sense of accomplishment and self-esteem."

Adapted from: Joelle Sanders, *Before Their Time*, p. 181.

# What do we expect from a mentor?

A mentor commits himself to at least a one-year relationship. In this year there will be a minimum of four face-to-face meetings with the mentee, one meeting with the mentee and their head ESA and additionally there will be two meetings with the other mentors and mentees used for intervision and evaluation of the mentoring program. In the mentee meetings you will need to help your mentee to develop goals and access resources. Because your mentee is from a different department, the mentor relationship in itself promotes already interdepartmental collaboration and communication but we expect you to stimulate this and help your mentee build a professional network. But it is just as important to talk about how you care for yourself in your (sometimes demanding) advising job. Of course, just like a regular academic advising session, only give advice unless you are asked for and always maintain confidentiality about private details discussed in the meetings. Below a list of Key Characteristics[[3]](#footnote-3) for Mentors.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Key Characteristics and Behaviors for Mentors | |
| Approachability | Let your mentee know you are interested and available. Share personal information and relate to them. Let them know they can come to you and you care. |
| Sharing | Share experiences, feelings, observations and knowledge openly. Establish a pattern of mutual information exchange. Encourage trying new things and expanding their knowledge. |
| Confidentiality | Honor sensitive personal or professional information either of you might share. |
| Openness | Find ways to make sure contact is regular and meaningful. |
| Trust | Ensure your mentee feels free to discuss issues without fear of reprisal or judgement. Create an atmosphere where it is comfortable to test ideas and explore. |
| Respect | Let your mentee know you respect their time and opinions. Acknowledge their skills and progress. |
| Appropriate feedback | Express how you feel in a respectful and gentle manner. Timely assertive, empathetic and honest communication is important. |
| Technical expertise | Remain current with your own knowledge (or acknowledge if you might not be and suggest where your mentee might seek additional information). |
| Reliability and consistency | Both you and your mentee should carry out agreed-upon actions. |
| Support | Be motivating, encouraging, positive and empowering. Provide emotional, intellectual and practical support. |
| Commitment | Invest sufficient time in the relationship … mentor regularly. |
| Desire | Be truly interested in helping someone else, without promise of help in return. |
| Inclusiveness | Embrace the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. |

# Program outline

The mentoring relationship is based around regular communication in the form of mentor meetings, as well as informal communication between meetings. Before the first meeting we recommend to be in contact about when your first mentor meeting will take place (maximum approx. 3 to 4 weeks after start of contact).   
  
Discussion topics to tackle;  
- How much time do you both have  
- what do you hope to get out of the mentor relation?  
Tip: fill in the biographical sketch and share this with your mentee and ask your mentee to do the same. (or: rank your interests and tell each other a little bit about it)  
Tip: Make a personal Bingocard for your mentee which can be used during the entire program.

## First meeting

* Introduce yourself and ask questions to learn more about your mentee. The Biographical Sketch will provide some background information. Share information about yourself.
* Some resources to discuss during the first meeting could be: the New Employee Information Materials, access to the Academic Advisor TU/e WhatsApp group, access to the Reflex Appointment system, invitations for ESA or chain student guidance meetings and LVSA or NACADA membership.
* Explain your role as mentor.
* Identify best times to make contact and preferred contact methods (face-to-face, e-mail, phone, WhatsApp, etc.).
* Mutually set start goals & expectations for the mentoring relationship.
* Determine the future meetings: Location, frequency, meeting length, how to schedule
* Encourage your mentee to contact you if they have any questions or concerns before you meet again.
* Share relevant documents you planning the use in the next meeting for instance the Bingocard and the observation reflection form.

Initial meetings and tough discussions are easier over food … eating together creates an atmosphere conducive to conversation. Walking together also makes talking easier.

## Meeting with Manager ESA

This meeting is used to explain your role as a mentor and to make this a formal relationship acknowledged by the direct supervisor of your mentee. In this meeting relevant work agreements between your mentee and the supervisor can be shared. The meeting with manager ESA underlines the fact that both mentor and mentee are actively investing in professionalizing their role and position. The organization benefits from these activities and therefore time should also be made available for participation in the mentoring program. The start goals can (but do not have to) be shared with the manager or supervisor, it is the role of the mentor to make sure that new goals are only added in agreement with the mentor and the mentee.

## Subsequent meeting

* Check how things are going. Ask about stumbling blocks.
* Take a look at the Bingocard and observation reflection forms. Have there been surprises? What has been great; what has been challenging? Help them by giving them ideas of resource persons they can contact to get their questions answered.
* Other topics could be:
  + NACADA competencies
  + LVSA gedragscode
  + Cultural preferences or intercultural communication

## Closure

To make a successful and satisfactory ending, mentees and their mentors need a sense of closure. Mentees need to feel that there was a sense of accomplishment in building the mentoring relationship, and that new goals and new relationships have been created. Mentors and mentees will end their mentoring relationship by reflecting upon their mentoring relationship.

# Documents

In the next pages you find some useful documents.

* The mentor/mentee biographical sketch is used to share some background information prior to the first meeting.
* The bingocard (this is an example and should be made personal) is used for discussing the different topics and aspects of the academic advisor job.
* The advising observation reflection form is used when observing advising sessions of a colleague advisor but afterwards this can also be used in a mentor/mentee meeting to discuss the preferred advising style of the mentee.
* Two advising approaches is used for discussing the preferred advising style.
* Self-care assessment is used in discussing the self-care.
* Links to useful resources

## Mentor/mentee biographical sketch

The purpose of sharing the biographical Sketch is to provide basic information. If at all possible, mentor and mentee should exchange their biographical sketches prior to their first meeting.

Name:

Department:

Educational programs:

Work Phone Number: Mobile Number (optional):

E-mail:

Educational Background:

Program/Work Experience:

Year(s) with TU/e Year(s) in Current Position

Previous Relevant Work Experience:

Major Areas of Interest/Expertise (Program Focus):

My Strengths:

My position with TU/e interests me because:

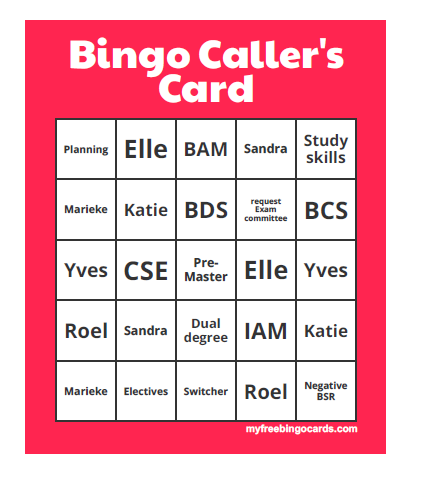
Topics I would like to discuss with my mentor/mentee include:

Personal Interests (optional):

Hobbies/Leisure Interests:

Family:

## Example Bingocard



## Advising Observation Reflection Form

Observer:

Advisor:

Student ID:

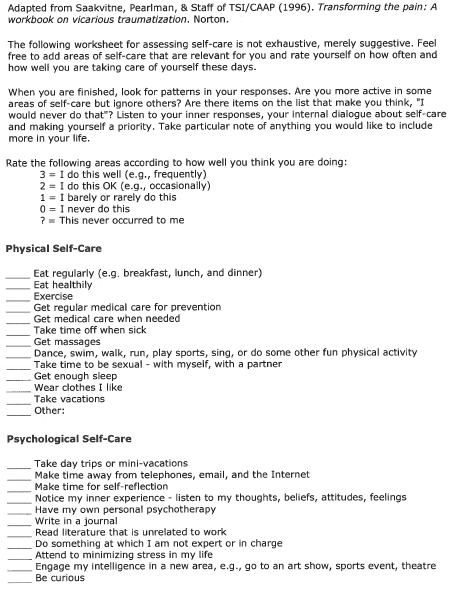
Major:

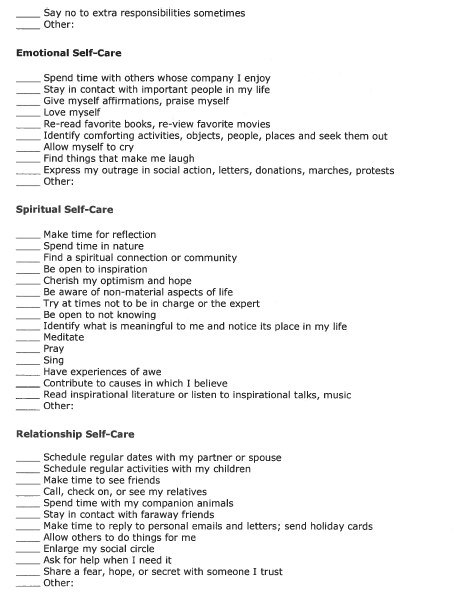
Reason for appointment:

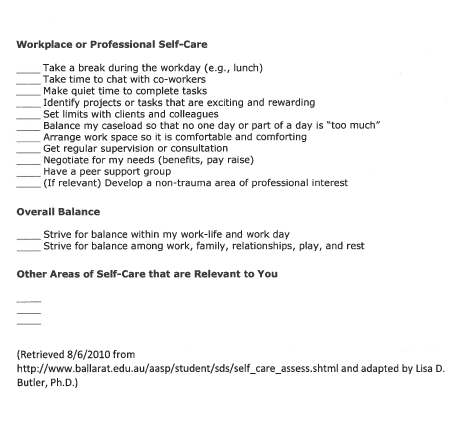
1. What are 1-2 things that you learned when observing this advising session?
2. Was anything confusing to you during the interaction that needs to be clarified for you?
3. Did you see any advisor approach/style that you might utilize in your student appointments in the future?
4. What are some key terms and/or policies that you heard when observing the student/advisor interaction?
5. Questions/Comments

## Two advising approaches

## Self-care checklist







## Links to useful resources

Nacada competenties: <https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Pillars/CoreCompetencies.aspx>

LVSA gedragscode: <https://lvsa.nl/studieadviseurs/visie/gedragscode>

## Onboarding program

**Academic Advisors TU/e (2019)**

**General notes:**

* Make sure there is one person in the team assigned to the new member, and has oversight on their whole orientation program.
* Organize someone from the department to lunch with every day in the first week.
* Assign a mentor from another department and plan a lunch in.
* Clarify expectations and responsibilities of new person before a big group meeting (so as not to overwhelm).

**Reading materials:**

* PER (read for the relevant Bachelors or Masters programs)
* [Student Statute](https://educationguide.tue.nl/organization/official-rules-and-regulations/student-statute/)
* Different Portals:
  + [Intranet](https://intranet.tue.nl/en/university/services/information-management-services/im-governance/the-round-table-of-education/new-education-systems/)
  + [OSIRIS PlanApp](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9xU3vNoZb4A&feature=youtu.be) Youtube video
* ICT training
* [Education guide](https://educationguide.tue.nl/) (read for the relevant Bachelors or Masters programs)
* [Different advisors at the TUE](https://educationguide.tue.nl/organization/advisors-and-tutors/) (take a look at all the different tabs, and the group training sessions)
* Study associations within the relevant faculty:
* Faculty organogram

**Meetings to set up:**

* Practical aspects:
  + Laptop, campus card, ICT, telephone/mobile etc.
  + Email lists to be added to:
    - ESA ketenoverleg
    - Secretariat
    - Support Staff
  + Rights/Access to different applications:
    - OSIRIS
    - Canvas courses (where relevant)
    - SharePoint
    - Relevant Outlook mailboxes
  + Whatsapp groups (where relevant)
* Individual meetings:
  + Academic Advisors faculty team (one on one with each)
  + Team manager
  + Director(s) of relevant programs
  + Meeting with newest member of the team (good way to get most relevant help)
  + Quality Assurance
  + Student Administration (overview and who does what)
  + Exam Committee Secretary (of relevant programs)
  + Resources / referrals:
    - Student psychologists
    - Student counselors and study management advisors
    - Career and Professional development counselors
  + Sit in on a few advising sessions with students
  + Lunch with mentor
  + HR meeting
    - Work hours, holiday days, contract etc.
* Group meetings / sessions:
  + Academic Advisors departmental meeting
  + Stand-up meeting (if relevant / in practice)
  + Kick-off presentation with students
  + Kringgesprek (evaluations of courses with students and professors, if relevant)
  + Walk-in advising hours (if relevant)
  + Borrel with relevant student organizations within the faculty
* Introduction to various computer applications:
  + OSIRIS (docent, PlanApp, catalogue)
  + CANVAS
  + BI Portal
  + Me@TU/e

# List of Mentors-Mentees

## 2019 and 2020

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mentee** | **Mentor** |
| Heidy Keepers | Yves Houben |
| Aissa Huysmans | Paula Verbeek |
| Hèlène Spiertz | Claartje Boskman |
| Katie Macleod | Josee Pulles |
| Monique Vullers | Roel Bloo |
| Ann De Veirman | Baukje Osinga |
| Sandra Rozemeijer | Kim Schellekens-Nicolaije |
| Judith van Gaal | Wil Kuijpers |
| Stefan de Vries | Lisanne Kamphorst |
| Jet Verbeeten | Paula Verbeek |
| [Ton van Amelsfort](mailto:Ton%20van%20Amelsfort%20%3ca.m.j.v.amelsfort@tue.nl%3e%20Msc%20ESOE) | Monique Jansen-Vullers |
| Lisa Langley | Marian van Wershoven |

## Explanation of choices

The program is at least one year because the work cyclus of an academic advisor is one year.

Mentor and mentee should be from different departments because this stimulates interdepartmental collaboration and it is safer to discuss doubt or stumbling blocks with someone who is not your supervisor nor the direct colleague.

1. Onboarding is a process that introduces new employees to an organization and its culture. Onboarding helps them integrate and gain the right knowledge and skills to carry out their new responsibilities.  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.successfactors.com/resources/knowledge-hub/why-mentors-matter.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <https://hr.osu.edu/public/documents/learning-development/mentoring-mentor-toolkit-%20final-508.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)