

# AUROLA

FUTURE • CHANGE • GROWTH

WOMEN ONLY PROGRAMME

Crib Sheet  
for  
Mentors

## Aurora Mentoring crib sheet for mentors

Thank you for becoming an Aurora mentor. We are delighted to have you as part of the community and helping to address the under representation of women in leadership in higher education. Mentors play a significant role in Aurora, and you will be a key enabler in supporting your Aurora mentee to apply their learning into their roles and in your organisational setting, as well as learning from your experience.

Aurora is the Advance HE leadership development initiative for women up to senior lecturer and mid-level professional services. Aurora is designed to inspire and encourage women in academic and professional roles in higher education to consider leadership in their career and develop themselves as leaders. While some progress has been made, women remain underrepresented in leadership roles in higher education, and in order to redress the balance we need the women who can be the leaders of tomorrow to have the aspiration, skills, knowledge and opportunity to pursue leadership roles.

Aurora comprises of a number of elements designed to provide a practical learning experience including four development days, two action learning sets, self-directed learning resources, role models who help facilitate leaning on the development days and yourselves as mentors. The mentor's role is to encourage and support participants, advise on institutional processes and culture and highlight both challenges and paths to success. It is your institution's responsibility to organise the mentoring relationships through its Aurora Champion. Mentors and participants can work with the Champion to help identify and address institutional barriers to women's progression.

Below is a brief mentoring guidance crib sheet. This is accompanied by a mentoring toolkit, with tools for your first meeting. The guidance and toolkit are for use if required, but you may wish to use your institutions' guidance or your own. The toolkit provided can be tailored to suit your needs.

### 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



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### Key personal qualities that support effective mentoring are:

#### **Attitude:**

- Enthusiastic – genuinely interested in the mentee and her concerns, needs, goals and aspirations
- Open – prepared to share their own experience of similar issues, being honest about themselves and being honest about the mentee
- Empathic – able to appreciate how the mentee thinks, feels and behaves
- Positive in outlook – able to appreciate the mentee’s point of view and see solutions
- Have a genuine interest in helping women to develop their careers and particularly support his/her mentee
- Flexible and open-minded
- Have sufficient time available to work with the mentee

#### **Skills:**

- A good listener – able to really focus on what the mentee is saying without personal thoughts crowding out the mentee’s words
- Motivating and encouraging – to channel the mentee’s energy into constructive change, new challenges and overcoming difficulties
- Able to offer the appropriate balance of challenge, encouragement and support
- Have a supportive or ‘coaching style’ of communication

#### **Knowledge:**

- Be considered successful in their careers
- Be knowledgeable and experienced in their organisation and understand its culture
- Have the endorsement of their Aurora champion
- Have sufficient general higher education experience to be able to offer advice and support.

The role of the mentor therefore relies on recruiting the right qualities, applying a flexible and adaptive approach and creating the right environment for the relationship to thrive.



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### Mentee:

The Aurora participant/mentee should own and drive the process. Without mentee commitment and engagement the mentoring relationship is likely to be unproductive.

The mentee needs to come to the relationship with a desire to learn and to take ownership of the process in an active and constructive way as an equal partner. The mentee should take responsibility for learning. Expectations should be managed so that mentees do not expect to be 'taught' or to just absorb experience and knowledge.

The mentee is responsible for arranging meetings and agreeing logistics, so that they manage the process.


### Key Mentoring Skills

#### Tips on effective communication

The types of questions a mentor asks can play a significant part in the flow of the session. You might want to think about your questioning and utilising the different types including:

- Open
- Probing
- Hypothetical
- Closed
- Inquiring
- Reflecting
- Comparisons

Here are some helpful strategies for effective communication for the mentoring relationship:

- Particularly using open questions: How? Why? What? etc.
  - Summarising what has been covered
  - Clarifying: "can you explain what you mean by XYZ?"
  - Reflecting: "so am I right in thinking that you're saying...?"
  - Observing body language & tone of voice: "I notice you frowned when you said you liked ....."
  - Genuine positive feedback development
  - Active listening: you should provide your full attention and they should be talking more than you. See below for more details
  - Ending the session on a positive note.
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### Active Listening

The ability to actively listen to the mentee is the fundamental skill of mentoring and requires the mentor to give their full attention to the mentee for long periods of time. It is fully concentrating on what is being said as opposed to passively hearing a message. It involves listening with all the senses, and giving the mentee the 'safe space' to tell their story without interruption or judgement.

### Appropriate Support

When we talk about support in mentoring we mean offering empathy and not sympathy, so that they feel heard and empowered to address the situation they face.

### Action Planning

As the mentee progresses through Aurora it may be useful to talk through what they are learning at the development days/action learning sets, and how they can apply it in their role or at the institution. With their new understanding and knowledge help them identify what their next step is and their key applicable lessons. Encourage them to write it down, and progress can be reviewed at the following meeting. An action plan can then be built from that.

### Defining the process

#### Building the Relationship

In the first discussion, it is important to devote time to establishing the relationship to build trust. The toolbox includes a First Meeting Checklist which identifies the first step as building rapport through a personal exchange of information.

Steps two, three and four focus on how to work together, these serve to establish clear expectations and to set up the relationship as a partnership. The questions provided are simply examples and you should adapt the process to suit your needs.

#### Establishing Boundaries

During this first meeting there should be a discussion about boundaries. Some of this may have been established by the Aurora Champion/HR, but a Sample Mentoring Agreement has been provided in the toolbox for guidance. This will give you some ideas about the sort of aspects that might be covered in the boundary setting.

You do not need to have a formal written agreement and some of these things can be covered verbally, but it is important to establish the scope of the discussions, the frequency and type of contact expected and to agree levels of confidentiality.

At this stage it is also important to time-bound the relationship, which would be based on the duration of the Aurora programme.



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### Effective Endings

When the mentoring partnership enters the last couple of sessions, both parties need to plan for an appropriate ending. Flag the ending is close at the penultimate meeting to allow for a mental preparation and any discussions that need to be had. The mentoring relationship can be very personal and emotional in nature, so needs sensitive handling. At the final meeting there may be a review of progress against objectives, perhaps a celebration of what has been achieved in the partnership as well as on the Aurora initiative, and a sharing of experiences. The aim is to give the relationship a sense of closure.

If both parties feel there is benefit in a continued relationship this can be discussed as part of the closure. For some the relationship will end, but for some it will alter into an acquaintance for an occasional coffee, for others it might evolve into a friendship. Others might want to continue with a mentoring relationship if that is possible. If this is the case both parties need to agree and set out the new boundaries and agreement to start the cycle again.

However, not all mentoring relations will work for both parties. If that is the case, once it is raised with the Aurora Champion, the termination of the relationship should be given some thought to avoid ill-feeling on either part. If the ending has come prematurely it can lead to animosity unless an open discussion has brought things to an effective close.

More mentoring information and good practice mentoring blogs can be found on the Advance HE website.

