



Association of University  
Legal Practitioners

**Mentoring Scheme  
Handbook**

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# INTRODUCTION TO MENTORING

This handbook provides guidance for participants in the AULP Mentoring Scheme. Mentoring can take many forms, but within AULP it is designed to support the professional development of university legal practitioners at all levels, and to strengthen connections across institutions.

AULP mentoring is distinct from internal institutional schemes. It enables colleagues to learn from peers in other universities, share sector insights, and build confidence in navigating the unique challenges of in-house higher education legal practice.

## What is mentoring?

Mentoring is “off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking” (Megginson & Clutterbuck).

In the AULP context:

- A **mentor** is a more experienced practitioner who supports a colleague with less experience of the sector or role.
- The relationship is **non-managerial** and based on trust, reflection, and constructive challenge.
- The focus is on helping the mentee develop their own thinking, confidence, and capability—not giving instructions or acting as a supervisor.

Mentoring conversations are reflective and exploratory. The mentor helps the mentee clarify their goals, consider options, and build insight, rather than providing direct solutions.

Key principles:

- The **mentee leads** the relationship and sets the agenda.
- The mentor’s seniority matters less than their **experience, perspective, and willingness to support**.
- The mentor has **no line management responsibilities**.
- Confidentiality, trust, and openness underpin the relationship.

## How is mentoring different from coaching?

Mentoring focuses on **long-term development**, career growth, and sector understanding.

Coaching is often shorter-term and performance-focused.

Mentors may use coaching skills, but they also share experience, open doors, and help mentees navigate the sector.

## **AULP Mentoring – scheme objectives**

The AULP Mentoring Scheme supports members to grow as in-house legal professionals and to strengthen the AULP community.

### **Scheme objectives:**

- **Career development** — helping members build confidence, develop skills, and progress in their roles.
- **Succession planning** — supporting emerging leaders within university legal teams.
- **Sector insight** — sharing knowledge about the higher education landscape and the realities of in-house legal practice.
- **Connecting people** — building networks across institutions and strengthening the AULP community.
- **Critical friendship** — fostering a culture of constructive challenge, reflection, and shared learning.

# What to expect

## Matching

Participants sign up as mentors, mentees, or both. AULP will review applications and match pairs based on:

- areas of interest
- experience
- development goals
- institutional context

Once a match is identified:

- The **mentee is contacted first** and asked to confirm whether they wish to proceed.
- Once accepted, both mentor and mentee receive an introduction email and can begin arranging their first meeting.

## Before the first meeting

Participants will receive:

- the **AULP Mentoring Code of Conduct**
- the **Mentoring and Confidentiality Agreement**

These documents ensure both parties share expectations around confidentiality, boundaries, and responsibilities.

Trust is essential. Mentoring only works when both parties feel safe to speak openly.

## Meetings

- Most meetings last around **45 minutes**.
- Pairs typically meet **monthly**, but frequency can vary.
- Relationships usually involve **4–6 meetings over 6 months**.
- Meetings can take place via Teams, phone, or in person.
- Mentees may also contact mentors informally between meetings where appropriate.

Meetings should be developmental and build on previous discussions. Mentees may wish to keep notes or use a simple mentoring plan to track progress.

## Guidance for mentors

Mentors do not need to be senior leaders—only willing to share experience, listen actively, and support another practitioner’s development.

Mentors should:

- commit around **one hour per month**
- focus on **listening, questioning, and reflecting**
- give **constructive, timely feedback**
- challenge supportively
- help mentees explore options rather than giving direct instructions
- maintain confidentiality at all times

Useful approaches include:

- giving positive feedback before constructive challenge
- being specific and practical
- focusing on what the mentee can influence
- helping the mentee identify next steps

The mentee should do most of the talking. The mentor’s role is to guide, not direct.

## Guidance for mentees

Mentees should:

- take responsibility for arranging meetings and setting agendas
- invest around **one hour per month**
- identify clear development goals
- be open to challenge and reflection
- take ownership of actions between meetings

Benefits include:

- developing confidence and capability
- gaining insight into sector practice
- discussing challenges with a neutral, supportive colleague
- receiving constructive feedback

- exploring long-term career development

Mentees should discuss how they prefer to receive feedback and set boundaries early on.

## **Common dilemmas**

Common issues and suggested approaches include:

- **Personal issues dominate discussions** — mentoring is not counselling; signpost to appropriate support.
- **Actions are not completed** — explore whether goals were realistic; discuss commitment.
- **Different working styles** — acknowledge differences; avoid imposing approaches.
- **Unraised issues** — mentors may gently raise observations but must respect boundaries.
- **Concerns about confidentiality** — raise sensitively; contact the scheme coordinator if trust breaks down.
- **Relationship becomes too comfortable** — mentors should balance support with challenge.
- **Excessive contact outside meetings** — clarify expectations and boundaries.
- **Mentor gives too much advice** — encourage mentee-led problem-solving.
- **Suggestion of joint work projects** — consider risks to the mentoring relationship.
- **Gifts** — consider appropriateness and potential discomfort.

# Complaints procedure

AULP aims to provide a high-quality mentoring experience. If you have concerns about the scheme or your mentoring relationship, please contact the AULP Executive Officer at [chris@aulp.ac.uk](mailto:chris@aulp.ac.uk). All concerns will be handled sensitively and confidentially.

## Frequently asked questions

### **Why haven't I been matched yet?**

Matching depends on availability and compatibility. We will endeavor to match as many pairs as possible each cycle.

### **How much time will this take?**

Most pairs meet for around 45 minutes monthly, with around 5-6 meetings over the 6 months.

### **What if we don't get on?**

Contact the coordinator. A new match can be arranged.

### **Is the scheme confidential?**

Yes. Conversations remain strictly between mentor and mentee.

### **My partner works in a very different area.**

This is common and often beneficial. It broadens perspective and sector understanding.

### **I want to withdraw.**

You can withdraw at any time—please let the coordinator know.

### **I've lost touch with my partner.**

Contact the coordinator if you would like help re establishing contact.

### **How long does the scheme last?**

Typically around 6 months, though pairs may end earlier or continue informally if mutually agreed.

### **Who leads the relationship?**

The mentee leads: arranging meetings, setting agendas, and driving progress.

### **I'm a mentor and feel out of my depth.**

You are not expected to solve problems. Contact the coordinator for support.

## Wider reading

There are many mentoring resources available online, and many universities run their own schemes. Participants are encouraged to explore additional materials that support reflective practice, coaching skills, and professional development.

## Application process

To join the AULP Mentoring Scheme as a mentor, mentee, or both:

1. Complete the online application form ([AULP Mentoring Application – Fill in form](#))
2. You will receive an acknowledgement once your form is submitted.
3. Matching will take place two times each calendar year, during June and December.
4. Once matched, you will receive introductory information and next steps.

For questions, please contact [chris@ulp.ac.uk](mailto:chris@ulp.ac.uk).