



Mentor Guidance & Resources

As CAs and members of ICAS we are very fortunate to belong to a professional community with strong values. We are proud of our heritage, the quality of our education and our professional responsibilities. We recognise our privileged position in a world where there is much disadvantage.

Many of you have told us of your desire to give something back, to meet an obligation to those in future generations who may struggle to gain access into our profession or follow our career path without a helping hand. We have created the ICAS Foundation so that you can do so.

We are giving you, the local and global community of CAs, the opportunity to share your experience and success with those who aspire to follow in your footsteps but who may struggle even to get on the first rung of the ladder.

As well as benefitting from financial support through bursaries and grants, students on the ICAS Foundation programme are enrolled on the mentoring programme which matches them with a CA who will help guide and support them in their first steps into a career in accountancy and finance.

We very much appreciate you volunteering your time to support a young person through their university journey, helping them to navigate academic, personal and professional challenges and make the most of opportunities.

This resource has been designed to help you and your mentee make the most of your mentoring relationship and supplement your existing knowledge and skills.

'It is vitally important that we do all we possibly can to give any aspiring, but disadvantaged, future Chartered Accountants and finance professionals, the opportunity to succeed. As ICAS members and as a profession, I believe we can do more to help a disadvantaged generation get on or stay on a ladder of progress.'

Sir David Tweedie

ICAS Past President & Chair of ICAS Foundation Trustees.

What is Mentoring?

The ICAS Foundation sees the mentoring process as:

“A relationship orchestrated to provide support to a student. The mentor uses their experience in a facilitative manner to support the career exploration and determination of the mentee. Mentoring is used to assist individuals at specific times of development or transition and lasts for a defined period of time. The relationship provides an opportunity for both to develop and benefit from the process.”

One way to help in understanding what mentoring is, is to consider what mentoring is not:

- a tutor/student relationship where the focus is on producing an academic outcome within a prescribed syllabus where the tutor is in control
- an instructor/trainee relationship focusing on learning skills and techniques to perform a specific function where the instructor is in control of the learning process
- a manager/employee relationship where the manager controls the outcome of the task
- a friend/friend relationship, which mainly focuses on personal development usually outside work, focusing on either friend depending on the circumstances

Principles of Mentoring

The following principles underpin the ICAS Foundation Mentoring Scheme:

- There must be shared understanding of, and agreement with, the purposes of the mentoring scheme and the process has to be understood by all those taking part.
- Mentoring is a constructive, developmental form of support and of mutual benefit to those taking part.
- A clear understanding of, and agreement on, the level of confidentiality will be required within the mentoring relationship.
- Any written record produced should be appropriate to the needs of the mentor and mentee. Records - including, where, used, recorded – should be accessible to the mentee.
- The mentoring scheme will reflect and promote a commitment to equal opportunities.
- Open communication and consultation will occur throughout the implementation and management of the scheme.

The ICAS Foundation Mentoring Policy supports these principles and a copy of this document is provided to all ICAS Foundation Mentors.

What are the benefits of mentoring?

Mentoring will have a clear and positive effect on the personal and professional development of the mentee. The ICAS Foundation also intends to benefit the mentors.

Your involvement as a Mentor supports an undergraduate student by:

- Giving them an insight into your work and career
- Offering advice and guidance with their career thinking and their transition from secondary school to undergraduate to young professional
- Support students in their thinking and understanding of various educational opportunities
- Assisting potential graduates with practical tips for successful job search strategies.

In addition mentors:

- gain personal and professional satisfaction in helping a student
- gain recognition from their peers and have the opportunity to connect with other mentors
- gain improved interpersonal and coaching skills.

Most ICAS Foundation students have limited knowledge of and no personal contacts within the accountancy profession. Our mentoring programme allows students to learn more about the profession, develop a professional network and an understanding of the benefits the CA qualification can bring.

The Mentors Role

The relationship between mentor and mentee is very much mentee-centred – focusing on their professional and personal development. It may include the giving of advice, information, establishing facts, sign-posting, self-appraisal, etc. Whatever the techniques, the emphasis is on enabling and empowering the mentee to take charge of their own development and their environment.

To allow this transition the importance of interpersonal skills is essential. These skills include listening effectively, empathy, understanding, a non-judgemental approach and the ability to facilitate through skilled questioning.

The role of the Mentor is to:

- Listen
- Question, to elicit facts
- Give information, knowledge about organisation/occupation and informal networks
- Give advice on career development
- Offer different perspectives
- Offer support and encouragement
- Draw on own experience when appropriate
- Confront and discuss current issues

And to encourage the Mentee to:

- Listen
- Clarify understanding
- Share thinking
- Review and reflect on oneself
- Change assumptions
- Consider different perspectives
- Develop and manage a career plan
- Take responsibility for their own development

The Mentoring Relationship

The mentoring relationship can be a very powerful positive experience. It enables and develops a greater sense of confidence, enhancing the professional and personal skills of both parties. To help make the experience/relationship a success the following should be considered:

- Clear guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of both parties in line with the ICAS Foundation Mentoring programme.
- Agreed and shared understanding of the nature and type of support
- Commitment towards the principles and values of the mentoring scheme
- The skills of both the mentor and mentee
- Clear communication in both directions

Clear communication is the cornerstone on which all the other factors sit. It is through constructive and empathic dialogue the relationship can develop allowing both parties to bring forward their ideas, enter discussions and maintain professional development.

Mentoring Activities

The following are only a suggestion of activities that mentors may take part in:

- An initial “contracting” meeting
- Work shadowing
- Review discussions
- Making use of a learning log to allow the student to track their progress and reflect on learning
- Building a portfolio or record of achievement
- Personal support
- Reviewing the relationship
- Ending the relationship

Mentoring Tasks

The following are tasks which the mentor may use to varying extents depending on the relationship and circumstances:

- Negotiating and agreeing
- Identifying needs
- Observing
- Recording
- Assessing
- Advising
- Informing
- Problem-solving
- Target-setting
- Clarification of strategies and actions
- Evaluating
- Giving and receiving feedback

Selecting and using strategies for supporting the Mentee

There are different ways a mentee can be supported, checked, encouraged and given constructive feedback. With each strategy, it is important to be aware of its purpose, appropriateness, the likely impact and its value to the mentee.

Strategies can include:

Giving advice – offering the mentee your opinion on the best course of action

Giving information – giving information on a specific situation (e.g. contact for resource)

Taking action in support – doing something on the mentee's behalf with their permission.

Observing and giving feedback – work shadowing and observation by either or both parties.

Observation coupled with constructive feedback is a powerful learning tool

Reviewing – reflection on experience can develop understanding allowing one to consider future needs, explore options and strategies

The selection of strategies can be guided by a number of factors, such as:

- Values and principles underpinning the mentoring scheme – in this case, encouraging self-sufficiency and empowerment
- Shared understanding between mentee and mentor of the purpose behind the mentoring relationship
- Quality and level of the professional relationship
- Level of experience and need of the mentee
- Level of mentor's own awareness and comfort with the mentoring process

The ICAS Foundation believes mentoring is an empowering experience for the mentee; it is therefore vital that the strategies chosen guide the mentee towards autonomy. While students are in their first year of their degree, conversations may generally centre on personal development and academic support with this progressing to include career exploration and planning.

Over time and as the mentoring relationship develops, the mentee will negotiate the forms of support needed; by making use of processes that are self-helping such as learning logs, self-review journals, reviewing meetings and feedback. The relationship can be used to develop skills for both parties and is dependent on clear communication. This all-important communication can benefit from analysing a number of key skills, Active Listening and Questioning.

Active Listening

Active listening is the ability to listen and internalise what is being said, essentially listening and understanding. You can use your whole self to convey the message of an active listener involved in the discussion, showing interest, gaining trust and respect. This can be achieved by using verbal and non-verbal communication.

Non-verbal communication has more impact than words alone, so facial expression, eye contact, non-verbal prompts (e.g. head nodding) and body posture (leaning slightly towards the mentee, showing interest) will contribute towards building upon the professional relationship and improving discussions.

While we recommend that mentoring meetings initially take place in public places such as a coffee shop, you may then choose to meet in a quieter environment such as the mentors office where your surroundings can be utilised to create a climate appropriate for discussion to occur. The aim is for a quiet, pleasant and relaxed environment with no physical barriers (e.g. a desk between mentor and mentee) to be used to conduct the meeting in.

Being Focused: Keeping the mentee focused on a specific discussion topic, keeping the conversation confined around one area. This is difficult as mentees in the early stages of mentoring tend to have many questions and move from one to the other without linking or having a structured approach

Giving space – during discussions the mentee will have silences and spaces, which will vary in length. Try not to rush in and fill these, as everyone has differing periods of reflection and thinking. It is important to allow the mentee time to internalise their thoughts.

Using the art of questioning - Questioning, if used effectively, is a very useful and powerful tool. It allows the mentee–mentor relationship to develop, assisting the mentee in exploring and understanding their experiences with the hope of formulating avenues and actions for the future.

There are many reasons to ask questions, they may be to:

- satisfy curiosity
- obtain or clarify information
- assist in exploring an issue
- look at possible alternatives
- check understanding
- challenge contradictions, views etc.
- move the discussion forward
- direct the discussion

Preparing for the role of Mentor

Mentors may have concerns and it should be noted that these concerns are the same ones that mentees have:

Some of these concerns may be:

- Will we get on?
- Will there be enough time for the meetings?
- What am I supposed to do?
- Will I be able to do this?
- Confidentiality?
- What if things go wrong?

Mentors can start to look at these issues prior to the initial contracting meeting. Reviewing past experiences and looking at the expectations of the mentoring programme can do this. The reflection will also invite you to consider issues that may be important for the future success of the mentoring relationship.

Self-check Questions for Mentors prior to first meeting:

- What within your past or present experience has given you preparation for your role as a mentor? (e.g. staff development, management of staff, have been mentored,
- What have you learned from the experiences above that will prepare you for the role of mentor?
- How do you see yourself supporting the professional development of the mentee?
- What support do you feel you require to allow yourself to perform as a mentor? How can this be supplied?
- What do you feel makes a successful mentoring relationship?
- What do you think the mentee will gain from the relationship?
- What do you think you will learn from the relationship?
- What do you think your organisation will learn from the relationship?
- What difficulties and constraints do you feel there will be on the mentoring relationship? How can these be resolved?
- How much time do you feel will be required for the relationship? How will this time be found?
- How do you think the mentee will be feeling? Consider their potential preconceptions about mentoring and Chartered Accountants.

You can read about another ICAS Foundation Mentor's experience at:

<https://www.icas.com/ca-today-news/the-magic-of-mentoring>

Developing Rapport and Building Trust

One of the best ways to build trust is to help the mentee accomplish something that is important to them. Mentors must take the time to help mentees identify the goal(s) they want to accomplish, view it realistically, break it down into small steps, and explore ways of reaching the goal. Building trust can take time, often over a period of many weeks.

Young people may be slow to give their trust, expecting inconsistency and lack of commitment, due to past experiences with adults. The mentor's trustworthiness and commitment may be tested, particularly if the mentee is from a background where adults have repeatedly disappointed them. During the testing period, mentors can expect:

- Missed appointments
- Phone calls not returned
- Unreasonable requests

Mentors should remember that the issue is not whether a mentee likes them. Young people can be protecting themselves from disappointment. Remember, predictability breeds trust. The mentor must be consistent and accountable:

- On time for meetings
- Bring promised information, materials
- Follow through on promises and contracts that were volunteered

In accordance with our mentoring policy, information shared by the mentee will only be shared with the ICAS Foundation and will not be discussed with anyone else.

If the mentor feels it is important to involve another person (e.g. a colleague), it should be discussed first with the student.

The Initial Meeting

The initial meeting is very important, it will set the stage for the relationship; allow a forum in which to establish the parameters essential for the success of the mentoring experience. It is the time to set, clarify and agree issues, these may include:

- The purpose of the mentoring scheme and your expectations of what you hope to get from the experience?
- The framework for the supporting activities – What and how will these be delivered? What preparation prior to the meetings is needed? Each other's responsibilities?
- Issues around time – Frequency of meetings? How long will these meetings be?
- Review meetings – Important to review the aims, objectives and consider how the relationship is developing and changing.

At the end of discussions of the initial contracting meeting both parties need to reach a shared agreement that states clearly what each party expects to give and gain from the relationship. This agreement can be verbal or a simple written summary can be written in the mentor log.

Regular Mentor/Mentee Meetings

The meetings are the central function allowing discussion on experiences, giving and receiving feedback, exploration of issues and talking through options for future action and development. The mentor acts as facilitator/enabler through skilful questioning, a non-directive, non-judgemental approach and the use of different strategies. All this needs to happen within an agreed framework around a clear purpose or purposes.

The main purposes of the meeting may include:

- Reviewing experience
- Giving feedback e.g reviewing coursework where students are experiencing challenges
- Identify strengths and achievements
- Identify weaknesses and areas for development
- Exploring options e.g choosing academic modules, exploring work experience opportunities.
- Teaching or coaching specific skills and techniques e.g. presentations, academic concepts, interview preparation.
- Engaging in discussions on professional issues e.g. expectations of the workplace, advancing technology in the accounting profession.
- Agreeing support needs e.g. information on career paths.
- Setting targets for future action e.g. writing a CV.

There are normally three key process stages within the meetings:

Establishing the task and people parameters – developing trust, connecting with each other, setting the agenda and ground rules

Exploration and clarification – of issues raised, mentee's thoughts and feelings and the mentor's views.

Identification and agreement – targets and tasks for future action for both parties

In order for the meetings to work effectively the mentor's ability to use their skills appropriately is essential. The core skills will probably involve: displaying respect, understanding, empathy, the ability to clarify, active listening, questioning, focusing, delivering feedback, summarising, negotiating, problem solving, target setting and action planning.

Just by looking at the core skills, it can be seen that the position of the mentor is very powerful. It is the mentor's ability in using these skills to empower the mentee, which is the 'magic'; moving the power base from themselves to the mentee, allowing them to develop. The mentor will draw on their expertise, experience, knowledge base, personality and ability to assess the mentee and situation.

Feeding Back to the Mentee

Feeding back during the mentoring process is essential for any meeting and is the core component to the development of the mentee. Mentors can make the process easier by considering some key steps:

- Trust and Respect – Before the feedback process even happens it is important that the mentee and mentor develop their professional relationship.
- Quality of the information fed back – Base comments on quantifiable and reliable information.
- Two-way discussion – Make sure the discussion is a two-way dialogue, where both parties are involved and buy into the process. There needs to be an exchange of ideas, views and opinions from both.
- Constructive Outcomes – Feedback needs to search for ways forward, strategies and solutions to difficulties that arise moving the development and learning forward.

Resources & Support

- Mentoring Resources

The ICAS Foundation offers active mentors the opportunity to share resources and ideas with each other through the Mentor Linked In Group. This is a forum to communicate with fellow mentors to share good practice and news from the ICAS Foundation as well as the wider mentoring community. Mentors should not post any personal information that could identify a mentee.

If you have any questions about joining or posting a question in the Linked In Group please get in touch with the ICAS Foundation. All mentors will receive an invitation to join the group when they have been matched with a mentee.

Mentors can also access mentoring-related articles on the ICAS website to develop knowledge and keep up to date with good practice in mentoring. www.icas.com

- Careers and Recruitment

All students and recent graduates can access free career development support through their university careers service. Students can participate in 1-2-1 career guidance sessions and interactive workshops, practice psychometric tests and access careers information resources. Students should utilise these resources throughout their degree as well as take advantage of employer presentations and networking opportunities on campus.

University Careers Services can also provide students with guidance on sourcing internships and graduate roles. Students can register to receive vacancy emails alerting them when roles are advertised which match their preferences.

ICAS run 'Become a CA' events for students and graduates across Scotland between September and October each year. These offer an opportunity to learn about the CA training pathway as well as network with a number of employers actively recruiting CAs. These are advertised on icas.com and the ICAS Foundation sends all penultimate and final year students an email encouraging attendance.

The ICAS 'Become a CA' website advertises internships and graduate roles with firms who offer CA training contracts. Students can also sign up to receive email alerts for vacancies tailored to their preferences. www.becomeaca.org.uk

The ICAS Foundation actively encourages students, particularly those in their penultimate or final year of study, to use these resources and be proactive in their search for an internship and graduate role. Mentors should also encourage mentees to make the most of these opportunities to complement their learning from the mentoring relationship and develop autonomy.

- Academic Support

If mentees are struggling with any aspect of their studies, mentors should encourage them to speak to their personal tutor or adviser of studies for support and guidance. Universities also offer optional academic and study skills support including workshops, 1-2-1 appointments with study skills advisers and online resources. Mentors should encourage mentees to consider utilising this support to improve their academic performance or feel more confident about their study skills.

Social Mobility

Increasing social mobility is high on the agenda for government, education and business. While progress has been made, access to university and to the professions still disproportionately benefits those from more affluent backgrounds.

In contributing to this agenda, the ICAS Foundation makes a significant impact on the lives of talented young people from less advantaged backgrounds and is helping students who may not otherwise have gone on to university. Significant barriers for our students include low household income, challenging family circumstances, limited awareness of opportunities and living in areas of multiple deprivation.

As the mentoring relationship develops, sometimes students confide in mentors about challenges they are having in different areas of their lives. If you have any concerns about your mentee please contact the ICAS Foundation to discuss.

CAs are fortunate to belong to a professional community and recognise their privileged position. Being a CA opens the door to many opportunities in accountancy, industry and academia across the world for Chartered Accountants. Unfortunately, these opportunities are not available to a lot of young people, who given the chance, could very well shape the future of ICAS. Mentors are a huge support to students and offer a window into what their future could hold.

Closure

The Closure stage is the natural finale at which point it will be time for the mentoring relationship to end.

We ask all ICAS Foundation Mentors to commit to mentoring for a minimum of 2 years. While most mentors are in a position to mentor their mentee for the full term of their degree (up to 4 years), we understand that this is not always possible. Where a mentor is unable to continue, the ICAS Foundation will rematch the mentee with a new mentor for the remaining period of their studies.

Upon graduation, the ICAS Foundation mentoring relationship should end. We hope that the mentee has become an independent learner able to facilitate his or her own development without the aid of the mentor. For most parties there is a degree of sadness and regret at the ending of an effective relationship, even when both parties know that it has reached the end of its useful life. It is important that the relationship finishes on a positive note and celebrates success in the final review. We understand that mentors and mentees may wish to keep in touch after this point but this is not an expectation and will no longer be managed by the ICAS Foundation.

Challenges & Complaints

The ICAS Foundation is committed to ensuring an enjoyable, challenging and rewarding experience for mentors and mentees. Although it is rare in a mentoring relationship there will be occasions where the mentor and the mentee struggle to work together to such an extent that there may be complaints or a grievance. Please refer to the ICAS Foundation to deal with any complaints or grievances that either mentor or mentee has.



ICAS Foundation
CA House, 21 Haymarket Yards
Edinburgh EH12 5BH

www.icasfoundation.org.uk

enquiries@icasfoundation.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter @ICASFoundation

The ICAS Foundation is a Scottish registered charity: No SC034836