

Framework of principles for mentoring

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A Framework of Principles for Mentoring

Introduction

The General Medical Council recognises that mentoring skills are important for ensuring doctors deliver safe, effective and efficient care as soon as they start a new job. The GMC's Good Medical Practice guidelines identify mentoring as essential to supporting and developing good practice.

Mentoring can vary from informal buddying to formal schemes which offer newly qualified consultants and GPs an established mentor to help them into their new role. There is also considerable variation between individual schemes/provision.

The aim of this document is to promote and ensure best practice for mentoring using a framework of principles that are consistent in values yet flexible in adapting to local demand, need and resources.

The document also allows mentoring provider organisations to monitor and align themselves with these standards, ensuring benchmarking against best practice and recognition in delivering high quality mentoring.

Principles

Mentoring should be available to all

Participation in mentoring schemes should be accessible to all doctors, at any stage of their career. Employers should take steps to ensure that doctors have such resources available to them locally and that they are aware of them.

Why is this important?

In addition to the increasing depth of knowledge needed to work in each specialty, and breadth and depth of knowledge in general practice, doctors now have to cope with the challenges of a changing organisational landscape.

Doctors should be encouraged to find and take part in structured support opportunities offered by their employer or contracting body. Doctors should do this when they join an organisation and whenever their role changes significantly throughout their career.

Engagement in mentoring is voluntary

Participation in mentoring should be voluntary.

Why is this important?

Voluntary participation is more likely to lead to greater engagement by the doctor and more positive experiences.

Mentoring has acknowledged potential to be beneficial to all doctors

It should be a positive scheme with benefits to all doctors, not those with specific needs.

Why is this important?

Mentoring has been shown to have a particular benefit to doctors at times of difficulty and times of transition. However, it can and should also be used as a tool to promote fulfilment of potential for all doctors and to help ensure doctors deliver safe and effective care.

Newly qualified consultants and GPs should be mentored in their new role

Newly qualified consultants and GPs should be offered structured mentoring to support their transition from training to their new role by an experienced clinician from their own specialty or general practice]. The mentoring relationship can last for varying lengths of time depending on needs identified, but for newly appointed consultants or GPs, a typical period may be up to two years with regular meetings.

Why is this important?

The transition from registrar to consultant or GP could be very stressful if appropriate preparation has not been considered – having access to impartial advice and encouragement through a supportive relationship is essential.

The GMC's Good Medical Practice Guidelines state that doctors should be willing to find and take part in structured support opportunities offered by their employer or contracting body.

Successful selection

Mentees should be matched to mentors who meet the needs of the mentee but who are independent of their appraisal process and of the managerial structures if they are in the same organisation.

There should also be a process for reallocating the participants, if it is recognised that a mentoring relationship is not working or not meeting the needs of the mentee.

Why is this important?

This will avoid risks of mentor bias, confidentiality breach and role confusion.

Mentors should receive appropriate and effective ongoing training and review

All mentors must understand the concept of mentoring and should ideally receive appropriate and ongoing training and support in knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to apply in their roles as mentors.

Why is this important?

For mentoring to be effective, it must extend beyond sharing a mentor's knowledge and/or expertise. Ongoing training will identify gaps in skills and allow opportunities for reflection. Mentors will benefit from the calibration of their practice and the ability to develop their skills. Mentors need support in order to deal effectively with the possible challenges of the role.

Appraisal and revalidation

Mentoring activities should be included within the mentor's scope of practice for appraisal and revalidation purposes.

Why is this important?

This will provide an opportunity for them to reflect on their performance in this area and to demonstrate up-to-date knowledge and skills and/or identify the need for additional support.

Mentees should receive appropriate preparation and support

Mentees should receive adequate preparation. This can be online or paper guidance as well as a face-to-face session.

Why is this important?

It will help ensure the understanding of the mentees and appropriate expectations of the mentoring process.

Regular evaluation

Mentoring programmes must be evaluated regularly and appropriately.

Why is this important?

This will help identify any problems at an early stage, enable any adjustments to be made, and will provide meaningful impact analyses.