Overview

The Nutrition Society of Australia is pleased to offer our Mentoring Program for Registered members.

The Mentoring Program aims to provide opportunities for sharing experience and knowledge between Registered members, contributing to their ongoing professional development.

This Booklet outlines the purpose of the Program, the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees and details the eligibility and procedures involved. FAQs and supporting documentation are also provided.

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1. Purpose of the mentoring program

The Nutrition Society of Australia has a core mission to promote the scientific value and relevance of nutrition science in Australia. We aim to be at the centre of Australian nutrition-related sciences and industries, focusing on mutual scientific support of members and the science of nutrition.

Our Registered members have a wealth of experience and knowledge within the nutrition-related fields of science and industry. Creating opportunities for our members to share their knowledge and experience is one of the ways that we will contribute to developing strong mutual support within a workforce that is focused on excellence.

Our mentoring program provides the framework within which we can build collaboration and knowledge-sharing at an individual and/or small group level. It contributes to the ongoing professional development of our Registered members and helps to strengthen the Society’s role within the science of nutrition.

2. Eligibility

To participate in the program, you must be a Registered member with the Nutrition Society of Australia. This includes any of the following registration status:

- Associate Nutritionist
- Registered Nutritionist
- Public Health Nutritionist
- Animal Nutritionist

Key points to note for program eligibility:

i. Each mentee will only be eligible for one mentor; however, mentors may elect to partner with more than one mentee if they wish.

ii. Mentees may preference a particular mentor (from our website) in their application form, however it cannot be guaranteed that this matching will always be possible.

iii. Mentor-mentee relationships need not be limited by geographical location.

iv. Mentors and mentees must be available to commit to the program over a 12-month period. The suggested commitment is 3-4 meetings over this period.
3. NSA mentoring program framework

The NSA mentoring program matches mentors with one or more mentees for a flexible period (12 months recommended).

A call for mentors/mentees is issued annually, who are then matched by the Mentor Program Committee based on key criteria including experience, key attributes and areas of need/expertise as outlined in the application forms.

Training is provided for mentors and mentees prior to the commencement of the mentoring program and additional resources are available on the NSA website.

An introduction is facilitated between the mentor and mentee, and it is the responsibility of the mentee to make contact with their mentor to initiate the relationship.

Evaluations will occur regularly throughout the program period, and at the conclusion of the program.

4. What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a professional alliance or relationship between two or more people which is based on mutual trust from which everyone benefits.

A mentor is a more experienced person who is willing to empower someone less experienced to achieve their goals by sharing knowledge and life experiences.

A mentee is a less experienced person who is willing to share knowledge and life experiences, learn from others and be empowered to achieve goals and reach their potential.

A peer-mentoring partnership may be more collaborative or provide an opportunity for both members to share differences in experience and expertise with the objective of supporting each other in professional development.

Mentoring creates purposeful discussion, giving both the mentor and mentee opportunities to share their skills and experiences to facilitate both personal and professional development.

Mentoring assists the mentee to:

- Reflect on their own experience
- Recognise their own strengths and opportunities to optimise or further develop
- Make informed decisions to solve problems
- Achieve their goals
Key characteristics of successful mentoring:
- Relationships are mutually beneficial and are often long-term and ongoing
- Focuses on an individual’s career as well as personal growth
- Sets clear and specific goals which are aligned with a broader vision or philosophy
- Is a blend of process- and relationship-oriented to achieve goals

Mentoring can be useful for those who:
- Have recently started a new job or changed role
- Are working towards promotion
- Require guidance on how to achieve professional goals
- Require guidance on defining their desired career trajectory
- Need to meet CPD requirements

5. Benefits to participants

FOR THE MENTOR
- Satisfaction of seeing others develop
- Increased recognition from peers
- Challenge & stimulation
- Personal learning & Development
- Exposure to new viewpoints or approaches

FOR THE MENTEE
- Increased confidence & motivation
- Support to formulate personal direction
- Develop new skills & view points
- A source of knowledge & experience
- A sounding board to explore ideas

FOR AN ORGANISATION
- Participants have a clear sense of direction
- Increased engagement & improved communication
- Sharing of knowledge & experience
- Innovation & continuous development

Why become a mentor?

There are many great reasons to become a mentor. A mentoring relationship enables you to:
- give something back or make a contribution to your industry
- strengthen the lessons you’ve already learned
- develop new strengths and skills in leading others
- empower someone else to see his or her own strengths
- work with people from different contexts and backgrounds
● practise offering positive and constructive feedback
● increase your personal and professional networks
● generate workable solutions together in a mutually respectful way
● motivate, advise and support whilst empowering someone to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own actions and development

Please think about being a mentor if you have skills, knowledge and experience that you feel can benefit others.

Why become a mentee?

Having a mentor may provide the mentee with:
● an impartial observer and sounding board
● Someone with whom to contribute viewpoints, advice, and information from their own knowledge, experience and expertise
● support to achieve your goals
● Help to refine your ideas and put them into practice
● Broadening your networks to increase your personal and professional opportunities
● accountability for any actions set within the sessions
● ask you questions that you may never ask yourself
● see strengths and qualities in you that you haven’t noticed
● work with you to generate workable solutions in a mutually respectful manner

Getting the most out of your mentoring relationship

● Trust is essential to a positive mentoring relationship. Make sure you feel comfortable with your mentor so you can get the most out of them.
● Find a professional who is willing, accessible (phone or face to face) and reliable. You want this to work- don’t set it up to fail.
● Enlist your manager’s support. They want you to succeed in the workplace and should encourage your initiative.
● Think about the support or supervision that you already have in place and identify gaps. This will help clarify what you want from the mentoring relationship.
● Many professional associations suggest about 2-4 hours/month is a good amount of time in a mentoring relationship. Make sure your mentor can commit to this amount of time.
● Make your mentoring appointments a ‘diary priority’- never cancel a mentoring session except in absolute necessity.
● If you find that your mentoring appointments are pleasantly social but not meeting your professional needs there are a number of actions you can take: Document what you want to achieve and how you will know when you have achieved this; Be clear and set the agenda with your mentor; Remain strictly with your agreed agenda; or Prepare a list of questions or details that you would like your mentor to observe/answer.
● Be aware that occasionally a mentor/mentee relationship needs to be discontinued.
6. Roles with a mentoring partnership

It is important that both partners within a mentorship understand their role in contributing to a successful mentoring experience. This allows for the expectations on each other to be clearly defined and understood.

6.1. Role of the Mentor

- Listen and be supportive
- Provide non-judgemental support
- Provide guidance on issues raised
- Clarify goals of the mentee
- Pass on knowledge and experience

A mentor is not:
- A private tutor or lecturer
- A parental figure
- A disciplinarian
- An examiner or assessor
- A source of financial support or assistance
- The only experienced professional the mentee should rely on

6.2. Role of a Mentee

- Take responsibility for your own mentoring journey
- Develop clear goals and implement them
- Speak up and discuss issues and concerns
- Be clear about what support works and doesn’t work for you
- Let the mentor know how she/he can best support you

A mentee is not:
- A student learning from a teacher or guru
- Dependent on the mentor’s opinions and views

7. Responsibilities

To achieve a successful mentoring experience, both partners should be aware of the responsibilities they both share and independently hold throughout the program.

Responsibilities of both partners:
- **Open communication** - this includes both during and outside of planned session, such as letting the other partner know with plenty of notice if you need to reschedule a session
Respectful interactions - to harness an open relationship for knowledge-sharing, both partners must treat each other with respect and appreciate the other person’s lived experience.

Prioritising the mentorship - both partners commit to making time to participate in the program

Maintain confidentiality - in developing trust within the partnership, both parties must ensure they treat their conversations in confidence unless otherwise agreed between you

**Responsibilities of the mentor:**
- Timely responses to the mentee
- Honour agreements made with the mentee

**Responsibilities of the mentee:**
- Contacting the mentor to arrange meetings
- Setting meeting agendas
- Maintaining records of meetings

7.1. Preparing for a Mentoring Relationship

In preparing for engagement in a mentorship, it is important that you are clear about what you can offer and what you want to gain from a mentoring relationship.

**Questions to ask yourself:**
- Why do you want to be a mentor? / Why do you want to have a mentor?
- What skills and experiences would you bring to a mentoring relationship?
- Do you have the time? Mentoring requires a time commitment so take a look at your existing commitments and evaluate how much time you can commit to a mentorship.
- Are you willing to be proactive and open in the mentoring relationship?
  - This includes contributing your knowledge, being honest, asking questions and taking responsibility for your own decisions
- Can you honour agreements that you have made with your partner, including keeping appointments and maintaining confidentiality?
- Are you self-aware and empathetic? These are important qualities in order to adopt a reflective approach to mentoring.

8. Procedures

If you are interested and eligible for the program, the below outlines the procedure for the application, matching and evaluation processes.

8.1. Application Process
There will be two application rounds per year. At each application round there will be an opportunity for training for mentors and mentees.

8.1.1. Mentors

Mentors will volunteer by completing the application form through the NSA website by the specified date. Volunteers will be listed on the mentor page on the NSA website to allow preferencing options for mentees. Mentors can elect to take on more than one mentee if they have sufficient time to do so. Mentors can also apply as a mentee.

8.1.2. Mentees

Mentees will submit an application via the NSA website to participate in the program and select up to 3 preferences for a mentor from the mentor page on the NSA website. Mentees may only be paired with one mentor at a time.

8.2. Matching Process

The NSA Mentor Program Committee is responsible for mentor-mentee pairing and will attempt to pair the mentee with one of their 3 mentor preferences (taking into consideration capacity of the chosen mentors). If all three preferences are not available, the committee will pair the mentee with a mentor who has the suitable skills to best match the mentee’s desired outcomes.

The mentor and mentee will be notified by email within four weeks of the closing date for the application round.

8.3. Training

In addition to receiving this resource booklet, all mentors and mentees will be invited to participate in an NSA training webinar that will cover the purpose and guidelines of the program, as well as roles, responsibilities and management of expectations.

8.4. Commencement

Once your training is complete you will be connected via email and your mentoring experience is ready to begin.

It is the responsibility of the mentee to initiate contact and schedule a mutually suitable time to connect for your first session. See “Mentor Meeting Guide” for more detailed guidance for the first and subsequent meetings.
8.5. Evaluation process

The NSA will continually improve and build upon the Mentoring Program for our Registered members so we can continue to support the professional development of our members and our commitment to our mission.

Throughout the duration of the program, both the mentor and mentee will be invited to complete an evaluation form about their experience of the program.

Within your mentorship, you may also decide to conduct a reflective evaluation of how you have found the experience and what you have learned from each other. This may assist you to identify what worked well and decide whether you wish to continue the partnership moving forward. See Section 7 - Additional Resources for some tools which might assist with this process.
9. Frequently Asked Questions and Answers (FAQs)

**How long do you need to commit to the mentoring program?**
There is no set period of time for mentoring relationships in this program because the time required depends on the needs of the mentee. The requirements and time commitment should be discussed and agreed between the mentor and mentee at the beginning of the mentoring relationship.

**What are the costs involved?**
The only cost for mentors and mentees will be the costs involved in contacting one another via email or phone. NSA mentoring resources can be used cost free by NSA mentors and mentees.

Please note: NSA does not reimburse any costs related to the NSA mentoring program for mentors and mentees.

**Who does a mentor or a mentee contact when problems arise?**
As in all professional relationships, issues should first be discussed between the parties involved (mentor and mentee) to see if a resolution can be reached. If a resolution cannot be reached the parties may contact the NSA Mentor Program Committee. The committee will consider the issue and may follow one of two strategies:
- Attempt mediation to determine whether the issue can be resolved
- Dissolve the pairing, and re-assign the mentee to a new mentor, or the mentee can apply in the next application round

**How long after I sign up am I assigned a mentor?**
We aim to complete the process within four weeks of receiving mentor applications, but that is dependent on whether we can locate a suitable match for you on the mentor database.

**Can there be gifts between mentors/mentees?**
It is not expected that gifts are given between mentors and mentees. Small token gifts may be given, but any gift that may be seen as a conflict of interest should not be accepted.

**What about privacy and confidentiality?**
All information provided by mentors and mentees during the application process or via communication with the committee is treated with privacy and confidentiality as specified in the NSA Code of Ethics [https://nsa.asn.au/about-us/code-of-ethics/](https://nsa.asn.au/about-us/code-of-ethics/)
10. Additional resources - Contents

10.1. Mentor Meeting Guide

10.1.1. Guidelines for duration and frequency of meetings

There is no set period of time for mentoring relationships in this progress because the time required depends on the needs of the mentee. The requirements and time commitment should be discussed and agreed between the mentor and mentee at the beginning of the mentoring relationship. As a starting point, it is suggested that the pair plan to meet 3-4 times over a 12-month period. Meetings can be in-person, or over phone or video call.

10.1.2. The First Meeting

Below are the steps to create a solid and realistic ground at your first meeting from which your mentoring goals can be developed and achieved.

**Contexts** - It is important that both mentor partners are clear about the contexts in which mentoring is occurring. Some questions to consider are:

- What are our current professions or fields of study?
- What are our geographical locations (remote, rural, urban etc)?
- What types of organisations are we working or studying in (university, government, NGO, private, corporate etc)?
- What experiences do we have in mentoring?
- What are the goals of each partner in this relationship?
- Frequency of meetings
- Do we have other interests or experiences in common?

**Expectations** - It is important to clarify expectations, establish boundaries and develop a common understanding of how the partnership will work.

The pair should address issues such as:

- The purpose and desired outcome of the mentoring relationship
- How often the partners meet and in what format (phone, email, in person etc)
- How effective communication will be established
- Confidentiality in the relationship
- How disagreements will be managed or resolved
- Monitoring and evaluation
- How the mentoring relationship will end
- What topics are off-limits

It is also useful at the beginning to establish a way for the relationship to end without blame - a no fault clause. This gives both mentoring partners permission to say when it's not working for them rather than enduring or avoiding.
Respecting differences - Personal style differences will become evident as the mentoring relationship develops. It is useful to develop an awareness of not only our own personal preferences but also our mentoring partners’ preferences in the following areas:

1. Communication styles: varied communication styles can range from:
   - Expressive or spirited style, high energy and emotion, fast speech and large gestures
   - Bold or direct style, brief and to the point
   - Technical or systemic style, orderly, methodical approach
   - Combinations of any of the above

2. Listening styles: five main styles are
   - Appreciative listening
   - Empathetic listening
   - Comprehensive listening
   - Discerning listening
   - Evaluative listening

3. Attitudes towards conflict
   Some people view conflict as a positive thing that can deepen relationships as it is worked through, while others view it as something that is dangerous, embarrassing, disrespectful or demeaning.

4. Decision making styles
   For some people there is a strong value placed on holding decision making responsibilities themselves. For others, it is important that decisions are made by groups of people by consensus or majority rule, or that decisions are delegated to a person or group with expertise in the subject.

5. Attitudes towards disclosure
   Some people are not frank about emotions, about the reasons behind a conflict or misunderstanding, or to disclose personal information. Others may feel that to work effectively with others they need to be heard or understood so they share personal information and feelings.

6. Responses to stress
   Some people thrive on stress which motivates them to meet deadlines and achieve their goals. Others may feel overwhelmed and function at a lower level when they are stressed.

10.2. Managing Mentoring Partnerships and Sessions

There is no set way to go about mentoring. The purpose of the meetings could be for some or all of the following reasons:
   - Reviewing and identifying the mentee’s experience
   - Helping the mentee to identify individual strengths and areas for development
• Discussing professional and work issues
• Agreeing what support is required
• Exploring the options open to the mentee
• Coaching on specific skills
• Supporting the mentee to set achievable realistic and stretching action plans

**Knowing Your Networks**

One of the key benefits of mentoring is that networks are shared. A network mapping exercise may be a positive step (helped by LinkedIn!).

10.3. **Mentoring Tools**

10.3.1. **Reflective Practice: The Reflective Cycle**

Reflective practice involves thoughtfully considering one’s own experiences in applying knowledge to practice while being mentored in the same discipline. Problem solving techniques and reflective thinking are developed through the dialogue with the mentor with whom experiences and knowledge are shared.

Some helpful features of effective reflective practice include:

- Clear learning goals
- Discussion of strengths and weaknesses, achievements and failures
- Links drawn between discussion of learning goals and real practice situations
- Identification of newly acquired practice skills and knowledge
- Identification of remaining problem areas to work on
- Identification of resources to support practice and reflective discussions

10.3.2. **The GROW Model: Goals, Reality, Options, Way Forward**

The GROW model is a good way to structure a meeting with your mentee. You can either start with the goal and work logically through the model or you can move the model around, starting with the reality and then the goal, if this works best. Remember to always finish with the way forward and ensure that this is set and owned by the mentee. The model is outlined below.

- **Goal** – Get the mentee to focus on the future and on what THEY want to achieve as an individual. It is not where you think they should be aiming.
- **Reality** – Ask questions to help the mentee establish where they are now. If you work with the individual directly you may need to give feedback on actual performance. Encourage the individual to get feedback on their performance from their direct line
manager if you do not work with them directly as this will help them to identify their current reality.

- **Options** – help the mentee to identify what different options are open to them and ask questions to help them explore the reality of each of these options. Share your own experiences if the mentee is struggling to identify sufficient options and beware of being too directive.

- **Way Forward** – Encourage the mentee to design an action plan which they have set and encourage them to set objectives, objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable and realistic for the mentee in their current position and that have clear timescales attached.

10.4. **Finishing a Mentoring Relationship**

One of your initial ground rules should be to end on good terms.

Mentoring partnerships usually end when:
- Mentee goals have been achieved
- Personal circumstances have changed for either the mentee or mentor and it is no longer possible for that person to continue
- The relationship is no longer working for the mentee or mentor. To prepare for this possibility, partners should adopt a no-fault rule, meaning that there is no blaming if the partnership is not working.

10.5. **Learning from your Mentoring Experience**

After each mentoring relationship has concluded it is useful to consider the following questions and do an honest reflection of the experience.
- What worked well?
- What didn’t work well?
- What did I learn?
- How did I grow?
- How can I use these learnings in the future?

10.6. **Conflict Resolution**

It is expected that mentors and mentees will establish mutually respectful relationships that comply with state and federal legislation related to the inclusion of diversity and the elimination of bullying, harassment and racial discrimination.