

Guideline

Subject: Mentoring for Trainees and New Fellows
Approval Date: October 2002, November 2008, November 2013, July 2017
Review Date: July 2021
Review By: BEA, Board of Directors
Number: 9/2002

Purpose

A mentor can be defined as “an experienced and trusted advisor” or a person who can provide professional and personal guidance throughout training, and into specialist practice. Often a Trainee’s supervisor will fulfil the role of mentor, or the Trainee may develop a mentor relationship with another person. Mentoring may be part of a formal College process, or it may be a less formal arrangement negotiated between the mentee and mentor.

The College requires formal mentoring for trainees in ‘major’ or ‘critical’ difficulty in accordance with the Policy on Support for Trainees in Difficulty. It is the responsibility of the State or Regional Councillor to ensure that this is in place, and they may fulfil that role themselves or nominate another suitable person.

The College advocates mentoring for all trainees and specialists where possible, and strongly recommends mentoring in the following situations:

1. The Trainee is unable to communicate effectively with his/her supervisor or the trainee//supervisor relationship has broken down
2. The Trainee needs objective discipline-specific advice, particularly related to examination failure
3. An overseas trained specialist undertaking training and/or assessments
4. Trainees in regional or remote locations
5. Pending or new Fellows transitioning into specialist practice
6. Trainees of Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Māori descent.

Role of the Mentor

The role of the mentor may include:

1. Providing career advice throughout training
2. Providing personal and professional counselling to Trainees in difficulty
3. Providing specific advice in the case of examination failure
4. Offering cultural orientation to international medical graduates
5. Monitoring and advising trainees on their suitability for a career in pathology (possibly as part of a local committee).

The mentor’s role is at all times supplementary to that of the supervisor, who has prime responsibility for training matters.

Candidates for formal mentoring of trainees in difficulty

In addition to the mentoring role currently undertaken by the State and Regional Councillors, the College may seek expressions of interest for a pool of mentors from the following groups:

1. Fellows on the Panel of Examiners
2. Fellows on the Advisory Committees for each discipline
3. Fellows on the State Committees, including Board of Education and Assessment representatives
4. Former Chief Examiners (for a specific role).
5. Semi-retired Fellows who have been involved in training and examinations.
6. Other suitable Fellows who fulfil all or most of the following criteria
 - a. Ordinarily, Fellows of more than 5 years
 - b. Interest in providing personal and professional support to Trainees and overseas trained specialists
 - c. Supervisory and/or examiner experience
 - d. Familiar with the local and broader workforce issues

Responsibilities and limitations of Fellows providing formal mentoring

The College will keep on record of mentors who are providing formal mentoring to trainees in difficulty. They will be provided with relevant policies and processes to be followed for Trainees in difficulty.

The following responsibilities and limitations apply:

1. While mentors should be familiar with College policies and procedures, they are not official College representatives.
2. Mentors will be advised to briefly document discussions, agreements and actions in case of any repercussions.
3. Mentors may seek the Trainee's consent for access to examination or supervisor's reports, or to discuss their situation with College representatives.
4. As the mentoring relationship is a personal one, the Trainee may choose to correspond with a number of mentors before choosing one with whom they feel comfortable.

Others who may offer informal mentoring

1. Pathologists who may or may not be supervisors of trainees
2. Other medical or dental specialists or senior scientists, especially in the corresponding faculties of the College
3. Senior trainees
4. Members of organisations for Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander or Māori health professionals
5. Overseas trained specialists who have attained RCPA Fellowship
6. Fellows who have successfully negotiated difficulties as trainees
7. Any other suitable person identified by the trainee or new Fellow