

Mentoring Framework

VET Trainers and Assessors

NACCHO
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

HumanAbility

Acknowledgement of Country

HumanAbility acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country we work and live. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders – past and present, and recognise their enduring connection to their culture, lands, seas, waters and communities.

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Introduction

A strong, capable, and supported workforce is critical to delivering high quality vocational education and training (VET). Mentoring plays a key role in building and sustaining this workforce by supporting trainers and assessors at different stages of their professional journey.

This Mentoring Framework provides a flexible, informed approach to the design and delivery of mentoring across the VET sector. It establishes a shared understanding of what mentoring is and what it is not, while allowing registered training organisations (RTOs) to adapt mentoring arrangements to local workforce needs and organisational contexts.

The framework recognises the complexity of the VET environment, including regulatory requirements, diverse learner needs, evolving delivery modes, and the increasing movement of industry professionals into training and assessment roles. It positions mentoring as a developmental, strengths-based practice that supports capability building, professional identity, cultural safety, workforce sustainability, inclusive practice and accessibility.

Designed as a guide rather than a prescriptive model, this framework supports consistent, high quality mentoring while encouraging contextualisation and innovation. It is intended for use by RTOs, managers and mentors to inform mentoring programs, agreements, and everyday practice.



Background

This framework establishes a consistent approach to mentoring VET trainers and assessors, supporting professional growth, capability development, and the sharing of industry and educational expertise, while remaining flexible to meet diverse learner, workforce, and organisational needs.

What is Mentoring

Mentoring is a structured, supportive relationship in which a more experienced professional (the mentor) provides guidance, insight, and support to a less experienced or transitioning colleague (the mentee). In the VET sector, mentoring supports trainers and assessors to develop confidence, capability, professional identity, and workforce longevity.

Mentoring is not supervision or performance management. It is developmental rather than corrective and is based on trust, mutual respect, and shared learning.

Purpose of Mentoring in VET

The VET environment is dynamic and continually evolving. Trainers and assessors are required to respond to changing regulatory and compliance requirements, diverse learner needs, emerging technologies, contemporary training practices, and evolving industry expectations. Navigating these demands can be challenging, particularly for those new to the sector or transitioning from industry roles.

Mentoring can assist trainers and assessors to:

- **Support trainers and assessors who are undertaking the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment:** including providing guidance on applying learning in practice, developing training and assessment resources, preparing for assessment requirements, and building confidence as emerging VET practitioners.
- **Transition successfully into training and assessment roles from industry:** including understanding the responsibilities of an educator, adapting industry expertise to a learning environment, and developing effective teaching and facilitation techniques.
- **Strengthen assessment practice and compliance knowledge:** including building an understanding of the Principles of Assessment, Rules of Evidence, validation processes, record keeping requirements, and quality assurance expectations within the VET system.
- **Enhance learner engagement and support strategies:** including sharing approaches for managing diverse learner cohorts, addressing varying learning needs, and creating inclusive and supportive learning environments.
- **Build capability to work respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, communities and organisations:** including strengthening cultural capability, understanding the importance of culturally safe and inclusive learning environments, incorporating culturally responsive teaching practices, and fostering respectful engagement and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- **Develop inclusive practice:** including building capability to support learners and colleagues with disability, contextualising teaching, assessment and communication approaches where appropriate, identifying and responding to individual support needs, and promoting equitable participation, accessibility and inclusion in learning and workplace environments.

Positives of Mentoring

Mentoring provides significant benefits for both mentors and mentees, contributing to individual professional growth, organisational capability, and the overall quality of training and assessment delivery within the VET sector. A well supported mentoring relationship creates opportunities for learning, collaboration, and continuous improvement that extend beyond the formal mentoring period.

Mentoring can:

- **Build capability and confidence in trainers and assessors:** by providing a safe and supportive environment to ask questions, explore challenges, seek feedback, and develop new skills. For example, a new trainer may gain confidence in delivering training sessions, while an experienced assessor may refine their assessment and validation practices through guidance and discussion.
- **Support retention and workforce stability:** by helping new and existing staff feel connected, supported, and valued within their organisation. Mentoring can ease the transition into new roles, reduce feelings of isolation, and improve job satisfaction, ultimately contributing to a more engaged and resilient workforce.
- **Encourage reflective practice and continuous improvement:** through regular conversations that promote self-assessment, critical thinking, and professional growth. Mentors can help mentees identify strengths, recognise areas for development, and set realistic goals to enhance their teaching, assessment, and learner support practices.
- **Facilitate the transfer of tacit knowledge and sector expertise:** that is often gained through experience and may not be documented in policies or procedures. This can include practical insights into managing learner engagement, navigating compliance requirements, working effectively with industry stakeholders, and applying best practice approaches in different training contexts.
- **Strengthen organisational culture and collaboration:** by fostering positive professional relationships, knowledge sharing, and a culture of learning. Mentoring encourages trainers and assessors to work together, share experiences, and contribute to collective success, helping to build a supportive and high performing workplace.
- **Promote professional networking and knowledge sharing:** by connecting staff across teams, delivery locations, regions, or areas of expertise. These connections can broaden perspectives, encourage innovation, and provide ongoing sources of professional support and collaboration.
- **Improve learner outcomes:** by strengthening the skills and effectiveness of trainers and assessors. As staff develop greater confidence, capability, and consistency in their practice, learners benefit from higher quality training, assessment, and support.
- **Strengthen cultural capability:** by enabling mentors and mentees to share knowledge, reflect on culturally responsive practice, and build confidence in working respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, communities and workplaces.

> A well-supported mentoring relationship creates opportunities for learning, collaboration and continuous improvement.

Potential Challenges and Limitations

While mentoring offers many benefits, it is important for both mentors and mentees to recognise that successful mentoring requires commitment, clear communication, and realistic expectations. Understanding potential challenges from the outset can help prevent issues from affecting the mentoring relationship and ensure that both parties achieve meaningful outcomes.

Some common challenges include:

- **Time constraints for both mentors and mentees:** competing workplace priorities, teaching schedules, administrative responsibilities, and personal commitments can make it difficult to schedule regular mentoring conversations. For example, a trainer managing peak assessment periods may find it challenging to dedicate time to mentoring activities. Establishing realistic meeting schedules and agreed priorities can help maintain momentum.
- **Poorly matched mentoring partnerships:** effective mentoring relies on a level of trust, mutual respect, and compatibility between participants. Differences in communication styles, expectations, availability, areas of expertise, or professional goals can sometimes limit the effectiveness of the relationship. Where possible, mentoring pairs should be matched based on development needs, experience, and shared objectives.
- **Lack of clarity around roles and expectations:** confusion can occur when mentors and mentees have different understandings of what the mentoring relationship is intended to achieve. For example, a mentee may expect direct answers to workplace challenges, while a mentor may see their role as guiding reflection and problem solving. Establishing agreed goals, boundaries, responsibilities, and communication methods at the beginning of the relationship helps create a shared understanding.
- **Mentoring being confused with supervision, performance management, or compliance checking:** mentoring is focused on professional development, capability building, and supportive guidance rather than monitoring performance or conducting formal evaluations. While mentors may discuss compliance requirements and quality practices, their role is not to assess, supervise, or manage the mentee's performance. Maintaining this distinction helps foster trust, openness, and honest discussion.
- **One-size-fits-all approaches that do not meet individual needs:** trainers and assessors enter mentoring relationships with different levels of experience, skills, confidence, and development goals. A mentoring approach that works well for one person may not be effective for another. For example, a trainer transitioning from industry may require support with facilitation techniques and learner engagement, while an experienced trainer may seek guidance on leadership, validation practices, or emerging technologies. Tailoring mentoring activities to individual needs improves engagement and outcomes.
- **Limited engagement or commitment from either party:** mentoring relationships are most effective when both mentors and mentees actively participate, prepare for discussions, follow through on agreed actions, and take responsibility for achieving their goals. A lack of engagement can reduce the value and impact of the mentoring experience.
- **Unrealistic expectations of outcomes:** mentoring can support professional growth and development; however, it is not a quick solution to every workplace challenge. Progress often occurs over time through ongoing reflection, learning, and application of new knowledge and skills.

Recognising these challenges early enables organisations, mentors, and mentees to establish mentoring arrangements that are realistic, well-supported, and sustainable. By setting clear expectations, maintaining open communication, and adapting the mentoring approach as needs evolve, mentoring relationships can provide meaningful and lasting benefits for all participants.

Outcomes

When mentoring is thoughtfully designed, well supported, and actively embraced by both mentors and mentees, it can deliver significant benefits for individuals, learners, and organisations. Effective mentoring strengthens workforce capability, supports professional growth, and contributes to a culture of continuous learning across the VET sector.

Successful mentoring can contribute to:

- **Work-ready practitioners who can effectively meet regulatory, industry, and learner needs:** through mentoring, trainers and assessors gain practical insights into compliance requirements, quality standards, assessment practices, learner support strategies, and industry expectations. This helps ensure they are well positioned to perform their roles effectively and professionally.
- **Improved quality and consistency of training and assessment delivery:** mentoring encourages the development of sound educational practices, robust assessment approaches, and reflective teaching methods. As trainers and assessors strengthen their capability, learners benefit from more engaging, relevant, and high-quality learning experiences.
- **Positive attraction, onboarding, and integration of new staff:** a structured mentoring program helps new trainers and assessors' transition more smoothly into the organisation and the VET sector. For those coming directly from industry, mentoring can provide valuable support in understanding VET practice, workplace systems, organisational culture, and learner expectations.
- **Stronger organisational culture and professional identity:** mentoring fosters collaboration, mutual respect, knowledge sharing, and a commitment to professional excellence. It helps build a sense of belonging and reinforces the important role that trainers and assessors play in supporting learners, industry, and workforce development.
- **Greater organisational capability and resilience:** by developing and retaining skilled staff, mentoring helps organisations build leadership capability, preserve institutional knowledge, and strengthen succession planning. Experienced practitioners can pass on valuable expertise while emerging professionals are supported to grow and contribute to the future of the organisation.
- **Enhanced professional judgement and decision making capability:** mentoring provides opportunities to learn from experienced practitioners and apply knowledge in authentic training and assessment contexts. Through observation, discussion, feedback and reflection, trainers and assessors develop the professional judgement needed to make informed decisions about learner support, assessment evidence, compliance requirements and training delivery.
- **Better prepared graduates of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment:** trainers and assessors who are undertaking the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment are better equipped through practical, mentoring supported experience to translate theory into practice. Mentoring helps build confidence, reinforce learning, expose participants to real world training and assessment scenarios, and support the development of the skills and behaviours required for effective practice in the VET sector.

How to Use This Framework

This framework is intended to provide guidance and a consistent foundation for VET Trainer and Assessor mentoring relationships rather than a rigid set of rules. Effective mentoring recognises that trainers, assessors, workplaces, and learners all operate in different contexts, and mentoring arrangements should be tailored to meet those unique circumstances.

The framework should be adapted to suit:

- **Local workforce needs:** organisations may have different workforce priorities, capability requirements, and skills gaps. For example, a mentoring program may focus on supporting new trainers entering the VET sector, developing specialist assessment skills, strengthening industry engagement, or building leadership capability within teaching teams.
- **Organisational size and delivery model:** mentoring approaches may vary depending on the structure and operations of the organisation. Large organisations may implement formal mentoring programs with defined processes and multiple mentoring partnerships, while smaller providers may adopt a more informal approach. Similarly, mentoring may need to accommodate face-to-face, online, blended, workplace-based, or remote delivery environments.



- **Trainer and assessor experience levels:** mentoring should reflect the individual needs, goals, and experience of each mentee. For example, a trainer transitioning from industry may require support with learner engagement, facilitation techniques, assessment design, and compliance requirements. In contrast, an experienced practitioner may seek guidance on advanced assessment practices, validation, leadership development, innovation, or emerging technologies.
- **Regional, industry, and learner contexts:** different regions and industries have unique workforce challenges, regulatory requirements, and learner expectations. Mentoring should consider factors such as regional and remote delivery, industry specific practices, culturally diverse learner cohorts, First Nations engagement, foundation skills development, and changing workforce demands.
- **Individual learning and development goals:** each mentoring relationship should be shaped by the needs and aspirations of the mentee. Some mentees may focus on building confidence and settling into a new role, while others may be seeking to broaden their expertise, improve performance in specific areas, or prepare for future career opportunities.
- **Available resources and operational requirements:** organisations can adjust mentoring arrangements to suit available time, resources, and organisational priorities. This may influence the frequency of meetings, the duration of the mentoring relationship, communication methods, or the use of individual and group mentoring approaches.

Flexibility is a key strength of effective mentoring. By adapting the framework to align with local circumstances and individual needs, organisations can create mentoring experiences that are relevant, practical, and meaningful. This helps ensure that mentoring remains responsive to changing workforce requirements while providing trainers and assessors with the support they need to develop professionally and contribute to high quality learner outcomes.

Why Contextualisation is Essential

The VET workforce comprises professionals with diverse industry backgrounds, levels of experience, organisational contexts, and learner cohorts. Consequently, mentoring is most effective when it is tailored to the specific needs, goals and circumstances of the mentor, mentee, organisation and learning environment.

While a standardised mentoring plan can provide consistency and structure, a flexible and contextualised approach ensures mentoring remains relevant, practical and responsive to individual and organisational requirements. Effective mentoring recognises that trainers and assessors operate in varied settings and face different challenges and opportunities throughout their professional journey.

Contextualised mentoring enables mentors and mentees to focus on issues that are directly relevant to the individual's role and workplace. This may include navigating compliance requirements, strengthening assessment practices, engaging diverse learner cohorts, incorporating new technologies, supporting inclusive learning environments, or balancing industry and educational expectations.

By responding to the realities of different training and assessment contexts, mentoring becomes more meaningful and impactful. A flexible approach promotes engagement, supports professional growth, strengthens capability and confidence, and contributes to improved outcomes for trainers, assessors, organisations and learners.

Trainers and assessors may be:

- **New to training and assessment but highly experienced in industry:** individuals often bring valuable vocational expertise but may require support to develop skills in facilitation, assessment design, learner engagement, and understanding VET compliance requirements. For example, a tradesperson transitioning into a training role may need guidance on creating effective learning experiences while adapting their industry knowledge for diverse learner groups.
- **Working towards a TAE qualification:** individuals requiring mentoring that aligns with their stage of learning, provides opportunities to apply knowledge in workplace contexts, and supports the development of practical training and assessment capability.
- **Working in culturally diverse or cross-cultural environments:** trainers and assessors may support learners from a wide range of cultural, linguistic, educational, and professional backgrounds. Mentoring can assist practitioners to build cultural capability, adapt communication styles, and implement inclusive teaching and assessment practices that support learner success.
- **Employed in different workforce arrangements:** including full-time, part-time, casual, contract, or remote roles. The needs of a trainer working remotely may differ significantly from those of a trainer who works onsite with immediate access to colleagues and support networks. Mentoring arrangements should consider availability, communication preferences, and opportunities for meaningful engagement.
- **Working across a variety of learner cohorts and delivery environments:** trainers and assessors may deliver training to apprentices, trainees, school students, adult learners, job seekers, international learners, or experienced workers seeking upskilling. They may also deliver training face-to-face, online, in workplaces, or through blended learning models. Mentoring should reflect the unique challenges and opportunities associated with these different contexts.
- **At different stages of their professional journey:** mentees may be seeking support to establish themselves in a new role, while others may be developing advanced assessment expertise, preparing for leadership opportunities, or exploring innovative approaches to training delivery.
- **Working within different industries and regulatory environments:** industry expectations, workplace practices, technologies, and compliance requirements can vary significantly across sectors. Effective mentoring acknowledges these differences and incorporates industry specific knowledge and practical examples where appropriate.

> Mentoring is most effective when it is tailored to the specific needs, goals and circumstances of the mentor, mentee, organisation and learning environment.

Where to Contextualise

To ensure mentoring is relevant, meaningful, and effective, organisations should consider where and how the mentoring framework can be adapted to reflect local circumstances, workforce needs, and individual development goals. Contextualisation helps create mentoring relationships that are practical, achievable, and aligned with organisational priorities while supporting the unique needs of mentors and mentees.

Key areas for local contextualisation include:

- **Mentor and mentee selection criteria:** organisations should determine appropriate criteria for selecting and matching mentors and mentees based on local needs and objectives. Considerations may include professional experience, technical expertise, industry background, communication style, availability, career aspirations, and development goals. For example, a trainer new to the VET sector may benefit from being paired with a mentor who has extensive experience in training and assessment practice, while an experienced trainer may seek a mentor with leadership or specialist industry expertise.
- **Duration and frequency of mentoring:** the length of the mentoring relationship and the frequency of meetings should be tailored to the needs of participants and the organisation. Some mentoring partnerships may benefit from weekly meetings during an initial induction period, while others may require monthly discussions over a longer timeframe. Flexibility allows mentoring arrangements to accommodate operational demands, workload cycles, and individual learning needs.
- **Delivery modes (face-to-face, virtual, or blended):** mentoring can be delivered through a range of formats depending on participant location, organisational structures, and available resources. Face-to-face mentoring may be ideal for workplace observation, coaching, and relationship building, while virtual mentoring can support geographically dispersed or remote staff. A blended approach may combine online meetings with occasional in person interactions to maximise accessibility and engagement.
- **Cultural and community considerations:** effective mentoring recognises and respects the cultural backgrounds, values, experiences, and perspectives of participants. This may include adapting communication styles, incorporating culturally responsive practices, acknowledging local community priorities, or supporting First Nations trainers, learners, and communities. Understanding cultural and community contexts helps create mentoring relationships that are respectful, inclusive, and responsive.

- **Links to organisational policies and professional development plans:** mentoring should complement existing organisational frameworks and development initiatives wherever possible. This may include aligning mentoring goals with professional development plans, induction programs, workforce capability strategies, quality improvement activities, performance development processes, or succession planning initiatives. For example, mentoring objectives may support a trainer's professional development goals in assessment validation, digital capability, learner engagement, or leadership development.
- **Industry and operational requirements:** different industries and vocational areas may require specialised mentoring support. For example, trainers in highly regulated industries may need mentoring focused on compliance and evidence requirements, while trainers in rapidly changing sectors may benefit from guidance on emerging technologies, industry trends, and innovative training practices.
- **Learner and delivery contexts:** mentoring should also reflect the characteristics of the learners being supported and the environments in which training is delivered. Trainers working with apprentices/trainees, adult learners, school students, remote communities, learners requiring individualised learning plans or additional support may have different development needs that influence the focus of mentoring discussions and activities.

By considering these areas for contextualisation, organisations can create mentoring programs that are flexible, responsive, and aligned with local needs. Tailoring mentoring arrangements in this way enhances the relevance and effectiveness of the mentoring experience, supporting stronger outcomes for mentors, mentees, learners, and the broader organisation.

> Contextualisation helps create mentoring relationships that are practical, achievable, and aligned with organisational priorities while supporting the unique needs of mentors and mentees.

7 Key Principles of Mentoring

Effective mentoring in the VET sector is built on a set of core principles that create a positive, supportive, and productive learning partnership. These principles help mentors and mentees establish strong professional relationships, promote meaningful development, and ensure mentoring remains focused on growth, capability building, and improved outcomes for learners.

Respect and Trust

Reflective Practice

Individual Focus

Cultural Responsiveness

Collaboration

Flexibility

Strength-Based Approach



1. Respect and Trust

Successful mentoring relationships are founded on mutual respect, trust, and professionalism. Mentors and mentees should feel safe to share experiences, discuss challenges, ask questions, and explore opportunities for growth without fear of judgement or criticism.

Confidentiality is an essential component of trust. While mentoring conversations may involve discussing workplace situations or professional challenges, information shared within the mentoring relationship should remain confidential unless otherwise agreed or where there is a requirement to disclose information for legal, ethical, or safety reasons.

For example, a mentee may feel comfortable discussing concerns about assessment practices or confidence in delivering training because they trust that the conversation will be treated respectfully and professionally.

2. Individual Focus

Every trainer and assessor brings unique experiences, strengths, aspirations, and development needs to a mentoring relationship. Effective mentoring recognises these differences and tailors support to the individual rather than applying a standard approach.

Mentoring goals may vary significantly between participants. For example:

- A trainer transitioning from industry may wish to develop facilitation and learner engagement skills.
- A new assessor may require support in understanding compliance requirements and evidence collection.
- An experienced practitioner may focus on leadership development, innovation, or expanding professional influence.

By focusing on individual goals and circumstances, mentoring remains relevant, practical, and meaningful for the mentee.

3. Collaboration

Mentoring is most effective when it is viewed as a collaborative partnership rather than a one-way transfer of information. While mentors provide guidance and share their experience, both mentors and mentees contribute knowledge, ideas, and perspectives to the relationship.

Collaboration encourages open dialogue, problem solving, and shared learning. For example, an experienced mentor may offer insights into assessment validation processes, while a mentee may introduce new digital tools, technologies, or contemporary workplace practices that benefit both parties.

Recognising mentoring as a two-way learning experience strengthens relationships and promotes mutual professional growth.

4. Strength-Based Approach

Effective mentoring builds on existing strengths, achievements, and professional capabilities. Rather than focusing solely on areas for improvement, mentors help mentees recognise and leverage their current skills, knowledge, and experience as a foundation for further development.

For example:

- An industry expert entering the VET sector may already possess strong technical expertise and workplace credibility.
- A trainer with excellent learner engagement skills may seek to strengthen knowledge of compliance processes.
- An assessor with significant experience may wish to further develop leadership capabilities.

A strength-based approach promotes confidence, self-awareness, and professional identity while supporting continuous growth.

5. Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is a key component of professional learning and continuous improvement. Mentoring provides structured opportunities for mentees to reflect on their experiences, evaluate their performance, identify lessons learned, and consider alternative approaches.

Mentors can support reflection through questioning, discussion, feedback, and constructive challenge. Examples of reflective questions may include:

- What worked well during that training session?
- How did learners respond to the assessment activity?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What have you learned from this experience?

Regular reflection helps trainers and assessors develop critical thinking skills, improve decision making, and enhance professional practice over time.

6. Cultural Responsiveness

The VET sector serves diverse learners, communities, industries, and workplaces. Effective mentoring recognises, respects, and values cultural diversity, different lived experiences, and varied perspectives.

Cultural responsiveness involves:

- Demonstrating respect for cultural identities and backgrounds.
- Using inclusive communication practices.
- Being open to different ways of knowing, learning, and working.
- Recognising the importance of cultural safety and inclusion.

For example, mentoring may involve supporting trainers working with culturally and linguistically diverse learners, First Nations communities, or learners from a broad range of educational and social backgrounds. Culturally responsive mentoring helps create inclusive and respectful learning environments for both practitioners and learners.

7. Flexibility

Professional development needs, workplace priorities, and organisational circumstances can change over time. Effective mentoring remains flexible and adapts to emerging needs, challenges, and opportunities.

Flexibility may involve:

- Adjusting mentoring goals as priorities evolve.
- Changing meeting frequency during busy periods.
- Using different communication methods, such as face-to-face meetings, virtual meetings, phone calls, or online collaboration tools.
- Refocusing discussions to address new workplace challenges or professional development opportunities.

For example, a mentoring relationship initially focused on induction and onboarding may later shift towards advanced assessment design practices, leadership development, or preparation for career progression opportunities.

By embracing these principles, mentors and mentees can create supportive, respectful, and effective mentoring relationships that foster professional growth, strengthen capability, and contribute to high-quality training and assessment outcomes across the VET sector. These principles provide the foundation for mentoring partnerships that are meaningful, adaptable, and focused on continuous learning and improvement.

Roles and Responsibilities

Successful mentoring relies on both the mentor and mentee actively contributing to the relationship. While each person has distinct responsibilities, mentoring is most effective when both parties are committed to open communication, mutual respect, professional growth, and achieving agreed goals. Understanding these roles from the outset helps establish a productive partnership and creates a shared sense of purpose and accountability.

Mentor

Mentee

Shared responsibilities



Mentor Role

The mentor's role is to guide, support, challenge, and encourage the mentee's professional development. Rather than providing all the answers, an effective mentor helps the mentee build confidence, develop capability, and identify solutions through reflection, discussion, and shared experience.

Mentors are responsible for:

- **Assisting the mentee to identify their needs, challenges, concerns, and aspirations:** by asking thoughtful questions, facilitating reflection, and helping clarify professional goals and development priorities.
- **Sharing knowledge, practical experience, and sector expertise:** to support learning and professional growth. This may include discussing training and assessment practices, compliance requirements, workplace processes, learner engagement strategies, or lessons learned from professional experience.
- **Facilitating growth and development:** by helping the mentee explore opportunities, overcome challenges, build confidence, and progress toward their career goals. This may involve supporting skill development, expanding professional networks, or identifying professional development opportunities.
- **Providing constructive feedback and encouragement:** that promotes learning and continuous improvement. Feedback should be balanced, respectful, and focused on helping the mentee strengthen their practice and achieve their goals.
- **Acting as a sounding board and trusted advisor:** by providing a safe environment for discussion, problem solving, and exploration of ideas. Mentors help mentees think through challenges and consider different perspectives rather than directing decisions.
- **Support culturally responsive practice:** by encouraging reflection on cultural assumptions, promoting culturally safe teaching and assessment approaches, and recognising the strengths, knowledge and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- **Working with cultural integrity, respect, and openness:** by valuing diversity, recognising different lived experiences, and fostering an inclusive mentoring environment. Effective mentors demonstrate cultural awareness and adapt their approach to meet the needs of individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- **Maintaining professional boundaries and confidentiality:** to build trust and ensure the mentoring relationship remains focused on professional development and support.

Examples of mentor activities may include:

- Sharing strategies for engaging learners in a classroom or online environment.
- Explaining validation and moderation processes.
- Observing a training session and providing developmental feedback.
- Supporting a trainer transitioning from industry into an educational role.
- Discussing career pathways, leadership opportunities, or professional development options.

Mentee Role

The mentee plays an active role in driving their own learning and development. Mentoring is most successful when mentees take ownership of their goals, seek feedback, and actively apply new knowledge and skills in their workplace practice.

Mentees are responsible for:

- **Identifying their development needs, challenges, concerns, and aspirations:** including communicating these openly with their mentor. This helps ensure mentoring discussions remain focused and relevant.
- **Setting realistic and meaningful goals:** that align with their professional responsibilities, career aspirations, and development priorities.
- **Being open to advice, new ideas, and constructive feedback:** while recognising that professional growth often involves reflection, learning, and trying new approaches.
- **Taking responsibility for their own development:** by preparing for mentoring discussions, following through on agreed actions, and actively applying learning to practice.
- **Seeking clarification and asking questions:** when support or guidance is needed. Mentoring provides an opportunity to explore challenges and learn from the experiences of others.
- **Reflecting on experiences and progress:** to identify strengths, recognise achievements, and determine areas for further improvement.
- **Respecting the mentor's time, expertise, and contributions:** by actively participating in meetings and maintaining agreed commitments.

Examples of mentee activities may include:

- Seeking guidance on assessment design and evidence collection.
- Reflecting on learner feedback and identifying improvements.
- Developing action plans for achieving professional goals.
- Implementing suggestions discussed during mentoring sessions.
- Exploring pathways for career advancement or leadership development.

> Mentoring is most successful when mentees take ownership of their goals, seek feedback, and actively apply new knowledge and skills in their workplace practice.

Shared Responsibilities

Effective mentoring is a partnership. Both mentors and mentees share responsibility for creating a respectful, productive, and supportive relationship that delivers positive outcomes.

Establishing Clear Expectations: at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees should work together to establish a shared understanding of:

- Mentoring goals and objectives.
- Roles and responsibilities.
- Meeting frequency and communication methods.
- Confidentiality and professional boundaries.
- Expected outcomes and measures of success.

Clear expectations help prevent misunderstandings and provide a strong foundation for the relationship.

Building Trust: is essential for open and honest communication. Both parties should:

- Demonstrate respect and professionalism.
- Maintain confidentiality where appropriate.
- Follow through on agreed commitments.
- Create a safe and supportive environment for discussion.

Trust allows mentors and mentees to have meaningful conversations about strengths, challenges, opportunities, and professional aspirations.

Evaluating Progress: mentoring should include regular opportunities to review goals, celebrate achievements, and assess ongoing development.

Mentors and mentees should:

- Monitor progress against agreed objectives.
- Reflect on learning and professional growth.
- Identify barriers and strategies to address them.
- Adjust goals and action plans as needs evolve.

Regular evaluation helps ensure the mentoring relationship remains relevant, effective, and focused on achieving meaningful outcomes.

Maintaining Professionalism: mentors and mentees are expected to maintain professional standards throughout the mentoring relationship. This includes:

- Being respectful, reliable, and accountable.
- Honouring agreed meeting times and commitments.
- Communicating openly and professionally.
- Recognising professional boundaries.
- Supporting a positive and inclusive learning environment.

Professionalism helps build credibility, strengthens the mentoring partnership, and contributes to a positive experience for everyone involved.

When mentors and mentees understand and fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities, mentoring becomes a powerful tool for professional growth, capability development, and knowledge sharing. Through collaboration, mutual respect, and a commitment to continuous learning, mentoring can help build a confident, skilled, and future-ready VET workforce.

Mentoring Process

A structured mentoring process helps ensure that mentoring relationships are purposeful, supportive, and aligned with the professional development needs of trainers and assessors.

By considering commencement timing, contextualisation, delivery methods, communication approaches, cultural inclusion, adult learning principles, and digital capability, mentoring can provide meaningful, practical, and lasting benefits for mentors, mentees, organisations, and the learners they support. Refer to Attachment A Mentoring Agreement.



Understanding the Target Audience

Effective mentoring begins with a clear understanding of who the mentoring is intended to support and what their specific development needs may be.

Mentoring programs may be designed for:

- **New trainers and assessors:** who require support in understanding training and assessment practices, learner engagement, and compliance requirements.
- **Industry professionals transitioning into VET:** who bring significant vocational expertise but may be developing their educational and facilitation skills.
- **Casual, part-time, contract, or remote staff:** who may have fewer opportunities for workplace networking, support, and informal learning.
- **Trainers and assessors working with priority learner cohorts:** including:
  - Apprentices and trainees.
  - Foundation skills learners.
  - School-based learners.
  - Learners requiring additional support.
  - First Nations learners.
  - Culturally and linguistically diverse learners.
- **Experienced practitioners seeking career progression:** including those preparing for leadership, quality assurance, validation, mentoring, coaching, or specialist technical roles.

Understanding the target audience allows mentoring activities, resources, and discussions to be tailored to the participant's circumstances, goals, and workplace context.

Commencement

Mentoring is most effective when provided at key stages of an individual's professional journey, where additional guidance, support and professional connection can have the greatest impact. Early access to mentoring can build confidence, reduce uncertainty and support the development of capability and professional identity.

Introducing mentoring at this critical transition points can enhance workforce capability, strengthen staff engagement and retention, and support successful integration into new roles and responsibilities. By providing timely and targeted support, organisations can foster professional growth while reducing the risk of disengagement and attrition.

Mentoring should be considered:

- **When undertaking the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment:** aligning mentoring with the stage of learning, to best provide opportunities to support the development of practical training and assessment capability.
- **At the commencement of employment:** particularly for new trainers and assessors entering an organisation or the VET sector. Early mentoring can support induction, workplace integration, and understanding of organisational systems, policies, and expectations.
- **During role transitions:** such as:
  - Moving from industry into a training and assessment role.
  - Transitioning from a learner support or administration role into training delivery.
  - Moving from trainer responsibilities into a specialist assessment, validation, or leadership role.
  - Taking on additional responsibilities within a training team.

- **When returning to work after an extended absence:** including parental leave, career breaks, or extended leave periods. Mentoring can assist individuals to reconnect with workplace practices, compliance changes, technologies, and operational requirements.
- **When undertaking new qualifications, training products, delivery modes, or learner cohorts:** for example, a trainer who is experienced in face-to-face delivery may benefit from mentoring when transitioning to online delivery or when working with a new industry area.
- **During periods of organisational or regulatory change:** where trainers and assessors may require additional support to understand new compliance requirements, systems, technologies, or workplace expectations.

Delivery Methods

Mentoring can be delivered in a variety of ways depending on participant needs, organisational requirements, geographic locations, and available resources. There is no single approach that suits every mentoring relationship.

Mentoring may be delivered through:

- **Face-to-face mentoring:** including workplace meetings, classroom observations, team discussions, role shadowing opportunities, and informal coaching conversations.
- **Virtual mentoring:** using virtual meetings, telephone calls, online collaboration platforms, messaging applications, and other digital communication tools.
- **Blended mentoring approaches:** combining face-to-face interactions with virtual meetings to maximise flexibility and accessibility.
- **One-to-one mentoring:** where an individual mentor works directly with a mentee to provide personalised support and guidance.
- **Group mentoring:** where several mentees learn and share experiences together under the guidance of one or more mentors. This approach can be particularly useful for induction programs, communities of practice, or professional learning initiatives.
- **Reverse mentoring:** where knowledge, perspectives and experience flow in both directions between mentor and mentee. This approach recognises that both participants have valuable expertise to contribute and can support shared learning in areas such as industry practice, emerging technologies, learner engagement, cultural capability, contemporary workplace expectations and organisational knowledge.

Examples may include:

- A new trainer meeting weekly with an experienced colleague during their first three months of employment.
- Remote trainers participating in monthly virtual mentoring sessions.
- A group of assessors meeting regularly to discuss validation practices and assessment challenges.
- Experienced practitioners mentoring emerging leaders through a blended mentoring model.
- An experienced trainer is mentored by a newer practitioner in the use of digital learning technologies, while sharing their own expertise in training design, assessment practice and learner engagement.

Selecting an Appropriate Delivery Method

The most suitable mentoring approach should consider:

- Participant location and availability.
- Geographic and regional factors.
- Access to technology and digital connectivity.
- Levels of digital literacy and confidence.
- Organisational resources and operational requirements.
- The nature and complexity of mentoring goals.
- Individual learning preferences.
- Cultural considerations and accessibility requirements.

The selected approach should support meaningful engagement, regular communication, and achievable outcomes for both mentor and mentee.

Communication Styles

Communication is central to a successful mentoring relationship. Effective mentors create opportunities for open dialogue, active participation, and reflective learning by adapting their communication style to meet the needs of the mentee.

Effective mentoring communication includes:

- **Using clear and accessible language:** that is appropriate to the training, assessment, regulatory, and workplace context.
- **Practising active listening:** ensuring the mentee feels heard, understood, and valued.
- **Encouraging discussion rather than directing solutions:** helping the mentee develop confidence, self-reflection and problem-solving skills.
- **Asking open-ended questions:** that encourage reflection and critical thinking.
- **Providing constructive and supportive feedback:** that acknowledges strengths while identifying opportunities for growth.
- **Checking understanding and clarifying expectations:** to avoid misunderstandings and promote shared learning.

Examples of effective mentoring questions may include:

- What challenges are you currently experiencing?
- What options have you considered?
- What worked well in that training session?
- How might you approach that situation differently next time?
- What support do you need to achieve your goal?

Communication should remain respectful, strengths-based, collaborative, and consistent with adult professional learning principles.



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Cultural Safety and Inclusion

Mentoring should provide a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment where all participants feel valued and supported. Recognising and respecting diversity contributes to stronger mentoring relationships and more meaningful professional learning.

Culturally safe and inclusive mentoring involves:

- **Acknowledging and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing.**
- **Recognising historical and systemic influences:** understanding how the ongoing impacts of colonisation, discriminatory policies, and institutional barriers may affect trust, participation, communication, and access to opportunities.
- **Recognising and valuing cultural diversity:** including different cultural, social, educational, and professional experiences.
- **Being sensitive to culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds:** adapting communication or support strategies where appropriate.
- **Considering individual abilities, accessibility needs, and support requirements:** to ensure equitable participation.
- **Recognising power dynamics and professional hierarchies:** that may influence communication and relationship building.
- **Respecting family, community, and cultural obligations:** that may impact participation and engagement.
- **Creating an environment where individuals feel safe to contribute, ask questions, and express different perspectives.**

For example, mentors may adapt meeting formats, communication approaches, or learning activities to better meet the needs of participants from diverse backgrounds.

Adult Learning Principles

Mentoring is a form of adult learning and should reflect the ways in which adults learn most effectively. Adult learners bring valuable experience, knowledge, and expertise that should be recognised and incorporated into the mentoring process.

Effective mentoring supports adult learning by:

- Valuing prior knowledge, vocational expertise, and lived experience.
- Building on existing strengths and capabilities rather than focusing solely on skill gaps.
- Focusing on practical, workplace relevant challenges and opportunities.
- Encouraging self-direction, ownership, and accountability for learning.
- Supporting problem solving and critical thinking.
- Applying learning directly to workplace situations and professional practice.

For example, rather than delivering instruction, a mentor may guide a mentee to analyse a workplace challenge, consider alternatives, and identify practical solutions based on their own experience and insights.

This approach promotes confidence, engagement, and sustainable professional growth.

Digital Literacy

As training and assessment increasingly utilise technology, mentoring should support the development of digital capability and confidence. Trainers and assessors may begin their mentoring journey with varying levels of experience using digital tools and online learning environments.

Mentoring can support digital literacy by:

- Providing guidance on learning technologies, systems, and digital platforms.
- Building confidence in the use of online communication and collaboration tools.
- Supporting the effective delivery of virtual and blended learning programs.
- Modelling best practice digital teaching and assessment techniques.
- Assisting trainers and assessors to navigate student management systems, learning management systems, and digital compliance processes.
- Encouraging the safe, ethical, and professional use of technology in training and assessment.

Examples may include:

- Demonstrating how to facilitate engaging virtual classrooms.
- Supporting online assessment and evidence collection processes.
- Sharing strategies for learner engagement in digital learning environments.
- Introducing tools that improve communication, collaboration, and learner support.

Developing digital confidence through mentoring helps trainers and assessors remain adaptable, responsive, and effective in an increasingly technology enabled VET environment.



As training and assessment increasingly utilise technology, mentoring should support the development of digital capability and confidence.

Pathways

Mentoring plays an important role in supporting career development, professional growth, and workforce capability across the VET sector. It helps trainers and assessors navigate career transitions, build confidence in new responsibilities, and identify opportunities for future progression. By connecting mentoring to clear career and professional development pathways, organisations can support a skilled, engaged, and sustainable workforce.



Workforce Pathways

Mentoring can support trainers and assessors at different stages of their careers, helping them understand available opportunities and develop the skills and experience needed to achieve their professional goals.

Mentoring should align with and support workforce pathways, including:

- **Entry into training and assessment roles:** individuals transitioning from industry into VET often possess extensive vocational expertise but may be unfamiliar with educational practice, assessment requirements, learner engagement strategies, and compliance obligations. Mentoring can support this transition by providing guidance, practical advice, and opportunities to learn from experienced practitioners.
- **Progression from casual, part time, or contract roles into ongoing employment:** mentoring can help staff build confidence, expand their organisational knowledge, strengthen professional networks, and develop the skills required for broader responsibilities within the organisation.
- **Advancement into specialist roles:** trainers and assessors may wish to develop expertise in areas such as assessment validation, compliance, quality assurance, learning design, digital learning, or learner support. Mentoring can help individuals identify capability requirements and gain insights from experienced professionals working in these areas.
- **Transition into leadership positions:** experienced practitioners may seek opportunities to become team leaders, RTO managers, coordinators, head trainers, or workforce development specialists. Mentoring can assist by developing leadership capability, strategic thinking, communication skills, and confidence in leading others.
- **Progression into mentoring and coaching roles:** many experienced trainers and assessors eventually become mentors themselves. Mentoring can help build the skills required to support colleagues, facilitate professional learning, and contribute to workforce capability development.

By linking mentoring to workforce pathways, organisations can better support succession planning, workforce retention, and long-term capability building.



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Professional Development

Mentoring complements formal professional development by helping individuals translate learning into practical workplace application. While professional development activities such as workshops, qualifications, conferences, webinars, and training programs provide valuable knowledge and skills, mentoring helps bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Mentoring supports professional development by:

- **Helping individuals apply newly acquired knowledge and skills in their workplace:** for example, after attending professional development in assessment validation, a mentee may work with their mentor to implement validation practices in a practical setting.
- **Creating opportunities for reflection and discussion following formal learning activities:** mentors can help mentees explore what they learned, what was most relevant, and how new knowledge can improve their professional practice.
- **Supporting the development of professional confidence:** applying new skills often requires encouragement, feedback, and opportunities to practise. Mentors can provide guidance throughout this process.
- **Assisting individuals to identify future development opportunities:** through regular discussions, mentors can help mentees recognise strengths, address capability gaps, and plan ongoing learning and development activities.
- **Encouraging a culture of continuous improvement and lifelong learning:** mentoring reinforces the importance of ongoing professional growth throughout a trainer or assessor's career.

Examples may include:

- Discussing how a recent workshop on learner engagement can be applied in the classroom.
- Reflecting on new compliance requirements following professional development training.
- Identifying additional learning opportunities to support future career aspirations.
- Developing action plans to embed new knowledge into everyday practice.

When integrated with formal professional development activities, mentoring provides ongoing support that strengthens learning outcomes and encourages long term professional growth.

Individualised Pathways

Individualised mentoring acknowledges that career journeys are rarely linear. Goals, priorities, and opportunities may change over time, and mentoring should remain flexible enough to adapt accordingly.

Each mentoring relationship should be tailored to the individual and contextualised according to:

- **Individual goals and aspirations:** mentees may be focused on becoming confident trainers, or may be working toward leadership positions, specialist roles, or broader career opportunities.
- **Professional experience and confidence levels:** a trainer entering the VET sector for the first time will require different support from an experienced educator seeking advanced professional development.
- **Employment arrangements and workload:** mentoring should accommodate the realities of full-time, part-time, casual, contract, and remote work arrangements, ensuring goals and activities remain achievable and relevant.
- **Current responsibilities and workplace context:** the focus of mentoring may vary depending on the qualifications delivered, learner cohorts supported, industries represented, or organisational priorities.
- **Long term career intentions within or beyond the VET sector:** individuals may aspire to leadership, management, compliance, workforce development, educational design, or specialist industry roles, or seek to deepen their expertise in training and assessment practice.

Examples of individualised mentoring pathways may include:

- A new trainer developing confidence in classroom facilitation and learner engagement.
- A trainer transitioning to online delivery and seeking support with digital teaching practices.
- An experienced assessor strengthening their skills in validation and quality assurance.
- A practitioner preparing for a leadership role within their organisation.
- A specialist industry trainer expanding their educational expertise while maintaining strong industry connections.

By linking mentoring to workforce pathways, professional development opportunities, and individual career aspirations, mentoring becomes more than a short-term support activity.
It becomes a valuable investment in professional growth, workforce capability, and the long-term success of trainers, assessors, organisations, and the learners they serve.

> Goals, priorities, and opportunities may change over time, and mentoring should remain flexible enough to adapt accordingly.



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