



# NZIQS MENTOR GUIDELINES

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Guidelines to assist Mentors in NZIQS Mentoring Programmes

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# NZIQS MENTOR GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS AND EARLY-CAREER QUANTITY SURVEYORS

## INTRODUCTION

The New Zealand Institute of Quantity Surveyors (NZIQS) Key Strategic Priorities (2019) highlights the need to develop students and early-career quantity surveyors (mentees) to add more value to the profession. Mentoring can play an important role to achieve this goal.

The NZIQS mentoring programme goal is to provide support to mentees to accelerate their development and give them an understanding of what they can expect when they enter the industry.

The programme should provide an opportunity for experienced quantity surveyors (mentors) and mentees to develop an ongoing relationship by meeting regularly and discussing issues relating to quantity surveying within an organised and supportive framework.

The requirements of the mentor role for which NZIQS accreditation has been provided is included in these guidelines, and any other mentor/mentee activity outside the guidelines is not part of the NZIQS programme.

The mentoring programme is intended to:

- deliver and enhance the mentee's knowledge of the **QS** industry roles and career possibilities within New Zealand
- enhance the tertiary education of the mentees
- promote valuable interaction among the mentors and mentees
- introduce mentees to professional ethics and best practice principles, and
- reinforce the value of NZIQS as the national body representing the quantity surveying profession.

## WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is defined as *"a mutually beneficial relationship that involves a more experienced person helping less experienced people identify and achieve their goals"*.

A mentor provides support, knowledge, encouragement, guidance, constructive feedback and acts as a sounding board to the mentee by developing a genuine interest in the growth of their abilities and development.

**It should be noted that the mentor is not to be seen as a potential employer or job placement, and they are not an alternative lecturer or tutor.**

The relationship should be based upon encouragement, constructive feedback, openness, mutual trust, respect, and willingness to learn and share.

There are two basic ways the mentoring programme structure can occur, One-to-One Mentoring and Group Mentoring.

The One-to-One Mentoring will be based on a relationship between one mentor and one mentee. Group Mentoring will involve a group of mentees participating as a learning group and benefitting together from the experience and expertise of a mentor or mentors.

## PARTICIPANT ELIGIBILITY

All mentors and mentees must be members of the NZIQS.

This voluntary programme will operate only within New Zealand and with the voluntary support of sufficient experienced NZIQS members.

NZIQS Branch Committees will manage the mentoring programme by appointing a **Mentoring Coordinator**

### **Mentors**

Mentors will ideally have at least 5 years experience in a private and/or contractor role and preferably hold Registered Quantity Surveyor status. The local Branch Committees nominate the mentors.

### **Mentees**

Mentees are students or early-career quantity surveyors with less than 3 years of experience. Undergraduate students should be in the final year of their studies.

## MATCHING MENTORS AND MENTEES

To increase the odds that a mentoring relationship will endure and be effective, it needs a strong foundation. This begins with a good match.

The Branch Committee's Mentoring Coordinator will undertake the matching of mentors and mentees. It is good practice to confirm with the mentee the identity of the potential mentor.

## MENTEES

Whether your need is career development or project-specific advice, a qualified mentor can help you. A mentor will share both insight and support while you navigate your way forward.

### **The Expected Outcomes for the Mentees will include:**

- to become acquainted with the benefits of belonging to NZIQS
- to become acquainted with the networking opportunities available through this programme and NZIQS by attending CPD events
- to give mentees an awareness of professional responsibilities, professional ethics, and the value of a professional institute
- to gain an understanding of the potential work environments and the context in which the tertiary subjects may be used
- to gain advice/information on research topics/specialist study
- to gain reassurance on the direction of current work
- to gain knowledge of the workplaces available to quantity surveyor qualification holders
- a record of participation in the mentoring programme.

Both mentor and mentee participate voluntarily in the Mentoring Programme, and the mentee has an active role in initialising and maintaining a productive relationship. All issues discussed in the mentoring relationship are confidential. The mentee is expected to provide feedback to the Mentoring Coordinator at the end of the mentoring programme.

### **MENTOR**

It is anticipated that the Mentoring Programme will benefit the mentors as it will acquaint them with the current educational programmes for quantity surveyors and introduce them to their future junior professional colleagues and employees. Mentors, while often very different in personality or management style, have the following characteristics in common:

- focus on professional development, which is the primary objective of the programme
- enthusiastic about their profession and about sharing their experience and knowledge
- work experience – broad background with depth in some areas
- ability to listen actively, ask open questions and give positive feedback
- appreciation of the value of different cultures within the profession and awareness of different cultural values
- knowledge of other professionals in the construction industry roles who may better respond to mentee queries.

The BEST mentors are interested and focused listeners who show empathy towards mentees and succeed in getting the mentee to gain knowledge from their own observation, research, and application and give constructive help and advice.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF A GOOD MENTOR/MENTEE CONTRACT

- the relationship is based on **trust**
- both mentor and mentee must maintain the **confidentiality** of any material seen or discussed, especially if it has or may have commercial sensitivity
- the mentor must have **credibility**
- the mentee recognise the **value** of the advice
- the relationship is focused on the needs of the mentee
- **success** is measured by how well the **mentor advice meets the mentee's needs**
- the mentor assists the mentee in finding the answer for themselves rather than gives the complete answer.

## NZIQS MENTOR GUIDE

*A brain to pick, an ear to listen and an occasional push in the right direction.’ John Cosby*

That’s the mentor’s role in a nutshell. In its simplest form, the mentor’s job is to help others succeed. What that involves will change with every mentoring assignment because a good mentor takes their lead from their mentee. They find out what they need, and they do their best to supply it.

### THE MENTOR’S ROLE

When someone approaches you to be their mentor, please don’t feel you need to be the font of all wisdom or have answers to all their problems. Your job is to be a sounding board, a supporter and sometimes a critical friend and confidant. You will find yourself sharing your experience with your mentee in the hope that they may learn something from it and be a source of information about the profession or the work.

Mentoring is a special relationship that includes potential imbalances of power. Mentors are expected to recognise that potential imbalance and be proactive in ensuring that the mentee experiences a safe and welcoming interaction. The main value you will add is your presence - your willingness to make yourself available to support someone on their professional journey. Many mentees, noting what they gain from mentoring, say how amazing this senior person was willing to invest time in them. In response, they make an effort to act on the insights gained through mentoring. Knowing they will be seeing their mentor again next month provides an extra layer of accountability that spurs them into action. As a result, they achieve goals that may have otherwise remained on the list of good intentions.

### THE FIRST MEETING

In the first meeting, you need to:

- get to know each other and build rapport
- get clear on the purpose or goals for the mentoring, and
- talk about how it will work – make practical arrangements

Start as you mean to go on by keeping this meeting focused - informal but purposeful - and making sure you shine a spotlight on the mentee’s needs. Sharing your professional journey is useful early in the relationship and letting your mentee know what you have to offer allows them to fully utilise your skills and expertise. Hearing about their future aspirations is essential as you start, and it is your job to help them clarify their goals for the mentoring process.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK

Some good questions to help mentees clarify their goals for mentoring are (split into mentee studying and mentee working):

### **Student**

- in an ideal world, with the wind on your side, in 3/5/10 years, where would you like to see yourself?
- what future challenges would you like to prepare yourself for?
- what subjects do you enjoy?
- are there any subjects you are struggling with?
- is there anything about the work that a QS does that you'd like clarification on?
- what are your strengths, and how do you think these will assist you when you are working as a QS?
- what would you like to achieve/focus on during this mentoring relationship?
- what do you want from me?

### **Work**

- in an ideal world, with the wind on your side, in 3/5/10 years, where would you like to see yourself?
- what future challenges would you like to prepare yourself for?
- what's important to you about your work and doing this work well?
- what is the one most significant thing that gets in the way of you working to your full potential?
- where do you see your strengths, and how fully are you able to utilise these at work?
- what do you need to work on to fulfil your current role well?
- what do you need to work on to meet the demands in the next 6 – 12 months?
- what do you need to work on to fulfil your aspirations for the future?
- what would you like to achieve/focus on during this mentoring relationship?
- what would your manager/clients/colleagues/family say you should be working on in mentoring?
- what do you want from me?

## MEETING ARRANGEMENTS

Discussing the practical arrangements for meeting (when, where and how often) also needs to be done at this first meeting. In addition, agree how available you will be between meetings.

Deciding how you will catch-up (phone, email, coffee etc.) prevents you from feeling overburdened by the process and makes it easier for the mentee to approach you. Some mentees find it hard to ask for a time when they know you are busy.

Making clear agreements around confidentiality and negotiating any potential conflicts of interest is also important before you begin. For example, you may know some of the characters in the mentee's stories or have your own connections to their work. The guidelines for mentoring clearly spell out the confidentiality requirements from all parties.

It is the mentor's job to manage the quality of the conversation (and the relationship). It is the mentee's job to determine the content of the discussions by deciding what they want to achieve and what they want to talk about in each session. Making sure mentoring is good value for time for both parties is the key to these relationships lasting the distance.

## HOW TO MANAGE A MENTORING SESSION

Mentoring works best if you meet regularly. 'Give me a call if you feel you need to' is great but will not provide the same outcomes that regular mentoring meetings supply. On the other hand, regular scheduling times for reflection keeps the relationship strong and ensures that mentees develop good habits around the reflection.

Starting a session with a bit of catch up is expected, but the mentor needs to get things started before too much time has passed by saying, 'what would you like to use your time for today?' This sets a mini contract for the session, and sometimes mentees bring several items needing attention. In the NZIQS Mentee's Guide, there is a list of what to bring to mentoring, so refer them to that if they are unsure.

### Meeting Format

- catch up and get started
- set a focus or agenda for the session
- explore each topic to get the mentee to think things through and arrive at their own conclusions
- help them turn these into action by saying, 'so what might you do differently now?'
- review the session and check that the next session is in the diary.
- how did we do today? Was that good value for time? Is there anything we could do differently next time to get even better outcomes?

## MENTORING CONVERSATION PITFALLS

Three common pitfalls for mentors are to give advice or solutions prematurely, providing reassurance, or talking too much. Some of the reasons why these are not the most effective ways to support a mentee are outlined below:

1. Giving advice or prematurely looking for solutions. Advice is a blunt instrument when it comes to mentoring and should be used sparingly and with care. Your ideas will be more useful once your mentee has done their own thinking first, so jot them down on your notepad for possible use later in the conversation and see what they can come up with themselves first.
2. Providing reassurance. If something is an issue for the mentee, it's an issue. So please don't waste time debating whether it should be an issue or not. Platitudes like, 'it'll be all right' or 'everyone finds that difficult' take the conversation nowhere. Instead, take their concern seriously and help them think it through to find the extra skills or confidence they need to make the difference.
3. Talking too much. Research shows that mentors easily fall into this trap – often with the best of intentions. Observations of mentoring conversations find that mentors tend to talk four times as much as their mentee. This needs to be reversed. What's the answer? Listen more. Be comfortable with pauses. Expect your mentee to do most of the talking, and don't be too quick to jump in. As you are listening, you might think of the one question you could ask to extend their thinking. Then ask it and listen some more.

## KEY SKILLS FOR GREAT MENTORING

Here are 7 key skills that ensure the mentee does all the thinking and help you steer clear of the previously mentioned mentoring pitfalls.

### 1. Listen Well

Use active listening skills. Repeat the essence of what the mentee has said to you in your own words. Reflect on the facts of the situation and how they feel about it, and summarise key points. This helps build rapport, keeps the focus on their needs and enables them to see their situation from a different point of view.

“So, there are 3 major issues you have been grappling with since we last spoke, and you are not feeling as positive about your capacity to turn them around. Which of those would you like me to help you think through?”

### 2. Ask Questions

Use open questions that start with how, what, which, when or who. Be curious; ask for clarification even if you think you don't need it. Help the mentee move around their experience and look at it from different points of view. Watch out for the question that starts with WHY. This will prompt justification or may be experienced as criticism.

### **3. Encourage and Support**

Emphasise the positive. Say what impresses you about their approach, actions, or attitude. Be specific and be genuine. The research shows that if you want people to grow and develop in your presence, they need at least 3 positive comments to every negative or improvement comment.

### **4. Share Your Experience**

Share an experience you are reminded of as you listen to them. Do this after they have had a chance to do their own thinking first. Stories are powerful tools for learning and reflection.

### **5. Use Feedback or Feedforward**

Challenge constructively or use Feedforward (offer specific positive feedback then suggest how they could do things differently). Help them face the facts with courage – say what makes them effective but also share any concerns.

### **6. Reframe Problems or Situations**

Help the mentee find more useful interpretations of their reality. The classic reframe is whether someone views the glass as half full or half empty. If you can see another way of looking at something, share it with your mentee to expand their view and create new possibilities.

### **7. Share Information, Knowledge or Expertise**

Find out what they need to know, find out what they already know and share your expertise without advising or overwhelming them. Don't be the expert all the time but give them the benefit of your experience when appropriate. Asking permission first is a great tip when you are about to move into a more informative mode of mentoring.