



Guidance in Choosing a Mentor 2025 - 2026

Mentoring Overview

Mentoring is a developmental partnership where an experienced colleague will act as a safe pair of ears and a sounding board, often during a time of transition or change. Mentors understand the context of any challenges their mentees are facing, and can draw on their experiences to support their mentees in arriving at solutions.

It is a requirement of the programme that each Aurora participant works internally with a mentor for a 12-month period, September 2025 – September 2026, as a support to them as they progress through the programme. Mentoring is a key strand of the Aurora programme and the process by which you select and engage with your mentor needs careful consideration to ensure you get optimum benefit from this dedicated support throughout your Aurora journey.

Mentoring is often referred to as “offline help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work and thinking”. Offline is important and in the context of mentoring, it means that the mentoring relationship **is not** between a direct line manager and their immediate member of staff.

Choosing your Mentor

In choosing a mentor, it is recommended to look beyond any line management or reporting relationships you have and choose a mentor outside of this structure. Also, it is advised that you look outside of your own School or Unit. This helps to ensure that the relationship keeps its developmental focus and avoids any potential conflict of interest i.e. a mentor having a vested interest in what you focus your energy on or what goals you identify as part of mentoring. By diversifying outside of your School/Unit you are also creating opportunities to make new contacts, embrace different ways of working and build on new ideas.

When considering a mentor, it is recommended that you think about this broadly. Consider who you admire; who has had the type of career progression you would like for yourself; someone who has successes or qualities that you respect. Ask for advice from people in your areas, discuss it with your manager and or Head of School/Unit, look at the previous mentors who were involved in Aurora or even engage a previous Auroran and ask them about their mentoring experience.

A list of those who have participated or mentored in the Aurora programme previously is available on the website below.

<https://www.ucd.ie/peopledevelopment/ourservices/leadership/>

Please note: *You do not have to choose your mentor from this list. It is simply provided to give you a flavour of who has been involved previously and the types of people/roles that have provided mentorship.*



Guidance in Choosing a Mentor 2025 - 2026

Reaching out to a Mentor

If you are successful in your application, you are welcome to reach out to a potential mentor at any time. You also have the option to wait until you have completed the internal Mentee Training on September 22nd 2025 before choosing a mentor. Many Aurorans have found it beneficial to wait as it assists them in identifying what they want and need from a mentoring relationship. You may also of course reach out to your preferred mentor as part of the application process if you wish. Early identification of a mentor will help to ensure that you have this organised prior to starting the Aurora Programme with Advance HE.

Please do not name someone as a mentor on the application form *without their prior consent and permission*.

Training for mentors will take place on 15th October 2025. This will be facilitated online via Zoom.

When choosing a mentor, you will need to make time to meet the person to introduce yourself and see if there is a match between what you are looking for, and what they can offer you. This is often referred to as a 'chemistry check'. It is important that you share with your chosen mentor what their responsibilities are in the mentoring relationship:

- The mentor as a more senior/experienced person should be able to recall and relate to the challenges of career progression, should be prepared to listen, and should support their mentee to develop good problem-solving skills.
- Mentors can be male or female - but the mentor and the participant must get on well and the mentor should be able to make time available to work with their mentee.

UCD Aurora Mentors need to:

- Have a genuine interest in helping women to develop their careers
- Be considered successful in their careers
- Be knowledgeable and experienced in UCD and have a strong understanding of its culture, so as to be able to offer appropriate advice and support
- Have time to work with their mentee – initially at the start in order to set up the mentoring relationship, it is recommended having at least 2 meetings post mentor/mentee training. From there, the guideline is 1 meeting every 6 weeks so approx. 8 – 10 meetings during the year. The time given to each meeting should be agreed between the mentee/mentor - at least 1.5 hours per meeting is recommended.
- Have a coaching style of communication
- Be willing to engage in mentoring training (15 October 2025)
- Be willing to attend internal events to support their mentee

The mentoring element of this programme is invaluable as your mentor can act as a sounding board as you move throughout the programme but also provides support beyond this programme in terms of role modelling and career development.