Association of Chairs



Your guide to being a mentee

September 2026

Welcome

Welcome to the Association of Chairs Mentoring programme for first-time chairs - we're delighted to have you involved.

As a mentee on this scheme, you can expect to be matched with an experienced chair mentor to support you in the process of finding your feet as a first-time chair, learning what is involved with the role and putting it into practice. You may have quite specific chair-related challenges you want to talk about, or you may want to focus more on building up confidence in the role and educating yourself on all that is involved.

Mentees often find that being able to vocalise their challenges to an experienced, sympathetic ear gives them a new and fresh perspective that really helps them progress.

This handbook lays out how the mentoring scheme works and provides guidance for mentees taking part. We cover everything from how to approach your first mentoring meeting to how to handle the end of a mentoring relationship. These are guidelines, rather than rules, but we hope they help you make the most of your mentoring relationship. Thanks so much for being part of our mentoring programme. We look forward to hearing how things go – please don't hesitate to get in touch with any questions or comments.



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Keep in touch

Feel free to get in touch at any time with, Lally Pearson, if you have any questions or problems at any point during the process. We always welcome your feedback and will support you in your role as mentor as best we can.

Lally Pearson
Associate (Mentoring and Peer Support)
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Overview – in a nutshell, how it all works

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a partnership through which one person shares knowledge, experience, skills or information to support the development of someone else. We match first-time chairs with more experienced chairs in mentoring relationships to help them find their feet and learn the ropes for being a chair. AoC mentors are volunteers who kindly give their time to support and encourage participants.

How we make a match

The mentoring scheme is a personal matching service. Mentee applicants fill out an online application form with information on their chair role and career experience and what they're looking to get out of the scheme. We then review our list of mentors to find an appropriate match.

Defining how it's going to work

Once we've made a mentoring match, an intro email is sent to mentor and mentee, so you can arrange your first meeting. This is a chance to get to know each other and talk to your mentor about what your objectives are for the mentoring. We provide you with a checklist of what to go through on your first meeting.

Mentors and mentees generally meet every 4-6 weeks over a 6-month period. We ask for a minimum commitment of 6 x 1-hour sessions, unless it's mutually agreed to end the sessions sooner. There is flexibility to carry on the mentoring for longer also, if both parties would like to do so.

Keep reviewing how it's going

We suggest reviewing how things are going after a few sessions. We will also check in with you both from time to time to see how you're getting on.

Any problems, let us know

Feel free to get in touch any time with our mentoring manager, Lally Pearson (lally.pearson@associationofchairs.co.uk) if you have any questions or problems. We always welcome your feedback and will support you in your role as a mentee as best we can.

Your first mentoring meeting

The first meeting

Your first meeting is a great chance to get to know each other and talk about what you'd like to get out of the mentoring relationship. It's also about defining your framework – setting some goals, talking about confidentiality and discussing the practicalities of when and where you're going to meet over the 6-month timeframe that the mentoring relationship will follow. It is also an opportunity to assess whether it's a match that will work for you both.

Prepare to meet

Know what your objectives are for being mentored. Try to be clear about what you want to achieve and how you think your mentor can help you. Be ready to introduce yourself, your background and your experiences and challenges as a first-time chair. Let your mentor know what you'd like to talk about in your mentoring sessions.

Review the background of your mentor. Read over your mentor's application form, which we will share with you, to get an understanding of who they are and their background. It can also be helpful to connect on LinkedIn.

Clarify that you both have a common understanding of the mentoring relationship

Knowing if a mentoring relationship is going to work is a lot about instinct. Use this first meeting to get to know each other by asking open questions and listening to one another. It's important to have an open discussion about what you are both looking to get out of the mentoring scheme. This will ensure that expectations are met and there is no misunderstanding about roles and responsibilities. Identify goals. Talk to your mentor about how you'd like to use your sessions together and what you'd like to achieve by the end of your 6-month timeframe.

Set boundaries – discuss confidentiality

The nature of a mentoring relationship means that issues of a confidential nature are often discussed. It's important that you both agree to keep such information confidential at all times. It's a good idea to acknowledge this in your first meeting.

Discuss practicalities

Our mentoring programme is structured on a 6-month timeframe and we suggest meeting monthly for around 1-2 hours for each meeting. These are gentle guidelines from us and there is flexibility for you to adapt these timings to suit the mentoring relationship.

Allow time in your first meeting to discuss things like how often you will meet, how long for and where, and put some dates in the diary (ideally your next three meetings).

Follow up and feedback

Follow up with each other after the first meeting (and future meetings). Sum up what was discussed, clarify what you would like to bring to the mentoring meetings and confirm dates for your next three meetings if possible. Follow-up emails are also a really good opportunity to feed back about what was particularly helpful for you and what didn't work so well during the meeting. Try and be sensitive and constructive with feedback. You will both be learning from each other continually through the process.

Keep in touch with each other

Try to keep connected during the mentoring relationship timeframe, so you're aware of any changes that might happen for each other and communication stays alive. It's important you both retain a good energy to keep the mentoring going in order for it to succeed. It shouldn't be driven by only one participant and one party should not feel they are having to chase the other.



Keeping the mentoring relationship going

Set a brief agenda before each meeting

Before meeting it can be helpful to check in with each other and send your mentor a few bullet points on what you would like to discuss and focus in on in your meeting. This helps set the scene for your mentor, so you both know what to expect. It also helps to focus your mind, so that you can really make the most out of the meeting.

Keep focused – do a brief review together before the meeting ends



What are the key areas that you focused on?



Reflect - how did the session go?



What are the action points from today's session?

These points can then be repeated in a follow-up email after the meeting.

Review after 3 sessions

We suggest a 6-month timeframe for the mentoring relationship, with a maximum of 6 mentoring meetings in total - but in some cases, you may find that fewer sessions are needed. So we advise having a review after 3 sessions with your mentor to agree whether you want/need to continue for another 3 sessions.

Mentors don't provide official advice or instruction

Please note that mentors don't provide official advice or instruction. Your mentor is not responsible for any decisions or actions taken as a result of the mentoring.

Ending your mentoring relationship

AoC will contact you as you approach the end

We will be in touch with you both as you approach the 6-month timeframe of the mentoring relationship, so that you can think about where you're at and if you're ready to close the mentoring relationship. We will also send you an evaluation form to complete about your experience.

Checklist of what to discuss in your final session

- ☐ What were your goals when you started working together?
- ☐ How have you developed or changed?
- ☐ What did you find useful about the mentoring?
- ☐ What wasn't so useful?
- ☐ What have you learned?
- ☐ Will you keep in touch?

If you need to finish the mentoring relationship early / before 6 months

If you need to draw the mentoring relationship to a close earlier than the 6-month timeframe (perhaps your circumstances have changed professionally or personally), please keep in contact with your mentor about this and also notify us, so all parties are aware.

If you want to continue the mentoring for longer than 6 months

If you'd like to continue the mentoring relationship for longer, this is absolutely fine. We will still require an evaluation form to be completed after 6 months and your mentoring relationship will then be operating outside of the AoC's official programme.

As part of our overall monitoring of this programme, we will ask you to report on the broad outcomes of the mentoring relationship. We will not ask for specifics of the issues you discuss – these are confidential between you and your mentor. We will also ask you for feedback to help us develop the programme. We'll do this informally when we check in with you, and more formally as part of our evaluation and learning.

After the final meeting

Please contact Lally Pearson, lally.pearson@associationofchairs.co.uk, to confirm you've had your final session. We welcome all feedback.

Problems that may arise during mentoring

Please get in touch with us at any point if you feel uncomfortable or unsure about any aspect of your mentoring relationship. For example:

You're unsure about your mentoring match

If you feel like you are matched with the wrong mentor, do let us know. You may already have a connection which makes it difficult to maintain confidentiality or be objective, or feel you are not going to work well together for some reason. It is important you feel comfortable about the match.

Communication breaks down

If communication breaks down, your mentor stops responding to emails, or meetings keep getting cancelled, let us know and we will support you to make a plan to move forward.

Boundaries get blurred

Remember this is a professional mentoring relationship, not therapy or a friendship. Don't feel pressured into going into areas you don't feel comfortable with. If you feel at any point your needs outstrip what could reasonably be expected from a mentoring relationship, please do let us know and we can help to manage the next steps.

Inappropriate behaviour from your mentor

Please get in touch if you are experiencing any kind of behaviour that can be perceived as bullying or makes you feel uncomfortable.

Confidentiality issues to be aware of

During the course of a mentoring relationship, issues of a confidential nature are often discussed, and we ask mentors and mentees to keep such information confidential. However, in very rare circumstances, you may feel the need to disclose the content of sessions - for example if your mentor indicated involvement in something illegal or appears to pose a risk to themselves or others or there is any concern about safety. Please contact Lally Pearson if you have any concerns of this nature.