

Learning Design

Best Practices for Mentorship



Why use Mentors in Learning Design?

[Mentors](#) support learner growth by offering guidance, suggestions, and direction. They serve as learning advisors to individuals and collaborative teams.

Engaging mentors and managers in collaborative learning experiences provides benefits, not just to the learner, but also to the mentor or manager, and the organization.

- **They model the work and how to get the work done.** Simply observing experts practicing their craft is invaluable. Modeling accelerates learning by demonstrating to novices what proficiency looks like in action.
- **They accelerate capability building.** Mentorship introduces expertise and experience to collaborative learning groups, thus accelerating participants' acquisition of skills and competencies.
- **Mentors and managers support, encourage, and guide.** Effective experts are generous with their wisdom and experience, providing individuals and groups with skilled, constructive feedback (both formal and informal), accounts of their own learning process, and guidance.
- **Mentors and managers transmit an organization's culture.** In return, they are exposed to new perspectives and "deep sensing," which can strengthen the organization.
- **Mentors and managers are also learners.** Through engagement in a learning process with others, they build their own coaching, leadership, and management skills.

To read more about mentors and other digital learning best practices, check out our [whitepaper on Collaborative Learning](#).

Learning Design Tips for Effective Mentorship:



The key to working with mentors is to understand that they typically have limited time to engage with a course. Set them up for success by minimizing admin work and sharing explicit guidelines and resources.

Here are some tips for making the best use of our [Mentor feature](#):

1. Be clear about the mission you want mentors to accomplish. There are many ways that mentors can engage with their mentees, so it's important to spell out exactly what mentors are expected to do in your learning experience.

- Possible expectations for mentors include:
 - Giving feedback on specific activities or discussions
 - Reviewing mentee activity in the course at a regular frequency
 - Holding regular touchpoints with their mentees
 - Maintaining availability to answer questions and discuss challenges
 - Providing a particular insight or perspective beyond what's included in the course lesson pages

2. Identify specific time expectations and dates, then encourage mentors to block the time on their calendar in advance. Mentors can often be taken by surprise at the time mentorship actually takes, so it's important to set expectations in advance.

- Estimate the expected time/week mentors should spend over the life of a course
- Identify key deadlines and expected surges in learner activity
 - For example, if there are specific deadlines for an assignment, the mentor should know in advance that they need X hours on Y day after the deadline to review mentee assignments and give feedback.
- For some particularly important cases, you may even want to send out the calendar invites to mentors to highlight important times to block

3. Set mentors up for success with communication templates. Often, mentors have limited time to support learners in a course. Help them engage more effectively by providing sample [communication](#) templates they can easily customize and send rather than relying on them to create their own.

- Consider including the following in a communication plan when you're using course mentors:
 - Shoutouts emails for key assignments where mentors can plug in mentee information
 - Intervention emails to follow up with learners who haven't hit key milestones



- Regular check in emails reminding learners that mentors are available for guidance
- Key takeaways posts with specific insights about a topic and how it relates to the mentee group specifically
- Key corrections - a template for reaching out to learners when they're seeing a common misunderstanding or questions

4. Hold mentor training. There's often a lot of focus on training instructors and learners, but don't forget that mentors also need guidance to succeed!

- Hold a kickoff session specifically for mentors to train them on NovoEd, their [Mentor Dashboards](#), and your course structure
- Provide a checklist of all course activities with key dates and communications highlighted
- Consider regular check in calls with mentors throughout the life of the course to make sure they receive the support they need (e.g. every 2 weeks in a 6 week course)
 - Consider creating a private [Group](#) specifically for mentors where they can ask questions and share best practices with other mentors

5. Provide mentors and mentees with a collaboration space. While mentees can always [talk 1:1 with their mentors](#), they don't always have a chance to talk to each other. Creating a "room" where they can talk about common challenges and share information enhances the mentorship experience.

- Create a private [Group](#) for each mentor and their mentees to communicate. This provides a great platform for the mentor to easily share resources, observations, and advice.
- This also gives mentees, who typically have similar questions, a chance to learn from their peers as well as their mentor.
- When the mentor is a manager, this is especially effective for letting work teams collaborate within a course

6. Encourage mentors to hold "office hours." This can be asynchronous through NovoEd or your company's instant messaging platform, or even live through a platform like Zoom.

- For busy mentors, it's often easier to have a designated "office hour" time rather than answering learner messages that come at inconvenient times



- Learners who might otherwise hesitate to contact their mentors often appreciate the opportunity to engage
- Set the expectation for the mentor that sometimes nobody will come to office hours, and that's okay! The point is simply to offer them to those in need.

7. Monitor mentor engagement. You identified what mentors should accomplish in Tip #1, so make a plan to follow up using our [data downloads](#) feature.

- As part of your engagement plan, decide how often you want to check on mentor data
- Consider [data](#) that matches your goals for mentor engagement, such as:
 - Should mentors have given feedback to mentees on an activity by a specific day?
 - Should they have communicated with their mentees a certain number of times?
 - Should they have engaged in their private mentee group workspace at a certain frequency?

A Week in the Life of a NovoEd Mentor

Every course is different, but this example might help give you a vision for how the tips above come together to create a delightful mentoring experience for both mentors and mentees.

Monday (1 hour):

- Mentor holds Monday afternoon office hours from 1-2pm. They join a Zoom meeting that has been shared with mentees.
- For the first 30 minutes, nobody attends so the mentor checks on mentee activity in the course.
- 30 minutes in, some learners join to ask a question about something they didn't understand, and the mentor is able to clarify.

Tuesday (30 minutes):

- Mentor checks their mentor dashboard for assignments under "needs comment" and responds to mentees by sharing additional insights on a topic

Wednesday (0 hours):

- Nothing time-sensitive related to the course happening today on the mentor's side. Keep an eye out for questions directly from mentees...

**Thursday (2 hours):**

- A key activity was due yesterday so the mentor had already blocked off time to review mentee submissions and give feedback.
- After reviewing, the mentor picks one really good assignment and plugs it in to the pre-written “shoutouts” email to send to learners

Friday (40 minutes):

- Optional 20 min mentor check-in call with course owners
- Mentor responds to a few learner comments on the feedback from yesterday

Related Articles:

- [The Mentor Role](#)
- [How to Assign Mentees to a Mentor](#)
- [Navigating the Mentor Dashboard](#)