

## FAQs Mentors - POST 2012

### **Who is eligible to be a mentor?**

Anyone who has been Registered for more than 2 years can be a mentor. However a mentor needs sufficient experience to be able to guide and assess their mentee as to knowledge and competence, as well as provide constructive feedback.

### **What is a mentor supposed to provide to a mentee?**

Time and experience.

A mentor is a support person not a teacher.

You provide experience of what it means to be a Registered landscape architect and the Registered membership process. It will be your questioning and your judgment that will provide the mentee with a real-life professional evaluation of her/his readiness to proceed through the process.

It may be you assess that your mentee will be ready in a shorter or longer time depending on the depth of her/his experience.

You are not responsible for managing the timeline to achieve the agreed outcome.

You are not responsible for the documentation the mentee prepares.

You are responsible for signing and dating documentation.

### **What is the difference between mentors and managers?**

It is likely that many mentors may also be managers, as graduates will be encouraged to seek a senior member of the profession within their company as a mentor, who will often be a line manager or manager.

As a mentor your responsibility is to guide the graduate towards ownership of and responsibility for their learning and progress as part of an ongoing and supportive relationship. This may not always fit exactly with your management role.

The following are all areas which have something in common with mentoring but which nonetheless differ from it in key respects:

**Appraisal** is a system of assessing change in a work context, and can be used to determine a rating or eligibility for pay enhancement. It is concerned with specific targets and goals over a fixed period of time and may be linked to processes such as disciplinary procedures.

**Coaching** often involves preparing a graduate for certain specific and usually short term goals such as a meeting with a particular client or the delivery of a presentation.

**Training** is usually related exclusively to the workplace and managers may have a role in deciding what training employees receive or in the delivery of parts of that training.

**Mentoring** involves a wider responsibility to the graduate. You will deal with both professional and personal issues. As a mentor, you can help them either directly from the benefit of your own experience or by guiding them towards help, advice and support from other sources.

### **How does a mentor support the mentee with practice areas ?**

As a mentor you will guide the mentee regarding her/his selection of major and minor practice areas.

It will be your questioning and your judgment that will provide the mentee with understandings about the suitability of their selection of practice areas.

It may be your evaluation that the mentee requires richer experience in one particular practice area. You may advise on what additional experience your mentee requires in a practice area to be ready for registration.

You will help the mentee explain and articulate their understanding and learnings from their practice areas.

You will review their documentation presentations and you will be the key adjudicator as to the mentee's readiness for professional registration. (Note: You will need to sign off on the applicant's Assessment Workbook and by doing this state that you consider your mentee has all the necessary experience and competencies to progress to the interview stage, where they will be orally assessed for acceptance as a Registered Landscape Architect.)

You will sign-off and date documentation submitted by the mentee which logs the dates at which you as mentor judged that the mentee 'understands', then is 'capable' and finally is 'competent' in the nominate categories. (Refer to question on milestones below.)

You are not responsible for teaching them the competencies. It is for the mentees to educate themselves.

The interview panel will use the practice area documentation as prompts to core competency questions.

### **How does a mentor support the mentee with core competencies?**

Ultimately it will be the interview panel who will question the mentee on the core competencies.

It is the mentor's role to assist the mentee in their readiness for this by advising on reading, and questioning or conversing about the subject matter.

Basic requirements of core areas are:

- Understand the legal and professional obligations of a professional member of the institute in relationship to clients, the profession, fellow professionals and society in general
- Understand the organisation, administration and management of landscape practice including client relationships and professional charges
- Be aware of the extent and application of law and legislation relating to land and the landscape
- Have a sound knowledge of the legal and contractual aspects of designing, managing and implementing landscape work

You may assist in organizing branch workshops or encouraging your mentee to participate in graduate/mentee workshops to upskill core competence in different topics.

**How many meetings am I expected to have with my mentee?**

The frequency and number of meetings will depend on the experience or readiness of the mentee, but a minimum of 10 meetings is expected for graduates.

Regular meetings are best, preferably every 3-4 weeks for the duration of the mentee's progress to interview stage.

It is the mentee's role to initiate this process and the duration and timing of these meeting are anticipated to be by your mutual agreement.

**How do I report the mentee's progress?**

All documentation preparation is the responsibility of the mentee, but you will be invited by the mentee to sign and date certain template documents. (See also question relating to mentee's progress above.)

**What do the milestones mean and how do I apply them?**

The milestones are a tool and guide to measuring your mentee's progress. The Assessment Workbook defines them as:

*Milestone 1: the applicant is aware of particular concepts, and is able to demonstrate a general understanding of the principles behind them*

*Milestone 2: the applicant is able to demonstrate that they can apply their knowledge and understanding of these concepts in day-to-day professional situations*

*Milestone 3: the applicant is able to give well-reasoned advice to clients or consultants, based on a full appreciation of the relevant issues raised, the opportunities and potential liabilities.*

An example of applying the milestones is found in the following responses to a question about the NZILA Code of Conduct:

**Milestone 0**

"I've never read it."

"I've been meaning to read this for ages and will do tomorrow so I'll be at least a 1 by next week."

**Milestone 1**

"I have read through the Code of Conduct but am not really sure how it applies to my work."

**Milestone 2** "I read the Code of Conduct a while back and at last week's Study Group we discussed how it affects each of us in the context of our current projects. I can see how it could apply within the context of the Park I am currently working on."

**Milestone 3**

"When I was working on the Council Parks Project we had a problem with the Client asking me to do work that I wasn't qualified for. I had to behave professionally while maintaining our good relationship with the Client and ensuring we didn't take on additional liability. It all made me think about the Code of Conduct and how it links with industry and company best practice."

**How do I check my mentee is ready for the panel interview?**

The mentoring and assessment programme is based on the graduate acquiring the necessary level of knowledge and understanding, not necessarily “experience”. Graduates will gain personal experience of a number of topic and practice areas through their day-to-day work as a landscape architect, but it is not expected that this will be the case for all areas.

Where no personal experience has been possible, graduates are expected to gain the minimum level of knowledge through personal study and discussions with professionals working in those areas.

In making an assessment of readiness you will need to be satisfied that the graduate has achieved an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding across the competence areas, expressed in terms of achievement of the Assessment Workbook and as follows:

- Applicants for Registered membership are expected to have achieved a minimum of Milestone 2 across the majority of the core competence areas and one practice area;
- Milestone 1 may have been achieved in a small number of areas which are not directly related to the Candidate’s day-to-day work;
- Milestone 3 is likely to have been achieved in areas relating to the Candidates specific areas of expertise. These will relate to a minimum of two practice areas.
- No areas should be at Stage 0.

**Stage 0:** no knowledge of this syllabus area

**Stage 1:** a basic level of knowledge and understanding which the graduate may not yet have applied in a professional context

**Stage 2:** a structured, coherent and integrated understanding of the intended learning outcomes, and their application in routine professional contexts

**Stage 3:** a critical understanding of the intended learning outcomes, which have been applied in both routine and non-routine professional contexts with a knowledge of the implications and liabilities of decision making

### **Who helps me decide whether my mentee is ready for the panel interview?**

This should happen as part of the process.

It may be you are located in an area where there are other mentors and you can organise group mentoring sessions as part of the process.

The local branch should also organise and facilitate group/secondary mentor workshops that will judge a mentee’s readiness.

All mentees are required to attend 2 workshops, but more may be needed where there are larger numbers of mentees

### **How involved should I be in the preparation of my mentee’s documentation?**

All documentation preparation is the responsibility of the mentee. But you will be invited by the mentee to sign and date certain template documents.

### **When is the mentorship of a mentee complete?**

Normally when the mentee submits information for the interview - usually between 18 months to 2 years. However, the interview panel may request extended mentoring in some situations.

### **Can I mentor more than one mentee?**

Yes, this may be particularly efficient if you are all in the one office.

You may also join with other mentors to mentor a group of mentees, provided a primary mentor is assigned to each mentee.

**Can I share mentorship of a mentee?**

Each mentee will have a primary mentor to touch base with, but responsibilities like information workshops devoted to particular core competencies can be shared by other Registered LAs. Discussion between mentors will assist in providing consistency across the country and so is encouraged.

**Will I have any contact with the interview panel?**

Not during most of the process.

But should there be areas of concern in your mentee's interview or documentation, it is possible the panel may contact you for clarification.

**Are there any example questions for the interview?**

Some sample questions are on the website. Note, however, that these have been prepared specifically as an aid for mentors/mentees and have not been authorized or supplied by the interview panel. Therefore they are **not** examples of interview questions.

**What is the role of the group mentor?**

To provide advice and guidance to graduates/mentees in a group setting, and/or  
To act as seconder in attesting to an applicant's readiness for Registered membership.  
(Note: outside main centres there may be fewer mentees and mentors so that group workshops are less practical. In these situations a secondary mentor may be more appropriate.)

**What is the role of the branch in the mentoring process?**

The branch is responsible for organising and facilitating workshops for graduates/mentees and their group mentors at least twice a year.

Although it is a mentee's responsibility to find a primary mentor, the branch may be asked to advise on available mentors. They will also be responsible for finding group mentors (or where there is only a small pool of mentees/mentors, a secondary mentor).

Note: primary mentors may also act as a group/secondary mentor to another mentee/candidate.

**Is there a set number of group mentors or student/mentor ratio?**

No (see also question above).