



Guidance on Continuous Quality Improvement Mentoring Scheme

Introduction

The College believes that mentoring, through support and role-modelling, will help build new skills, develop new experts in continuous quality improvement (CQI) and improve the quality of pathology practice.

The aim of the CQI mentoring partnership scheme is to provide support to College members who are seeking **to develop or improve their CQI skills** through carrying out quality improvement activities in their workplace. The scheme operates by matching such individuals, as mentees, with experienced CQI mentors. The Clinical Effectiveness team maintains a register of established, self-nominated mentors and co-ordinates a partnering service between potential mentees and these mentors. Partnering is achieved by identifying a mentor whose expertise best fits the mentee's goals, creating contact between mentee and mentor and following up with the partnership at intervals until the specified CQI activity has been completed.

1 What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a powerful tool for professional and personal development. Mentoring relationships are typically formed between two people with different levels of experience working in similar fields. A mentor guides their mentee to achieve their aims by sharing their experience, expertise and encouragement. Mentees are supported to achieve defined objectives and to improve their skills and knowledge while being challenged and encouraged by the mentor. The length of mentoring relationships varies widely with context.

For its CQI mentoring partnership scheme, the College supports a relatively short term arrangement (approximately six months) until completion of the **specified CQI activity**.

2 Benefits of participating in a mentoring partnership

Several aspects of mentoring benefit both mentor and mentee, including:

- shared contacts and increased networking opportunities
- increased skills and visibility
- opportunities to reflect on own practice.

Mentees have much to gain from the scheme, including:

- developing skills and knowledge about CQI methods and conduct
- gaining support to set and achieve targets through CQI activities
- opportunities to learn and gain insight from experienced practitioners
- receiving assistance to overcome challenges that arise in achieving quality improvement



- potential to gain award of 5 CPD credits on submission to the College of a report of the completed high quality CQI activity
- potential publication in the Bulletin of that final CQI activity report.

While the focus of mentoring is primarily on the developmental needs and opportunities of the mentee, partnership also confers benefits to the mentor, including:

- sharing of experience and expertise
- demonstrating and enhancing leadership skills
- increased personal satisfaction through supporting development of others
- feedback from mentees to support further personal development as a mentor
- registered mentors will be eligible for 5 CPD credits for completion of each mentoring partnership.

3 Role of the mentor

The mentor's role is to provide support to the mentee as appropriate for their CQI activity. This may be provided in one or more of the following ways:

Role	Skills required
Source of feedback	Ability to provide constructive feedback Ability to challenge assumptions and encourage alternative thinking Available for mentee to test ideas and suggestions
Expert	Ability to act as a source of professional knowledge Ability to recognise potential barriers and their causes
Adviser	Ability to provide objective advice and guidance on how to meet challenges and overcome barriers Ability to focus on observable behaviours and effort rather than on personality traits
Coach	Ability to assist mentee in improving specific technical and behavioural skills Ability to support mentee in goal setting and action planning to achieve outcomes Ability to help mentee recognise their own individual areas of strengths and weaknesses
Facilitator	Willingness to point mentee towards potential opportunities Willingness to arrange introductions, as appropriate
Motivator	Ability to encourage achievement of goals and boost morale

4 The mentoring partnership process

The Clinical Effectiveness team will identify a potential mentor whose expertise best fits the mentee's needs and contact them to confirm their availability to support the proposed CQI activity. With their agreement, the mentor will then be put into direct contact with the mentee for an initial conversation, to test whether they feel able to establish rapport and logistical arrangements to take the mentoring relationship forwards. Either party may decide not to proceed for any reason, the College may be requested to provide matching for the mentee with an alternative potential mentor.

The mentoring partnership thereafter has three phases: initial contact, a series of mentoring sessions and a concluding phase to end the mentoring relationship.

The initial contracting stage is used to discuss the specific purpose and objectives of the mentoring partnership, including **background details of the proposed CQI activity**, and agree the frequency and format of meetings (e.g. face-to-face, telephone, email or Skype). Mentor and mentee will also use this stage, usually held as one conversation, to discuss the responsibilities of each party throughout the process; this includes agreeing how they will work together, in addition to what each will do.

The precise format and conduct of mentoring sessions will be unique to each partnership, depending on the needs of the mentee and experience of the mentor. These conversations will include provision of feedback and identification of areas for personal development, in addition to action planning to meet the mentee's **specified objectives** for their CQI activity.

At the completion of the mentoring partnership, both parties will review the initial objectives and jointly identify potential next steps for the mentee. Mentor and mentee will additionally be asked to provide feedback about their experience of the process to the College, to inform continuous improvement of the CQI mentoring partnership scheme.

If at any stage during the partnership a mentor or mentee is unable to continue with the mentoring relationship, they must notify the Clinical Effectiveness Department (clinicaleffectiveness@rcpath.org) so that alternative mentoring support can be arranged if needed

5 Person specification for mentors

The Clinical Effectiveness Department is responsible for maintaining a register of mentors. Potential mentors must submit an application form and meet the person specification outlined below.

Mentors will:

- hold a pathology post in the UK
- be a member of the College
- have relevant and sufficient experience of participating in CQI activities
- be passionate about quality improvement
- have the ability to skilfully give high quality positive and negative feedback
- have good communication skills.

6 What we expect from registered mentors

The College expects the following from our registered mentors:

- to abide by the College's code of conduct
- to commit to a full CQI activity

- to support the assigned mentee for this agreed period
- to act as a resource and guide for the mentee throughout the completion of their specified CQI activity
- to demonstrate a thorough understanding of CQI principles and methods
- to give constructive feedback to mentee, skilfully and sensitively
- to communicate with progress reports to the Clinical Effectiveness team as needed during each mentoring relationship
- to provide feedback to the Clinical Effectiveness team on completion of each mentees CQI activity.

7 What we expect from mentees

The College expects the following from mentees:

- to abide by the Colleges code of conduct
- to complete and submit a simple application form with an **outline of their proposed CQI activity**
- to maintain a good level of communication with their mentor
- to complete actions within the timeframe agreed with their mentor
- to notify the College on completion of their CQI activity
- to provide feedback to the College about their experience of their mentoring partnership
- to submit a final report of their CQI activity to be considered for publication in the Bulletin.

8 Confidentiality

The roles of mentor and mentee require integrity, as confidential information may be shared and this confidentiality must be maintained by both parties. This means that when either mentor or mentee is sharing personal, confidential and other sensitive information in the course of their mentoring partnership, they must take reasonable steps to minimise all risk of disclosure.

9 How to apply to become a mentor

Individuals interested in becoming mentors should complete an application form and send it to the Clinical Effectiveness team (clinicaleffectiveness@rcpath.org). In applying to join the register, potential mentors should state:

- their specialty and any other specialties in which they would be willing to mentor
- the organisation and region in which they work
- any prior mentoring experience
- areas of special interest or special skills.

The Clinical Effectiveness team welcomes any comments or suggestions you may have, to help us improve the CQI Mentoring Scheme.