

Mentoring

Supporting guidance for the Architects Code of Conduct and Practice

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1. Introduction

The Architects Registration Board has developed this guidance to support architects in meeting their obligations under the Architects Code of Conduct (the Code) when acting as a mentor.

The Code requires architects to maintain competence, act with integrity, and treat others with respect. Where architects act as mentors, these obligations shape how they support the development of others.

This guidance explains what architects should do to comply with the Code when acting as a mentor.

While compliance with this guidance is not mandatory, it may be taken into account when considering whether an architect has met the standards expected under the Code. Any architect who departs from it should be prepared to explain their reasons, having exercised appropriate professional judgement.

In this guidance, "must" is used where there is a legal or regulatory requirement. "Should" describes conduct that ARB would normally expect of architects in meeting their obligations under the Code. "May" is used where the appropriate course of action will depend on the circumstances or where a particular outcome is not inevitable.

2. What is mentoring and why it matters

Mentoring is a professional relationship in which a more experienced practitioner supports the development, confidence and professional judgement of a less experienced person. It usually involves sharing experience, offering constructive challenge, and encouraging reflection to help the mentee develop their own understanding and capability. In architecture this could be a pre-registration trainee or an early career architect.

Mentoring is distinct from supervision, management or formal assessment roles, although these may overlap, especially in smaller practices. The purpose of mentoring is not to direct or control decisions, but to support the development of independent professional judgement.

Mentoring supports the development of competence, professional judgement, and confidence across the profession. It involves making a commitment towards someone else's development, often at a crucial time in their education and training, and it can be personally and professionally rewarding to support others in this way. Architects may mentor students, trainees, early-career architects, or peers taking on new responsibilities.

Acting as a mentor is a professional activity, and the Code applies whether a mentoring relationship is formal or informal. Your responsibilities are likely to be greater where the guidance you offer as part of a mentoring relationship has the potential to influence a person's competence or professional decisions.

Understand the value in informal mentoring relationships and recognise that this may suit some mentor and mentee relationships better than a more rigid and formal mentoring relationship.

The quality of mentoring can influence how professional judgement is formed and applied in practice, and therefore how decisions affecting the built environment are made. It can also help shape and improve culture if strong, positive, and influential mentoring relationships then reflect back into a workplace.

Effective mentoring contributes to public confidence in the profession by supporting the development of competent practitioners.

3. Mentoring relationships

Mentoring relationships rely on trust and carry an inherent imbalance of experience and influence. You may also receive personal information disclosed to you by your mentee. You should manage this responsibly.

Effective mentoring depends on clear communication, trust and appropriate professional relationships. You should:

- maintain professional boundaries in and out of the workplace
- be aware of any power imbalance and the influence you may have over those you mentor
- ensure your mentee can seek an alternative point of view outside of your own; and
- while the mentee should value your advice, avoid developing a relationship in which they are dependent on you

It is beneficial to match mentors up with mentees appropriately. You may wish to consider age, gender, and experience when matching up mentors to mentees to try to ensure a cohesive mentorship. While learning is the focal point of a mentorship, matching personalities allows for a successful mentorship and may create longevity.

Be clear about your role at the start of your mentoring relationship and set out mutual expectations. This can include explaining the limits of your experience and distinguishing between your opinion and instruction. When in situations where a variety of approaches could be considered, you should avoid presenting your preferred approach as the only acceptable one.

Example:

A mentee shares a recently learned sustainability approach that is unfamiliar to their mentor but may be relevant to a current project. The mentor listens openly, considers the evidence and discusses how the approach could be tested or developed with the wider team. Effective mentoring recognises that experience and learning can flow in both directions.

Any conflicts of interest should be recognised and managed, and the mentoring relationship should never be used in a way that could exploit or disadvantage the mentee. You should avoid relationships or behaviours that could compromise objectivity, independence, or professional boundaries. Examples of inappropriate behaviours include having romantic relationships, creating a co-dependency and exploiting your mentee by giving them your excess work.

Mentoring should support the development of independent professional judgement and not create reliance on the mentor's direction.

Mentoring should be voluntary for both parties and while both should commit to it, there may be circumstances where the relationship may need to end. As the mentor, you should do your best to support the mentee in transitioning to another mentor or an alternative arrangement.

4. Competence

Mentoring is a professional skill which should be developed and maintained through reflection, learning and feedback.

Mentoring plays a direct role in developing professional competence. You should ensure your guidance supports safe, ethical and effective practice and aligns with the Code.

Architects at any stage of their career can be effective mentors but it is a significant responsibility and should be undertaken only if you are competent and able to commit to the role.

Mentor only in areas where you have appropriate knowledge and experience, recognise when matters fall outside your competence, and direct the mentee to others where appropriate. Mentoring should encourage reflection, judgement, and learning over time - not simply the completion of immediate tasks. Good mentoring can be holistic and cover much more than technical work.

5. Accountability

Mentoring can influence decisions about competence, progression and professional practice. Architects are responsible for the guidance they provide. This is particularly important where mentoring relates to learning, training or readiness for practice.

Provide honest and constructive feedback, support safe and competent practice, and avoid placing individuals in situations beyond their capability without appropriate support. You should recognise the imbalance of experience and authority that can exist and manage this responsibly. You should acknowledge when you are no longer the right person to provide guidance and step back where appropriate.

Example:

A recently qualified architect is preparing for their first client presentation and is anxious about responding to difficult questions. Their mentor rehearses the

presentation with them, gives focused feedback and discusses practical ways to respond when they do not know an answer immediately. During the meeting, the mentee leads where possible, with the mentor providing support only where necessary, followed by a short debrief to help them learn afterwards.

If you become aware of behaviours, environments, or practices that risk harm, exploitation, or unsafe learning, you should take appropriate action. This may include stepping back from the role, seeking advice, or raising concerns through appropriate channels¹.

Where mentoring forms part of a structured arrangement, such as part of a trainee's period of professional practical experience, commit appropriate time and attention to it, and engage constructively with processes linked to the trainees' education and training. You should be responsive to others who are also involved in supporting the mentee's progress, such as their learning provider.

¹ [Raising Concerns and Whistleblowing guidance](#)