



A Focus On Nature – Mentoring Guidelines

Please read both parts of this document.

As a mentor

Mentoring can take many different formats: from a distance, e.g. via the internet, over the telephone, via social media, or on a much more personal basis, offering work experience, meetings, talks or lectures: we want AFON mentors to give advice tailored to the individual.

We arrange mentoring relationships based on a simple application form, which the potential mentee must complete. In this form, they are asked to specify up to three mentors from our online list, whom they think are the best suited to their career needs. We will then distribute those forms appropriately and you will have the opportunity to comment and either approve or reject the application. This is entirely at your discretion and can be for whatever reasons – which you do not have to justify – although feedback that we can pass to the candidate is always appreciated.

As a minimum, we expect mentors to:

1. Send an introductory email explaining background and current career, thus entering into correspondence with the recipient
2. Answer all emails fully
3. Give advice on careers
4. Assist in the construction of CVs
5. Where appropriate provide references and recommend jobs and prospects, etc.
6. Highlight any upcoming opportunities to mentees

Any additional support (including any financial costs incurred) is given at the discretion of the mentor, and therefore is not the legal or financial responsibility of AFON or any of its associates. This includes work experience, public or private meetings or offering lectures.

Mentoring is expected to continue for a minimum of **six months**, providing the recipient keeps up the correspondence, however, we would like mentors to support talented individuals for as long as possible, following and influencing the careers of promising individuals.

All information passed between the mentor and mentee is confidential; AFON does not give any of its members permission to pass on private information to third parties, such as telephone numbers, postal addresses and email addresses, without express permission of the mentor. However, if you receive knowledge that the mentee is being bullied or intimidated in any way, or has any concerns regarding the group/network, it is your responsibility to pass on that information to us so that we can deal with the issue as quickly as possible.

We cannot guarantee the demand for mentors at any one time: this may fluctuate over time. You have the right to reject applications where you are already in mentoring relationships, though we will still circulate forms to you. You have the right to leave the AFON project at any point, giving notice to the committee in writing.

By accepting the role of mentor, I hereby agree with these terms and conditions



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As a mentee

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It is the responsibility of the mentee to:

1) Make yourself stand out

Nature Conservation is a competitive world, and there are hundreds of young people out there all jostling for the best opportunities. You've got to make yourself stand out – whether that's on the phone, via email or in person. If you're meeting face-to-face, then be punctual; if possible, take a copy of your business card or CV, and go with a list of questions in your head so that you're never short of conversation. In an introductory email, don't just talk about who you are, but what you want to be, and how you're going about getting there.

2) Ask questions & continue the correspondence

All of our mentors are professionals often with hectic lifestyles; you'll get the best response if you go into a conversation with clear cut questions that can be answered easily. Don't be vague – if you want to know about a certain job, opportunity, course, product, additional contacts, a reference, a CV or organisation, then just ask! Too often we ramble on for a few sentences before we get to the point, and for a busy mentor this will put them off replying until much later. Remember that they're not psychic and won't guess what you want out of your mentoring relationship: you've got to tell them. Several times we've seen mentees simply send over a copy of their CV and expect a miraculous relationship to form, but this isn't the case. It's not up to your mentor to get information out of you, but vice versa. By being specific and succinct you're more likely to get a helpful response.

3) Be professional

Whether that's writing an email or letter, on the phone or face-to-face, be polite, don't swear and make sure your grammar and spelling are up to scratch. It's also important to remember that tone of voice or sarcasm can be lost in an email, so read back through your emails before you send them. Do they make sense? Are they positive? At the same time, though, be friendly. Some mentors and mentees go on to become good friends and have lasting professional relationships, so don't make anything too stiff or formal. Complacency won't be well received, either: show your enthusiasm and demonstrate that you want to take the relationship seriously.



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4) Be patient

Again, when working with professionals you have to remember that they may have a lot of work on and therefore won't be able to answer until later on – this could be days later. Nature Conservation often involves a lot of time away from the computer screen, and your mentor may not receive your email until they return. If time drags on, then think about picking up the phone or sending a polite reminder.

5) They've committed to you, so commit to them

A mentoring relationship is two-way: if a mentor helps you out, offers advice or answers a question, then say 'thank you'. If they've offered to help with something, then respond – don't just ignore emails or dismiss advice, as it'll come across as rude or complacent. There's no replacement for experience, and a little respect and gratitude can go a long way. There are little things that you can do, too, to show your gratitude: thanking them on blogs or social media, crediting them in talks, and so on. If they give you an opportunity, make sure you acknowledge their role in your career and never try to undermine them or overshadow them. Be prepared to follow advice, listen and learn.

As a good starting point, why not ask your mentor to help sharpen up your CV and biography: this will give them an introduction to who you are and your experience level. At the same time, make it clear what area you would like to work in: this will allow your mentor to identify gaps in your experience and recommend next steps for you, as well as providing feedback on your CV to help you stand out. Working together on this can be a good introduction for both of you.

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