

Work-Integrated Learning Mentorship Guide

2026



Mentor Canada



Queen's
UNIVERSITY



OBJECTIVES

1. Understand the purpose and mindset of mentoring.
2. Recognize the roles and responsibilities of mentors and mentees.
3. Apply concepts of mentoring in work-integrated learning.
4. Identify and navigate common mentoring challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

Dear Reader,

Welcome to this guide on mentorship within Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), including community-engaged settings. Whether you are a mentor, supervisor, or student (mentee) entering a placement, your role and presence are essential in shaping meaningful learning experiences. This guide offers a general framework for mentoring within WIL contexts, but it isn't a one-size-fits-all approach. Consider these ideas a foundation to build from. Feel free to adapt the tools, language, and strategies to fit your role, organizational context, and the unique dynamics of your mentoring relationship. WIL brings students into real-world environments where tasks, relationships, and reflection come together. Because students have limited time to orient themselves, a mentorship mindset grounded in curiosity, strength-based support, and shared learning, can significantly enrich the experience for everyone involved.

This guide offers practical tools, principles, and strategies to help WIL supervisors and their placement students use a mentoring mindset to build strong relationships, navigate challenges, and support personal, academic, and career development. With this approach to supervision, students quickly build confidence and capacity, allowing them to make a significant impact while reducing the time and effort required from supervisors.

This guide was co-created by Mentor Canada, the Experiential Learning Hub at Queen's University, and Queen's Learning in Evaluation and Applied Research Networks (QLEARN). The project has been funded in part by the Government of Canada's Innovative Work-Integrated Learning Program and CEWIL Canada's iHub.

We invite you to approach this work with openness, humility, and a commitment to mutual learning.

Thank you for the time, care, and intention you bring to this shared journey.

Warmly,

The Mentor Canada and QLEARN teams

Mentorship In Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

WIL opportunities – whether internships, co-ops, clinical or professional practicums, or community-engaged projects – are unique because they combine workplace responsibilities with intentional learning objectives. In these settings, supervisors often play a dual role by guiding students' day-to-day work and accountability, while also supporting their personal and professional growth through ongoing conversation, feedback, and reflection. In WIL environments, students benefit from structured opportunities to try new tasks, reflect on their successes and challenges, and then apply what they've learned. As they navigate authentic work or community-based environments, a mentorship mindset can foster deeper learning from experience, opening more avenues for students to connect their work to personal values, social and cultural contexts, and their emerging sense of professional identity. Supervising with a mentorship mindset helps supervisors set expectations early while also supporting student independence – this leads to increased student engagement in their role, allowing them to ask better questions, apply their skills and knowledge in unique and creative ways, and ultimately leads to greater impact for the organization in a shorter period of time.

To learn more about WIL pedagogy see:

[Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario:](#)



[WIL Quality Indicators, CEWIL Canada Resource Hub:](#)



ABOUT MENTOR CANADA



Mentor Canada

Mentor Canada is the only national registered charity dedicated to supporting and building capacity for mentoring across the country, linking programs and initiatives to a comprehensive portfolio of leading-edge mentoring resources, research, training, and networking opportunities.

MISSION & VISION:

To accelerate and scale world-class mentoring in Canada.

We envision a Canada where mentoring is valued and accessible to all –grounded by evidence, rooted in collaboration, and driven by a dynamic ecosystem that unlocks potential, fuels opportunity and strengthens communities. Our impact is clear, and our reach is nationwide.

Community-Engaged Teaching And Learning Framework

Community-engaged learning is a unique form of WIL that strengthens relationships between post-secondary institutions and local, regional, national, and global communities. Because collaboration and reciprocal relationship building is a core element of community-engaged learning, it has much in common with the mentorship guidance provided throughout this guide. Through projects or placements, students collaborate with community partners to identify initiatives, co-create goals, and work towards mutually beneficial outcomes. Similarly, mentorship is fundamentally a learning relationship. Whether the audience is students, new hires, organizational leaders, volunteers, or community partners, the purpose of mentorship is growth; building capability, confidence, and connection. Bringing in concepts from learning theory and pedagogy strengthens mentorship by making that growth intentional rather than accidental.



How To Use This Guide

This guide is designed for supervisors (mentors) and students (mentees) engaged in WIL and Community-Engaged Learning. It provides practical strategies, tools, and reflection activities to help you build strong mentoring relationships and navigate the unique dynamics of WIL.

- Start with **Part 1** to understand the foundations of mentorship: what it is, why it matters, and how it differs from supervision.
- Move to **Part 2** for practical steps to begin your mentoring relationship, including conversation starters, goal-setting tools, and strategies for success.
- Use **Part 3** when challenges arise or as a reference for sustaining healthy, professional relationships.
- Explore **Part 4** for additional resources, worksheets, and student feedback to deepen your practice.

We suggest reading the guide as a whole to gain a fulsome understanding of the materials, however, you may also navigate directly to the sections most relevant to your role and stage in the mentoring process.



PART 1: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION

What Is Mentorship?

"Mentoring is a mindset and set of intentional actions. It involves purposefully transforming everyday interactions into meaningful mentoring moments by listening and supporting with care, offering thoughtful advice, encouraging growth, and opening doors to new connections and opportunities. Mentoring is a collaborative and reciprocal process of co-learning, helping both mentors and mentees develop and grow." – Mentor Canada

At its core, mentoring is...

1. RELATIONAL

A foundation of mutual trust and respect is critical.

3. IDENTITY AFFIRMING

Mentoring respects and uplifts mentees for they are, and who they want to become.

5. RECIPROCAL

Mentoring is a two-way street. Together, you both learn and grow.



2. STRENGTHS-BASED

Mentoring celebrates and amplifies the existing strengths of mentees.

4. FOCUSED ON GROWTH

Mentoring is goal-focused. It focuses on helping mentees set and achieve important goals.

Benefits for the Student (Mentee)

- **Accelerated achievement of learning objectives**, supported through structured guidance, reflective conversations, and meaningful mentorship moments.
- **Stronger workplace integration and well-being**, including a deeper sense of community, belonging, and connection to organizational culture.
- **Enhanced professional communication and social skills** gained through regular interaction, feedback, and relationship-building with supervisors and colleagues.
- **Growth in professional knowledge and transferable skills**, with opportunities to apply academic learning in real-world settings and build confidence.
- **Improved clarity around career pathways**, helping students explore professional identities and understand roles, expectations, and future possibilities.



- **Access to networks, opportunities, and sponsorship**, made possible through mentorship relationships, advocacy, and exposure to organizational and sector connections.
- **Increased career satisfaction and self-efficacy**, resulting from consistent strengths-based support and opportunities to contribute meaningful work.
- **Support navigating challenges such as inequities, bias, or workplace barriers**, through inclusive, identity-affirming mentoring practices.

Benefits for Supervisors (Mentor)

- **Increasing student engagement and initiative** helps students feel more supported and confident, which leads them to ask better questions, take ownership of tasks, and contribute more meaningfully to their role.
- **Students make a greater impact in a shorter period of time** when supervisors use a strengths-based, growth-oriented approach, helping students adapt faster, learn workplace norms more quickly, and begin adding value earlier in the placement.
- **Makes supervision more efficient and less time-consuming** because a mentorship mindset reduces the need for repeated instructions and micromanagement by encouraging independent thinking, reflective practice, and clear goal-setting, saving supervisors' time in the long run.
- **Strengthens relationships and reduces workplace friction** as mentorship-oriented supervision improves communication, builds trust, and reduces misunderstandings or performance issues that often require additional supervisory attention.
- **Supports organizational goals and builds capacity** because engaged, well-supported students often produce higher-quality work, contribute fresh perspectives, and strengthen the organization's ability to take on projects that otherwise might not be possible.
- **Enhances supervisors' leadership skills**, enabling them to develop stronger communication and feedback competencies that benefit their broader teams and support long-term professional growth.

Benefits for the Organization/ Community Partner

A mentorship-based supervisory model strengthens organizational capacity, enhances team performance, and increases supervisory efficiency by equipping students with the support they need to produce meaningful, high-quality work. By welcoming a student or mentee, organizations benefit from fresh perspectives, a stronger future talent pipeline, and an elevated reputation as a learning-friendly, community-engaged partner.

Relationship Between Mentorship And Supervision

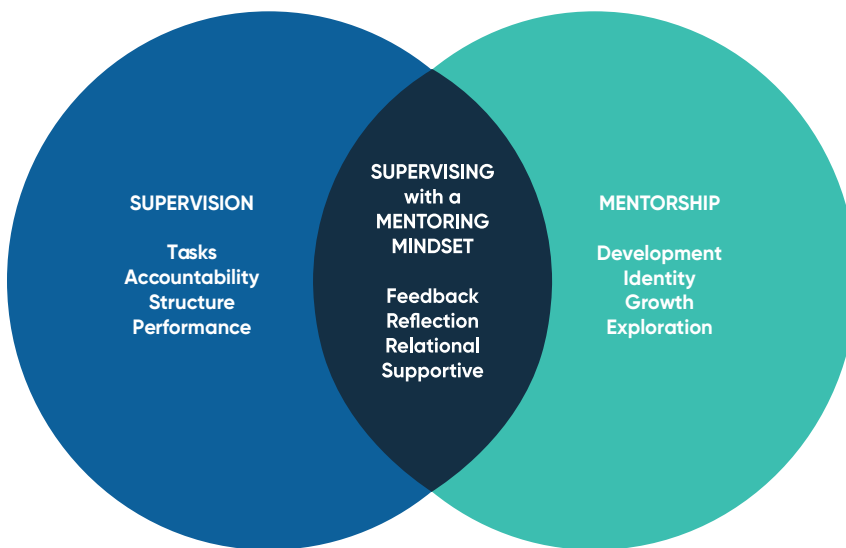
How They Connect

In traditional terms, **supervisors are responsible and accountable for the students they supervise in a WIL placement, so they tend to** focus on providing direction on tasks, ensuring deliverables and compliance with policy and procedures, along with monitoring performance, while **mentorship** emphasizes development, reflection, career exploration, and skill-building.

In WIL settings, these roles often overlap. Students have limited time to adapt, and organizations may not have separate resources for both supervisor and mentor. That's why **adopting a mentorship mindset within supervision** is so valuable.

When supervisors integrate mentorship principles, such as goal setting, reflection, and growth-oriented feedback, they create a richer learning experience that supports both accountability and professional development.

Mentorship and Supervision Overlap in Experiential Learning



Supervision focuses on clarity, structure, expectations, and accountability.

- Assigning tasks
- Ensuring projects meet requirements
- Reviewing performance metrics

Supervising with a Mentorship Mindset

focuses on linking tasks to learning and supporting growth.

- Co-creating strategies for success
- Connecting daily work to long-term goals
- Encouraging skill development

Mentorship focuses on goal setting, personal and professional development, and identity.

- Supporting career interests
- Asking reflective questions
- Expanding networks and opportunities



Quality Mentorship

Principles of Effective Mentoring

Effective mentoring goes beyond supervision; it's about fostering growth, confidence, and opportunity. Quality mentorship means:

- **Helping mentees shape their goals and aspirations** through thoughtful guidance.
- **Offering advice and counsel during challenging times**, creating a safe space for learning.
- **Boosting confidence and self-esteem** by recognizing strengths and progress.
- **Supporting skill development** by encouraging practice and providing resources.
- **Giving constructive, motivating feedback** that inspires improvement and reflection.

At its core, quality mentorship is a relationship built on trust, respect, and a shared commitment to learning and growth.

Mentor Mindset

Quality mentorship is:

• Relational: A foundation of mutual trust and respect is critical for the relationship to succeed.
• Mentee-Centered: Mentoring is about encouraging the mentee to lead the experience. Being mentee-centered means the mentee's goals, values, and needs are the "North Star". Every conversation and decision should align with what matters most to them, not your agenda as the mentor.
• Strengths-based and Identity-affirming: Mentoring celebrates and amplifies the existing strengths of mentees. Mentoring is not about saving mentees from themselves or their communities. Mentoring respects and uplifts mentees for who they are, and who they want to become.
• Focused on growth: Mentoring is goal-focused. It focuses on helping mentees set and achieve important goals.
• Reciprocal: Mentoring is a two-way street. It's not a hierarchy. Mentors aren't all-knowing experts, and mentees aren't passive recipients. Mentors and mentees both bring experience, fresh insights, and lived realities. Together, you both learn and evolve.



Roles And Responsibilities

Mentor Roles: Advocate, Sponsor, Skill Developer

As a career mentor, there are four roles and responsibilities that you need to be aware of while supporting your mentee. Fulfilling these roles will help you develop and maintain high-quality mentoring relationships.

ADOPT A MENTORING MINDSET

Treat every interaction with your mentee as an opportunity to deepen the relationship, teach them a new skill, or share a helpful piece of advice.

ACT AS AN ADVOCATE AND SPONSOR

Introduce your mentee to new people, resources, and opportunities that can deepen their networks and learning opportunities.



OFFER SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Listen and respond to your mentee's goals and needs. Offer them feedback and guidance that supports their self-esteem, confidence, and sense of belonging and inclusion.

SUPPORT KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Teach your mentee new skills, provide them with constructive and motivating feedback, and offer them helpful pieces of career advice.

Mentor Role and Responsibility #1: Adopt a mentoring mindset

Every interaction with your mentee has the potential to be impactful, even more so than you might realize. Mentees look up to their mentors as role models and place a lot of importance on how they carry themselves as professionals.

A **mentoring mindset** recognizes that the everyday interactions we have with mentees are important opportunities to engage and connect with them, to understand them more deeply, and to support their goals, values, and needs.

A mentoring mindset helps supervisory mentors approach **every interaction** with their mentees as an opportunity to deepen their relationship, teach them a new skill, or share a helpful piece of advice.



There are four ways that you can develop a mentoring mindset:

1

Be Intentional

2

Focus on Growth

3

Create Connections

4

Be Authentic and
Accountable

Being more intentional can also involve exploring your own awareness and knowledge.

- Do you have any potential biases that you might unknowingly be bringing to the relationship?
- Are you always mindful when interacting with your student mentee in a supportive and strengths-based manner?

It is important to distinguish between a mentoring mindset and a hero or saviour mindset.

Mentors are not heroes or saviours sent to save or rescue their “helpless” mentees from themselves or their communities. This false and harmful mindset can stem from differences in privilege between mentors and mentees and personal biases about equity-deserving individuals (women, 2SLGBTQIA+ peoples, persons with disabilities, Indigenous / First-Nations peoples, black peoples and racialized peoples (Non-Black, Non-Indigenous).

A mentoring mindset can help you become a more thoughtful, intentional, and supportive mentor and person, not someone who is ready to “fix” or “save” your mentee at any given moment. A mentoring mindset treats all mentees with dignity and respect.

Mentor Role and Responsibility #2: Offer social and emotional support

A critical role for any career mentor is to offer their mentee social and emotional support. Social and emotional support is feedback and guidance that supports a mentee’s self-esteem, confidence, and sense of belonging in the mentoring relationship and in the workplace.

For example, while meeting with Luca, Pierre, Luca’s supervisor, always tries to **highlight at least one of Luca’s strengths**. This makes Luca feel valued and supported as an aspiring teacher. In addition, Pierre practices active listening and empathy during his interactions with Luca, which helps build trust and rapport between the two. Because of this social and emotional support, Luca feels welcomed and well-supported by Pierre and develops a strong sense of belonging.



Mentor Role and Responsibility #3: Support knowledge and skill development

Another critical role for career mentors is to support their mentee's knowledge and skill development. This can be accomplished by providing feedback and guidance that can help mentees develop new forms of professional knowledge and acquire skills that will advance their careers

Your mentee might use the Queen's Skills Cards, which are available for anyone to use for free. An activity worksheet has been included at the end of this module on how to use the skill cards.

Mentor Role and Responsibility #4: Act as an advocate and sponsor

A key component of the mentoring relationship is for the mentor to expand the mentee's opportunities, possibilities, and social networks. This can be accomplished by leveraging one's social capital (i.e., benefits and resources that one can obtain through their social networks and interpersonal connections). Becoming someone's advocate and champion can take time. This kind of support is rooted in a close and trusting relationship and the mentee's proven work ethic, dedication, and quality of work.

In mentoring relationships, advocacy and sponsorship involve three processes:

Facilitate Introductions	The mentor introduces the mentee to other colleagues, professional networks, and leaders that will help them in the pursuit of their goals, values, and needs.
Encourage Networking	The mentor encourages the mentee to attend industry events, conferences, professional development opportunities, and other gatherings that facilitate networking. This can also look like encouraging mentees to become members of certain associations, subscribe to popular and helpful mailing lists, newsletters, and communities of practice.
Discuss Mentee Potential	Mentors can publicly recognize and actively discuss mentee's contributions and value with other colleagues and leaders. Mentors should not be afraid to bring up your mentee and celebrate their potential behind closed doors. Mentors can advocate for their mentee's development by encouraging their inclusion in high-profile projects, assignments, and events. Mentors can nominate their mentee for promotions, awards, and other forms of advancement.



For example, after noticing and discussing his mentee's interest in becoming a professional accountant, Omar organized a brief coffee meeting with his friend Samantha, a professional accountant at a major financial institution. Omar wanted to connect his mentee with Samantha because she is a trusted friend who is not only a competent accountant, but also a kind person who shares many values and interests with his mentee. The meeting created an opportunity for Omar's mentee to learn more about Samantha's career path and also led to an incredibly insightful job shadowing opportunity for his mentee.

Mentee Roles: Active Learner, Goal Setter

Your mentor has been trained to support you, but the success of this relationship largely depends on you. Here are your four key responsibilities:

Mentee Role and Responsibility #1: Be the Driver. Be Goal-Oriented

You are in the driver's seat. The most successful mentoring relationships are driven by a mentee who brings purpose and focus.

- **What this looks like:** Come to sessions knowing what you want to discuss. What is one small step you can take toward a larger goal?

We've designed an activity to support you and your mentor in the goal-setting process. When you're ready, please see the "Skills and Goal Setting Activity".

Mentee Role and Responsibility #2: Be Prepared. Be Engaged and Productive

Respect your mentor's time and expertise by being fully present and prepared.

- **What this looks like:**
 - *Show up on time.*
 - *Come with 1-2 questions or topics.*
 - *Actively listen and take notes.*
 - *Proactively seek out learning opportunities your mentor suggests.*
- **Activity Suggestion:** Draft two questions you could ask your mentor in your first meeting:
 - *A question about their career journey (e.g., "What was a key 'fork-in-the-road' decision in your career?").*
 - *A question about your specific goal (e.g., "What skills are most critical for the role I aspire to?").*



Mentee Role and Responsibility #3: Be Open. Seek and Provide Feedback

Growth requires being open to constructive feedback and willing to adapt.

- **What this looks like:** Listen to feedback without getting defensive. Ask clarifying questions. Apply the insights to your development. Also, provide gentle feedback to your mentor on what's working or not working for you.
- **Example:** *"Thank you for that feedback. Could you give me an example of how I might apply that in a project?"*

Mentee Role and Responsibility #4: Be Professional. Be Respectful and Appreciative

The relationship is built on mutual respect.

- **What this looks like:** Be courteous, maintain confidentiality, and honor your commitments. A simple thank-you goes a long way.

Worksheet: Skills and Goal Setting Activity on page 25.



PART 2: IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

Starting Strong

Starting strong means intentionally setting the tone for this blended relationship. The first interactions should clarify expectations, build trust, and create space for learning beyond the specific project or placement tasks.

Structuring the First Conversation

Connect and Build Rapport

Spend some time getting to know each other. The mentor can help the mentee feel comfortable by discussing their own career and life first. In discussing their wins, setbacks, and even “fork in the road” decisions, this can lead to building a foundation of trust before working on more focused goals.

Ask Curious Questions

Come prepared with some questions. Be curious about each other’s experiences and interests. Questions could include:

- **Mentee to mentor questions:**
 - What energizes you?
 - What challenges or barriers have you faced in the past?
- **Mentor to mentee questions:**
 - What energizes you?
 - What challenges or barriers are you facing right now?
 - What career goals have you set for yourself?
 - Why did you register for this program?

Discuss Goals for the Mentorship Relationship

Make a Plan

Write down your goals for the relationship and start to make a plan. What are each of your action items for the next meeting?

In the next section, we’ll go into more detail about goal setting within the WIL environment and how that can work within a mentorship mindset.

Goal Setting and Planning

Goal setting is at the foundation of a successful WIL placement and a successful mentoring relationship. While mentees are generally assigned tasks by their supervisor, they may have a general vision for the skills they want to develop and the path they want to take but may not know the actionable steps to get there.



Mentors can help mentees develop a plan and set goals, including ones that connect specific tasks in the WIL placement with broader objectives related to their personal and professional growth.

SMARTER goals is a common approach to setting goals in mentoring relationships. It involves setting goals with your mentor that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely, Exciting, and Risky. In WIL contexts, SMARTER goals often extend beyond traditional performance targets to support broader personal growth and career development.

As you review the following SMARTER goal criteria, consider which ones you can apply to each of your goals. Ideally, all goals will be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely, but not every goal has to be exciting or risky. Work together to make sure the goals that you set are applicable to your specific context and are ones that you can reflect on throughout the WIL experience.

Specific	Set a goal that is specific, clear, and actionable.
Measurable	Set a goal that you and your mentor can collaboratively monitor, track, and measure using certain criteria or metrics.
Achievable	Set a goal that is realistic and achievable given current resources, time, and skills.
Relevant	Set a goal that is strongly aligned with your interests, values, and needs.
Timely	Set a goal that has a specific timeline and deadline.
Exciting	Set a goal that is personally exciting and that inspires your curiosity and action.
Risky	Set a goal that stretches you beyond your comfort zone, supporting growth and helping develop transformational knowledge and skills.

Aligning Expectations for Achieving Goals and Reflecting on Progress

Setting clear expectations for how often you'll be checking in to discuss your goals can make it easier to create a routine and stay accountable. Here are a few questions that mentors and mentees can ask each other to establish these expectations:

- Who is responsible for setting up meetings?
- How frequently will meetings take place?
- Is there a preferred time for the meetings to take place?

When you are ready to start planning, and setting goals, check out our Skills and Goal Setting Activity on page 25.



PART 3: NAVIGATING CHALLENGES AND SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

Mentee Role and Responsibility #3: Be Open. Seek and Provide Feedback

Growth requires being open to constructive feedback and willing to adapt.

Common Challenges

Time Constraints

At times, you might have limited capacity and time for your mentoring relationship.

Potential Solutions for Mentees and Mentors:

1. Try to remember your "why" and some of the core values that motivated you to become a mentor or a mentee.
2. Don't forget to send your mentor/mentee periodic check-ins to stay in touch between meetings and asynchronously work toward mentoring goals.
3. Remember that mentoring doesn't always need to be intensive and time-consuming. Small mentoring moments can be extremely beneficial. Focus on quality over quantity.

Feeling Mismatched

Feeling mismatched can involve feeling like your mentor or mentee's career goals and interests do not align with your current role, experiences or career-related knowledge and skills.

Potential Solutions for Mentors:

You might not be aware of the positive impact you're having on your mentee. Ask your mentee if they are receiving the support they need. Does your mentee have ideas about things you might do differently to help them reach their goals?

The role of a mentor isn't just to impart knowledge and advance skills. Although your mentee might have different career goals, you can still support their confidence, sense of belonging, and expand their professional network. There is also value in exposing your mentee to different perspectives.

Potential Solutions for Mentees:

Instead of focusing on what feels mismatched, consider revisiting your goals with your mentor. You could identify one specific goal you set and discuss where additional support from your mentor or some of their colleagues would be helpful. Don't be afraid to ask your mentor to make an introduction if you have a particular colleague in mind.

Lack of Follow Through

At times, a mentee might not come prepared to a mentoring meeting or follow through on their



previous action items. It is important for mentees to come prepared and for mentors to address the required follow-through.

Potential Solutions for Mentors:

Be empathetic. Your mentee might be dealing with a lot of extra work or stress outside of your mentoring relationship.

Try to make a habit of reviewing the agenda for your next meeting with your mentee.

Revisit the goals for your relationship and initiate a discussion on whether your mentee is making progress towards them.

Potential Solutions for Mentees:

Communicate. There may be extra work that you have or stressors outside of your mentoring relationship. By sharing this with your mentor, you can avoid relationship challenges.

Try to make a habit of tracking and following up on previous action items and reviewing the agenda for your next meeting prior to arriving at the meeting. If you don't feel prepared, you can always ask to reschedule – it's better to ask in advance than show up unprepared.

Revisit the goals for your relationship and reflect on whether you are making progress towards them.

Boundary Issues

Boundary issues may arise when a mentor or mentee asks the other person to take on a role, discuss a topic, or take an action that feels uncomfortable or outside the scope of the supervisory or mentoring relationship. Boundary crossings are often unintentional and likely a misunderstanding of the expectations and goals established for the mentoring relationship.

Potential Solutions for Mentors

Clearly and respectfully communicate your discomfort with the boundary crossing.

Discuss why you're unable to play a certain role, discuss a certain topic, or perform a certain activity. Be patient. Perhaps the mentee doesn't know that they have crossed a boundary. Revisit the goals you and your mentee set for your mentoring relationship and make sure they still align with how both your supervisory relationship within the WIL context, and your mentoring relationship, have evolved during the placement.

Potential Solutions for Mentees

Recognize and trust your feelings of discomfort. If a request or expectation doesn't feel appropriate or comfortable for you within the context of your values and identity, and the expectations of the WIL placement, take a moment to reflect and discuss the situation with your mentor.

If you don't feel comfortable discussing the situation with your mentor, seek guidance from the



WIL program coordinator at your post-secondary institution or another trusted support. Getting perspective can help you respond in a way that protects both the relationship and your well-being.

Work-Related Performance

In a WIL environment, using a mentorship mindset when supervising a placement student requires supervisors to navigate roles that can at times feel distinct. Supervisory and mentorship responsibilities often serve different purposes and may call for different approaches depending on the work environment or the demands of a particular project or task. When work-related performance issues arise, such as unmet expectations or concerns identified through performance reviews, the supervisory role may become more directive and structured, prioritizing accountability and productivity. This shift can create tension that impacts the mentorship relationship, which relies on trust and openness.

Mentees may end up feeling uncertain about when they are being evaluated versus mentored, while mentors may struggle to address performance expectations while also fostering learning and growth.

Steps the Mentor Can Take

1. Clarify the purpose of each meeting or conversation and be explicit about when you are acting in a supervisor capacity and when you are engaging as a mentor. There may be times when these roles overlap, but when it comes to issues related to performance, make the distinction clear to reduce confusion and set appropriate expectations for the discussion.
2. When possible, connect performance feedback to learning and growth. Frame performance issues as opportunities for development and use reflective questions to help the mentee identify skills to strengthen and strategies for improvement. At the conclusion of the discussion, reaffirm that you are still working together on the mentee's personal and professional goals.

Steps the Mentee Can Take

1. If you feel uncertain about any of the feedback you've received, ask your mentor to clarify expectations and priorities, and to explain what success looks like moving forward.
2. Approach performance feedback with curiosity rather than defensiveness. Reflect on which skills or behaviours need further development and how your current skill development goals, as well as your broader career and personal development goals, connect to the feedback you've received. Update goals, supports, and/or resources as needed.

Repairing Relationships

Repair occurs when mentors acknowledge that they were misaligned to their mentee's goals and needs and seek to repair the mentoring relationship. Repair is a sign of healthy mentoring relationships, and it often deepens connection and trust.

Mentors are not expected to be perfect. Sometimes, they can make mistakes. Fortunately,



mistakes are opportunities for growth and improving mentoring relationships.

"The trouble in mentoring relationships is not the presence of mistakes, but the absence of repair."

Language of Repair

Explore the examples below of things you can say to initiate the repair of your mentoring relationship. These are just examples. We encourage you to practice repair in ways that are authentic to you and your mentoring relationships.

- **Mentee:** "Last meeting, I recognized that I did not fully agree with the direction we were headed with the goals that I have. I would like for us to review this together."
- **Mentor:** "I was reflecting on our last meeting, and I think I said something that was not aligned with your goals. I'm sorry for potentially steering you in a direction that wasn't right for you. My advice was influenced by my own experience, and I didn't fully consider your situation and goals."
- **Mentee:** "I would like to apologize for not being prepared during our last meeting. I have been feeling overwhelmed with my WIL placement tasks and projects. I have come prepared today and plan to do so moving forward."
- **Mentor:** "I want to apologize for being distracted the last time we spoke. I've been juggling a lot at work and I wasn't fully present. Because I was distracted, I fear my advice was rushed or incomplete. I overlooked a few important details that I'd like to discuss with you today."
- **Mentee:** "I have been reflecting on my goals and our past discussions, and I would like to review some of my goals to better align with my growth during this WIL placement opportunity."
- **Mentor:** "I recognize that in our last meeting I may have encouraged you to share more about your personal life than you were comfortable with. I apologize if I crossed a boundary, please know that was not my intention. I will be more mindful in future conversations as I want to ensure this is a supportive and respectful environment."

Managing Constructive Relationship Endings and Transitions

Bringing mentoring relationships to an end is a natural and expected component of most mentor-mentee connections. Although some mentoring relationships persist for years or even decades, many come to a close after the mentee has accomplished their goals or the WIL placement has ended. Relationship endings and transitions should always be framed as constructive, celebratory, and supportive.

No matter how or why your relationship is coming to an end, it is important that the **mentor** lead the process and conduct this stage of the mentoring relationship in a thoughtful and supportive manner.



For **mentees**, saying goodbye to mentors requires careful forethought and planning. Each WIL placement and mentorship relationship is unique and it is important to discuss with your mentor whether and how you will stay in touch. Regardless of whether the relationship is ending, or transitioning into something different, celebrate one another's milestones and learning. Discuss the role your mentor can take in providing you with a future employment reference and how they can help you stay connected to the organization, industry, or professional networks they've helped you build.

Five Strategies for Mentors Managing Relationship Endings and Transitions

This section describes five strategies mentors can use to successfully bring their mentoring relations to an end and support a constructive transition.

These strategies are also relevant for mentors who are not ending their relationships but are looking to renegotiate parameters (frequency, duration, etc.) with the mentee going forward. This might be the case when a WIL placement comes to an end, but both the mentor and mentee want to continue the mentoring relationship despite the end of the supervisory relationship.

1. **Celebrate milestones and growth:** The first step is to take a moment to appreciate one another's growth and development as a result of the mentoring relationship.

Conversation starters & tips

- What was an "aha!" moment each of you had during the mentoring relationship?
- Share a key skill you each gained from your time together.
- What is one piece of advice or "golden nugget" you will hold onto?

2. **Openly discuss the closure or transition:** The second step is to create the required space and time to discuss any feelings or reactions you and your mentee might have regarding the ending of your mentoring relationship, or meetings becoming less regular.

Conversation starters & tips

- Does your mentee have any questions or concerns about the ending of the relationship?
- Is everyone clear why the relationship is ending, or becoming less consistent?

3. **Honour and protect confidentiality:** The third step is to protect one another's confidentiality. Supervising with a mentorship mindset has involved building a relationship built upon mutual trust, vulnerability, and honesty. Sometimes, mentors and mentees can discuss things they don't want others to know about, and there may come a time when your mentee would like you to act as an employment reference. As the WIL placement comes to an end, be sure to discuss with your mentee how you would respond to a reference request, what you would share, and the broader issue of confidentiality to ensure both parties feel comfortable moving forward.

Conversation starters & tips

- How can we protect one another's confidentiality going forward?
- What personal information, lived experiences, stories, and opinions are safe to discuss with others, and which are not?



- If I was to act as an employment reference for you in the future, what would you want me to say about you?

4. Discuss ongoing contact and mentorship: The fourth step is to discuss whether and how you will stay in touch with one another. Knowing the supervisory relationship will come to an end when the WIL placement ends, it is important to discuss whether you'd like the mentorship side of the relationship to continue or if there are other ways you can keep in touch. Be clear and realistic about your willingness and capacity to provide a mentee with ongoing mentorship.

Conversation starters & tips

- Are both parties open to continued mentoring?

If so, co-construct clear guidelines for how you will communicate going forward. How often will you communicate? How will you communicate (e.g., by email, phone, in person, etc.)? What topics or issues are you open to discussing (e.g., just career-related topics, or other topics as well)? What topics are you not willing to discuss and provide mentorship in?

If not, discuss the reasons why. If you can't continue providing a mentee with mentorship, can you stay connected via LinkedIn? Let your mentee know what types of support they can still reach out to you for in the future (e.g. occasional career advice, networking support, or serving as an employment reference)

5. Facilitate a constructive transition: The final step is to prepare a mentee for the next steps in their career. Try to provide a mentee with one final act of mentorship (before you stop seeing one another, or before you can meet again).

Conversation starters & tips

- What are the mentee's next career steps and goals?
- How can you support them to take this next small step?
- Who can you introduce them to that might become another mentor and help them accomplish their next goal?
- What resources can you provide them to take the next step in their career?

ABOUT MENTOR CANADA



Mentor Canada

Mentor Canada is the only national registered charity dedicated to supporting and building capacity for mentoring across the country, linking programs and initiatives to a comprehensive portfolio of leading-edge mentoring resources, research, training, and networking opportunities.

OUR MISSION:

To accelerate and scale world-class mentoring in Canada.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What goals have been set for this mentoring relationship, and how well do they align with expectations and long-term development?
2. How am I taking responsibility for shaping and engaging in this mentoring relationship?
3. In what ways am I listening openly while also thinking critically about the feedback being shared?
4. How does this mentoring relationship respect and support individual values, identities, and definitions of success?
5. How am I contributing to this relationship, and what am I learning through reciprocity or reverse mentoring?
6. What is working well in this mentoring relationship, and what could be improved?
7. How am I addressing challenges, discomfort, or misalignment in a respectful and constructive way?
8. As this mentoring relationship evolves or concludes, how will the learning be carried forward into future roles, as a professional and/or as a mentor?

WIL Canada Mentorship Guide: Skills and Goal Setting Activity

Introduction

An important part of any WIL experience is building knowledge and transferable skills.

A helpful tool for guiding skill development conversations is the open-access Queen's Skills Cards. The skills outlined in the cards offer a shared language for discussing the transferable skills mentees are developing through day-to-day tasks, navigating challenges, and building on successes.

While WIL-related goals often focus on tasks, projects, and performance, supervising with a mentorship mindset creates space to explore how the WIL placement connects to academic learning, personal growth, and longer-term career development.

The following activity will help mentees recognize strengths, connect skills to specific tasks in the workplace, and reflect on why certain skills matter in relation to their career development. For mentors, the activity provides a simple way to prompt reflection, shape feedback, and support meaningful goal setting.

**Scan the QR code to access the
Queen's Skills Cards!**



Step 1: Prep for a Meeting to Discuss Skills and Goal Setting for the WIL Experience

Mentee: Complete a Skills Assessment and Reflect on Motivations and Areas for Growth

Skills Assessment

- ☐ Using the online [Skills Cards Sorter](#), review the '**How to Use**' instructions and complete a **full sort** skills assessment.
- ☐ We recommend choosing the '**Set Goals for a New Experience**' matrix and selecting all the skills you're interested in developing.



- ☐ Sort your selected skills onto the matrix by reflecting on your current strengths in each skill area (perhaps you are already quite strong in a particular area or maybe it is an area for growth) and how relevant each skill is to achieving success in your WIL role.
- ☐ Download a PDF of your sorted skills and be prepared to share it with your mentor.

Motivations and Areas for Growth

- What motivated you to seek out this WIL experience and what elements of the role or project are you most excited about?
- What do you hope this experience will help you learn about yourself – your interests, strengths, or preferences for how you work or collaborate?
- How does this experience connect to your current ideas about future career directions?

Mentor: Review the Queen's Skills Cards

- ☐ Familiarize yourself with the Queen's Skills Cards by reviewing the [website](#) and [PDF version of the deck](#).
- ☐ Identify which skills are most relevant to the mentee's role.



Before moving forward with setting skills and growth related goals, take a few minutes to clarify how you'll work together in this mentorship relationship. Remember to discuss topics such as:

- How you will distinguish between conversations about performance and conversations about growth.
- Frequency of your mentorship meetings and how you will reflect on progress
- What kinds of supports are most helpful to you when you engage in goal setting and reflection.
- How will you address any challenges that arise in either the supervisory or the mentorship component of your relationship?

See Part 2 of the guide "Discuss Goals for the Mentorship Relationship", for more information.

Step 2: Meet to Discuss Skills and Set Goals

Mentee: Share your results and set skills goals for the WIL experience

- ☐ Share the most 'relevant' skills from your matrix and discuss the ways in which each skill is connected to the tasks you'll be performing during your WIL role.
- ☐ Choose **3 to 5** skills you want to focus on during the WIL experience. Try to balance skills that will improve performance in the role with ones that will contribute to your long-term career development.
- ☐ Share your reflections about what motivated you to pursue this WIL opportunity and what you hope to learn about yourself throughout the mentorship relationship.
- ☐ When it comes time to set goals with your mentor, you can use the following chart as a guide, or follow a format suggested by your mentor:



Skills Goals		
Skills I Want to Develop	Related Tasks/Projects	Development Plan
<i>Identify three – five (3-5) skills that you would like to develop</i>	<i>Consider the tasks and projects where you will be able to apply and develop these skills.</i>	<i>For each skill, record a strategy you can use to develop this skill.</i>
Oral Example: Communication (communicating information and ideas clearly and effectively to different audiences)	Providing verbal data analysis updates and technical findings to project managers and non-technical teammates.	I will prepare brief talking points before meetings to clearly explain my methods, assumptions, and key findings in plain language. I will ask my mentor for feedback on my clarity and pacing and make adjustments to future presentations where necessary.
Goal 1:		
Goal 2:		
Goal 3:		



Career Development Goals		
Area of Growth and Development I want to Explore	Connection to the WIL Experience	Actions & Supports
<i>Identify one - three (1-3) longer-term goals related to academic, personal, or career development.</i>	<i>Describe how the WIL placement, role, or mentoring relationship can support progress toward this goal.</i>	<i>Identify actions, reflections, or conversations that will help you move toward this goal.</i>
<i>Example: I'm interested in exploring the types of work environments that motivate me as a STEM professional (e.g. collaborative vs independent, short-term vs long-term impacts, pace of work, real-world application vs research or technical knowledge)</i>	This placement offers insight into how STEM work is done in an industry setting, including team dynamics, organizational priorities, and the impact of technical decisions.	I'll reflect on which aspects of the work environment feel most engaging or challenging. I'll ask my mentor what they value, enjoy, and find challenging about working in this sector. I'll observe how collaboration, communication, and decision-making happen across the organization to assess alignment with my personal values and future goals.
Goal 1:		
Goal 2:		
Goal 3:		



Remember to apply the SMARTER Goals acronym we discussed in part 2: Co-creating Goals.

Mentor: Guide reflection and assist with goal setting

- ☐ Listen as your mentee reviews their matrix with you and encourage them to make connections between the skills they've identified as most relevant to the WIL role and the specific tasks they'll be performing.
- ☐ When settings skills goals use the following questions to guide mentee reflection:
 - Have you engaged in reflection on your skill development in past roles? If yes, what worked well for you? What was challenging about the process?
 - Which skills will you need more support in using and developing? Do you have ideas for how I can support you?
 - What tasks or projects do you think will be most valuable for helping your skill development?
 - Which skills might be most valuable to your long-term career development?
- ☐ When setting career development goals, use the following questions to guide mentee reflection:
 - What do you want to better understand or test through this experience (e.g. types of work, work environment, responsibilities, ways of contributing)?
 - What are one or two longer-term career, academic, or personal goals this WIL placement could intentionally support?
- ☐ Share some of your insights regarding task-specific skill requirements as well as broader industry-related skills.
- ☐ Assist student in setting goals (see chart above for an example).



Step 3: Mid-Experience Check-in to Discuss Skill Development

Mentee: Reflect on skill development and progress

- ☐ Prepare for the meeting by reviewing the goals you set, following up on any action items from the previous meeting, and setting an agenda for the check-in meeting.
- ☐ Spend some time in advance of the meeting reflecting on the following:

Skills Goals

- Which of your targeted skills have you had the most opportunity to practice so far?
- What specific tasks or projects have helped you develop these skills?
- What skills are you feeling more confident using than at the beginning of the experience?
- Are there any skills you expected to use more but haven't yet? Why might that be? Are there skills you've needed that weren't identified in the initial assessment?
- What challenges have you encountered when trying to apply or develop certain skills?

Career Development Goals

- How are your personal and professional development goals evolving since the start of this placement?
 - Are there any expectations you had coming into the role that are being confirmed, challenged, or changed?
 - What types of knowledge and skills do you value in your colleagues?
 - What new questions about your future direction have emerged because of this experience?
 - Based on what you've learned so far, are there any career development goals you'd like to refine, expand, or let go of?
 - What additional exposure, conversations, or experiences would be most helpful between now and the end of the placement to support your broader goals?
-
- ☐ Bring examples from tasks, projects, feedback, successes, and challenges to support your reflection.



Mentor: Guide reflection and help mentee adjust goals if necessary

- ☐ Review the meeting agenda in advance; follow-up on any incomplete action items from the previous meeting.
- ☐ Guide the mentee's reflection using some of the following questions:
 - What progress have you noticed in the skills you initially identified as priorities?
 - Are there upcoming tasks, projects, or meetings that could provide more opportunities to practice these skills?
 - Are there additional opportunities that would support further growth?
 - Do the original skills goals still feel relevant, or should they be refined or expanded?
 - Have any of your longer-term career goals or interests shifted since the start of the placement?
- ☐ Offer specific constructive feedback tied to observed behaviours or outcomes. Offer guidance and insights.
- ☐ Help the mentee make connections between skill development and success in both the immediate WIL role and future roles.
- ☐ Consider opportunities for skill development beyond the mentee's core responsibilities (e.g. shadowing, supporting another team, professional development).

Step 4: End of Experience Debrief

Mentee: Reflect and articulate learning

- ☐ As you prepare for a final conversation with your mentor about skill development, review your original skills matrix and development goals, and reflect on the following:
 - Which skills did you develop the most during this experience?
 - Did you develop any skills that you weren't originally expecting to?
 - Which tasks or elements of your role did you enjoy most? Least?
 - Is there a relationship between the skills required for those tasks and how energizing or draining you found them?
 - How did your work contribute to the broader goals of the team or organization?
 - What examples best demonstrate your growth or impact during this experience?
- ☐ After the debrief, take some time to:
 - Update your resume.
 - Practice describing your skills and the story of your experience in interviews and networking situations.
 - Assess possible career paths based on the skills you enjoy using.



Mentor: Facilitate meaning-making and forward planning

- Use the debrief to help the mentee connect skill development to future opportunities and career exploration.
- Share observations:
 - Moments where you saw the mentee demonstrate clear growth or increased confidence.
 - How skills developed align with industry expectations or possible career pathways.
 - How skills can be transferred to new contexts.
 - Discuss what skills would benefit from further development – focus on ways to use skills in more complex or nuanced ways. Practice unconditional positive regard.
- Guide reflection with some of the following questions:
 - Were there certain tasks or elements of a project you enjoyed more than others? Is there a relationship between the skills required to carry out those tasks and what you liked or disliked about the task/project?
 - How do you think your work supported the broader goals of the department or the organization?
 - If you were to tell someone about your experience in this role, what would you emphasize?
 - Looking across your skills, experiences, and reflections, what feels like an important next step after this WIL placement?
- Encourage the mentee to update their resume and practice telling the story of their experience; guide them towards resources in your organization and their academic institution.



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QUESTIONS?

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