

Mentor Approval Position Statement

This position statement sets out the criteria the Pharmacy Council of NSW applies when considering approval of a mentor and the Council's expectations of an approved mentor. It should be read in conjunction with the Council's Compliance Policy - Mentor, which sets out the obligations of a practitioner subject to mentor conditions.

BACKGROUND

The Pharmacy Council of New South Wales approves mentors to assist pharmacists with practice issues in a wide range of situations. The requirement that a pharmacist be subject to mentoring may arise from an Order of an adjudication body such as the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (NCAT) or a condition imposed on registration following an Impaired Registrants Panel Inquiry, a Council Inquiry or a Performance Review Panel Inquiry.

PURPOSE

Mentor conditions are intended to facilitate the development of a relationship between the practitioner and a respected experienced practitioner in the same/similar area of practice, who acts as a support person for the practitioner. A mentor may provide assistance with professional and personal development, and help a practitioner to cope in the professional environment in which he/she may have had some difficulties, or from which he/she may have been absent for some time.

The Council expects a practitioner subject to mentor conditions to ensure that his/her practice (or specified aspects of their practice) is guided by a mentor approved by the Council.

ROLE OF A MENTOR

By consenting to act as a Council-approved mentor, a mentor agrees to act as a support person for the practitioner, assisting with their professional and personal development. Mentors are expected to have regular communications with the practitioner, such as telephone conversations and/or face-to-face meetings and to be generally available to discuss issues relating to clinical practice or any other matters that may arise.

The role of the mentor is to be distinguished from that of a supervisor (refer to the Council's Supervisor Approval Position Statement).

This document aims to assist proposed mentors in their consideration of acceptance of the mentor role, to guide Council nominated mentors in addressing the responsibilities attached to the mentoring role, and to inform pharmacists subject to mentoring of the Council's expectations. While the Council will provide mentors with a 'brief' at the outset, there may be aspects of the mentoring role that require additional information or advice regarding a specific situation that has arisen. Mentors are therefore encouraged to contact the Council Secretariat if clarification or further directions are needed.

1. SELECTION OF MENTORS

- a) Mentors are approved by either:
 - following approval by the Council of a person nominated by the pharmacist requiring the mentoring support, or
 - upon the nomination of a suitable person by the Council
- b) Mentors should be pharmacists with significant practice experience and the capacity to act as a role model and a source of knowledge. It is not expected that the mentor will necessarily provide solutions to problems but, rather, assist the pharmacist to develop the requisite skills and to find the answers themselves with appropriate guidance.
- c) It is desirable but not essential that mentors hold current registration as a pharmacist. The mentor must however possess up to date knowledge of standards, practices and legislative requirements governing the practice of pharmacy.
- d) Where the pharmacist nominates a mentor for Council approval, this person should be a pharmacist colleague 'at arm's length' from and not professionally involved with the pharmacist to be mentored.
- e) The proposed mentor must not be a relative of the pharmacist being mentored.

- f) Mentors are not to be the subject of current conduct, health or performance investigation proceedings; must not have conditions on their registration nor have been the subject of an adverse finding in previous disciplinary proceedings, regardless of whether his/her registration remains subject to conditions.
- g) In nominating a mentor, Council will give consideration to factors such as the age and backgrounds of the parties, as well as the environments in which they operate, to increase the likelihood that the parties will form a productive professional relationship.
- h) The Council may withdraw a mentor's approval where a mentor ceases to meet the criteria set out above.

2. BASIC PRINCIPLES

- b) Mentors will be advised of the expected time commitment required of them at the outset.
- c) The Council will provide the mentor with background information in relation to the reasons for the appointment of a mentor and any other relevant material. This may require the concurrence of the pharmacist for the release of confidential information.
- d) The Council will provide the mentor with advice as to the deficits to be addressed and the outcome/s it wishes to achieve via the mentoring process. It is expected that the outcomes may be attained over a period of time and achieved in stages.
- e) Mentors should endeavour to explore with the pharmacist the nature of the issues/offence that brought about the mentoring.
- f) The Council will provide the mentor with feedback on the reports provided by the mentor as well as its view on the pharmacist's progress and any areas requiring additional attention or focus on specific aspects of professional practice.
- g) Mentors must be prepared to notify the Council if they have any immediate concerns in relation to the mentored pharmacist's conduct, performance or health, compliance with the mentoring requirement or if the mentoring relationship ceases.

3. PRACTICAL ARRANGEMENTS

- h) The mentor will contact the pharmacist to be mentored to arrange a mutually suitable place and time for the initial mentoring session.
- i) The pharmacist to be mentored is to meet the cost of mentoring
- j) The mentor determines the venue for mentoring sessions. If the mentored pharmacist's capacity in the professional setting is the central issue for the mentor's consideration, it may be appropriate that mentoring sessions are held in the pharmacist's workplace. Where the mentoring sessions are to include open discussions about sensitive matters, such as the circumstances that led to the requirement for mentoring, it may be more appropriate that meetings take place in a 'neutral' setting.
- k) Mentors should endeavour to ensure that adequate time is set aside for a useful discussion of issues. Meetings in the workplace may result in interruptions that will reduce the amount of time available and diminish the benefit of the meeting.

It is the responsibility of the mentored pharmacist to cooperate fully with their mentor to enable effective mentoring to take place.

4. COSTS

- l) The pharmacist to be mentored is to meet the cost of mentoring and make arrangements about payment directly with the mentor.
- m) Mentoring costs should take into consideration time allocated for the mentoring session, report writing and any travel expenses incurred.
- n) The Pharmacy Council is not responsible for issues concerning payments. However, mentoring reports withheld due to unpaid mentoring fees will be dealt with as a breach of condition by the pharmacist being mentored.

5. REPORTING TO THE COUNCIL

- o) The pharmacist being mentored is responsible for ensuring reports on the progress or current assessment of the pharmacist are provided to the Council at a frequency either specified in relevant conditions of registration, or as determined by the Council.
- p) The Council will identify the areas where it seeks the mentor's assessment and the specific issues to be developed or explored in future mentor sessions. Mentor reports should report on progress for each of the areas identified as requiring development or improvement.
- q) Whilst it is desirable that the mentor develops a supportive professional relationship with the pharmacist, the mentor must ensure that mentoring reports deliver a frank and accurate account of the pharmacist's current status.

6. STANDARD INCLUSIONS FOR REPORTS

- r) The mentor's initial report should include details of the practical arrangements that have been put into place for the mentoring program.
- s) The initial report should also confirm the issues to be addressed as specified by the Council and an indication of the mentor's assessment of the current status.
- t) The initial report should include background information about the pharmacist's workplace. Details should include but be not limited to; days and hours worked per week, roles and responsibilities of pharmacy staff, staffing levels and opening hours. Other details relevant to the issues to be addressed should also be included, where relevant.
- u) The Council requires reports to routinely include updates on the current working arrangements of the pharmacist; any changes (positive or negative) that have occurred since the commencement of mentoring and the mentor's views on the implications of the changes, where appropriate.
- v) Where the central issue for the pharmacist has been the operation of the pharmacy or management of the responsibilities of a pharmacist, the mentor should also include advice regarding the current state of play and an opinion on the progress (or lack of progress) made to date.
- w) Reports should also include a regular update on the pharmacist's professional

development activities, both recommended by the Council and the mentor, as well as any activities initiated by the pharmacist, plus a summary of the discussions that have taken place regarding the benefits and practical application of the information obtained from the CPD. In many cases, the Council recommends that pharmacists complete approved education activities and anticipates that the acquisition of knowledge will lead to improvements in understanding and management of issues for the pharmacist concerned. It is therefore important that mentors review and report on the effect of these CPD activities on the pharmacist's practices and views.

- x) The mentor is encouraged to include advice regarding the nature of the subject matter or issues, where discussions have occurred with the pharmacist during the reporting period. The Council is also looking for the mentor's advice regarding the suggestions made to the pharmacist for action and the steps taken by the pharmacist to comply (or not, if this is the case).
- y) The Council is keen to have the mentor's assessment of the pharmacist's professional judgement where 'sub-standard' behaviour has been identified in the past.
- z) Where a mentor identifies an area requiring further development or attention this information should be reported to the Council for its consideration.
- aa) Where relevant, reports should provide an indication of the pharmacist's insight into the issues giving rise to the appointment of a mentor and the progress made as the level of understanding develops. The Council would be interested to have advice regarding the discussions/actions that demonstrated to the mentor that the pharmacist has developed a genuine appreciation and understanding of issues that brought about the need for a mentor.
- bb) Mentors should, where possible, include examples of the pharmacist's professional judgement gleaned from the discussions.

7. OTHER POSSIBLE ISSUES FOR INCLUSION

- cc) Future plans and aspirations – an indication of the pharmacist's short and long-term professional goals may also be useful relevant information for the Council's consideration.
- dd) Changed processes and examples - changes to processes and examples of the improved results should also be included in reports, when appropriate.
- ee) Specific arrangements to deal with ongoing pressures/problems.
- ff) Physical and mental wellbeing of the pharmacist.
- gg) The mentor's suggestions regarding other appropriate learning for the pharmacist, including sources of additional reading, websites, etc.
- hh) In some cases referral to other sources of expertise or advice may be appropriate to assist the pharmacist to expand his/her understanding or knowledge. The mentor's reports should include advice regarding suggestions about seeking input from other experts.
- ii) Mentors may find it useful to seek feedback on the mentoring program from the pharmacist