

Guidelines for the Law Society Mentorship Scheme (the “Programme”)

1. Roles and Responsibilities of a Mentor

Mentors are expected to support the mentee’s development of professional and interpersonal competencies through strategic questioning, goal setting and planning.¹ In fulfilling their role as a mentor, a mentor is expected to:

- Create a supportive and trusting environment (see **Section 3** on Courtesy and Respect);
- Ensure the mentee coordinates activities and learning plans with them and comes prepared for each session with well-articulated and directed questions;
- Agree to and schedule uninterrupted time with the mentee;
- Stay accessible, committed, and engaged during mentorship sessions;
- Engage in active listening and questioning by being non-judgmental, giving undivided attention to the mentee, and using silence effectively;
- Give feedback to the mentee on their professional goals, situations, plans and ideas;
- Encourage the mentee by giving genuine positive reinforcement;
- Serve as a positive influence;
- Provide frank and constructive feedback if necessary;
- Openly and honestly share “lessons learned” from their own experience in practice;
- Regulate discussions in an appropriate manner (see **Annex A for Tips on Mentorship**); and
- Respect a mentee’s time and resources.

2. Talking Points

The following topics may be considered for the purposes of discussion.²

For Junior Lawyers

- **Guidance on Ethical Conundrums:** seek guidance from a senior lawyer on dealing with ethical dilemmas at the workplace and how to navigate such challenges.
- **Insights on Mental Wellness:** seek advice on dealing with work-related challenges and strategies to improve time management and interpersonal skills.
- **Guidance on Practice Areas:** gain knowledge on specific practice areas and common challenges faced in the practice area.
- **Guidance on Career Progression:** seek guidance on career development strategies and navigating career transitions.

For Senior Lawyers

- **Viewpoints on Practice:** obtain views and perspectives on what it is like to be a Junior Lawyer
- **Insights on Mental Wellness:** gain insights on mental wellness within the legal industry and what drives and/or motivates a Junior Lawyer.

¹ Refer to **Annex A** for Tips on Mentorship.

² Refer to **Annex B** for Effective Questioning Tips.

- **Updates on Technological Trends:** gain information and updates on the latest technological trends, the use of social media, and technology that may be utilised for networking.

3. Courtesy and Respect

As fellow members of a noble and honourable profession, mentors and mentees are expected to treat each other with respect and common courtesy. This shall entail each mentor and mentee:

- (a) being committed to participating in the Programme and showing sensitivity and respect for the other party's schedule. This means being punctual for all mentorship sessions and providing early notice if rescheduling is required.
- (b) observing basic standards of etiquette relating to communication by being polite in one's tone and manner of communication. Responses to any communication should be sent promptly as far as possible. Save for communications relating to **Matters Concerning the Mentor/Mentee Relationship (see Section 7 below)**, both mentors and mentees are to observe appropriate and reasonable times in contacting each other via telephone call or any messaging platform if such forms of communication have been agreed to.
- (c) observing proper social etiquette. Parties are to dress professionally and appropriately for all mentorship sessions.
- (d) never being rude, discourteous and/or disrespectful to the other party.

4. Confidentiality

- (a) Save for the reporting of illegal conduct and/or **Matters Concerning the Mentor/Mentee Relationship (see Section 7 below)** to the Law Society, all communications and correspondence between the mentor and the mentee shall remain confidential and are not to be disclosed to any third party.
- (b) Mentors and mentees are required to disclose and must not have any actual or apparent conflicts of interest. Appropriate disclosures and consent are to be obtained in the event of an actual or apparent conflict of interest.

5. The Mentoring Relationship

Under this Programme, mentors and mentees will participate in a mentoring relationship that goes both ways. Through **traditional mentorship**, mentors are expected to render guidance, advice, views and perspectives to their mentees. Through **reverse mentorship**, the mentee will take on the role of a mentor and be able to share their own expertise and perspectives with the mentor in areas such as the concerns, mind-set and mentality of young lawyers, as well as the usage of social media and technology for networking.

Both mentors and mentees can help each other to fill in knowledge gaps and offer common sense and strategic insights based on their own respective experiences.

- (a) Mentees receiving guidance, advice, views and/or perspectives are expected to take such guidance seriously and treat it with respect.

- (b) Mentors and Mentees should strive to provide each other with constructive feedback and build a relationship of mutual trust.
- (c) To facilitate each mentorship session, both mentors and mentees may consider the following tips on body language:

DO USE	DO NOT USE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good Eye contact – no scary stares • Interested/neutral facial expression • Nodding of head to show understanding or agreement • Calm tone of voice • Even voice volume • Sitting slightly forward • Relaxed arm & hand placement • Use “I” statements. Give examples from your experience • Ensure feedback is specific. • Give the other person an opportunity to ask questions or share their viewpoint. • Listen – carefully not only to the words but to the feelings and body language of the speaker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced eye contact, scowling, or narrowing of eyes • Tense or aggressive posture • Rocking, pen bouncing, hand wringing, and/or signs of nervousness/defensiveness • Hands on hips or tightly clenched • Arms tightly crossed across chest • A blank expression • Statements that describe someone instead of their actions • Language that may be perceived as defensive or argumentative.

- (d) To establish a healthy mentoring relationship with appropriate boundaries, mentors and mentees are encouraged to observe the following:

DO	DO NOT
Be a positive influence and encourage each other by giving genuine and positive reinforcement.	Be disparaging or unkind to each other.
Stay accessible, committed and engaged for the Programme.	Be uncontactable and/or unresponsive to questions.
Take responsibility and follow through on professional commitments made in relation to the Programme.	Attempt to control the other party's actions and/or persuade the other party to take a certain course of action.
Provide a safe learning space by ensuring that all mentorship sessions take place at a venue that is safe and comfortable for all parties.	Demand to meet at a venue that causes discomfort to either party and/or demand to continue with a conversation that the other party does not wish to engage in.
Keep discussions on track and in line with the agreed learning and/or discussion plan.	Veer off the agreed learning and/or discussion plan for a prolonged period of time.
Respect each other's commitments and set clear communication methods between meetings that are mutually acceptable (e.g. WhatsApp or email).	Contact each other outside reasonable hours.

DO	DO NOT
Provide adequate notice in the event of a cancellation and/or delay. Postponed meetings are to be rescheduled as soon as possible.	Cancel and/or postpone meetings without good reason.
Choose a neutral and professional space with minimum distractions at a time that is convenient for both parties.	Conduct mentorship sessions at each other's personal residences and/or at late hours.
Be receptive to suggestions offered and respectfully express needs, concerns, and questions to one another	Interrupt each other.
Create a supportive and trusting environment and show appreciation for each other's participation in the Programme.	Use offensive language and/or make remarks of a personal nature.
Keep a written record of discussions and ensure that such records are stored and securely disposed of at the end of the mentoring relationship.	Store your written records in an insecure location that may be accessed by third parties.
Be punctual and mindful of the time allocated for each meeting.	Exceed the allocated meeting time.

6. General Feedback

Mentees or mentors may generally approach the Co-Heads of the Law Society's Membership and External Relations Department (the "**MER Co-Heads**") or any member of the Working Group if they wish to give general feedback on the Programme or report illegal conduct and/or Matters Concerning the Mentor/Mentee Relationship to the Law Society. Please refer to the following contact email addresses:

MER Co-Heads	Email
Goh Wan Cheng	wancheng@lawsoc.org.sg
Lee Wei Yan	weiyen@lawsoc.org.sg

Working Group Members	Email
Benjamin Foo Co-Chair of the Working Group	benjamin.foo@aoshearman.com
Christine Low Co-Chair of the Working Group	christinelow@peterlowllc.com
Darryl Chew	darrylchew@chiawongchambers.com
Jonathan Muk	jonathanmuk@lvmlawchambers.com
Marc Teh	mteh@asiapractice.com.sg

Working Group Members	Email
Lim Shu Fen	shufen@jsslw.com.sg
Vivienne Lim	vivienne.lim@genesislawcorp.com

7. Matters Concerning the Mentor/Mentee Relationship

Matters concerning the Mentor/Mentee relationship are matters which affect a healthy mentoring relationship (see Section 5), information concerning the safety or well-being of the mentee and/or warning signs of risky behaviour.

Note for Mentors

Mentors should refer to Annex A for information on Tips on Mentorship.

Note for Mentees

As a mentee, you should receive guidance from your mentor on how to navigate the complex world of legal practice. Through this Programme, you should have a safe and supportive learning space to soundboard any questions or concerns you may have on professional practice and benefit from your mentor's wealth of experience and knowledge by gaining invaluable perspectives and insights which have been shaped by your mentor's time in practice.

8. Request for Change or Termination

- (a) We understand that there may not be a perfect fit between mentor and mentee and therefore encourage an authentic and transparent sharing of expectations coming into the mentoring relationship. This sharing of expectations should be done in the first session to allow both parties to manage expectations moving forward. Nevertheless, if you strongly feel that a change is required for whatever reason, **please immediately refrain from meeting any further** and contact the MER Co-Heads and/or any member of the Working Group for assistance and further discussion.
- (b) All reasons provided to the MER Co-Heads and/or any member of the Working Group by the mentor/mentee (as the case may be) for any request for change shall be kept confidential and shall not be disclosed to the other party.
- (c) We hope that both mentors and mentees understand the extent of commitment required before signing up for the Programme. This is because it is crucial for the quality and continuity of the mentoring relationship for both mentors and mentees to complete the Programme in full. Nevertheless, we understand that extenuating circumstances may affect your ability to fulfil your commitment to the Programme. If you ever find yourself in such circumstances, please contact the MER Co-Heads and/or any member of the Working Group immediately for assistance.

ANNEX A

Tips on Mentorship

1. General Remarks

Mentors should at all times be mindful of their ethical obligations as set out within the Legal Profession (Professional Conduct) Rules 2015 (“PCR”) and remind mentees that the PCR applies to them as well. These would include ethical obligations pertaining to confidentiality and addressing a conflict of interest. To mitigate the risk of a breach, mentors are to take into account the following:

(a) Duty to maintain client confidentiality

Mentors are to remind mentees of Rule 6 of the PCR which addresses confidentiality, and that they are **not to disclose** any information which is confidential to their client and/or is acquired by them in the course of their engagement by the client. Mentors should not assist and/or intervene with a mentee’s client.

(b) Asking for advice or opinions on specific case matters

Mentors are not expected to answer specific questions of law or assist with legal research on legal matters for the mentee. In the event that a mentee has a substantive question on their ethical obligations as set out within the PCR (e.g. conflict of interest), the mentor should exercise prudence and advise the mentee to contact the Advisory Committee Secretariat which supports the Advisory Committee of the Professional Conduct Council at ethics_enquiry@lawsoc.org.sg.

(c) Dealing with financial matters

Mentors are not to engage in the lending of money or extend any form of financial assistance to the mentee. Any requests for financial assistance are to be reported to the HOD Co-Heads and will result in the mentee being removed from the Programme with immediate effect.

(d) No business development opportunities

Whilst mentors and mentees may each have other professional interests to further or develop, any professional interests that are not consistent with the nature and purpose of the Programme are inappropriate:

- i. Mentors are to remind mentees not to make any unsolicited approaches, including business development activity.
- ii. **Any mentee found and/or reported by the mentor to be making unsolicited approaches in the course of this Programme shall be immediately removed from the Programme.**

(e) Ways to Assist

Apart from the Talking Points set out in Section 2, mentors may provide guidance on workplace challenges (e.g. workplace dilemmas, difficult clients, and professional disappointments) based on their own personal and past experiences.

In the event the mentor assesses the query from the mentee to be beyond their scope of professional experience, the mentor should do the following:

Situation beyond mentor's scope of professional experience	Action to be taken by mentor
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the mentor's own observation or expressly disclosed by the mentee during the discussion. • Where the mentor has information on a real and immediate threat to the safety or well-being of the mentee (e.g. mentee is in physical danger at the workplace). • Where the mentee has displayed warning signs of risky behaviour (e.g. self-harm or suicidal tendencies). 	<p>The mentor should seek assistance from any member of the Working Group.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In relation to the PCR 	<p>The mentor should exercise prudence and advise the mentee to contact the Advisory Committee Secretariat which supports the Advisory Committee of the Professional Conduct Council at ethics_enquiry@lawsoc.org.sg.</p>

ANNEX B

Effective Questioning Tips

1. Exploratory questions – to assess the real issues and gain greater understanding:

- What are the most interesting aspects of your job?
- Why did you pick this to concentrate on?
- What do you want to gain?
- What do you want to be known for?
- What do you understand the issue to be?
- What tells you that your assessment is correct? What are other people's perceptions of this issue?
- What assumptions are you making here?
- What other ideas do you have?
- How long has this been an issue?
- What did you learn from past experiences that you didn't expect to learn?
- What are the reasons behind an issue?
- Have you tried to resolve this issue before? Why or why not? If yes, what was the result?
- What choices do you have?
- What progress have you made?
- What other ideas do you have?
- How are you using the things/ideas we've spoken about?
- What results are you looking for?

2. Empowering questions – to assist the Mentee to think for themselves:

- What are the skills you want to develop?
- What strategies come to mind when looking at a situation?
- What do you see as possible solutions here?
- What outcomes are you after here? Are these outcomes reasonable given the circumstances?
- What resources are available to help you move forward?
- What key players do you need help from?
- What forces may help and/or hinder you?
- What other information do you need to arrive at a solution?
- What are the pros and cons of each solution?
- What is the first step you need to take to achieve your preferred outcome?
- What alternative strategies should you develop?
- How will you know you have mastered or successfully enhanced a competency?
- How will you apply your new skill?