

## NOHA Graduates Platform

### Mentoring guidelines

The objective of the Mentoring Programme is to help advance the students' academic and professional goals in directions most desired by the individual and to serve as a stepping-stone for their careers. In particular, it is meant to provide students and recent graduates with guidance and advice, as well as adequate and tailored information on the types of career paths in the humanitarian field. This is an informal mentoring programme conducted outside of the scope of the NOHA Joint Master's Degree Programme in International Humanitarian Action.

**Mentors** are graduates of the NOHA Master's Programme. Typically, they have at least five years of professional experience, including leadership responsibilities. They represent a broad range of career paths and experiences in the humanitarian sector, including general management and expert roles, as well as academic backgrounds in fields related to humanitarian action. **Mentees** are students or graduates of the NOHA Master's seeking support and career advice from their older colleagues.

#### What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a longer-term relationship in which the mentor shares their relevant knowledge and experience with the mentee in order to help them **grow and develop professionally and as a person**. In such a relationship, the mentor acts as a critical friend and trusted advisor, e.g. by discussing possible career paths or helping the mentee build their confidence by learning about their potential and expertise. Mentoring also provides a space for the mentee to reflect on their learning process, career objectives and personal development, and on what is and is not possible. It gives an opportunity for analysis, reflection, testing of assumptions and actions that ultimately enable the individual to achieve their goals.

#### How does it work on the NOHA Graduates Platform?

Each registered user of the NOHA Graduates Platform (both students and graduates) can apply for the Mentoring Programme. In order to do so:

- (1) Log in to your account.
- (2) Access '[Advanced search](#)' of the Graduates Database and select 'Yes' under the 'Mentor' option.
- (3) Search through the list of available mentors. You can see their availability at the top of their profile (number of current mentees/maximum number of mentees). You can also filter the list by adding extra search criteria (e.g. nationality, thematic specialization).
- (4) Once you find a Mentor you are interested in working with, you can apply for mentoring by clicking the button "Apply to become a Mentee", drafting a message to a fellow NOHA Graduate and sending your application.
- (5) The mentor will then receive a message to their e-mail address informing them that you have applied. They will have to log in to their account to either approve or decline your application. You will be notified of their decision once they do so.
- (6) If you are accepted as a Mentee, the initiative is now in your hands. Send a message to your Mentor's email address to kick-off the relationship. The system will automatically maintain your mentee status for a year (12 months). After it expires and if you wish to continue relationship with your Mentor, you will have to re-apply.

## What should I do as a Mentee?

Participating in the Mentoring Programme as a student and/or fresh graduate is a unique chance to benefit from the experience of the NOHA Graduates working in the humanitarian or related sectors. By doing so, you will be able to discuss your career choices, interests and dilemmas with a more experienced person and obtain valuable advice. You will be exposed to networking opportunities and receive advice on how to strengthen your own professional networks.

Being a Mentee is both an opportunity and a responsibility. The Mentoring Programme offered by the NOHA Graduates Platform only facilitates the contact – it is you who has to take the initiative of approaching the Mentor, defining your objectives for each mentoring session and maintaining the relationship. Below you will find a few tips which should facilitate your role as a Mentee.

**Be respectful, engaged and driven** to get the most of the programme; recognise that the mentoring process is an investment in your development. Your Mentor might be a busy person who decided to support you on top of their usual professional activities. Keep this in mind when approaching them: be professional and humble but also short and to the point in your communication. Show flexibility in adapting to your Mentor's agenda while planning your relationship.

**Take initiative, be prepared, think through your purpose.** An effective partnership between you and your Mentor requires clarity of what you would like to take out of it and what kind of information you are looking for from your Mentor. At the onset of the mentoring journey, agree with your Mentor on: (a) a desired form of contact, (b) frequency and length of the sessions, (c) desired outcomes of the entire process and specific sessions, and (d) commitment to work between sessions. Don't be vague, ask concrete and well-thought-out questions every time you approach your Mentor. The clearer you are, the greater the likelihood that your Mentor will be able to give you advice according to your specific needs.

**Don't be afraid to ask for advice or networking opportunities.** But don't expect your Mentor to find you a job or an internship. It is not their role. If you receive a recommendation to contact someone, follow up on the advice in a timely manner using the name of your Mentor (with their permission).

**Be open to challenge yourself, your thoughts, ideas and working practices.** Listen, consider and respond to feedback received. Follow up on all tasks and deadlines agreed upon during mentoring sessions, prove to both yourself and your Mentor that your interaction is worthwhile.

Even if you finished your mentoring relationship as part of the NOHA Graduates Platform, **keep in touch with your Mentor.** Drop them a message as you progress in your career while reflecting on the advice they gave you and the added value they brought to your professional life.

## What should I do as a Mentor?

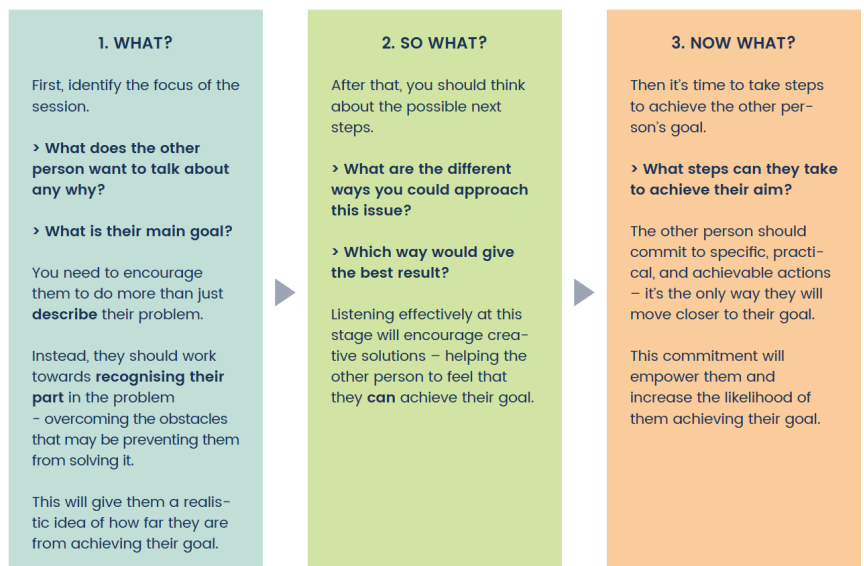
The Mentoring Programme can be a **great way to learn and develop your own skills set**, important for your professional career: coaching and leadership, active listening, creative problem solving and giving feedback. By participating in the programme, you will have access to a pool of talented and ambitious young students and graduates, and a thriving learning community; you will be up-to-date with current trends and motivations to enter the humanitarian sector which can strengthen your own understanding of the field.

As part of the Mentoring programme, mentors are asked to **guide** mentees in their quest for knowledge about the humanitarian field, **advise** them on professional and personal development and **facilitate** their networking opportunities. There is no pre-defined scope of the programme, however. It will be up to you and your Mentee to agree on the frequency and length of the sessions based on their needs and your availability.

**The role of the mentor** could include the following:

- Identifying what the Mentee wants to focus on, why it is important to them and setting expectations of the entire process accordingly;
- Observing, listening and asking questions to understand the individual's situation as well as using skilled questioning to provoke thinking;
- Helping the Mentee to move between big picture goals and the detailed requirements of a particular challenge or situation;
- Using feedback for understanding, to build the case for change, to motivate the individual and to improve mutual interactions;
- Supporting the Mentee to establish appropriate milestones to see progress made towards overall goals;
- Keeping the Mentee accountable for what they say they are going to do, for the results of an intended action, or for a specific plan with related time frames

Starting out as a Mentor, it helps to have a structured approach in order to make it as effective as possible and measure progress. **The What? So what? Now what? Model** is a helpful tool to structure mentoring sessions. It provides the headline questions you need to consider together with your Mentee at each stage: what is the situation to be addressed, what are the different options to address identified goals and what are the most suitable steps to realise the goal?



Source: *Humanitarian Leadership Academy, Coaching & Mentoring Toolkit, Introduction to Coaching and Mentoring*, available online: <https://kayaconnect.org/course/info.php?id=661>

If you would like to deepen your knowledge on mentoring, you might be interested in taking a free self-paced online course [Introduction to Coaching and Mentoring](#).