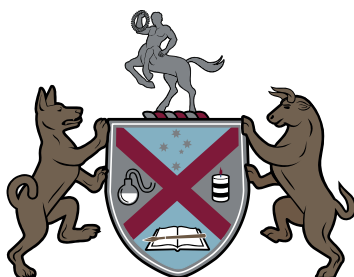


MENTOR GUIDELINES



Australian and New Zealand
College of Veterinary Scientists

Advice to Candidates regarding Mentoring

The Board of Examiners recommends all Membership candidates develop a professional support network during their time preparing for the Membership examination in their chosen discipline. In particular, it is recommended that a specific relationship be established with an experienced person who will act as a mentor to the candidate.

What can a mentor do to help you?

Mentors can provide encouragement and support for the candidate as well as more specific advice on preparation for examination and study progress. They act as a sounding board for your queries, concerns and progress.

- Mentors have been through the College (or similar) examination processes themselves and will have experience to bring to bear. They understand what is required and are in a position to advise and encourage you.
- A mentor can assist you to appreciate the scope and standard of the examination; and to develop an effective study/learning plan.
- A mentor might be part of a mentor group with other candidates and mentors in your (or a related) discipline.
- Mentors are often prepared to “mark” practice written exam questions and to run you through some mock oral exam questions and give you feedback.

The mentor is not responsible for you passing or failing the examinations! Nor are they there to check up on your progress and hound you to do more. They are not there to teach you about the discipline (although they can advise, recommend resources and are often happy to explain particular topics). They are there to support your independent learning.



How to obtain a mentor

It is the candidate's responsibility to initiate contact with a mentor. Membership examination candidates will be directed by the College Office to a database of College members willing to act as mentors; each candidate is expected to approach a proposed mentor individually.

If a candidate has difficulty securing a suitable person to act as a mentor, the College office may help by contacting the relevant Chapter Subject Committee for assistance.

Candidates may alternatively nominate a particular mentor not on the database that they have identified from discussions with colleagues. In this case, chosen mentors should be highly trained in the field in which the candidate is sitting and preferably hold Membership or Fellowship qualifications themselves (or a similar level of qualification from overseas).

You should provide the following information to a prospective mentor:

- Your name, address and contact details (phone, email)
- A copy of your C.V. to help the mentor appreciate the level of experience and preparation you have already achieved.

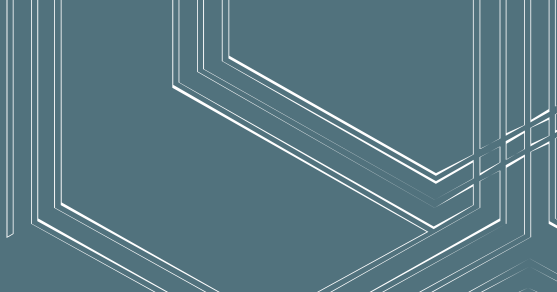
Establishing the mentor relationship

If a prospective mentor agrees in principle to mentor you for Membership examinations, it will be important to arrange an introductory meeting as soon as practical to . The purpose of this initial meeting is to introduce each other and establish the expectations for the relationship. The amount of time and the scope of what you are each able to do, as well as the possibility of group meetings, should be established early on. You should be able to demonstrate that you are familiar with the Membership Handbook and Subject Guidelines and have perused some previous examinations. This will help you to ask pertinent questions and be able to discuss resources that the mentor might recommend.

Each mentor/mentee arrangement will vary and arrangements need to be tailored to needs and availability of both parties. Nevertheless, without a degree of commitment and prioritisation, the mentoring relationship will not work. The nature of the interaction should be discussed and agreed to at the beginning of the mentorship. How often will you meet (initially, on an ongoing basis and toward the end)? How will you meet (in person, online, in a group)? What will be the general goals and expectations of each session? What do you hope that the mentor will do, and is this possible/ realistic? What does the mentor expect you to do in preparation for a meeting? How will you tackle any communication or time issues that arise?

Aim to meet regularly with your mentor, but do not overwhelm them. Remember that they are volunteering their time and expertise. Suggested activities include:

- Preparing a study schedule ahead of the first meeting, with reasonable deadlines and a way you will monitor your progress. This can be shared and discussed
- Attempting one or two paper one and paper two questions early on and emailing to your mentor to receive early feedback. This is important to ensure you are



pitching your study at the right depth and are answering typical questions with appropriate detail, word count and style.

- Establishing a regular check-in for progress reports, additional sample questions, addressing topics of concern and final exam preparation, including, if possible, a practice oral exam.

If at any stage, a change in mentor is desired by the candidate, or a mentor is unable to continue to fulfill the duties described above; it is the candidate's responsibility to communicate the concern with the mentor and subsequently approach a replacement mentor from the list of available mentors on the College database. If necessary, the College office may help by contacting the relevant Chapter.

Prospective Mentors

Why every member of the College should consider being a Membership mentor:

As a Member of the College, you have the privilege and opportunity to be a mentor to a Membership candidate. As a mentor you will have the important role of providing support and guidance as a candidate prepares for examinations and develops their independent learning activities. Many current members of the College will have already benefitted from an effective mentoring system, so this is your chance to “pay it forward.”


Benefits of becoming a mentor include:

- The opportunity to play an important role in a colleague's professional life. There is a great deal of satisfaction in helping a colleague achieve what you have achieved.
- Supporting your College Chapter: this is a relatively simple way to contribute to your organisation which relies on the support of volunteers and community.
- Enhancing and refreshing your own knowledge and skills. Discussing your chosen subject with a colleague is beneficial to both of you. It helps you to stay at the top of your game.
- Forming new connections and networks with colleagues through individual and group mentoring that will stay with you for years.

What is required of a mentor?

As a general guide, a mentor is required to:

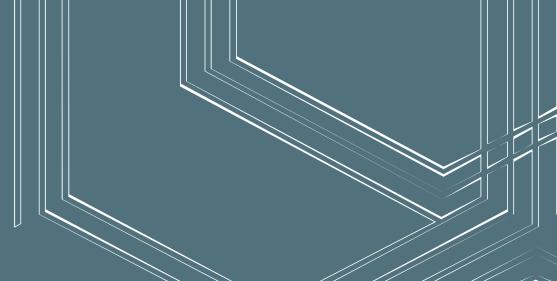
- Possess general depth and breadth of knowledge required to pass the examination. What this effectively means is that you have continued to practice in your field of interest at a standard that reflects your membership qualification, using what you learnt by preparing for and sitting the membership exam yourself. You don't need to have all the answers, and are not expected to “teach” the subject, but to be very aware of what is required in terms of preparation for the examination in this subject.

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- Discuss the style of examination. The examination format may have changed since you sat, however information on the current format is available in the Membership Handbook and Subject Guidelines. The candidate will also be able to access an online practice session. The actual requirements in terms of knowledge and ability to communicate that knowledge remain pretty constant.
 - Provide guidance on timeline for the candidate's preparation for the examination. You will have an opinion based on your own and perhaps some colleagues' experiences and will need to take into account the candidate's background and current level of preparedness.
 - Provide guidance on a study strategy or an approach to learning in the key areas identified in the Subject Guidelines' Learning Outcomes. Once again, you may draw on your own or others' experiences, or simply help the candidate to work through their own study schedule and help them manage their expectations.
 - Advise the candidate to allocate time for reading recommended references and making of synopses for revision.
 - Discuss the need to do practice examinations. You might find it helpful to look over a couple of early candidate attempts at exam questions to provide timely advice on whether they seem to be providing enough detail, utilising good exam technique etc., as well as providing feedback on practice exam attempts later in the preparation process.
 - Provide feedback on the candidate's progress in preparation for the examination. This might include reviewing their study plan progress, practice
 - exam answers and evaluating their awareness of the examination requirements.
 - Provide feedback on the level of knowledge a candidate demonstrates in written and/or oral practice examinations.

Mentors can provide encouragement and support for the candidate as well as more specific advice on preparation for examination and study progress. The mentor is not responsible for motivating the candidate to study or for their examination performance but will act as a recognised and available primary source of information and advice. The mentor is not required to teach the candidate about the discipline. The purpose of a mentoring system is to provide a candidate with an experienced sounding board to help them approach their independent learning activities. The mentor relationship aims to assist the candidate to appreciate the scope and standard of the examination; and to develop an effective study/learning plan.

Mentor groups and study groups

Rather than a candidate working in relative isolation, with occasional contact with a mentor, there are significant advantages to mentor groups. These may be conducted in person or



online. The difference between a mentor group and a study group is that a study group or “study buddies” is an arrangement between candidates, whereas mentor groups involve one or more mentors of those candidates. They have the advantage of sharing perspectives on progress, challenges, how study is going, comparing study techniques and practice exam answers, and “testing” each other. As members of the group get to know each other, they can provide encouragement as well as challenge. One or more mentors can offer their different perspectives based on their own experiences. New mentors can also learn from experienced mentors, especially those who have also been involved in examining. Candidates can bring prepared answers to practice questions to the session to be workshopped. It is also a helpful forum for practice oral exams.

Practical requirements

It is the candidate’s responsibility to initiate contact with a mentor. Membership examination candidates will be directed by the College Office to a database of College members willing to act as mentors. The database will be located on a secure site within the college website. Each candidate is expected to approach a proposed mentor individually through the database. Candidates may alternatively nominate a particular mentor not on the database that they have identified from discussions with colleagues.

The amount of time and the scope of what you are able to do, as well as the possibility of group meetings, should be established early on. You should establish the candidate’s relevant background (time in practice, type of practice and experience, recent CPD, expectations etc) to ascertain the level of experience and preparation the candidate has already achieved. A copy of their CV may be helpful. Ascertain what they already know of the examination and preparation experience, and whether they have read the Membership Handbook and Subject Guidelines and are aware of the past examination papers on the College website.

Establish expectations. Ensure that the candidate understands what you are prepared and able to do with your own time commitments, what they hope to get out of the relationship, and what the mentor’s role is (and is not). Ultimately, responsibility for exam preparation rests with the candidate; the mentor can only advise.

Each mentor/mentee arrangement will vary and arrangements need to be tailored to needs and availability of both parties. Nevertheless, without a degree of commitment and prioritisation, the mentoring relationship will not work. The nature of the interaction should

be discussed and agreed to at the beginning of the mentorship. How often will you meet (initially, on an ongoing basis and toward the end)? How will you meet (in person, online, in a group)? What will be the general goals and expectations of each session? What does the candidate hope you will do, and is this possible/ realistic? What do you expect the candidate to do in preparation for a meeting? How will you tackle any communication or time issues that arise?