

MENTORING CODE OF CONDUCT



STUDENT COUNSELLING PROGRAM



**NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY,
ROURKELA**

Aim

The code of conduct is designed to establish a set of guidelines to create a benchmark for ethics and good practice and ensure that mentors conduct their practice in a professional yet, friendly and ethical manner. The code is also meant to inform mentees, and to promote public confidence in the Student Counselling Program as a process for personal and professional development.

Mentorship

It is a student initiative, run by NIT, Rourkela, to make sure that the transition of freshmen into NIT life is smooth and they can make informed decision when faced with problems in their life at NIT, Rourkela. Freshmen joining NIT, Rourkela is assigned a mentor who will be a friend and guide in their first year and will help him analyse various situations at different stages of NIT life.

Mentors

Mentors are second-year/ third-year/ fourth-year students at NIT, Rourkela who aid the induction of freshmen and their development process through the academic year. Mentoring in NIT Rourkela is not only about the transfer of knowledge from a more experienced to a less experienced person through learning and dialogue, but also about being a good friend with whom a mentee may share all his hesitations and apprehensions, a person away from family who will guide him emotionally, mentally and academically.

Who is a Mentor?

- A knowledgeable and experienced guide who teaches (and learns) through a commitment to the mutual growth of both mentee and mentor.
- A caring, thoughtful, and humane facilitator who provides access to people, places, experiences, and resources outside the mentee's routine environment.
- A trusted ally, or advocate, who works with (not for) the mentee and on behalf of the mentee's best interests and goals.

Whatever role the mentor may take, his principal goal is to invite and nurture the "total autonomy, freedom, and development of those he mentors."

Code of Conduct

1. Commit to the relationship and the Mentorship, SCP for one full academic year.
2. Attend and actively participate in all mentoring training and special events, and in the long run suggest and execute any idea relevant to the SCP.
3. Trust and confidentiality are backbone of successful mentoring and must be maintained at all times. Be careful about sensitive issues. A mentee's personal life may be difficult to discuss early in the relationship.

4. Should abide to all rules set up by the Committee during the initial interaction period. All meetings with freshers should happen in open and visible regions and not in closed rooms.
5. No illegal drugs should be promoted or consumed within the mentorship activities/meetings.
6. No alcohol/ tobacco should be promoted or consumed within the mentorship activities/meetings.
7. Never physically discipline or use abusive language or ultimatums as a tool for putting your point across. Any instance of ragging during mentorship activities is strictly forbidden and will be reported to concerned authorities.
8. Failure to comply or an outright violation of any of the above may lead to termination from the SCP for all purposes.

Effective Skills

Know How to listen - Fully participate in a conversation by being an active listener and utilizing some simple counselling skills such as reflecting, encouraging and asking questions. Be aware of how your body language can affect a conversation.

Observe – Try to understand what the mentee is actually saying: how they are thinking and approaching the topic, instead of focusing on how you are perceiving the conversation. Be aware of how the mentee is presenting the message or ideas through his/her body language and unspoken words.

Communicate - Be very clear in your presentation of facts and opinions. Communicate with them in ways that they will understand. Exemplify things to bring about clarity of thought.

Ask open-ended questions – Avoid asking a question with an objective Yes/No answer, which limits the scope of conversation. For example, compare two questions:

1. “Are you studying for the minors?”; Possible Answer: Yes/No.
2. “How is your preparation for your minors going?” Possible Answer: State + Reason(s)

A descriptive answer is more revealing, and hence, more helpful.

Attend and respond to both issue & response (behavioural trends) - Often there are two things going on at once – there is an issue, and the person develops some kind of response to that issue. Consider this: “I’m so mad about my MAL test!”

Possible Issue: Performance in the test; Response: A feeling of anger

So, don’t only cater to the issue of improvement in his/her performance, but also his ability to handle such crisis situations.

Facilitate but don’t spoon-feed - It’s easy to want to try to solve things for people, but that’s not really as helpful as it might seem. Focus on showing him the right approach to a problem, rather than leading him to the solution.

Know your resources - You are not a trained counsellor. Don’t expect yourself to be. But know your resources (Mentorship Committee, Counsellor, Course Advisor, Dean of Students Office,

etc.) and help people make use of those individuals and services. It's OK to say, "I don't know" as long as you get the information for the person.

Statements such as "I am certainly willing to help you with your academic work but feel I am perhaps not the best person to assist you with these difficulties", "I'm sure it is in your best interests to get this kind of help from someone who has more experience in this situation. I can only guess at ways of handling it", "Talking to someone at SCS may help you solve this problem" can be helpful

Inter-Personnel Skill Set

Availability – Be present. Literally. Lend a personal touch. You can either cut a phone and message the guy or you can pick up and apologize for being busy. Makes a difference in the perception.

Taking Initiatives – It's not always the case where mentees are open and forthcoming with their problems. Especially in the beginning, it is your mandate to take so that extra mile to make and maintain contact.

Self-disclosure - Use it as long as it's helpful to the person and not just a story. "I was in a similar situation and I did this which helped," vs. "I was in that situation, too, and it sucked and no one helped me and blah, blah, blah." How helpful was that? Not at all!

Being an example – Your mentees will observe you closely. Your role is one responsibility; make good decisions in what you say and how you act when you're interacting with them. Always remember that whether or not you are actively participating in a mentoring activity at the moment, you are constantly representing the program as a whole.

Confidentiality - A bond of trust is formed when a student comes to share something with you. It is important that you give them your attention and ensure them that what they tell you is kept in confidence. If a student discusses with you a situation that could result in self-harm or harm to others, it is your responsibility to report that information immediately to the appropriate persons.

Feedback - Show tolerance for mistakes and give feedback that is clear, concise, constructive and which also builds confidence. Have the patience to realize that adapting to college lifestyle and the academic requirements takes time.

Forget your personal bias – While giving any advice to mentee regarding different opportunities and programs on campus, try to give unbiased opinions. Think about something you are involved in or something you did that has helped to shape your experiences. Think about how you found out about this opportunity. Now think about what would have happened if someone had discouraged you from taking this opportunity - what might have you missed out on? Each mentee is an individual, and although something may not have been a topic of interest for us, do not discourage your mentees from experiencing new opportunities based on your personal bias.

Be genuine in your efforts to build relationships - Although it can be awkward at first, reach out to your mentees. Be genuine in your efforts in getting to know them. Mentees will have a hard time trusting you as a mentor if they do not feel a real connection.

Dos & Don'ts

There is a very fine line when you are dealing with something as delicate as mentoring. In order to highlight the same, here are some analogies to make the subtleties crystal clear in your minds.

EFFECTIVE	INEFFECTIVE
Advisor Sounding board, facilitator	Rescuer Problem fixer, assumes responsibility
Protector Supports, is a safety net	Bodyguard Fights mentee's battles, overprotective
Coach Provides structure, gives feedback and direction	Svengali Dictates, controls learning
Diamond Cutter Suggests, polishes rough edges	Mechanic Wants a quick-fix, insensitive to self-esteem
Broker Identifies resources, develops	Buck passer Abdicates, doesn't follow-up
Challenger Positively provokes, pushes toward highest standards	Adversary Pushes too far too soon, always plays devil's advocate
Clarifier Teaches professional values	Minesweeper Removes obstacles so mentee doesn't have to deal with them
Affirmer Gives needed support, enhances self-esteem	Smother Gives too much feedback, discounts mentee's feelings or concerns

Initial Interactions

You should make a sincere effort to communicate with your mentees with an open heart and an open mind. But having an open heart and open mind does not guarantee that your mentee will return your good intentions with the same feelings or with gratitude. Some important things that should be done are -

- Give your contact details to the mentees and get them to write your details.
- Take their contact details and keep a safe record.
- Tell them about yourself and some of your good experiences at NIT Rourkela.
- Ask them about their school/coaching institute experiences to get a friendly atmosphere.
- Let them know that they can approach you on campus anytime convenient to both of you. If possible, decide a common time for regular meetings.

You will find that it's a lot easier to mentor some students than others. There will be differences in personality, attitudes and values. Sometimes these differences will be obstacles and will seem to get in the way in connecting with a student. But it's vital to remember that just as often, these differences will be an opportunity to learn about others and about you.

Referring a Student to the Counselling Services

The most important thing to remember in any situation is that you're not a counsellor. Know your limits; sometimes the best way you can help others is by referring them to someone else with more experience.

Student mentors may, at times, recognize students who are in distress and struggling with personal and/or academic issues. Some mentees may approach you directly or you may notice that he/she is not as engaged in the mentoring program and college life as they were initially. It is appropriate in these cases to refer the student to see the Counsellor.

The Counselling Service provides voluntary, confidential, free, brief counselling for a variety of issues, including: decision-making, academic concerns, motivation, phase of life transition, family issues, socializing, relationships, sexuality, stress, anxiety, drug and alcohol use, bereavement, traumatic events, depression, mental health concerns and other concerns of a personal nature.

The suggestion to an individual to seek alternative help must be made in the context of your concern for the person's well-being. Remember that when a person is feeling discouraged, distressed or helpless what they want most is to feel understood and accepted. The first step is to acknowledge their concerns and normalize appropriate help seeking behaviour- "I have found (or my friend has found)...helpful in this situation". Encourage them to go to see the Student Counsellor, using such language as; "Talking to a Student Counsellor may help you solve this problem".

Good Practices

1. Recognize that mentoring in NIT ROURKELA is focused on building a lasting relationship and sharing information.
2. During the initial stages of the programme, your mentee may appear hesitant and unresponsive to your help. The mentee's attitude will take a positive turn over time and after sincere efforts from your end. Be patient!
3. Remember there is an initial phase to every relationship. In the early stages, a freshman is interested in knowing how sincere and 'real' you are. Establish a means of communication at the earliest.
4. Conduct regular mentor meetings during the initial phase. Inform him of all the activities that take place in NIT especially those recommended for freshmen.
5. Consider conducting the mentor meetings in the Common Room/ Mess Hall and not in private, at least during the first month or so. Understand that there is a civilized timing for this meeting, and it should not extend to late night.

6. Advise your mentee of complaint procedures in case of an undue approach or an instance of ragging. Remember: His insecurities are heightened by the fact of him being in a new environment.
7. Don't try to be a teacher, parent, therapist or babysitter. Present the information carefully and without any distortion and give all possibilities and solution a fair hearing, without passing a judgement. Suggest ways to solve the problem together, rather than lecture the mentee. Remember: Your role is to respond to the mentee's needs, not impose your agenda.
8. Respect the integrity of your mentee and influence him through constructive feedback. If you have a concern which you believe is beyond your ability to handle, call the coordinators even if it is trivial.
9. Do not give your mentee the silent treatment. Discuss your and his concerns.
10. On a very rare occasion you may need to inform the mentee's parents of any unacceptable behaviour. Before doing this get in touch with Coordinators and a professor.
11. Don't make judgements concerning a family conflict or heightened situation. Leave the parenting to the parent.
12. If you are informed that your mentee's safety or safety of another is jeopardised, report this concern to the Coordinators first and then if required to Hostel Caretaker and Warden or a concerned professor immediately.
13. As has been seen, mentors have a great deal of impact however, it is not immediately evident. Look for signs: like increased attendance, higher CGPA, timely showing up for mentor meetings and freely expressing appreciation.
14. Mentors and mentees will be asked to complete evaluations provided by the SCP. The evaluations will be recorded on an electronic database. This is to ensure that expected standards are met, and to realise ways in which the programme can be further improved during the year and subsequently, over the years to come.
15. If you are unhappy about experiences associated with the SCP or any of its policies, you are requested to speak to the SCP Coordinators.

Note

Mentoring does not necessarily mean that you must spend huge amounts of time with your mentee. What mentoring does mean is that you make every effort to ensure that every contact that you have with your mentees counts — that every interaction matters. It's the quality, not necessarily the quantity, of time that you spend with them.

We hope that you will welcome this challenge with the same kind of excitement, energy, maturity, and dedication that first brought you to SCP. As a Mentor, you now have the opportunity to carry on the legacy of SCP, and pass on this legacy to the next generations of Mentors.