

Why mentoring?

Would you like:

- Guidance for your personal and professional development in the veterinary profession, from someone with a wealth of experience?
- An opportunity to reflect on professional challenges and achievements?
- Satisfaction from helping others and contributing to the future success of the veterinary profession?
- A chance to develop your mentoring and leadership skills?

The AVA Graduate Mentoring Program aims to support graduates to transition into the profession smoothly, to assist them to reach their full potential and to be happy in their jobs.

The AVA Graduate Mentoring Program unites new veterinarians seeking guidance and support with more experienced practitioners who are willing to commit time and energy to the professional development of another veterinarian.

What do we mean by mentoring?

mentor: (noun)

an experienced and trusted adviser.

Broadly speaking the Oxford Dictionary offers an adequate definition of mentoring. But in practice Australian organisations employ a broad spectrum of mentoring approaches.

At one end of the spectrum are mentoring relationships that focus on the extensive experience of the mentor. The expectation is that the knowledge, power and influence of the mentor will assist the mentee in achieving their career objectives. These relationships are often long term and sometimes confused with line management roles.

At the opposite end of the spectrum the focus shifts to the mentee. The emphasis is on the personal insights and intellectual challenge to be gained through interaction with a mentor. It is expected that the mentee will lead the relationship, inviting the mentor into their own inner dialogue to assist in working through complex career decisions. These types of relationships are more often than not fostered through formal programs that tend to be short term, and designed not to be tangled into hierarchical roles.

The mentoring experience we expect in this program tends toward the latter end of the spectrum. The focus is on the personal development of the mentee. The hierarchical status of mentor is not as significant as the learning potential he or she has to offer.

This program provides an opportunity for those involved to share and reflect on life in the veterinary profession in a confidential, non-judgmental environment. It allows mentees to explore their careers and skills and provides opportunities for them to connect with like-minded people, through participation in a mutually-beneficial developmental relationship.

Some examples of what our mentors may assist with:

- Support transition into the veterinary profession
- Act as a source of information and insight
- Suggest relevant options regarding career development or strategies for achieving professional goals
- Recommend possible resources to improve specific skills
- Help the mentee solve professional challenges in their working life
- Discuss issues of professional ethics
- Discuss workplace related issues and options for how these may be addressed

Why is mentoring important?

The AVA's Graduate Mentoring Program will be an important component for developing and sustaining a satisfying professional career for veterinarians. Participants in mentor programs report a number of benefits from their participation: improved confidence, self-awareness, clearer career direction, better communication skills, listening skills, feedback skills, more assertive communication, and enhanced management skills.

Benefits of the program

For Mentees:

- Experienced guidance and support in the profession
- Excellent networking opportunities
- Receiving feedback and developmental guidance
- Identifying professional growth and career planning

For Mentors:

- Contribute back to the veterinary profession
- Stay abreast of emerging issues relevant to the veterinary profession
- Further development of mentoring skills such as listening, asking questions, guiding, providing feedback, communication and interpersonal skills

Who can apply?

To join as a mentee,

you must be in your final year of veterinary study, about to commence work.

In addition to this, AVA graduate members in their 2nd, 3rd or 4th year out, are also invited to apply.

To join as a mentor,

you must have at least three years' experience in the profession, and be an AVA member.

Both mentees and mentors must also be willing to attend program events, webinars and complete the training provided.

Application Process

Mentees and mentors will be asked to complete a short application form to assess their eligibility for the program and to collect details about what they are looking for in a mentoring partner.

What's involved?

The AVA Graduate Mentoring Program is a 12 month program commencing every year in September. Mentors and mentees will be matched according to application details and are required to attend three events – Program Launch, Mid-Program Review and Program Close – some of which will be face-to-face meetings while others will be delivered via webinars.

During the program, mentors and mentees will be expected to be in contact at least monthly.

Mentees and first-time mentors will also be expected to complete Art of Mentoring program training either as arranged by your Division or online to prepare them for their mentoring relationship. Acceptance into the program is conditional upon your commitment to completion of the training.

During the program, you will receive frequent communications from the AVA, giving you helpful tips and information about mentoring and access to other relevant materials available for supporting new graduates.

During and at the end of the 12 month program you will be invited to provide feedback to the AVA about your experience.

To what am I committing?

Activity	Time required
Training, reading and workshops	Up to 1 day in total
Preparation and time spent in mentoring conversations & follow-ups	1–2 hours per month
Program surveys	1/2 hour in total

Your participation is:

- Voluntary — you and your partner can end your relationship at any time
- A two-way process — mentors will share their skills, knowledge and experience with their mentees to enable them to explore their professional and personal situation, and mentoring pairs will work together to achieve agreed goals.



Key dates

	Key dates — University of Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland, Adelaide, Murdoch, James Cook and Charles Sturt
Applications open	May 2023
Applications close	August 2023
Program start and training	September 2023
Mid-program review meetings	February 2024
Program close	August 2024

Please refer to the AVA website for specific dates and times for these events — <https://www.ava.com.au/mentoring>

Program materials

Once you apply and are matched, all the materials you need will be available for you online. If you have materials you would like to share with others, you can also post these up. The online program administration platform will allow you to communicate with the program co-ordinators, access resources, and if you wish, track mentoring goal progress.

What do I do next?

Submit your application by completing the application here <https://www.ava.com.au/mentoring>. Mentees will be asked questions about their background, and what they would like to achieve by working with a mentor for twelve months. Mentors will be asked about the areas in which they feel comfortable mentoring. Please give as much information as you reasonably can as it will assist the matching process.

What if I am not selected?

We will endeavour to match all mentees that apply, provided that we have a suitable mentor. Some mentors may not be matched if their expertise/experience is not suitable for any applicants. If we don't have a suitable match for a mentor, we won't pair you for the sake of putting you in the program.

Code of conduct

In applying for and entering into the AVA Graduate Mentoring Program, it is understood that the following code of conduct is adhered to at all times:

1. The AVA is committed to supporting new veterinary graduates through enabling mentors who will support these new members through their first year in the profession.
2. The mentoring relationship is a powerful development experience that is aimed to support the mentee but it is a relationship likely to have personal and professional benefits for both mentor and mentee.
3. Supporting new graduates through this mentoring program is recognition of the importance that the AVA places on positive and dynamic early experiences of professional practice.
4. The mentor encourages the mentee to develop positive attitudes to their professional life and career planning.
5. The interaction with mentees is likely to be an affirming experience for mentors who are likely to experience the positive effects of volunteering, assisting a receptive colleague and having their interest and effort appreciated.
6. Both the mentor and mentee have a responsibility to invest their time skills and experience into the partnership. Mentors and mentees must respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring they do not impose beyond what is reasonable.
7. The mentor may take many roles: being a role model, sounding board, helping build networks and career support, sometimes simply being there to listen and challenge. The mentor responds to the mentee's developmental needs and challenges.
8. Mentors must be aware of the stressors which challenge many new graduates. Identifying when a mentee needs help which is beyond the expertise of the mentor is a critical skill for a mentor.
9. Feedback from the mentee on how the relationship is working for them and what could be done to improve it, is an important part of the mentee's development.
10. Listening is an important skill for a mentor. A mentor should be prepared to listen to the mentee's views and avoid the natural urge of many scientists to look for quick solutions.
11. Both mentor and mentee volunteer their time, energy and expertise. Either party may request to dissolve the relationship if they feel it is not working for them. However, they have a responsibility to discuss options to improve their relationship before deciding on this step.
12. Mentors and mentees should be encouraged to discuss any issues with their Regional Program Co-ordinator or the AVA Recent Graduate and Student Program Manager.
13. The mentor is encouraged to suggest options and to empower the mentee rather than give directed advice or single solutions. This helps develop self-reliance and resilience in the mentee.

14. Mentor and mentee must be open and truthful to each other about the relationship itself, reviewing from time to time how it might be made more effective.
15. Mentors and mentees must abide by the AVA professional code of ethics and policies. Mentors should be aware of the resources relevant to recent graduates through the AVA and outline the benefits of being a member.
16. Mentors and mentees must be careful in their discussions with their partners not to denigrate other employers or workplaces.
17. All participants understand the confidentiality and privacy of the mentor/mentee will be strictly adhered to at all times.
18. Mentor and mentee share responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship after the 12 months of their assignment.
19. Although the mentor/mentee relationship is for a year, many mentors and mentee continue to stay in touch for a range of beneficial reasons.

Frequently asked questions

Is the program open to AVA members and non-members?

All final year veterinary students about to graduate may participate as mentees, free AVA membership will be included as part of the program for mentees. As a general rule, this program is only open for AVA members to participate as mentors. Any non-member participation will be considered on an individual basis, and will need a recommendation put forward by the respective AVA Division.

What's the cost?

Mentees pay no fees to participate in the program. Mentors are volunteers and pay no fees, training is provided free of charge. All participants are responsible for any travel and accommodation costs involved with attending any events associated with the program.

Why do you need me to provide so much information on my application form?

The information you provide will help us 'match' the right mentee with the right mentor, based on experience, skills and what you both want to achieve from the program.

When will I know if I've been successful, and if so, who I've been matched with?

A few weeks after you have uploaded your profile, we will contact you to confirm whether you've been accepted into the program and who has been selected as your mentoring partner.

What will I have to do if my application is successful?

If your application is successful, you will need to attend the following:

1. Program Introduction and Training meeting (or webinar): 1–2 hours
2. Progress Review meeting (or webinar): 1 hour
3. Program Close meeting (or webinar): 1 hour

If you cannot attend the first meeting you will be asked to complete a 45-minute webinar information session and a one-hour online training. Whichever training you do, it will help provide you with the knowledge and skills to have a successful mentoring relationship.

It will be up to each mentee/mentor pair to establish their own timetables for their one-on-one meetings, which would probably take place at least monthly for the programs period.

Will discussions between mentees and mentors be confidential?

Absolutely! Great mentee/mentor relationships are based first and foremost on trust. Your participation in the program is confidential and you will agree with your mentoring partner how you will handle confidentiality between you.

Will I be able to claim VetEd points in my role as a mentor or mentee?

Yes, all mentors and mentees will be allocated 2 structured points for participating in the mentor/mentee training. Depending on the state/territory that you are registered in you can also claim 0.5 to 1 unstructured points for each hour time spent working with your mentor/mentee.

For more information

Contact the mentoring@ava.com.au; T: (02) 9431 5000 or your AVA Division office.

*This program is supported by the AVA and our kind sponsors
and as such is complimentary for participants.*



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