

## Mentoring Programme Data Analysis Report

This report summarises the key findings from the Mentoring Programme data received since 2020. Quantitative results have not been presented in this report, as graphical representation of responses is more easily gathered from the raw data via Survey Monkey.

### Summary of Key Findings:

1. There is a marked expectation/aspiration from many Mentees about wanting their Mentor to go outdoors with them to give support and feedback on technical skills.
2. Mentors report feeling disappointed when their Mentees do not respond, or are not very committed to the process.
3. Mentees report feeling disappointed by a) lack of practical support from their Mentor, b) Mentors being too busy to agree to meetings (particularly outdoors).
4. The Programme seems to be, on the whole, very successful.

### Findings from Mentor feedback:

1. Mentors gave resoundingly positive feedback about participating in the Programme (save for a few exceptions whose Mentees did not engage with the process, but they were still largely positive about the actual Programme itself).
2. They said that they:
  - learnt a lot from the process;
  - felt as though they were giving back to the industry, especially for those who had themselves been supported in their outdoor journey;
  - met nice people and formed good rapport with their Mentee;
  - found the training and support from MTA reassuring and helpful;
  - gained new experience and extra training; and
  - broadened their skill set.

Not one Mentor saw it as a CV-enhancing opportunity. This suggests their reasons for participating as mentors were predominantly altruistic and developmental.

3. The 2022/2023 12-month feedback has elicited 3 responses per year of 'poor match' with their Mentee. Reasons given:
  - Mentee uncommunicative or unresponsive;

- Mentee didn't need Mentoring, and had already booked their assessment within 3 months; the
  - Mentee was disorganised, which made meetings/interactions very difficult.
4. In the same period five Mentors responded that their match was 'neither good nor bad.' The reasons for this were unequivocally to do with distance and not being able to meet up, distance becoming an barrier to meeting more frequently. On one occasion, the Mentor stated that they had been asked by MTA specifically if they would mind a greater distance and they were happy to accept it. It appears that some Mentors, as with Mentees, prefer to be closer geographically to meet in person. Mentors did not specify about meeting for the express purpose of outdoor practice, or just meeting face-to-face.
  5. Mentors find the Mentoring Agreement more useful than the Mentees. Not all Mentors find the agreement useful, however, and therefore do not use one. Some simply create a verbal agreement. For those using the written agreement, they were able to tweak this and adjust timelines/expectations along the journey. There is no clear correlation between using the agreement and retention or successful completion of the Award. From this, it may be surmised that the agreement forms more of a safety net for setting boundaries and expectations for the Mentor.
  6. A large number of Mentors said that they had met their Mentee for days out on the ground, either for walking & talking, or for practicing technical skills. Many expressed the wish that they had arranged outdoor meetings, or indeed did so more frequently.
  7. As per point 4 above, geography was still a barrier for some relationships. Even with zoom/whatsapp/email, etc., some Mentors who were located far from their Mentee said that this prevented meet ups so the relationship wasn't 'as successful.' This is an interesting framing of the relationship, as many mentoring relationships can be successfully carried out at a distance, even when based on practical skills. It may be surmised that practical support is the main preference of our experienced and practical Mentors.
  8. A lot depended on the personality and expectations of the Mentee. Many Mentors found that 'accountability promoted action.' The very fact of having a Mentor to 'check in' on progress was motivating enough.
  9. Understandably, the 2020 data revealed that most participants (Mentors and Mentees) found COVID to be the biggest obstacle to success/satisfaction with the relationship. Many cited not being able to meet face-to-face/having to shield was a big hurdle. There may be a deeper issue here that the absence of face-to-face generally that year already

had a depressing and repressing effect on people trying to attain goals. In any case, the findings are not surprising and could not have been aided.

10. The Programme has improved confidence in being a Mentor in less experienced Mentors, and most have had a positive learning experience. Many expressed desire to return to the programme. Many said they now wished to follow more qualifications themselves, within Mountain Training and with coaching and mentoring.
11. Mentors who experienced difficulties with their Mentees (particularly lack of engagement or expecting too much of the Mentor) expressed that MTA support, when sought, was very helpful. Others stated that they wished they had engaged with MTA for support sooner. This shows that
  - a) MTA is offering the right support, even if it's just reassurance!
  - b) Mentors feel better knowing they can ask for support,
  - c) we need to keep reiterating that support is available to Mentors, and express what forms that support may take.
12. Most Mentors found the MTA-delivered Mentor Skills training “very helpful.” Fewer said it was “somewhat helpful,” although some intimated that this was owing to their experience levels prior to the training (i.e., they are already experienced in coaching and mentoring).
13. Mentors talk about being reassured whenever they have interacted with MTA (e.g., through the Mentor Skills training or speaking with staff), which intimates a need for connection with MTA and possibly a lack of confidence in their role as mentors.

This lack of confidence could be due to the vocational nature of mentoring, meaning that the individual is committed and generous. Consequently, they may take more responsibility for issues such as lack of rapport, or the mentee not engaging, etc.

MTA has a clear mandate here to reassure and encourage our Mentors. Interventions could include:

- Adding in refresher and update training
- Mentor ‘catch-ups’ (as we did for the 2024 cohort)
- Mentor Community - ideas to build a space where mentors can connect.
- Periodic email contact from MTA to encourage and remind to contact MTA if needed

## Findings from Mentee feedback:

1. The most overwhelming response was regarding how much more confident and less nervous our mentees felt at assessment after participating in the programme.
2. Positive feedback included:
  - much praise for their Mentor's time, encouragement and support;
  - engaging more with the environment by participating with Award pathways;
  - discovering new work opportunities from completing an Award;
  - having 'no surprises' at assessment;
  - understanding that failure is part of the learning process;
  - understanding the lifestyle changes they would need to make in order to gain qualifications (i.e., taking holiday/unpaid leave)
  - understanding of how much consolidation time is required to complete an Award.
3. Mentees also appreciated having a 'safe place' to ask questions, having someone to encourage them, any practical help they were given and being reassured when they were anxious or nervous. Comments were made about Mentors supporting them to recognise they knew more than they thought.
4. Feedback about geographical distance was made in a few cases, particularly where Mentees said that there was a 'poor match,' owing to them wanting physical support (out on the ground) and them being so far away from their Mentor.

MTA is very clear that this is NOT a guaranteed offering of the Mentors – there is no expectation or requirement to deliver any practical training to mentees.

MTA will continue to reinforce this with the Mentees prior to meeting their mentors. In feedback about what could be better about the programme, these same individuals typically said closer locations for the express purpose of the Mentor taking them out to focus on practical skills.

5. There is a desire to do more shadowing and supported practice (not just with the Mentor), so it may be beneficial to add this into the application and training materials: For example, "Mentees are expected to take responsibility for any practical training and shadowing on their qualification pathway. Your Mentor may be able to signpost you to places where this is possible".
6. Largely, Mentees felt more confident not only to commit to their assessment, but more confident in general. This was added in the open ended questions, underpinning the value of having both qualitative and quantitative data.

## Recommendations for the Mentoring Programme:

### 1. More time training Mentees to reinforce the expectations of the Programme.

Specifically:

- That the programme, and indeed Mentor, are not a panacea. The Mentor is NOT responsible for the Mentee gaining the desired qualification. The programme will NOT deliver all answers or take the responsibility away from the Mentee.
- Clarity on the role of the Mentor which is broadly to:
  - Guide, support and encourage,
  - Help with questions about the syllabus,
  - Signpost to further help.
- the role of the mentor is NOT:
  - providing technical training,
  - running mock assessments,
  - committing to free training days out,
  - making introductions with employers,
  - finding work for the mentee.

The mentor is a source of knowledge and experience who has chosen to encourage and support mentees in their preparation towards their qualification assessment.

- Clarity of the role of the Mentee which is:
  - Responsibility for engaging with the Mentor,
  - accepting advice and guidance from the Mentor,
  - organising their own practical training,
  - reflective practice to identify goals and next steps.

### 2. The data suggests that the biggest barriers to an effective mentoring relationship, (aside from extenuating life circumstances leading to lack of contact), are the expectations of Mentees about the role of their Mentor

The data are very clear about the impact of the Mentoring: Overwhelmingly, the main difference Mentoring made was to increase confidence to commit to an assessment.

All other indicators of what impact the Programme had were small from 'before' to 'after.' Either the Mentoring does not really impact the other indicators (environment, leadership and group management, etc.), or these are not relevant to the purpose of Mentoring. It is possible, of course, that confidence to commit to an assessment really is the main outcome

## Summary

On the whole, the feedback is largely positive, with excellent Mentors doing a great job, and Mentees who are aligned and engaged.

It is therefore apparent that the programme is working successfully.

Mentees share that outcomes for them are a positive shift towards having the confidence to attend and pass an assessment.

Issues seem to focus mainly around:

1. Misaligned expectations of the role of the mentor.
2. Geographical distance as a barrier to meeting outdoors (for both mentors and mentees).
3. Mentee not being organised or not communicating with mentor.
4. Dissatisfaction when one party is not committed to the process.
5. Expectations of mentees that there will be practical support given to gain feedback/improve technical skills.

It is suggested that a large portion of these issues can be dealt with by:

1. Being more explicit about expectations and roles in the application and training stage.
2. Including questions/statements at the application stage to discern *what* type of support the Mentee is looking for, and to qualify that meeting in person/meeting for feedback/training/shadowing/work opportunities is not an official role of the Mentor.
3. MTA addressing expectation management at the application stage.
4. Giving more live training to Mentees, to reinforce expectations and boundaries.
5. Forming/overseeing a community for Mentors so they feel less isolated and more reassured.
6. Reinforcing that MTA help and support is always available.

It is reasonable to state that our mentoring programme is successfully helping both Mentors and Mentees, and that MTA's vision for future development is to remove the most obvious obstacles to misaligned expectations, and therefore enhance the success of mentoring relationships.