

# [Coaching and Mentoring]



# Lecture Title:

## 4. [Coaching and Mentoring: Critical Understanding-B]



**Lecturer: Paul Gauci**

**Date: 29 September 2025** 13.00hrs-17.00hrs

# Masters in Human Resources Management

# Learning Objectives

Following this session students will be able:

To demonstrate a critical understanding of the knowledge, skills, principles, behaviours, and good practices of effective coaching and mentoring within an organisational context on a one-to-one basis and group based. (Part B)



# Learning Method

- **Lecture focused on learning objectives and core content** as a key instructional process.
- **Formative assessment through participative learning tools and activities** will be utilised evaluating students' comprehension and academic progress throughout - with respect to understanding and applying HRM concepts.



*"Professional coaching is a theoretically grounded, systematic, goal-directed process designed to facilitate sustained change and foster the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the coachee and is aimed at skills development, performance enhancement, and personal development."*

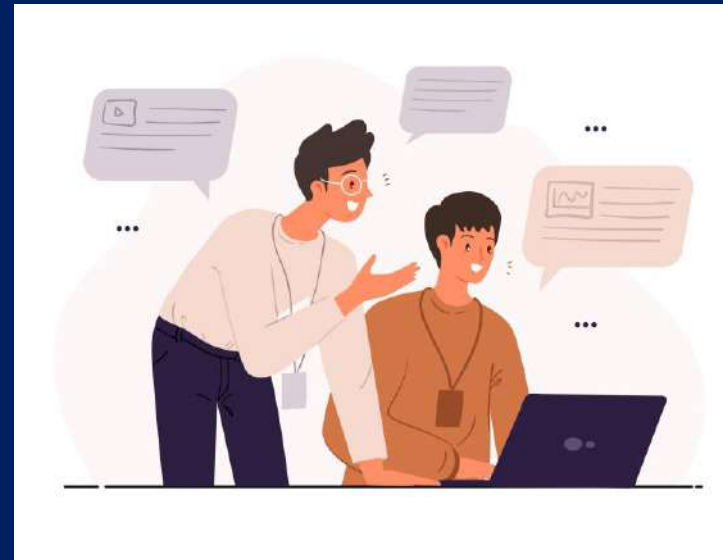
(Grant 2001)



# Coaching Core Knowledge & Skills:

## Individual Activity: Research and Present Key Points on:

- Active Listening
- Powerful Questioning
- Goal Setting & SMART Goals
- Feedback Techniques
- Building Trust & Rapport
- Conflict Resolution
- Cultural Competence
- Ethical Considerations

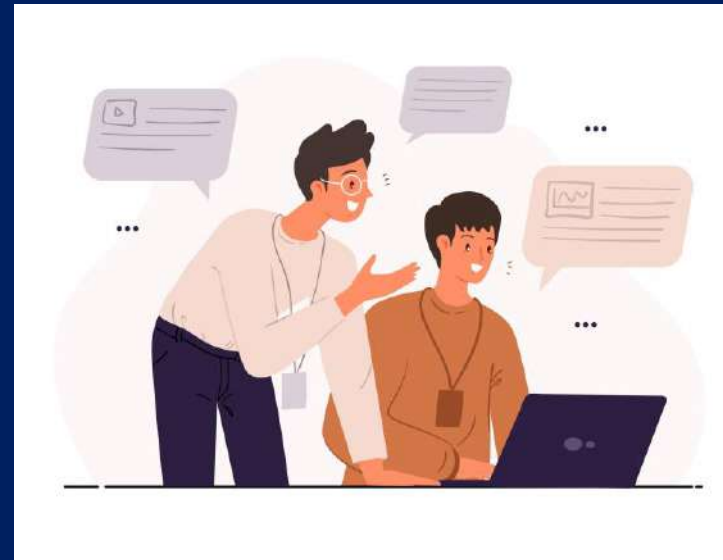


**Formative Assessment**

# Coaching Principles & Behaviours

## Individual Activity: Research and Present Key Points on:

- Confidentiality
- Non-judgmental Attitude
- Accountability
- Empowerment
- Respect & Inclusivity
- Adaptability
- Consistency
- Boundaries & Role Clarity



# One-to-One Coaching & Mentoring

- Benefits of One-to-One
- Structure of Sessions
- Challenges & Solutions
- Digital Tools for One-to-One



# Benefits of One-to-One: *Personalized Learning*

- Tailored to individual needs and pace
- Addresses specific strengths and weaknesses
- Builds learner confidence and autonomy



# Benefits of One-to-One: *Stronger Relationships*

- Fosters trust and rapport
- Encourages open communication
- Enhances motivation through personal connection



# Benefits of One-to-One: *Greater Flexibility*

- Adaptable scheduling and content
- Immediate feedback and support
- Easier to integrate learner interests



# Structure of Sessions

- Opening & Rapport Building
- Warm-up conversation or check-in
- Review of previous goals or tasks
- Set expectations for the session



# Structure of Sessions:

## *Core Learning Activities*

- Targeted instruction or practice
- Use of examples, exercises, or discussion
- Real-time feedback and scaffolding



# Structure of Sessions:

## *Wrap-Up & Planning*

- Recap key takeaways
- Reflect on progress
- Set goals or tasks for next session



# Challenges & Solutions

- Engagement & Motivation
- Challenge: Learner disengagement
- Solution: Use varied methods and interests
- Solution: Celebrate small wins



# Challenges & Solutions

- Time & Resource Constraints
- Challenge: Limited availability of materials
- Solution: Use digital tools and flexible formats
- Solution: Prioritize key learning goals



# Skill Gaps & Confidence

- Challenge: Learner frustration or anxiety
- Solution: Scaffold tasks and build gradually
- Solution: Offer consistent encouragement



# Digital Tools for One-to-One

- Communication Platforms
- Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet
- Features: screen sharing, breakout rooms
- Ideal for remote sessions



# Collaborative Tools

- Google Docs, Padlet, Jamboard
- Real-time editing and feedback
- Supports interactive learning



# Assessment & Engagement

- Kahoot, Quizizz, Mentimeter
- Gamified quizzes and polls
- Tracks progress and boosts participation





# **Masters in Human Resources Management**

*"Mentoring is a process of serving as a mentor, or someone who facilitates and assists another person's development... [It] is a dynamic relationship that leads to the creativity, professional growth and mastery over problem-solving techniques."*

**Ganser, T. (2006)**



# Group-Based Coaching & Mentoring – further notes

- Benefits of Group-Based
- Facilitation Skills
- Peer Coaching Circles
- Group Mentoring Programs
- Challenges & Dynamics



# Benefits of Group-Based Coaching

- Collective Wisdom
- Diverse perspectives enrich learning
- Shared experiences foster deeper insights
- Encourages collaborative problem-solving



- Accountability & Motivation
- Peer support drives commitment
- Group goals enhance focus
- Encouragement from others boosts morale



# Cost-Effective & Scalable

- Supports multiple learners simultaneously
- Efficient use of time and resources
- Ideal for team development



# Facilitation Skills

- Creating Safe Spaces
- Build trust and psychological safety
- Encourage open dialogue
- Manage group dynamics respectfully



# Active Listening & Questioning

- Use open-ended questions
- Reflect and paraphrase for clarity
- Listen for both content and emotion



# Managing Flow & Energy

- Balance participation and pacing
- Handle conflict constructively
- Use activities to energize and engage



# Peer Coaching Circles

- What Are They?
- Small groups of peers supporting each other
- Rotating roles: coach, coachee, observer
- Structured yet informal format



# Key Benefits

- Builds coaching skills in all participants
- Promotes self-awareness and empathy
- Strengthens team cohesion



# Best Practices

- Set clear guidelines and goals
- Ensure confidentiality and respect
- Use consistent frameworks (e.g., GROW model; CLEAR Model)



# CLEAR Model – Mentoring framework

- CLEAR stands for:
- Contracting
- Listening
- Exploring
- Action
- Review



## Purpose:

- Provides a structured flow for mentoring conversations
- Encourages reflection, goal-setting, and accountability
- Builds trust and clarity between mentor and mentee



## Step-by-Step Breakdown

- Contracting
  - Agree on goals, boundaries, and expectations
  - Clarify roles and confidentiality
- Listening
  - Active, empathetic listening
  - Create space for mentee to express thoughts and feelings
- Exploring
  - Dig deeper into challenges and opportunities
  - Use powerful questions to uncover insights
- Action
  - Identify steps forward
  - Support decision-making and commitment
- Review
  - Reflect on progress and learning
  - Adjust goals or strategies as needed



# Applying CLEAR in Practice

## Tips for Mentors:

- Use open-ended questions at each stage
- Be flexible—move between stages as needed
- Keep sessions focused and purposeful



## Example Questions:

- Contracting: “What would you like to achieve today?”
- Listening: “What’s really important to you right now?”
- Exploring: “What options have you considered?”
- Action: “What’s your next step?”
- Review: “What have you learned from this experience?”



# Group Mentoring Programmes

- Structure & Format
- One mentor with multiple mentees
- Regular sessions with shared themes
- Combines guidance with peer learning



# Advantages

- Broader reach than one-to-one mentoring
- Builds community and shared identity
- Encourages cross-functional learning



# Success Factors

- Clear objectives and expectations
- Matching mentor expertise with group needs
- Ongoing feedback and adaptation



# Challenges & Dynamics

- Common Challenges
- Uneven participation
- Dominant voices or disengaged members
- Managing confidentiality and trust



# Navigating Group Dynamics

- Understand group development stages (Forming–Storming–Norming–Performing)
- Address conflict early and constructively
- Foster inclusive dialogue



# Solutions & Strategies

- Use clear ground rules
- Rotate roles and responsibilities
- Regular check-ins and feedback loops



# Case Study: Navigating a Career Pivot

## Group work and Critical Discussion

- **Mentor:** Alex, a Senior Software Architect with 15 years of experience, specializing in cloud technologies. Alex has formally mentored five individuals through their careers.
- **Mentee:** Sarah, a Software Engineer with 5 years of experience, who is currently proficient in front-end development but has expressed an interest in pivoting to become a DevOps Engineer.

Formative assessment



## The Scenario

- Sarah has been meeting with Alex for six months. Their initial focus was on refining Sarah's front-end skills and mapping out a path for promotion to Senior Software Engineer within her current track.
- However, in their latest meeting, Sarah confided in Alex that she is feeling burnt out by front-end work and is deeply motivated to transition into a DevOps role.
- She is feeling overwhelmed by the change and unsure how to leverage her existing experience or convince her current manager that this is a viable move. She feels her current company might not support the internal transition.



- Here are the key questions the case study addresses, focusing on Alex's actions, thought process, and advice:

## 1. Initial Response & Strategy:

- What should Alex's immediate reaction be to Sarah's sudden shift in career goal, and what is the mentor's primary objective in this initial discussion?
- What is the first action item Alex should recommend to Sarah to validate her interest in DevOps and begin the transition?



## 2. Leveraging Existing Skills & Experience:

How can Alex help Sarah identify transferable skills from her front-end role that are valuable to a DevOps position?

What specific, practical advice should Alex give Sarah on bridging the knowledge gap between front-end engineering and DevOps?



### 3. Internal Transition/Communication:

How should Alex advise Sarah to approach her current manager regarding the desired career pivot, especially given Sarah's fear of a lack of internal support?

If an internal transition is not supported, what alternative strategy should Alex and Sarah plan for, and how can Alex best support Sarah during this potentially difficult time?



#### 4. Role Modelling and Psychological Support:

What personal experience or insight could Alex share to encourage Sarah and normalize the idea of a significant mid-career change?



## Suggested Answers (Mentor's Perspective)

### 1. Initial Response & Strategy:

- Immediate Reaction & Objective:
- Alex's immediate reaction should be one of active listening, validation, and encouragement. Alex should express support for Sarah exploring her passions, even if it deviates from their initial plan. The primary objective is to de-risk the decision for Sarah and gather concrete evidence about her commitment and the viability of the new path.
- First Action Item:
- Alex should recommend Sarah dedicate one hour per day for one week to a structured, low-commitment activity to test the waters. This could be completing a beginner-level course on a core DevOps tool (e.g., Docker or basic Cloud concepts on a platform like AWS/Azure) or shadowing an internal DevOps team member for a few hours. The goal is to move from theoretical interest to practical exposure.



## 2. Leveraging Existing Skills & Experience:

**Identifying Transferable Skills:** Alex should highlight Sarah's existing strengths in problem-solving, attention to detail, debugging, and her deep understanding of application requirements (which informs deployment strategies).

**Specifically:**

**Communication:** Her ability to articulate technical needs between design and engineering teams will be crucial in a cross-functional DevOps role.

**User-Centric Perspective:** She understands what a successful deployment looks like from the end-user perspective, which is valuable for monitoring and incident response.

**Bridging the Knowledge Gap:** Alex should advise a "T-shaped" development approach:

**Broaden (The Top of the T):** Focus on foundational, high-level concepts like CI/CD principles, Infrastructure as Code (IaC) and basic networking/security.

**Deepen (The Vertical of the T):** Select one core area (e.g., a specific cloud platform or a configuration management tool ) and build a small personal project from scratch using it, documenting the entire process. Alex can offer specific resources or suggest mini-projects that align with real-world problems.



### 3. Internal Transition/Communication:

Approaching the Manager: Alex should advise Sarah to frame the conversation with her manager not as an "exit" from front-end, but as a "value-add" and "growth opportunity" that will benefit the company.

She should:

Do the homework first: Come prepared with a self-study plan (as developed in Q2) and a small, successful internal project (e.g., streamlining the front-end build process using a CI/CD pipeline). Focus on contribution: State her goal to use the new skills to solve existing front-end/DevOps friction points, making her a more versatile and valuable engineer.

Propose a pilot: Suggest dedicating a small percentage of her time (e.g., 10-20%) to working directly with the DevOps team on low-risk tasks.



- Alternative Strategy (If Internal Support Fails): Alex should reassure Sarah that this is common and suggest an external job search plan. Alex can help by:
- Revising her resume/LinkedIn to emphasize her new DevOps-focused personal projects and transferable skills, positioning her as a strong "DevOps-curious" candidate.
- Utilizing his network to introduce Sarah to managers or recruiters in companies known to hire junior DevOps talent or offer internal rotation programs.



#### 4. Role Modelling and Psychological Support:

- Alex should share a brief, relevant story of a time in his own career (or another mentee's) where he felt stuck, or made a successful pivot that involved initial fear and uncertainty.
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- The key message:
- "Change is a natural part of a long career. Your early career experience is never wasted; it becomes the foundation for your next step. The fact that you recognize the burn-out and are taking proactive steps shows immense self-awareness and professional maturity—qualities that are highly valued in any engineering leader."
- This validation helps shift Sarah's perspective from viewing the pivot as a failure of her front-end career to viewing it as a strategic, courageous step toward her ideal future.



# References

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