



Brisbane Seniors OnLine Association Inc: Register of Key Documents

OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

Mentors are valued members of BSOL, and we set out to make their tutoring a satisfying experience. We regard our mentors as BSOL ambassadors. These notes are designed to provide mentors with information about their role and relationship with BSOL and their learners. They should be read in conjunction with the other information downloadable from the BSOL website (www.bsol.asn.au).

Membership

Mentors are volunteer members of BSOL, so are not required to pay membership fees; they complete an application form and, if accepted, agree to observe BSOL's policies and procedures.

What mentors are expected to provide

Mentors volunteer to teach BSOL learners computer skills as per our current basic curriculum. We recognise that mentors are individuals, and so each mentor will have different levels of computer knowledge, and different ways of tutoring, which may affect the scope and order of the training they provide.

What mentors are not expected to do

- *No Technical Advice, Installation, Set-Up etc:* Our charter does not include the provision of technical advice or assistance, installation of programs, set-up, configuration, reconfiguration, repairs, etc, except as noted below. For this reason, mentors have no authority from BSOL to provide such services. Any such help they may provide would therefore be done in a private capacity and not on behalf of BSOL. BSOL accepts no responsibility for the consequences of any such assistance. There is one exception to this: where there is a requirement for the learner's computer to have basic security software – anti-virus program, firewall, anti-spyware – and the mentor is able to install it, they should go ahead. If they don't wish to undertake this work, then the learner is expected to make alternative arrangements to have the appropriate security software installed and configured.
- *No Promotion of IT Suppliers/Providers or IT Products etc:* BSOL is not affiliated with any commercial organisation. While mentors may give general advice as to the desired features to look for in a particular piece of equipment e.g. a printer, they should not recommend a specific type or brand. Similarly, mentors should not recommend a particular supplier. Any recommendation they provide regarding a type or brand or particular supplier is given in a private capacity and not on behalf of BSOL.

Where BSOL mentoring can be held: Individual mentoring sessions may be held at:

- *BSOL's City Training Centre*
- *the learner's home*
- *the mentor's home*
- *at a Brisbane City Council library*

- *at some other mutually agreed location.*

Small group training may be arranged at locations where BSOL has access to group training facilities.

No Payment for Tutoring

Mentors receive no payment from BSOL or from learners for their voluntary mentoring, but they are entitled to ask their learner for the cost of printing course notes, etc. *subject to the learner's prior consent. Mentors are not obliged to supply these items and learners are not obliged to purchase them.*

No Obligation to Accept Additional Learners

Mentors may teach as many or as few learners as they wish; the choice is theirs. They are under no obligation to accept additional learners.

Access to Photocopier

Mentors are entitled to use the photocopier at the office. Currently, the cost of black and white photocopies is 5 cents per page.

Mentor Involvement with BSOL

We encourage our mentors to become involved in the wider scene of BSOL, by participating in regular meetings with their Hub Coordinator and other hub mentors where ideas and tips are exchanged, and suggestions passed to the BSOL Management Committee. All members are encouraged to attend the BSOL Annual General Meeting which is usually held in August or September. From time to time we hold social activities such as barbecues which all members are invited to attend. BSOL produces regular newsletters which are sent by email to all mentors and learners for whom we have a current email address. Back copies can be downloaded from the website. More information is provided under the News section on our website www.bsol.asn.au.

Member Development

BSOL will from time to time, as resources permit, arrange training sessions for mentors. While mentors are not obliged to attend these sessions, they are strongly encouraged to do so.

Mentors' Special Skills

Some mentors have special skills in programs outside the scope of BSOL's basic curriculum. These mentors are encouraged, but not obliged, to run sessions to share their special skills with other mentors; the aim is to help all of our mentors to broaden their knowledge and provide them with additional benefits in return for the time that they donate to BSOL. The mentors may also wish to run special classes for those learners wanting to learn additional programs. We envisage that these classes would be group sessions held either at the Central Training Centre or at other BSOL group training venues.

Code of Conduct

Please be aware of BSOL's *Code of Conduct* which can be downloaded from the website, and particularly note the privacy provisions, and our *Privacy Policy* which is also available on the website. All BSOL members are required to be familiar with, and abide, by the provisions of these documents.

Learner Turnover

As we often have a queue of learners awaiting mentor allocation, mentors should be aware that it is important to achieve reasonable learner turnover. We suggest attempting to minimize the learner 'no show' problem (which lengthens the training period) by making learners aware that mentors are not paid, and cannot afford to waste that most of important of resources – their time.

Length of Course

The prime aim of BSOL is to teach learner members computer skills listed in its basic curriculum. There is always a danger that some learners may come to perceive the tutoring session primarily as a social visit, which can result in an excessively long tutoring period. This means that waiting learners may have to wait a long time before they can commence their lessons. Similarly, mentors may also become comfortable too, and unwittingly prolong the mentoring period, again to the disadvantage of waiting learners.

While we recognise that a number of factors will determine the tutoring period, and that the period will vary from learner to learner, we urge mentors to finalise the mentoring sessions once the curriculum has been covered and sufficient revision has been provided. For home mentoring, we suggest twelve lessons as an appropriate guideline, but recognise this number can vary greatly depending on what the mentor feels is appropriate for each particular situation.

Repeat Courses

Learners are entitled to repeat aspects of the course during their membership period. If they want to do this, the mentor should refer the matter to the Hub Coordinator who may decide to allocate a new mentor to provide the additional training.

Learner Unable to Comprehend Training

On occasions a mentor will recognise that, no matter how many sessions are provided, a learner, for whatever reason, is having unreasonable difficulty in trying to understand and remember the lessons. Where this is a problem, the mentor should refer the matter to the Hub Coordinator. Where appropriate, a refund or part refund may be granted to the learner; this is entirely at the discretion of the Management Committee.

Uncommitted Learner

On rare occasions, a learner may appear to have little commitment to the tutoring sessions and will cancel sessions, sometimes at very short notice. We do not expect mentors to be treated this way and we suggest that the mentor first tries to discuss the problem with the learner, to establish whether changed circumstances now make it difficult for the learner to attend sessions at the agreed time and/or day. Simple rescheduling may solve the problem. If not, the mentor should discuss the matter with the Hub Coordinator.

Incompatible Learners and Mentors

We recognise that, on rare occasions, a mentor and a learner can be incompatible. Where this happens the mentor should contact their Hub Coordinator, and explain the problem. The Hub Coordinator will try to resolve the issue, if necessary by allocating another mentor to that learner.

Use of Email by Learners

BSOL wants mentors to encourage learners to use email as much as possible, and to communicate with their learners by email so that the process becomes part of the learning process. When a learner has connected to the internet and acquired an ISP, it is the mentor's responsibility to let BSOL know the learner's email address, by advising admin@bsol.asn.au.

Recruiting mentors and volunteers

Mentors are urged to recruit the more proficient learners as mentors and/or BSOL volunteers – there are many roles able people can fill in BSOL.

Problems/Concerns/Queries etc

Mentors should direct any query in this respect to their Hub Coordinator. In the unlikely event that the query involves their Hub Coordinator, it should be directed to the BSOL President.

No longer wish to be a Mentor?

If for any reason a mentor no longer wishes to continue in the role, please advise the Hub Coordinator or the Office. This will enable us to reallocate the mentor's learners, and update our database.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR MENTORS

- 1 Thou shalt impart information in a logical sequence. The suggested format does this.
- 2 Thou shalt break things down into "bite sized pieces ". Don't put too much information into one session.
- 3 Thou shalt stick to basics. This curriculum covers what participants "must know. "
- 4 Thou shalt use analogies. Analogies are "user-friendly" and make your learner feel: "yes, I can relate to this."
- 5 Thou shalt be mindful of time. Everyone's concentration wanders after a certain time, and as we get older it wanders at an alarming rate. Know when to call it a day.
- 6 Thou shalt give people the opportunity to take notes. Most people need to write things down to remember them. This need increases, as we get older.
- 7 Thou shalt ask questions. Instead of repeating the last or recent piece of information, try "how did we do that?" etc.
- 8 Thou shalt revise, revise, revise. Always remember to run through the last segments covered, albeit briefly.
- 9 Thou shalt tie thy hands behind your back. Unless absolutely necessary, do not touch the mouse.
- 10 Thou shalt not baffle others with technical terms. Avoid all unnecessary "industry jargon".

Revised: 12 September 2011 (PMN)