

# SONA Mentor Program 2019



Australian  
Institute of  
Architects

Queensland Chapter SONA  
Mentor Program 2019

**Program Delivered by>**



Australian  
Institute of  
Architects

# SONA



## **1. Introduction to the Mentor Program**

The Australian Institute of Architects, Queensland Chapter Student Mentor Program is a service that coordinates and monitors partnering between practising architects and students (typically 3<sup>rd</sup> year) to foster work experience opportunities and provide a support mechanism for students to introduce them to architectural practice within an operational context.

### **1.1 For Students**

#### **Requirements of the program for Students**

Students will be required to:

- commit to a least a one-hour meeting per month
- prepare questions to facilitate the exploration of practical and theoretical issues in design, documentation and management with a practising architect.
- attend and contribute to meetings with the architect.

#### **What can students expect from the program?**

The program allows for mentors and students to meet on a regular basis and discuss issues relating to the practice of architecture and to explore the relationship between university and the working environment. Meeting dates should be arranged to take into account the respective work commitments of all parties. It is recommended that meetings be held once a month.

#### **Benefits of the program for Students**

Involvement in the Mentor Program will provide students with an opportunity to discuss design, documentation, management and general practice issues with a practicing architect. This may also be an opportunity to observe and gain some experience of an architectural practice in operation.

### **1.2 For Mentors**

#### **Requirements of the program for Mentors**

Practising architects will be required to:

- commit to a least a one-hour meeting per month
- Act as mentor to explore issues relating to design, documentation or general practice
- Be committed to providing support for students, especially in relation to understanding the operations of a working practice.

#### **Benefits of the program for mentors**

Involvement in the Mentor Program will provide a practising architect with:

- (i) contact with students currently studying architecture at university.
- (ii) a forum for the discussion and critical analysis of current projects and office practices.



- (iii) an opportunity to assess firsthand the student's skills and to gain an insight into the current aspirations of the educational system.
- (iv) the opportunity to offer service to the profession by supporting architecture students as they commence their careers.

## **2. Qualifications of Participants**

### **2.1 Mentors**

Mentors must be registered architects practising in Queensland with a minimum of four years' post-graduate architectural experience and be current members of the Australian Institute of Architects.

### **2.2 Students**

Students must be enrolled in a recognised full or part-time university architectural program in their 3<sup>rd</sup> year of study (or equivalent) and be current student members (SONA) of the Australian Institute of Architects.

## **3. Procedure**

### **3.1 Introductory meeting**

The Institute will place students in their groups and match the groups to a mentor. A student group organiser will be appointed, to allow for more streamlined communications between the group and the mentor, the student group organiser will work with the mentor to schedule the first meeting. It is recommended the first meeting be scheduled within the first 2 weeks of the launch night.

Should students or mentors have any questions or feel that a placement is not satisfactory they may contact the Chapter Representative who will work to seek to a more suitable placement.

### **3.2 The Mentor Program meetings**

Mentors and students (via the SONA Group Organiser) must establish a suitable mechanism to arrange meetings on a regular basis. This can be as formal or informal as the mentor and students agree.

Within this guide there are optional pro forma sheets that may be of assistance in planning and setting goals for meeting times and keep records of meetings.

One week prior to each scheduled meeting it is recommended the students (via the SONA Group Organiser) contact the mentor and highlight any specific questions they have thought of that might require additional preparation on the part of the Mentor.

### **3.3 How long does the mentoring process last?**

Initially the Mentor Program is designed to progress through the period of approximately March - October. Depending on the success of the relationship, you and the student may like to maintain the relationship for a longer time.



### **3.4     *How should I start the program?***

#### **Students:**

All students are busy, and it is easy not to take the time to plan your participation in the mentor program.

To really get some benefit you should:

- Get together with the other students in your group and list down a few important questions you think might be answered by talking with a practicing architect.
- From this discussion draft a rough plan with the number of times you want to meet with the mentor and the topics you would like to cover. Have a look at the Preliminary subject discussion areas found below in this document.
- Communicate your expectations with your mentor.
- Spend some time as a group after you have visited the mentor to think over the things discussed and see whether there are any things you would like to clarify when next you meet. This type of discussion with other students may be very useful.
- If you are discussing your design projects with a mentor, then be open and willing to explore the way the practitioner works through a brief. Understanding their methodology may be one of the greatest benefits from being mentored.
- Take time to conclude your association with your mentor on a positive note. Be professional and acknowledge the effort the mentor puts into the relationship.

#### **Mentor**

The Mentor should:

- Ask the student to plan your discussions, bringing up things of importance to them.
- Offer to help with problem solving, but let them draw their own conclusions
- Function as a resource and draw on your own experiences

Keeping it going:

- Give the best advice you can at the time.
- Rely on your experience.
- Don't let the meetings degrade to become gripe sessions.
- Avoid getting involved with personal situations unrelated to the mentoring purpose.
- If you feel that a student is not benefiting from the relationship, discuss this with the Chapter representative and, if needed, make alternative arrangements.
- Be sure to keep all discussions confidential. If a conflict arises, make sure the student is aware of it.

### **3.4     *What if it doesn't seem to be working?***

If the relationship begins to break down contact the Chapter representative who can help to rectify any problems. But don't prolong it if it is obvious that improvement will not happen. Try to exit the relationship on good terms. Mentors may like to recommend another suitable mentor if the need still exists. If the relationship ends please contact the Institute's Coordinator.



### 3.5 The Mentor Program review

On completion of the year students are to forward a completed copy of the Mentor Program Review Form to the Qld Chapter Coordinator. This information will provide a brief summary and analysis of the program to the Qld Chapter.

When the Review Form is received by the Qld Chapter, the Coordinator will review the material supplied and discuss any issues raised. A Mentor Program Certificate will be forwarded to students and practitioners to indicate their participation for that year.

## 4. Risk Management and Insurance

These guidelines have been prepared by the Institute Legal Counsel and are endorsed by the National Education Committee. Guidelines must be followed or the insurance cover obtained by the Institute is likely to be invalid.

### 4.1 Public liability

#### Who is covered?

The Institute has obtained public liability insurance cover for *participants* in the mentor programs. This cover extends to both mentors and student participants.

#### Definition of cover

Public liability insurance covers an insured person for accidental or unintended harm to another person or their property, where the harm was caused by something the insured either did or did not do, or by something under the 'control' of the insured or for which the insured was responsible.

It covers physical events. It does not cover professional advice or the consequences of professional activity.

The public liability insurance the Institute has arranged covers individual *participants* for liability they may have to other *participants*, or other people, but only while the *participant* is taking part in the mentor program activities. The *participants* are not covered when the activity is not a part of the mentor program, or is an activity not reasonably, or usually, a part of mentor program activities. Mentor program activities which are covered are set out below.

The cover for mentor program activities applies anywhere in Australia, but it only covers each of the *participants* for their liability to **others**, not self-inflicted injury or property damage affecting the *participant*, even if unintentional.

#### Conditions of cover

These conditions must be complied with or the Institute and the cover provided to a *participant* in relation to a claim, is at risk.

- All *participants* must be Institute members.



- Each Chapter conducting the Institute Mentor Program must keep a record of the names of all *participants*.
- Mentors must be registered architects in the State/Territory where the mentoring is to take place.
- Practices offering to be mentors *must* either consist of registered architects who are Institute members or at least be controlled by Institute members who are registered.
- The individual(s) from the practice who are acting as mentor(s) *must* be registered architects and Institute members.
- Participating students must be enrolled and attending a professionally accredited and recognised architecture course.
- Practices providing mentor services *must* carry their own public liability insurance.

### Activities covered by insurance

The insurer has specifically agreed to cover participation of students in the following activities:

- Regular meetings between individuals (or groups of students) with mentor architect(s) whose aim is to develop contacts between students and the architecture profession and to discuss topics of interest related to the architecture course(s). Venues for these meetings might be the mentor architect's workplace, institute premises, the relevant university or other agreed place.
- Visits by students and mentors to construction sites or other relevant venues (e.g. prominent buildings, architect's work office, relevant local government or state government offices).
- Observation of an architect at work (i.e., where the student shadows the architect in her/his daily work routine).
- Participation in social events arranged by the mentor architect.

The public liability insurance specifically excludes students from cover for paid work in the mentor's office. (Such activity falls under the State/Territory statutory insurance programs such as Workers Compensation or equivalent).

If an activity falls outside these general descriptions, it may not be covered. If you think the activity planned is not described above, please refer it to the Institute's Education Manager initially before undertaking the activity.

## 4.2 Professional indemnity

Professional indemnity cover (PI) for the *participants* in the mentor program is **not** available as part of Institute's own insurance.

### What PI Insurance cover is required for the Mentor Program?

To protect the members who are participating in the Mentor Program the Queensland Chapter will ensure that the following conditions are met.

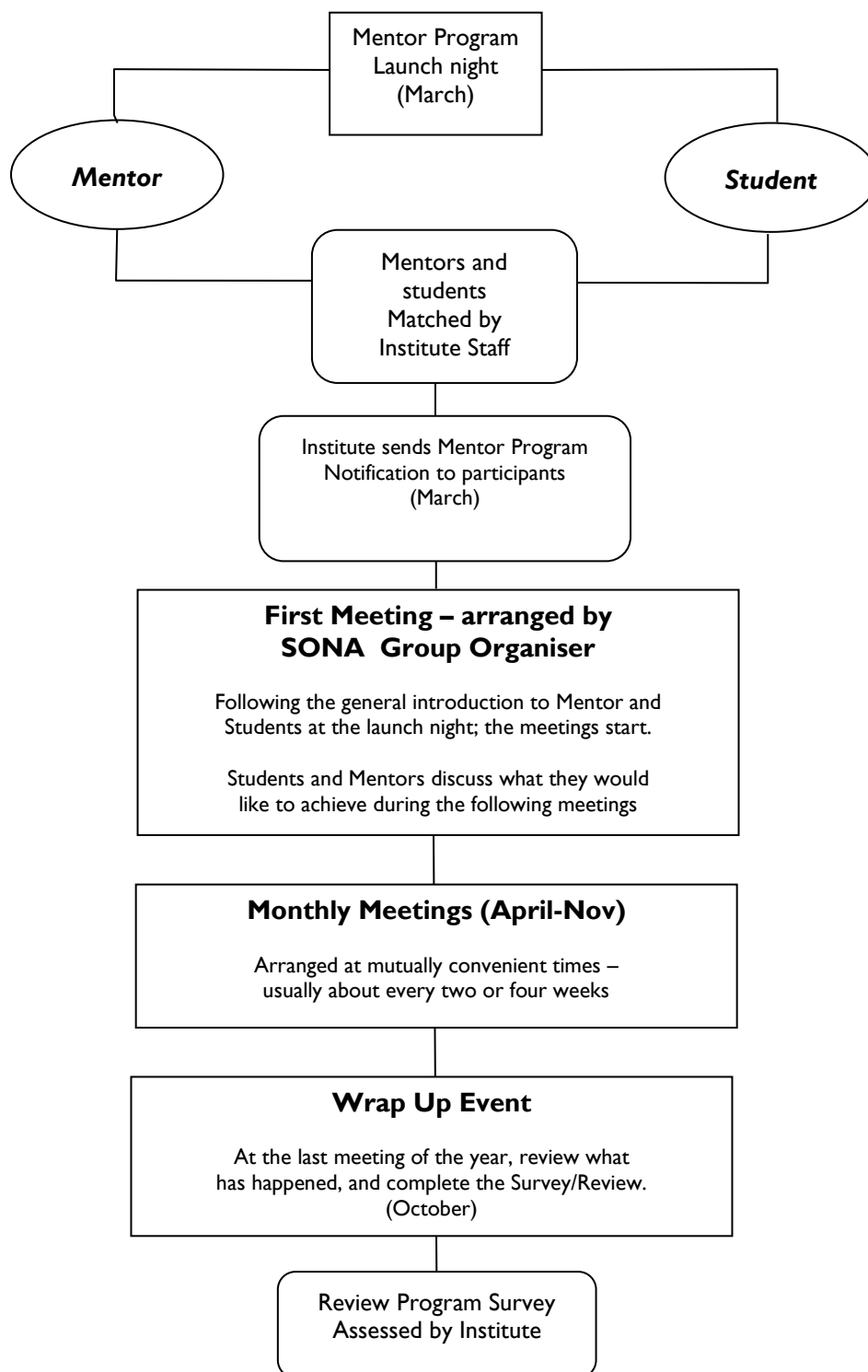
- Mentors must be registered architects entitled to practice in the State or Territory concerned *and must* have individual PI insurance or be covered by a PI policy taken out by their Practice of at least \$1 million cover.



- The currency of the policy must be checked to ensure it is in force during the mentoring period. The Chapter will need documentary proof that PI insurance is in place. Such proof must be treated confidentially.



## Overview of the Mentor Program – The Process







## Helpful Hints for Mentors

The following are suggested topics that may be used to generate discussion or to plan the type of areas to be covered in the time available to the mentor and students. They are only suggestions and there is no problem with the group discussing other matters and exploring other areas of practice.

### Getting Started

What can the mentor do to start things off?

The following are some suggested activities:

- Show the student examples of recent projects completed by your architectural practice.
- Take the student to visit projects under construction.
- Take the student along to client and site meetings; remember to always inform other meeting participants beforehand of your intention to do so.
- Offer to answer any of the student's questions about architectural practice (see below for ideas)
- Explain some of your daily tasks to the student.
- Talk to the student about career opportunities for architects.
- Visit an architecturally significant building, or a few that represent various types of projects (commercial, public, heritage, etc.)
- Discuss the architectural salary award system. Perhaps consider providing comparisons with other professional salaries – ensure that the information you provide the student is current and accurate to the best of your knowledge.
- Discuss the registration process and the type of experience which best prepares a graduate for that.
- Suggest the student discusses any queries with other students and/or recent architecture graduates who are employed in the office. It is likely that tertiary architecture students or new graduates will have encountered similar issues to the student being mentored.
- Suggest involvement with architecturally focussed activities (such as Brisbane Open House, lectures/CPD at the Chapter auditorium or other venues, group viewing and discussion of a DVD documentary, etc.)



## Mentor Program Activities Generally Undertaken

- 1.0 Review the Mentor Program documents with the students
- 2.0 In collaboration with the students develop a list of possible topics for discussion over the ensuing period. Topics could include:
  - Review of competency standards in architecture (design, documentation, project management, practice management). Students are often not aware of this baseline information!
  - Review current happening in the office
  - Discussion of students' university programme for the semester
  - Review of a selected university project from each student. This could be a completed project or one currently in development. A format we have used for this is a lunch in the office which includes staff as well as student: staff are encouraged to ask questions and offer constructive critique. The lesson for the mentor student is that they need to sell their design ideas.
  - Discussion of resources used by the office in its daily work e.g. BCA, Town Plans, Australian Standards, Acumen Notes, Tech Library, computer software applications.
  - Sustainability measures employed in practice e.g. Green Star, ABGR, BCA Part J.
  - Financial aspects of practice – how fees are calculated, how hourly charge-out rates are established, how cost of jobs is recorded and monitored, why we need to have business acumen.
  - Visit to job site.

*It is usual that the Mentor is the only person who has ideas on topics for discussion: the students often just want to be exposed to an office environment and rely on the mentor to provide the guidance. Encouraging the students to spend time talking informally to the employees also seems to be helpful.*

- 3.0 Based on the agreed topics develop a programme of meetings to which both parties can commit.

*(Note: provided courtesy of Neylan Architecture)*



## Preliminary Discussion Subject Areas

This list has been prepared to assist mentors and students participating in the student mentor program. It is possible that students may use this to help them prepare discussion topics/questions to discuss with their mentors, so they can make best use of contact time between mentors and students.

The topics are organised under the headings typically relating to the progress of a project from initial client contact through to construction, with office organization as a separate group.

Note: the following it is not intended to be a comprehensive checklist of office procedures.

### Pre-design

- Establishing client contacts
- Client communications
- Building relationships with clients/potential clients
- Pitching/preparing fee proposals
- Client expectations and their understanding of architects' services and working methodology
- Managing client expectations
- Selling design services/capabilities
- Client/design presentations

### Design

- Managing client expectations
- Client communications
- Brief preparation/formulation
- Interpreting client requirements
- Construction/project budgets and expectations of building and project costs
- Consultants work
- Incorporating "architecture"
- Client design ideas/requirements/stylistic comments
- Planning approvals – architecture and the general public

### Working Drawings

- Client communications
- Purposes of working drawings – communications, contractual documents
- Timing/programming
- Construction issues
- Working with consultants/ Co-ordination
- Detailing
- Maintaining the "architectural theme"
- Materials
- Construction costs during documentation phase
- Changes to client requirements



- Additional fees/brief changes

### **Construction**

- Tendering
- Building costs/ cost opinions
- Communication with builders
- Managing client expectations
- Working with builders on site
- Site visits
- Instructing the builder
- Changes to the building
- Cost variations
- Client communications
- Client understanding of design as realised/constructed
- Additional fees
- Re-design
- Re-documentation
- Client “demands”

### **Office Management/Organisation**

- Library
- Filing
- Records
- Processes/standards
- Finding information
- Legislation
- Meetings
- Fees income and expenditure management
- Chasing fees
- Office ethos
- Work environment
- Work programming
- Staff relations
- Staff aspirations/expectations
- Working relationships
- Technology and its implementation – appropriateness
- CAD and manual drawing
- Risk management – client expectations, building costs, design, construction quality



## Frequently Asked Questions about the Program

### **Q - What is a Mentor?**

A Mentor is an experienced registered architect who is prepared to make a commitment for a period of time to the professional development of one or more architecture students. They must be Institute members with four years' post-graduate experience. Where practical we would encourage larger practices to have more than one mentor at the firm to be involved to help share the time commitment and take on some of the meetings.

The relationship is one that enables a student to confidentially discuss matters that relate to:

- duties and responsibilities of an architect as well as understanding professional issues
- finding vacation work and choosing employment
- becoming a registered architect

### **Q - What does a Mentor do?**

The main objective for the mentor is to befriend and advise a student as they make the transition from university to professional architect.

Only SONA/Institute student members are eligible to participate in the Mentor Program. Students are placed in groups of two or three and assigned to a mentor by the Coordinator. This means that you may have contact with students from more than one university. The students nominate their areas of interest and an attempt is made to match them with mentors in practices that specialise in those areas or who have similar professional interests.

### **Q – Can I claim CPD points for being a Mentor?**

Yes, Informal Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points can be claimed by architects participating as mentors in the program. Earn 1 formal CPD point per meeting with the student group. To keep accurate records and to claim a formal point it is recommended you complete the “agenda” form on page 18 of this document.

### **Q- What is the Mentor’s most important task?**

The most important task is to guide and assist the student as much as possible with their questions about working as an architect. Try to remember not to let the student become dependent on you. The goal is independence.

### **Q - I’ve never worked with students before ..... what do I have to offer?**

Yourself - we envisage that the student will learn from your experiences, advice and guidance.

### **Q - What do I get out of it?**

Acting as a mentor has many benefits. You can:

- be re-energised by working with young people



- offer service to the profession by supporting the next generation of architects
- refresh your body of knowledge as you respond to the questions raised
- earn 1 formal CPD point per meeting with the student group

**Q - Will I have enough time?**

The program requires a time commitment of 1 hour per month to meet with your mentees, this could be at your practice or over coffee. The logistics of when and where meetings occur are left to you mentors and mentees to decide. Where practical we would encourage larger practices to have more than one mentor at the firm to be involved to help share the time commitment and take on some of the meetings.

**Q - Will it really make a difference?**

Yes. Our experience shows that your advice, guidance and support will help your young colleague to become a better architect and equip them for working life in practice following university.



## Sample Program for use by Program Mentor

### Session 1: **Introduction**

- Backgrounds
- Topics
- An Architect?
- Buildings / Architects
- Directing your career

### Session 2: **The Practice of Architecture**

- Professional bodies
- Marketing
- Contracts
- Fee submissions
- Job budgets
- Liability
- Project brief
- Consultants
- Authorities
- Building cycle
- Students (wages, work, CAD, drawing, CV's)
- Architects and gatherings

### Session 3: **Design**

- When do you design
- Process, process, process
- Reference
- The holistic approach
- Tenacity
- Materials, light, sound and texture
- Getting those ideas built

### session 4: **Documentation**

- Sketch design
- Detail design
- Construction documentation

### session 5: **Construction**

- Building procurement
- Tendering
- Contract administration
- Working with builders

### Session 6: **Site Visit**

- The joy of building
- Visit and critique a current prominent existing building

*(Note: provided courtesy of Alfred La Spina)*



*Recommended for use to record meetings*

## Mentor Program: Mentor & Student Meeting Agenda

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**Meeting Date:**

**Meeting Length:**

**Meeting Place:**

**Attendees:**

**Competency addressed in meeting:**

Design ☐

Documentation ☐

Project delivery ☐

Practice Management ☐

### **\*\*Agenda Topics\*\***

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.





## CONTACT US

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