

## MENTORSHIP PROGRAM – GUIDELINES FOR PROTÉGÉS

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*This Program matches protégés (final year Student Members or Provisional RGDs) with mentors (Provisional RGDs or RGDs) to help protégés develop the necessary skills to enter or continue on a professional career path in graphic design. As a protégé, you will receive encouragement, guidance and support from a professional active in the industry.*

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### Program Overview

#### Protégés receive:

- Expert feedback on portfolios, résumés, etc.
- Advice on further training and job hunting techniques.
- Information on ethical and professional practice.

#### Protégé commitment

The structured mentoring program provides a framework to help you establish a successful mentoring relationship. Part of that framework is clarifying what is expected of those who participate. Before you may participate in this program, you must read over the conditions of your participation, and fill out the online form at [rgd.ca/events-and-programs/mentorship](http://rgd.ca/events-and-programs/mentorship)

#### Protégé eligibility

You are eligible to participate in RGD's Mentorship Program if:

- You are a Provisional RGD in good standing of RGD.
- You are a Student Member in the final year of your program.
- You are available to participate in the program for a minimum of 6 months.

### Matching mentors and protégés

Initially all participants are asked to complete a form outlining professional interests and preferences for being matched with a mentoring partner. For example, you may prefer to be mentored by someone who attended your alma mater or someone who wants to discuss issues of particular interest to you (such as, job search techniques or balancing your work and personal life). We will review the information provided by you and identify mentors who have indicated similar preferences. Your information, along with information about any similar candidates, will be sent to prospective mentors who will make a final selection.

#### Matching

Provisional RGDs participating as protégés are matched with Registered Graphic Designers. Student Members in their final year are matched with Provisional RGDs.

#### Is everyone who applies matched with a mentoring partner?

Unfortunately, no. While we will do all we can to find appropriate matches for everyone, the pool of available mentors and interested protégés will not always match. If we are not able to identify a mentor for you initially, we will keep your information on file, and let you know if and when a suitable mentor becomes available.

#### What if there are no suitable mentoring partners in my area?

Initially, we plan to match participants based on common location, but if there are no appropriate protégés available for a mentor in a location, we will encourage mentors and protégés to participate in a virtual mentoring relationship.

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### Contact and meetings

After you and your mentor have been matched, we will send you your mentor's e-mail address to initiate contact.

#### Initial contact

We recommend that you establish the initial contact with your mentor. If you do not hear from them within a week of initiating contact, you may contact RGD to facilitate initial communication.

#### How often do mentors and protégés meet?

It is hoped that mentors and protégés will meet 4 to 6 times over the 6-month period, but it is the responsibility of you to arrange and schedule these meetings. RGD cannot be held responsible if your mentor is unable to meet this guideline. Contact RGD if you are having difficulties with your mentor.

#### Reasonable expectations

Mentors are busy professionals. Many of them are running small or medium-sized businesses. They have busy schedules which may include unexpected client meetings and extensive travel. Don't be discouraged if your mentor takes a while to respond to your e-mails or meetings are rescheduled. Your mentor is volunteering his or her time to assist you, but professional responsibilities must come first.

The RGD mentoring program is not a job service. Your mentor is not likely to offer you a position in his or her company. Don't ask him or her for a job or expect this. Instead use the experience to gain valuable insights that you will use in approaching other design professionals.

#### Are there any boundaries that I should be aware of?

Gift-giving, acting as an advocate for career advancement, loaning money, or becoming involved in dispute resolution are all out-of-bounds in mentoring relationships.

#### Phone contact

We are not providing you with your mentor's phone number and we insist that you not contact your mentor by phone unless this method of contact is requested of you by your mentor.

#### Program duration

We anticipate that the program will run for six months but this is up to the discretion of the mentor. Mentors and protégés will be matched on an on-going basis, and meetings are expected to occur over a 6-month period.

### Maintaining contact

Maintain regular contact. Mentors should assume they are the givers in the relationship. Consistent contact models dependability and builds trust. At least monthly contact by e-mail is recommended.

### Questions and concerns

What if there are problems or misunderstandings between a mentor and a protégé? RGD asks you to inform us if you have not heard from your mentor, if you have questions or comments about the mentoring relationship, or if you are uncomfortable with any aspect of your mentoring relationship. We will address your questions, help to reconnect you and your partner, or rematch you with a different partner, as appropriate.

### Preparing for meetings

You may wish to write a list of things that you would like to ask your mentor. Once you have written them down, you may wish to send them to your mentor before the meeting. Below is a list of suggested topics for discussion.

#### Suggested topics for discussion

What was your experience like as a college/university student? What do you know now that you wish you had known then?

- Why did you become a mentor? What do you hope to gain professionally and personally from being a mentor?
- What strategies would you recommend to ensure a long, fruitful career in this industry?
- How did you first get started in the industry?
- What is your most memorable experience as a professional working in the industry?
- What do you like most about your current job? What would you change if you could?
- What challenges have you faced in your career and in your life? How did you address or overcome these challenges? What have you learned in the process?
- How do you balance your career with the rest of your life?
- What did you do as a recent graduate that helped you be successful? What would you recommend that I do?
- How do you spend your time at work?
- What skills do you use most in your job? What skills did you learn in school and what skills did you need to learn outside of school?

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- What was the most valuable lesson that a mentor or supervisor taught you?
- If I wanted a job like yours, what would I have to do?
- And, ask your mentor what they think you should ask them.

### What does it take to be a good protégé?

#### 1. Be teachable.

Be willing to learn new things, obtain another perspective, and be responsive to suggestions and constructive criticism.

#### 2. Be considerate of your mentor's time.

Mentors are participating in this program because they are committed to mentoring but they have very demanding jobs and work schedules. They often spend considerable time in meetings, or are involved in work-related travel. It's not uncommon that a design professional, who typically receives 30 or more e-mail messages a day, return from a two-day meeting or business trip to discover more than 200 e-mail messages waiting, many of which urgently need a response! Be patient and understanding if your mentor is sometimes unable to respond to you in a timely fashion.

#### 3. Be prepared.

It's up to you to make the most of the limited time you will have with your mentor. Come prepared with specific objectives. Before each meeting, select two or three critical issues you need help with. Develop specific questions that you would like your mentor to answer. Provide these to your mentor in advance of your meeting. Bring your resume and portfolio to a meeting to have your mentor review them.

#### 4. Be professional.

Respond in a timely manner to your mentor's questions and comments. If you don't have the time to respond at the time, send a short message letting him or her know you will be in contact when you have the opportunity. Do your best to maintain and respect privacy, honesty and integrity. Be responsible about any meetings you schedule, don't cancel at the last minute, show up late or not show up at all. Maintain your agreed-upon boundaries and level of confidentiality. Although it is unlikely that your mentor will hire you, you will be able to use him or her as a reference if you have behaved professionally during your mentoring relationship.

#### 5. Be flexible to the needs of your mentor.

Although RGD has developed guidelines for its mentorship program, your mentor may have a specific way that he or she would like to maintain the mentoring relationship. Keep track and follow any special requirements that your mentor sets out for maintaining the relationship. For example, when your mentor tells you about a particularly busy period or a business trip, remember this so you aren't anticipating a response to an e-mail that may not come for some time.

#### 6. Be receptive to your mentor's behaviour and manner.

You can learn from not only what your mentor tells you but how he or she behaves during your meetings or responds to your e-mails. Does your mentor write in a more formal tone than your friends do? If so, you may want to mirror the more formal tone during your e-mail exchanges.

#### 7. Have realistic expectations.

Don't expect your mentor to solve all your problems for you. In particular, don't expect your mentor to get you a job. This program is not a job placement service. If you obtain a lead on an internship or job through the mentoring program, that is fine, but it is unlikely and should not be expected. Remember that your mentor is human and can make honest mistakes.

#### 8. Communicate clearly.

Identify your needs and communicate them as clearly as possible. Be a good listener and communicator. Accept and offer feedback. Re-read e-mails to your mentor for clarity, spelling and grammar.

#### 9. Honour your commitment

Not all interested candidates will be lucky enough to be matched with a mentor right away. If you are one of the select few, make sure you maintain the relationship with your mentor over the six month period. If, for some reason, you do not wish to continue the relationship, let RGD know so that we can provide the opportunity to another.

#### 10. Respond to requests from RGD staff.

Please respond to requests from the RGD staff (we will keep these to a minimum). Also, please let us know if you have not heard from your mentor so that we can help to get you reconnected, or if there are any issues with your mentoring relationship that we can help with.