

Module 4 – Session Structures

This module has been carefully designed to provide a structured, practical, and theory-informed approach to mentoring in the prison context organised into five key parts:

A. Learning Outcomes outlines what learners will know, understand, and be able to do by the end of the module;

B. Core Theory presents essential concepts, answers key questions, and references relevant case studies or frameworks;

C. Practice Activities offer interactive exercises for applying theory and developing mentoring skills;

D. Trainer Notes and Guidance provide crucial tips, reminders, and strategies for effective facilitation, including how to adapt content for different learner groups and questions to stimulate discussion;

E. Resources and References support further learning.

As a facilitator, please **read D before implementing any of the activities**, as it will guide you through the content and ensure effective delivery. The module flows from theory (B) into practical application (C), while trainer guidance (D) recontextualises the material and offers practical advice to maximise learning outcomes.

A. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this module, learners will be able to:

- Recap various mentoring models used in prisons and their applicability.
- Decide on suitable mentoring models for your setting.
- Recognise how to design and structure mentoring sessions for maximum impact

B. Core Theory Content

Section 1: Overview of Mentoring Models

Questions answered in this section:

- *Which mentoring models are most suitable for different institutional contexts?*
- *How do confidentiality, trust, and time commitments vary across mentoring models?*
- *What are the practical considerations for implementing each model effectively?*

Mentoring in correctional settings is not simply about pairing a more experienced officer with a newer colleague. The **model chosen has a direct impact on learning outcomes, professional development, psychological safety, and institutional culture**. While Module 1 provided detailed descriptions of internal, internal-external, external, and peer mentoring, this section examines the broader theoretical considerations that underpin these models and offers guidance for selecting the most effective approach for your institution.

Recap of Mentoring Models

- **Internal Mentoring** – Shared context and immediate access are advantages, but mentees may be hesitant to speak openly due to power dynamics.

← *Best suited for onboarding and skills transfer.*
- **Internal-External Mentoring** – Combines contextual understanding with psychological safety, ideal for structured professional development or leadership programmes.

← *Best suited for structured professional development, leadership pipelines, or transitional support between roles.*
- **External Mentoring** – Provides impartial guidance and fresh perspectives, useful for career development and reflective practice. Orientation is critical to align mentors with institutional norms.

← *Best suited for reflective practice, career development, and fostering innovation through external insights.*
- **Peer Mentoring** – Supports emotional resilience, adaptation to the workplace, and informal knowledge sharing. Most effective when complemented by structured reflection opportunities.

← *Best suited for orientation, collegiality, and support*

In addition to the previously identified models, we also highlight further opportunities:

- **Group Mentoring** – Encourages collective learning and exposure to diverse experiences but requires strong facilitation and clear group norms.

← *Best suited for building team cohesion, promoting shared reflection, and fostering cross-disciplinary understanding.*

- **Hybrid Models** – Flexible and adaptive, combining the strengths of multiple approaches to meet complex developmental needs. Careful planning is essential to avoid confusion or inconsistency.

Best suited for mentoring with varied staff profiles or evolving mentoring goals that require customised solutions.

Why Mentoring Models Matter

The choice of mentoring model influences:

1. **Learning outcomes and developmental focus** – Different models support different types of learning. Peer mentoring often prioritises practical, day-to-day skill transfer and emotional support. Professional mentoring (internal-external or external) encourages reflective practice, leadership development, and structured skill growth. Group and hybrid models combine elements of both, promoting collaborative problem-solving alongside targeted professional development.
2. **Psychological safety and openness** – The level of confidentiality and trust inherent in a mentoring model directly affects how candid mentees are. Internal mentoring may be limited by hierarchical pressures, whereas external mentoring often fosters more honest reflection. Understanding this helps institutions match mentee needs with an environment where they can speak openly, experiment with new approaches, and learn from mistakes without fear of repercussion.
3. **Sustainability and institutional impact** – Mentoring is more than a developmental tool; it is an intervention in organisational culture and leadership. Models that rely heavily on individuals without institutional support, risk inconsistent implementation. Peer mentoring may be highly accessible but can be fragile under operational pressures, while hybrid or group models require careful planning but can embed learning more deeply across a cohort of staff. At the same time, it is important to consider your goal:
 - a. Is your goal to onboard new staff within an institution? Peer-Mentoring may be your best solution.
 - b. Is your goal recruitment and retention? You may want to establish a more formal mentoring programme, which can be advertised.
 - c. Is your goal to create leadership and positive effects on organisational culture? You may prefer a more direct investment into professional mentoring.
4. **Equity and inclusivity** – Not all staff have equal access to mentoring opportunities. Models that rely on internal networks may unintentionally reinforce existing

hierarchies or privilege certain staff. External or hybrid approaches can help ensure equitable access, providing all mentees with professional guidance and reflective space. At the same time mentor-mentee matching will be crucial to increase the likelihood of positive and impactful mentoring relationships.

Theoretical Considerations for Selecting a Model

1. **Matching objectives to model design** – Consider what you want mentees to achieve. Skill transfer, coping strategies, reflective practice, leadership development, or innovation may each require different mentoring structures.
2. **Institutional context and culture** – Hierarchies, operational pressures, and staff workloads all influence the feasibility and effectiveness of each model. Peer mentoring may thrive in a collaborative culture, whereas external mentoring may be necessary in hierarchical or high-pressure environments.
3. **Psychological safety, trust, and confidentiality** – These are fundamental to effective mentoring. Facilitators must consider:
 - *How confidential is the relationship?* Internal mentoring risks leaks or judgment; external mentoring often allows more candid discussions.
 - *How quickly can trust develop?* Shared experience accelerates trust, but external mentors may cultivate deeper, more reflective trust over time.
 - *Group dynamics:* Group mentoring requires explicit agreements on confidentiality and norms to maintain psychological safety.
4. **Resource implications and sustainability** – Mentoring programmes require time, trained mentors, and institutional support. Models that are flexible, accessible, and scalable are more likely to be sustainable, but they must also preserve developmental quality.
5. **Flexibility and adaptability** – Hybrid models allow institutions to address multiple needs but require clear guidelines and monitoring to ensure that mentees receive consistent support.
6. **Monitoring and evaluation** – Any model should include mechanisms for feedback, assessment of progress, and adjustment to ensure it continues to meet institutional and mentee objectives.

Comparison Guide: Practical Reference for Facilitators

Model	Best Suited For	Confidentiality	Trust	Time Commitment	Key Advantages	Key Limitations
Internal	Onboarding, skill transfer	Moderate	Develops quickly but may be affected by hierarchy	Flexible, may be disrupted by operational pressures	Context-specific guidance, immediate access	Fear of judgment, blurred boundaries
Internal-External	Leadership, structured professional growth	High	Strong once relationship established	Requires coordination	Balances contextual knowledge with professional distance	Scheduling and logistics
External	Career development, reflective practice	Very high	Builds gradually; can foster deep reflection	Planning and orientation required	Impartial guidance, fresh perspectives	Limited familiarity with institutional realities
Peer	Resilience, peer support, adaptation	Moderate	Builds quickly; influenced by hierarchy & demands	Integrated into daily routines	Emotional support, accessible, builds collegiality	Informal structure, may lack depth for professional growth

Section 2: Structuring Mentoring Sessions

Questions answered in this section:

- *How long should sessions be, and how frequently?*
- *What formats can sessions take (individual, group, remote)?*
- *How to set clear goals and agendas?*
- *How to structure sessions and using the frameworks already taught (T-GROW, OSKAR, SMART Goals)*

A well-defined structure facilitates mentors and mentees in optimising the use of their time together. Although flexibility remains important, establishing a mutually

agreed-upon framework regarding session duration, frequency, and progression guarantees that discussions stay targeted, productive, and aligned with developmental objectives.

Formats and Duration of Mentoring Sessions

Individual sessions (45 – 60 minutes, weekly, bi-weekly or monthly)

These sessions constitute the foundational element of most mentoring relationships. They offer a confidential environment wherein the mentor and mentee can dedicate their focus to the mentee's development, foster trust, and engage in meaningful dialogue. Typically, these sessions last between 45 and 60 minutes and are initially held weekly or biweekly, transitioning to a monthly schedule as the relationship matures. The structure generally adheres to a consistent pattern: A brief check-in to reconnect, an exploration of the mentee's goals and current challenges, reflection guided by structured questions, and ultimately, agreement on specific next steps. Frameworks such as T-GROW and OSKAR (see Module 3) provide a structured roadmap for these discussions, ensuring that they remain focused while permitting space for reflection. The purpose of these individual sessions is not merely to address immediate concerns but also to empower the mentee to develop problem-solving strategies, take ownership of their growth, and translate learning into their daily practice.

Group Sessions (60 minutes, bi-weekly or monthly)

Group sessions serve as a structured complement to individual mentoring by bringing multiple mentees together under the guidance of a mentor. Unlike individual sessions, the primary focus of group sessions is on **shared learning, peer support, and collective problem-solving**, rather than resolving a single mentee's individual issue. These sessions create a **safe and equal space** where participants can reflect on workplace challenges, develop critical thinking and conflict management skills, and strengthen professional relationships within the prison context. By working collaboratively, mentees learn to navigate challenges together, identify recurring patterns in their experiences, and cultivate a solution-oriented mindset. These sessions typically take 60 minutes, allowing ample time for all participants to contribute.

The **objectives of group sessions** include:

- Building a supportive peer network and fostering teamwork.
- Encouraging reflective thinking and a solution-focused approach to workplace challenges.

- Developing transferable skills such as active listening, critical thinking, and conflict management.
- Providing mentees with exposure to diverse perspectives, enhancing their ability to analyse problems and generate practical strategies.

What are group sessions?

Group sessions involve a small cohort of mentees (typically four) and a mentor acting as a facilitator. One mentee presents a real-life workplace challenge, and the group collaboratively explores the issue, offering questions, reflections, and potential strategies while the presenter observes. This process encourages peer learning, mutual support, and reflective practice, allowing mentees to gain insight not only from their own challenges but also from those of their colleagues.

Structure of a Group Session (60 minutes)

- 1. Kick-Off and Introduction (5 minutes)**
 - The mentor sets the tone, explains the session structure, and introduces the presenting mentee. The presenting mentee should already be pre-identified and should be aware that they will present a current challenge to the group.
 - Emphasise respectful listening, reflection, and a safe, equal environment.
- 2. Presentation of the Challenge (4–6 minutes)**
 - The presenting mentee shares a workplace challenge, focusing on facts and context.
 - Other mentees listen silently and take notes; no solutions are offered at this stage.
- 3. Clarifying Questions (5 minutes)**
 - The group asks neutral, fact-focused questions to clarify understanding.
 - No advice or opinions are shared; this stage ensures the problem is fully understood.
- 4. Silent Reflection and Idea Generation (2–4 minutes)**
 - Participants individually write down questions, ideas, or potential next steps.
 - No talking; this allows everyone time to process and reflect on the challenge.
- 5. Group Discussion (8–10 minutes):**
 - The group shares reflections, suggestions, and ideas collaboratively.
 - The presenting mentee remains silent, observing and listening.
 - The mentor ensures balanced participation and maintains a respectful tone.
- 6. Presenter Reflection (5-6 minutes):**

- The presenting mentee reflects aloud on what stood out, which ideas felt most helpful, and potential actions they might take.
- The group listens without interruption.

7. **Closing/Wrap-Up (5-10 minutes):**

- The mentor summarises key learning points, reinforces collaborative problem-solving, and encourages ongoing reflection and peer support.
- The mentor provides a space for mentee reflections.

Key Benefits of Group Sessions:

- Builds teamwork, peer support networks, and a sense of community among mentees.
- Promotes critical skills, including active listening, reflective thinking, and conflict management.
- Encourages a solution-focused, reflective approach to challenges rather than immediate problem-solving.
- Provides mentees with broader perspectives, as they learn from both their own and their peers' experiences.
- Helps mentees recognise patterns in challenges and consider multiple approaches to professional issues.

By combining structured reflection, peer learning, and facilitator guidance, group sessions reinforce the mentoring process, complement individual mentoring, and contribute to **developing resilient, thoughtful, and collaborative staff** within correctional settings.

Whether conducted individually or in groups, all sessions benefit from having clearly defined goals and agendas. Goals should be realistic, meaningful, and articulated in a manner that promotes progress. The utilisation of the SMART framework guarantees that objectives are specific and attainable, while models such as T-GROW and OSKAR offer the structure necessary to guide reflection and action throughout the session (see Module 3 for detailed information and practice activities). When mentors and mentees dedicate time to explicitly define their objectives in advance, sessions assume a more purposeful character, results are more readily monitored, and both parties can distinctly observe progress over time.

By merging the depth of individual mentoring with the collective advantages of group supervision, programmes can establish a balanced framework that is both supportive and sustainable.

Example Mentoring Timetable

Below you can find an example mentoring timetable for a one year mentoring programme with a staff cohort newly introduced to mentoring.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Month 1 to 6	Individual Session	Group Session	Individual Session	Group Session
Month 7 to 9	Individual Session	Group Session	Individual Session	Break
Month 10 to 12	Individual Session		Group Session	

C. Practice Activities

List of Practice Activities:

- *Activity 1: Model Matching Exercise*
- *Activity 2: Session Planning Workshop*
- *Activity 3: Scenarios on Session Structures*

Activity 1: Model Matching Exercise

Purpose: This activity helps participants deepen their understanding of different mentoring models (Internal, Internal-External, External, Peer, Group, and Hybrid) by analysing how each aligns with specific institutional needs and mentoring goals. Through guided discussion and case scenario-based problem-solving, participants explore the advantages, limitations, and contextual suitability of each model. The activity builds on Module 1 and encourages participants to apply the knowledge on practical mentoring design decisions introduced in Module 4.

Time: 45 minutes

- Introduction – 5 minutes
- Matching Task – 25 minutes
- Sharing and Reflection – 15 minutes

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Materials:

- Printed or digital handout summarising six mentoring models (Internal, Internal-External, External, Peer, Group, Hybrid)
- Scenario cards describing different institutional contexts or mentoring needs
- Flipchart or whiteboard for group discussion
- Markers or pens

Instructions

Phase 1: Introduction (5 minutes)

- Emphasise that different mentoring models serve distinct functions depending on institutional culture, available resources, and mentee development needs.
- Highlight key decision-making factors when choosing a model, such as:
 - Level of confidentiality and trust required
 - Availability of time and resources
 - Purpose of mentoring (e.g., onboarding, leadership development, wellbeing)
 - Institutional hierarchies and culture
- Frame the exercise as an opportunity to “match the model to the context.”

Phase 2: Matching Task (25 minutes)

- Divide participants into small groups (3 to 5 persons).
- Provide each group with a set of scenario cards representing different institutional contexts and mentoring challenges.
- Task: For each scenario, groups must:
 1. Identify the most suitable mentoring model.
 2. Explain *why* it fits the context.
 3. Consider possible challenges (confidentiality, time, trust, logistics).
 4. Suggest adaptations to improve fit or feasibility.
- Each of the tasks should be prominently displayed.
- Groups should note key points on flipchart paper or digital slides.
- Encourage participants to reference their own experiences where similar mentoring dynamics have occurred.

Sample Scenarios

Scenario 1 – Staff Induction in a High-Security Prison

The institution is onboarding new officers who need rapid adaptation to routines and

security culture.

→ *Which mentoring model ensures immediate contextual support and consistent access?*

Scenario 2 – Leadership Development for Middle Managers

A group of newly promoted managers needs reflective space to discuss delegation, staff motivation, and decision-making.

→ *Which model promotes strategic reflection and confidentiality across facilities?*

Scenario 3 – Reducing Burnout and Building Resilience

Experienced officers report emotional exhaustion and disengagement. The institution wants to strengthen peer networks and wellbeing.

→ *Which model builds mutual support while managing workload constraints?*

Scenario 4 – Professional Reflection Across Prisons

Staff from different sites are involved in a regional mentoring initiative.

→ *Which model balances contextual understanding with objectivity?*

Scenario 5 – Training Newly Appointed Mentors

A group of new mentors seeks confidence in applying frameworks and sharing learning collaboratively.

→ *Which model offers structured, facilitated learning and shared reflection?*

Phase 3: Sharing and Reflection (15 minutes)

- Each group presents one scenario and their reasoning for the chosen model (2–3 minutes each).
- Facilitate a debrief discussion using guiding questions:
 - *What patterns did you notice in your model choices?*
 - *How do confidentiality, trust, and time differ across models?*
 - *What challenges arise when implementing these models in real prison environments?*
 - *Could a hybrid or phased approach offer more flexibility?*
- Record insights on a flipchart to highlight key learning points

Facilitation Guidance

- Anchor the learning: Remind participants that Module 1 outlined the theory whereas this activity focuses on *application* and *decision-making* in realistic contexts.
- Encourage reasoning over recall: Ask *why* participants chose certain models and what trade-offs they considered.

- Draw out reflections: Prompt with questions like, “What model would you choose if confidentiality were the top priority?” or “How does limited time influence your choice?”
- Adapt scenarios: Trainers can replace or modify scenarios with current institutional challenges for relevance.

Activity 2: Session Planning Workshop

Purpose: This activity enables participants to practise structuring a mentoring session with clear objectives, logical sequencing, and the use of established frameworks (SMART, T-GROW, or OSKAR). Participants learn how effective mentoring sessions follow a deliberate flow from check-in and exploration to reflection, goal-setting, and closure. By developing their own individual session plans, participants strengthen their ability to plan purposeful, balanced, and mentee-centred mentoring interactions in either one-to-one or group supervision contexts.

Time: 50 minutes

- Introduction – 10 minutes
- Group Task – 25 minutes
- Sharing and Reflection – 15 minutes

Materials:

- Printed or digital handouts summarising SMART, T-GROW, and OSKAR frameworks
- Mentee profile cards (Profiles 1–5 below)
- Flipchart paper or digital planning template
- Markers or pens
- Timer

Instructions

Phase 1: Introduction (10 minutes)

- The trainer briefly revisits the three key frameworks: SMART goals, CLEAR, FUEL, T-GROW, and OSKAR, highlighting their relevance for already established mentoring relationships.
- Explain the structure of an effective mentoring session: Check-in → Exploration → Reflection → Goal-setting → Closure.

- Clarify that the focus of this exercise is session design and structure, not conducting a live mentoring conversation.
- Emphasise that structure creates focus and safety in mentoring relationships, while maintaining flexibility to meet the mentee's needs.

Phase 2: Group Task (25 minutes)

- Divide participants into pairs or small groups.
- Assign each group one mentee profile from below.
- Task: Design a 45–60-minute session plan that includes:
 - Session objectives (aligned with the mentee's needs)
 - Planned activities or discussion prompts, referencing CLEAR, FUEL, T-GROW or OSKAR
 - Approximate timing for each stage (check-in, exploration, reflection, goal-setting, closure)
 - Strategies for closure and follow-up, such as feedback questions or SMART goal formulation.
- Encourage creativity but ensure that the design remains realistic, structured, and mentee-focused.
- The trainer should circulate to support groups, prompt reflection, and answer questions.

Mentee Profiles

Profile 1: New Staff Member

- Background: Recently joined the prison service; motivated but inexperienced.
- Challenge: Feels anxious about maintaining authority with incarcerated people and struggles to balance empathy with firmness.
- Session Goal: Understanding their needs. Build confidence in applying boundaries while remaining professional and supportive.

Profile 2: Experienced Officer Facing Burnout

- Background: Fifteen years in service; respected but emotionally exhausted.
- Challenge: Feels disengaged and increasingly cynical about the work.
- Session Goal: Explore stress management strategies and identify small steps to re-engage with the role. Sign-post when necessary.

Profile 3: Middle Manager Transitioning into Leadership

- Background: Newly promoted; first time leading a team.
- Challenge: Struggles with delegation and tends to micromanage, could be leading to staff frustration.
- Session Goal: Identify practical ways to delegate effectively and empower the team.

Profile 4: Officer Struggling with Communication

- Background: Competent but introverted; avoids conflict.
- Challenge: Hesitates to speak up in meetings, leading to misunderstandings.
- Session Goal: Develop strategies to communicate more clearly and assertively in team settings.

Profile 5: New Mentor in the Programme

- Background: Recently trained as a mentor; enthusiastic but uncertain.
- Challenge: Feels insecure about structuring sessions and maintaining professional boundaries.
- Session Goal: Practise using T-GROW or SMART goals to structure a one-to-one session confidently.

Phase 3: Sharing and Reflection (15 minutes)

- Each group presents their session plan briefly to the wider group (3 minutes per group).
- The trainer facilitates a reflection discussion:
 - *What similarities or differences did you notice between session plans?*
 - *Which elements made sessions feel realistic and structured?*
 - *How did the frameworks help shape your planning?*
- Summarise key takeaways on a flipchart or whiteboard:
 - “Structure creates clarity and progression.”
 - “Frameworks are tools to guide, not to control.”
 - “Every session should end with reflection and next steps.”

Facilitation Guidance

- **Emphasise intentional structure:** Mentoring sessions are most effective when mentors move deliberately through exploration, reflection, and goal-setting rather than staying purely conversational.

- **Anchor the frameworks:** Reinforce that CLEAR & FUEL support starting relationships, whereas T-GROW and OSKAR promote developmental dialogue and SMART ensures actionable follow-up.
- **Encourage realism:** Remind participants to consider prison work dynamics such as shift timings, environment, and emotional intensity when planning sessions. What could hinder your engagement and how can you solve it?
- **Link to practice:** Ask, “How might this session design look in your own mentoring conversations?”

Activity 3: Scenarios on Session Types

Purpose: This activity enables participants to experience the dynamics of various mentoring formats. Through scenario experiential learning, they practise adapting their approach to meet the needs of individuals versus group settings.

Scenario 1 – Individual Sessions

Goal: Help mentors facilitate individual sessions.

Instructions: In pairs carry out the following scenario, swap roles in the middle.

Timings: 2x 20 minutes (15 minute practice + 5 minute feedback)

Materials:

- Scenario handout
- Reflection sheet
- Optional whiteboard

Situation: You are holding your third individual session.

Roles:

- *Mentor (Learner):* You are a new mentor and are holding your third session with a mentee. You are focused on building trust, since you do not know each other well yet. You also want to understand the problem and support your mentee in finding a solution for themselves rather than telling them what to do.
- *Mentee:* You are a new prison officer and have your third session with your mentor. You recently got into an argument with a colleague over how you dealt with problems during exercises. You want to talk to your mentor about it, but are also

hesitant, as you did not expect to have issues with your colleagues. You open up when your mentor gives you space.

Learning Outcomes:

- Exploring one-to-one sessions
- Using active listening and relationship-building skills
- Applying coaching structures in realistic situations.

Success checks:

- Active listening
- Summarising key points
- Mirrored body language
- Adhering to one of the coaching and goal-setting structures.

Facilitation Guidance:

After practice, invite the participants to reflect how the mentor's presence (tone, posture, silence) helped or hindered openness. Highlight the difference between empathy and rescuing.

Scenario 2 – Group Sessions

Goal: Help mentors facilitate group sessions.

Instructions: In groups of five (4 mentees - one mentor) carry out the following scenario, swap roles three times to take different perspectives in the middle.

Timings: 3x 25 minutes (20 minute practice + 5 minute feedback)

Materials:

- Scenario handout
- Reflection sheet

Situation: You are holding your third individual session.

Roles:

- *Mentor (Facilitator - Learner):* You are a new mentor and are holding a group session with your mentees. Explain the session structure, set the scene by introducing the presenter for today's sessions and facilitate the time management.
- *Presenter:* You are a new prison officer and present for the first time during a group supervision with your colleagues and mentor. You bring forward a situation from

your recent work experience where you struggled to manage a conflict between two incarcerated individuals. You also received some backlash by colleagues, who called you “soft”. You feel unsure whether you handled it appropriately and are seeking constructive input from the group. Share your perspective openly, explain what you did, and highlight where you felt uncertain or overwhelmed.

- *Group Members:* You are new prison officers and are told about a situation one of your colleagues is facing. Follow your facilitator’s guidance and try to help/advise the presenter well. If you want, test the facilitator by not entirely adhering to the guidance such as asking questions during silent reflection etc.
- *Alternative Presenter:* You are a new prison officer and bring a situation from your daily work to the group session. A young incarcerated person you often interact with has recently started to open up to you during routine check-ins, sharing personal details about his family and current struggles. While you have responded with supportive words, you are now questioning whether you may have crossed a professional boundary or become too emotionally involved. You want to use the session to reflect with your colleagues on how to navigate these situations, where empathy and professional distance appear to be in tension.

Learning Outcomes:

- Exploring group sessions
- Exploring active listening and facilitation skills
- Applying group session structures in realistic situations

Success checks:

- You adhere to the group structure
- You intervene when necessary but avoid giving advice

Facilitation Guidance:

After practice, invite the participants to reflect how the mentor’s presence (tone, posture, silence) helped or hindered openness. Highlight the difference between empathy and rescuing.

D. Trainer Notes and Guidance

This section provides facilitation guidance for delivering **Module 4 – Session Structures**, ensuring trainers can confidently lead participants through both theoretical and practical components. The focus of this module is to deepen mentors' understanding of mentoring models, and to strengthen their ability to **structure and facilitate mentoring sessions** that are purposeful, ethical, and adaptive to correctional environments.

Trainers should encourage **active participation, reflection, and contextual application** throughout. The module builds upon knowledge from **Module 1 (Mentoring Models)** and **Module 3 (Frameworks for Mentoring Conversations)**, moving participants from conceptual understanding toward **applied session design and facilitation competence**.

Emphasise Why Session Structure Matters

Why it matters: Structure is not rigidity, it provides clarity, safety, and flow within mentoring conversations. In high-pressure environments such as prisons, mentors benefit from a consistent process that helps manage time, sustain focus, and build psychological safety for both mentor and mentee. Structured sessions also make mentoring more measurable, transparent, and replicable across the institution.

How to do it:

- Begin by revisiting the importance of structure in creating safe and purposeful mentoring interactions.
- Use real examples of unstructured vs. well-structured mentoring conversations to show how clarity changes the outcome.
- Stress that structure supports, rather than constrains, empathy and reflection.

Practical tips:

- Write the session sequence visibly (Check-in → Exploration → Reflection → Goal-setting → Closure).
- Reinforce that session design should flex to context.
- Highlight how frameworks like **SMART, CLEAR, FUEL, T-GROW, and OSKAR** keep discussions on track while still honouring the mentee's voice.

Gentle prompts:

- “How does a clear session structure influence a mentee’s confidence and openness?”
- “When might too much structure limit spontaneity or trust?”

Model and Reflect on Group Mentoring Dynamics

Why it matters: Group mentoring fosters collective learning, resilience, and problem-solving all essential in correctional environments. However, it also presents facilitation challenges such as managing participation, confidentiality, and time.

How to do it:

- Introduce the group session structure step-by-step using the visual sequence provided.
- Emphasise the facilitator’s role: setting tone, maintaining boundaries, and balancing contributions.

Practical tips:

- Before starting, co-create group norms around confidentiality and respect.
- Observe and note patterns: who dominates, who withdraws, how silence functions.
- Reinforce that the mentor acts as a facilitator, not a problem-solver.

Gentle prompts:

- “How did facilitation style affect group safety and openness?”
- “What strategies helped balance participation?”
- “What’s the difference between facilitating and advising?”

Address Confidentiality, Trust, and Time Management

Why it matters: These three variables determine the depth and safety of mentoring relationships. In correctional environments, mentors must manage confidentiality, build trust across rank hierarchies, and work within strict time limits.

How to do it:

- Facilitate discussions on real dilemmas: What happens if confidentiality is breached? How can trust be rebuilt?

- Compare how these factors differ between models (e.g., internal vs. external mentoring) and how you can overcome certain model restrictions or challenges.
- Encourage reflective dialogue on maintaining professional boundaries and reliability.

Practical tips:

- Reinforce institutional procedures for confidentiality and escalation.
- Model consistent communication and respectful curiosity as a trainer.

Gentle prompts:

- “What does trust look like in your mentoring relationship?”
- “How do you balance transparency with confidentiality?”
- “When does time pressure begin to affect trust or depth of reflection?”

Reinforce Reflective Practice and Continuous Learning

Why it matters: Mentoring effectiveness depends on the mentor’s ability to reflect, adapt, and learn from each interaction. Encouraging reflective habits strengthens ethical judgment and professional growth.

How to do it:

- Facilitate peer sharing to normalise learning from challenges.
- Highlight the importance of reviewing what worked and what could be improved after every session.

Practical tips:

- Use post-activity debriefs to gather “key insights” on a flipchart.
- Encourage participants to identify one practical change they will implement in their next session.
- Link reflections to institutional culture: How can mentors model reflective leadership?

Gentle prompts:

- “What surprised you about today’s session structures?”
- “Which frameworks felt most natural to your facilitation style?”
- “What will you take into your next mentoring conversation?”

E. Resources and References

- Unlocked Graduates – Programme Structure: This outlines how Unlocked uses Mentoring Prison Officers (MPOs) with structured roles, selection and training. [Unlocked Graduates](#)
- PRISGRADS – External Report: Examines recruitment, competency frameworks and mentorship programmes within European prison services. [Richtungswechsel](#)
- HM Prison & Probation Service (UK). “*Looking After Our People: The Prison Service Employee Package*” includes mentoring & buddy schemes for staff induction and support. [GOV.UK](#)
- National Institute of Corrections (USA). “Mentoring staff” focuses on assigning senior staff to support junior staff, guidance for mentoring staff roles. [nicic.gov](#)
- VIDEO: Mentors on the Unlocked Graduates Programme. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWMxY3shEfs>