

## MENTORING guidelines – 104 London Debaters

For those who are experienced TMs and/or mentors, most of these points will not be new, except for **the new commitment** we ask you to make in terms of giving feedback (something some of the mentors may have been doing already, of course). The following notes are a short digest of TM principles and guidelines, slightly re-worked to fit within a debating club context and with some added points.

The mentors' role is to support mentees as they take personal responsibility for working toward the accomplishment of broader goals over a sustained period of time

Due to the format of our meetings, we don't provide evaluations of each speaker at the meetings of 104 London Debaters, but peer-review and reciprocal support is central to the TM ethos. It is therefore **extra useful for the mentee to receive feedback from the mentor** after having done a speech or carried out another formal role in the meeting.

### KEY COMMITMENT FOR MENTORS AT 104 LONDON DEBATERS:

**As a mentor, therefore, we ask that you commit to trying your best to be present at any meeting where your mentee has a role, and that you provide helpful feedback orally or in writing within a reasonable time-frame, as agreed between you and your mentee.**

By arrangement, the feedback could also feed into the formal pathway evaluations. The mentee may benefit from discussing with you what Pathway is most suitable for him or her.

**The below guidelines are suggestions that we hope you will find helpful, and that will contribute to making mentoring at 104 meaningful and valuable.**

#### Practical tips:

- Make sure to agree with the mentee how you will communicate, so that the expectations are clear and the demand on your time is reasonable.

An example could be:

After the mentee has done a formal role:

- Written feedback sent by email (based on notes made during speech/role) one or two days after the club meeting
- Later that week, by mutual agreement, a 10–20 min video call (or phone call, or meeting up at a local cafe, or whatever is agreeable to both parties) to chat through the feedback and explain/discuss progress, etc.

And in preparation for the next debate:

- Discuss good ways to prepare, either by having a chat or in writing
- By mutual agreement, arrange to watch practice run of debate speeches if that is something the mentee wishes to do

## **AGREE ON GOALS**

- Make sure to ask the mentee at the outset what his goals are. If unsure, you could perhaps suggest some goals after having watched the mentee in action.
- After agreeing on goals, make sure that advice/feedback given is helpful towards achieving them.

**Some how-tos for giving feedback based on TM principles:**

**Share observed information, instead of going straight to advice**

- It's easy to say you should do this or that, but start always with saying what you observed, focussing on how you experienced the debater's contribution (what worked well/not so well in your *opinion*). Then ask the mentee how he felt about it, what areas he thinks he needs to improve and how that can be achieved.
- If you disagree with the mentee, explain why and try to reach a common understanding.
- At this point it is appropriate to move to any specific advice you may have for the mentee. Obviously don't say you *must* do such and such, but rather this has worked for me, perhaps you could try that, etc.
- Provide feedback based on what you know about the speaker's public speaking ability and level of confidence. If the member is new to public speaking, focus more on what he is doing well. Boost a new speaker's confidence first, then note a few skills he needs to develop.

- Give an advanced speaker more feedback on ways to enhance her communication and leadership skills while still including positive remarks.
- Please do make sure to ALWAYS include positive and encouraging points; reinforcing and boosting existing strengths are the best ways to build a debater's confidence and enable him/her to build on those strengths to become even better.

### Face to face feedback:

Q1 How did **you** feel about your speech/debate contribution?

Q2 Use I-statements and tell mentee how you experienced the speech

(I think what worked well was... / I was a little distracted by... / I think your performance would benefit from...)

- In all evaluations and feedbacks AVOID evaluative adjectives (good/bad/great/wonderful).

These have very little value in explaining WHAT worked or didn't and WHY, and it is the *whats* and *hows* a speaker/debater needs to know in order to get rid of bad habits and build on existing strengths to get better.

Example:

DON'T: "That was a **great** debate speech, I really **loved** it, you did **so well**."

DO: "The **arguments** in your debate speech were set out **clearly and systematically**, which I felt made it **easy to follow** from premise to conclusion, and I therefore found it a **persuasive** speech.

Of course it may be nice to give a compliment first, as a way to put the mentee at ease, but in the formal feedback it has little informative value and so is best avoided.

### 2 aspects: content and delivery

#### Content:

- According to TM guidelines for evaluations, we are not supposed to comment on the actual content of a speech usually, but in a debate setting it is necessary to evaluate the arguments chosen. The mentor should try to give the mentee some feedback on whether the premises, conclusions, examples, anecdotes, reasoning, etc. that formed part of his debate contribution worked well as part of his team's effort to persuade the audience.
- ALSO: Structure is important – did the structure work well? Was it clear to follow the reasoning, etc.?

- If something didn't work as well as it could have, do NOT jump straight to 'what I would have done is ...', but rather ask the mentee to come up with other possible alternative angles/arguments, if necessary.

### **Delivery:**

- Here we should use the various points that TM presents in its material either as relevant for the chosen Pathway (if the evaluation is to form part of the formal progress) or just as a general guideline, such as tone of voice, use of vocabulary, eye contact, pace, timing, use of pauses, etc.
- But in addition, we need to pay special attention to how well the speech/presentation worked on the screen. This is really important. Currently we meet via Zoom, and feedback given on how to improve the way in which we use this medium in our presentations and contributions can be very helpful. (This can also be very valuable for a work setting).

### **Points to cover include (but are not limited to):**

- Image: was it **bright enough** (or too bright?), was it clear, was it too far away, too close?
- Sound: was it **loud enough**, distorted, did it break up, was it pleasant to listen to?
- Did the speaker look into the **camera** to connect with the audience, or read from a script off screen?
- Did the speaker smile and look **confident**, or did the speaker give the impression of being uncomfortable?
- Did the speaker use hand **movements** that distracted or did they work to reinforce the message?
- Did other movements **distract** (wobbling or nodding of the head)?

### **Help with preparations:**

- Important as giving feedback after a delivery is, it could also be helpful to a mentee to get some support during the preparations. The need will vary, so this is to be agreed in each case.

### **Points to cover:**

- Getting started – bouncing ideas, making a structure
  - Incorporating points from the debate team discussions
  - How to practice your speech (including using the recording function on Zoom to see yourself)
  - Timing – how many words per minute (100–150 for a comfortable pace)
  - Preparing for clashes
  - Structure – how to structure arguments and when and how to deliver rebuttals
- In all things, have the **agreed goals** in mind and refer back to them in the feedback/help given.
  - Where relevant, look on the Toastmaster website and use the rich resources there to help with what and how to help the mentee grow and improve.

**THANK YOU** for giving of your time and sharing your knowledge, skills and experience for someone else to improve, and for making our club experience an even richer and more meaningful one. As individual debaters improve, so will our debates.

## **MENTORING BENEFITS**

Members with all levels of experience can benefit from having a mentor. No matter how much experience a member has, he or she can grow and learn from having personalized support as he or she works toward goals.

- Through mentoring mentees gain self-confidence and will often achieve at a higher rate than members without the encouragement and support of a mentor.
- Peer-review and reciprocal support is central to the TM ethos, and by receiving feedback your experience and knowledge can benefit someone who wishes to improve their skills.
- You also gain valuable experience as a mentor, which can be relevant in the world of work, plus it can aid your progress through the TM mentoring pathway.