

Mentoring Programme Guide for Mentors

“I am delighted to introduce the RREF mentoring programme guidance and structure. One of the very best ways we, as practitioners, can help students is to offer them an insight into our experiences and here they have the opportunity to have a one to one connection with an alumnus.

This is a great opportunity for us all to give something back to Reading and to share the benefit of our experiences with some of the brightest and keenest students in the country who will soon be entering our industry.”

Bryan Laxton, RREF Trustee

Introduction

Thank you for volunteering as a Mentor in the RREF Programme 2017/18. We have developed a structure to ensure consistency in practice and understanding of the mentoring process. This is a work in progress, but we hope it will allow effective access to mentors and ensure this valuable support for students is efficient and trouble-free for both parties.

As a mentor, this framework should help you to understand both the benefits and the responsibilities of the mentoring relationship.

Aims

1. Help students learn about the industry whilst at University
2. Encourage students to find work experience
3. Help students understand which area they may want to specialise in and what type of company may suit them
4. Help to make students more employable
5. Offer better graduates to industry

How it will work

It is proposed that mentors should mentor a student throughout their Reading studies in order to allow the mentee to gain the maximum from the relationship and to ensure the advice and guidance given is consistent as their needs change during their study period. We hope that mentors who have been paired with a 2nd year student will continue this relationship until the end of their 3rd year.

In the eighth year of the mentoring programme beginning in October 2017, new mentors will initially be offered to the new 2nd year Undergraduate students and Masters students.

The meetings are to be arranged between you and your mentee: as a guideline these should occur three to four times a year and be flexible in format, e.g. an office-based chat, property/site visit, or shadowing you for a few hours. We suggest that contact be made as soon as you know who your mentee is and the first meeting should take place by the end of November.

You are not expected to cover costs of travel or lunch/coffee but in some cases the mentee may need some help, where we hope a compromise can be made.

Partnerships

Partnerships are made based on the mentor's area of primary focus and sectors of experience and the mentee's focus area and chosen areas of interest. While we aim to match partnerships up appropriately we can only match the mentors we have and we hope that if you do not share the exact area of interest as your mentee, they will still be able to gain wider experience of the industry and working practices from you. However, if you do have any specific problems please let us know as soon as possible.

Mentoring Activity

The ongoing mentoring activity is between you and your mentee. You jointly determine the content and style of the sessions. However, setting some form of objectives based on this guide will help the relationship be more effective. You could also discuss your availability for, for example, ad hoc calls or spending a day together. There will be no obligation for you and no guarantee to the mentee of future internship or employment. We have made some suggestions below for how often you should aim to meet your mentee and the kinds of topics you may want to discuss. Please be aware that these are purely an example of how a partnership could work and mentors and mentees are encouraged to set an agenda which relates specifically to their needs. It is also up to the discretion of both parties as to the number of meetings and phone calls that are deemed necessary to maintain a successful mentoring relationship.

Timeline

- **End October 2017:** Mentors and mentees are paired up. You shall receive an email from RREF notifying you of your mentees details
- **November 2017:** The first meeting should take place; both parties discuss what they want to get out of the relationship, parts of the industry they are specifically interested in and set a general agenda for future contact. This may include:
 - What will be the purpose of the mentoring relationship?
 - What objectives do we want to work with?
 - How do we want to run the relationship and future sessions?
- **February 2018:** A second meeting to have taken place. More specific career advice could be given e.g. plans for work experience, job applications, CV, etc.
- **March 2018:** RREF Mentoring reception held in London- a chance for you and your mentee to network with other partnerships
- **April 2018:** A third meeting to have taken place

Some etiquette for mentoring

Entering into a mentoring relationship is significant and carries a certain amount of responsibility for both parties. For the mentor it is important to bear the following in mind:

Do

- Help your mentee take the initiative in the relationship and learn to engage in relationships and networking with various members of organisations
- Listen to their ideas and issues
- Make it clear that the mentee is not expected to follow all your suggestions
- Help your mentee to make progress against their goals

Don't

- Assume your advice or suggestions will be followed
- Ignore the mentee's objectives
- Talk negatively about your mentee behind their back

Being involved in a mentoring relationship is a privilege for both parties and should be highly rewarding for both Mentor and Mentee. We trust this simple guidance and framework will help you to enjoy and benefit from an effective and valuable mentoring experience.

If you wish to cease the relationship

You may cease the relationship at any time should you wish to do so. This may arise should you feel that your mentee may benefit from another perspective, or due to sudden increased work pressures. You should discuss the situation with RREF.

Feedback

Please feel free to contact RREF with feedback at any time during the year. If problems arise within the partnership please do not wait until the end of the year to let us know. We will aim to find a solution to problems to ensure both parties get the most out of the relationship.

Further information

If you would like further information on the programme, please contact the RREF Team on info@rref.reading.ac.uk