

UOR MENTORING GUIDELINES

Mentoring Scheme for Research Staff

This mentoring programme is part of the variety of learning and development opportunities offered by the University to research staff. Mentoring is a process where one person offers help, challenge, advice and support to facilitate the learning and development of another, especially when they are new to the University. It supports the new researcher to become effective as swiftly as possible by helping them understand the context of their role within the University, School and research theme.

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SCOPE

The mentoring scheme is available to all new research staff, whether appointed on a permanent or fixed term contract. Their line manager, Research Division Leader, Head of School or nominated person from within the school will assign a mentor for them on appointment. The mentoring relationship is expected to last at least until the end of the probationary period, or until the new member of staff shows that they are capable of acting as an independent researcher within the University.

This scheme does not replace the New Staff Induction session, which should be attended by all new staff and is booked via Employee Self Service, or the local induction to the school carried out by the line manager as it is the line manager's responsibility to ensure that the new starter receives a comprehensive induction to the University and their team.

There are also University mentoring guidelines for new academic staff and for new professional and managerial staff. Where Schools have their own arrangements in place for mentoring academic, research and / or support staff, Schools should ensure that their practices meet or exceed the minimum guidelines.

MENTOR ALLOCATION

It is a good idea for the mentor to be outside the direct line management of the new researcher and they should always be an experienced active researcher themselves. It is not necessary for them to carry out research in the same specific field as the new researcher, although it is helpful if their own research is in the same general area, so that they will be aware of the national and international context and structures.

They should have, and be willing to make available, appropriate time to meet with their mentee at regular intervals, to read draft written work or grant proposals, as appropriate, and to be able to connect the mentee to other colleagues who might help. They should also display the characteristics outlined below as part of the responsibilities.

The line manager or nominated person will gain the agreement of the person to take on a mentoring role. It is recommended that the mentor should have already attended the 'Successful Mentoring' training provided by People Development or book themselves onto the next available date. In selecting a mentor, the line manager should consider:

- do they have the capacity in their workload to support the new staff member?
- do they want to take on the role?
- do they listen well and ask open questions?
- can they give honest and direct feedback in a constructive way?
- can they create a safe but challenging learning environment that suits the needs of different types of people?
- do they have a proactive approach to their own development to appreciate the importance of development for the new member of staff?
- are they likely to have empathy with the problems faced by new researchers?
- do they have a balanced view of the importance of each facet of the University?
- do they role model the University's Values and Behaviours?
- are there any cultural or gender issues that should be taken into account?

The new starter should make contact with their mentor within their first two weeks to arrange the first meeting.

BENEFITS OF MENTORING

Mentoring is a fantastic opportunity to help someone to settle into a new role quickly and explore personal motivation, skills and thought processes with an independent colleague. The relationship can bring benefits to both the mentor and the mentee.

Benefits to the Mentee

Benefits will vary for individuals but it is likely that mentoring will help to achieve at least some of these points:

- settling in and developing networks more quickly
- understanding the culture, professional behaviours and values of the University
- overcoming feelings of isolation
- receiving advice and encouragement
- having access to an informed second opinion
- help with problem solving
- gaining insight into own performance through a 'critical friend'
- identifying development needs and opportunities
- drawing on another person's perspective
- reflection on our behaviours and approach, increasing personal awareness
- developing knowledge or skills
- building confidence
- dealing with change
- responding to a challenge
- balancing work with personal life
- guidance on career development.

Benefits to the Mentor

Mentoring can be extremely rewarding for the mentor in the following ways:

- developing their own skills and expanding their experience
- learning about other areas of the University or School
- finding personal satisfaction from seeing a colleague develop and flourish
- acting as a catalyst for own personal development and change
- having access to different ideas and perspectives
- having the opportunity to discuss research issues that there would not normally be the chance to do
- gaining insights into their own practices, approaches, thinking and behaviours
- enhanced organisational reputation.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Carrying out research can be a very lonely process. A primary role of a research mentor is therefore to provide encouragement for, and show an interest in, their mentee's research plans and activities. Both parties have a responsibility to ensure that the mentoring relationship is of mutual benefit and it is based on trust, confidentiality and equality. By participating in the scheme, both parties agree to abide by the Ethical Code of Practice for Mentoring, as shown in Appendix A.

Mentees should:

- be open and honest with their mentor
- respect any trust that they show, for example sharing personal and confidential information
- arrange each meeting, set the agenda and make the time for it. Each meeting typically lasts for one hour, although this can vary with agreement from both parties
- keep their mentor informed of progress and any problems at each meeting
- ask for help or advice
- prepare for and participate in meetings
- achieve actions and / or targets within deadlines as agreed with the mentor
- agree the frequency and location of the meetings with their mentor.

Mentors should:

- provide guidance based on their past experience in a sensitive and straightforward way that deals with the participant's concerns
- create a positive relationship based on open communication
- commit to arranged meetings
- empower the participant to solve problems rather than give solutions
- any criticism should be given constructively
- being a mentor should develop your own skill base, get feedback from the participant and consider your own development as well as their development
- be interested in the participant and their objectives
- keep an eye out for anything that would be of interest to or support the participant
- respect the confidentiality of the conversations with their mentee, subject to the exceptions described in the next section
- help the mentee to focus on a manageable research agenda
- advise on their publication strategy and suitable outlets for research outputs
- help to transform research ideas into projects that could attract external research funding, and advising on funding sources
- help them to plan a longer term research career (i.e. thinking beyond their first grant)
- ensure new researchers are aware of internal support (both within the School and the wider University) for making grant applications, for example Research and Enterprise Services (RES)
- suggest other appropriate internal and external contacts/potential collaborators
- encourage new researchers to attend key conferences etc in order to gain new research ideas and make new contacts
- read draft written work or grant proposals, as appropriate, and assist in providing introductions to other colleagues who may be helpful in working with/guiding the new researcher in the development of their research
- provide encouragement for, and show an interest in, their mentee's research plans and activities. All new staff engaged with research should have been set explicit research targets that should be achieved within their probation period. In many instances, the research mentor can help the new researcher to break down these higher level targets into a number of sub-targets, with deadlines.

MAINTAINING GOOD PRACTICE

The role of a mentor is not the same as a line manager and if the mentee is struggling in their role then the mentor should not try to manage them. Instead, the mentor should follow the responsibilities highlighted above, encouraging the mentee to develop their own strategies for resolving the situation. If appropriate, the mentor may recommend that the mentee seeks assistance from their line manager, other University support services such as Human Resources, Occupational Health, People Development, Harassment Advisors and the Employee Assistance Programme, provided by EmployeeCare or to external sources of support such as their GP.

Both the mentor and mentee have a commitment to each other to maintain confidentiality both during and after the mentoring relationship. However, there may be some circumstances in which the mentor might need to seek assistance and disclose the reasons for this. Examples may include if the mentee is behaving in a way that is of considerable concern, appears to be going against University policy, acting illegally or raises concerns for the mentee's or other's safety. The mentor should discuss concerns with the University support services or external authorities. If possible and appropriate, this should be done with the mentee's consent and permission. The mentor should not contact the mentee's line manager, unless this has been discussed and agreed with the mentee.

ENDING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Mentoring relationships are expected to last for at least six months, although they can last longer by mutual agreement to support the new researcher to a point of independent research. They usually come to a natural end as agreed between the two parties. However, either party can end the mentoring relationship at any time with no blame attached, for example if the mentoring relationship is not working or there is a personality clash. Mentors and mentees must notify the Head of School of any changes to relationships.

BECOMING A MENTOR

If you would like to become a mentor, please gain agreement from your line manager in the first instance. You can then book onto the Successful Mentoring Workshop, which is run at regular intervals and covers the key aspects of this scheme and skills required.

APPENDIX A

Ethical Code of Practice for Mentoring

- The mentor's role is to respond to the mentee's developmental needs and agenda; it is not to impose his or her own agenda
- Mentors must work within the current agreement with the mentee about confidentiality that is appropriate within the context
- The mentor will not intrude into areas the mentee wishes to keep private unless invited to do so. However, he or she should help the mentee recognise how other issues may relate to those areas
- The mentor will be sensitive to issues of culture, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, race, age and all other aspects of diversity
- Mentor and mentee should aim to be open and truthful with each other and themselves about the relationship itself
- The mentoring relationship must not be exploitative in any way, nor can it be open to misinterpretation
- Mentors need to be aware of the limits of their own competence and operate within these limits
- Mentors have a responsibility to develop their own competence in the practice of mentoring
- The mentee must accept increasing responsibility for managing the relationship; the mentor should empower them to do so and must generally promote the mentee's autonomy
- Mentor and mentee should respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring that they do not impose beyond what is reasonable
- Mentor and mentee share responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship when it has achieved its purpose – they must both avoid creating dependency
- Either party may dissolve the relationship. However, both mentor and mentee have a responsibility for discussing the matter together as part of mutual learning
- The mentee should be aware of his or her rights and any complaints procedures
- Mentors must be aware of any current law and work within the law
- Mentor and mentee must be aware that all records are subject to statutory regulations under the Data Protection Act 1998.