

# Introduction to Mentoring

## What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is a process for helping someone develop in their current job and also for the future.

- A mentor is a person who offers support and guidance to another; an experienced and trusted counsellor or friend (Oxford English Dictionary)
- Mentoring is help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking (Meggison and Clutterbuck, Mentoring in Action)

It is often characterised by:

- Focusing on the overall development and aspirations of the mentee
- The relationship being professional and also, to some extent, personal
- Mentees sharing whatever critical issues impact their professional and personal success.
- Being a long term relationship between the mentor and the mentee
- The employee's manager is not a critical partner in the mentoring process

Through the mentoring process, we would like to promote a culture where:

- all members of staff feel empowered and supported to ask others for mentoring support
- all members of staff feel open to supporting others' development through mentoring

Our aim is to provide you with all support and resources that you need in order to work with a mentor (and make the most from it).

## Who is the Mentoring for?

Mentoring is available to all academic, academic Related and Research staff across the organisation.

A mentor can offer the right kind of support for you if YOU are:

- willing to take responsibility for your goals
- willing to reflect on what you want out of the relationship
- willing to seek out and identify who would be the best mentor for you
- able to commit to driving the relationship forward

And want to learn and develop by working with someone who can:

- provide feedback
- help them find their own solutions, but provide some advice and expertise
- help develop specific skills

## How does a Mentoring Relationship work?

Mentees are encouraged to either find their own mentor or ask their PI/Supervisor to assign someone.

The mentee initiates the first meeting/contact, where they establish whether the mentor would be able to meet the mentees needs. If rapport is established and both parties feel that they can work well together, they can take the conversation further. Initially, establish the boundaries of the relationship, probable length, when and how will they 'meet', ways of working, confidentiality, and most importantly: learning and development objectives.

There is no fixed time that mentoring relationships are expected to last. This is entirely a matter for the mentee and mentor to decide. It often depends on the mentee's needs.

## The Purpose of Mentors

Mentors help people learn and develop. Mentoring therefore has the potential to make a valuable contribution to staff in terms of personal and organisational development. It ties in closely with the emphasis we place on personal and professional development, and it promotes knowledge sharing across the organisation.

Benefits for the Learner can include:

- Increased confidence/self-esteem
- Increased sense of value within the organisation
- Help and support
- Safe learning environment (can be open about vulnerabilities)
- Increased understanding of the organisation
- Focus on specific skills (i.e. coaching from the mentor)
- Ideas about career opportunities
- Training in new skills (financial, staff management, committee membership etc)

The benefits are not all one way. Mentors too can gain a sense of value within the organisation as well as satisfaction from passing on their skills and wisdom; also greater understanding of the organisation and its issues and problems, as well as improving one-to-one communication skills, coaching skills and management skills.

## The Role of the Mentor

Mentoring is separate from the line management chain. Your relationship with your mentor should however, benefit your relationship with PI/Supervisor. You can be open with your PI/Supervisor about the fact that you have a mentor if you wish, and you can ask your PI/Supervisor support in identifying development areas that you might want to work with a mentor with. This is however not a requirement and your relationship with your mentor is confidential

Your mentor will not supplant your PI's role or act as an instructor, tutor or personal friend to you. Instead they will provide an additional resource and complement the relationships you have already developed within and outside the organisation.

Mentors are volunteers. They can be more senior within the organisation (offering wisdom and organisational awareness), or external to the organisation, may offer insights into particular skills and experiences (including project management, change processes or leadership) and they can be from a different affiliate (sharing their knowledge of their affiliate).

Mentors can...



A mentor is expected to...

- act as a sounding board
- listen and challenge
- question
- provide professional and personal support
- encourage independent thinking
- keep to boundaries and principles
- encourage their mentee to come up with their own solutions to problems
- coach the mentee to make the most of their talents
- build the mentees self confidence
- act as a role model
- be someone to talk to outside the line management structure
- offer insights into the culture and values of the organisation
- share their experience and expertise
- give feedback
- provide advice where possible and relevant
- indicate additional resources



## Your Own Role

The relationship between yourself and your mentor is two-way and you bear equal responsibility for making it work effectively. Both of you will gain and learn from the work you do together and you will decide together how it will work and what you will cover.

As a mentee you are expected to:

- Be prepared to drive the mentoring relationship forward and take ownership of your learning
- Identify your development goals and decide how you will work towards them
- Agree and commit to a schedule of meetings
- Prepare for meetings, and undertake any agreed actions
- Maintain the confidentiality of the relationship

## Finding your mentor

1. First of all, you need to be clear in what you'd like the mentor to support you with. Reflect on what you want a mentor to help you with. (see above)
2. Then you can think about:
  - Who could provide you with that support?
  - Where in the organisation are they?
  - What is their knowledge/experience?
  - What is their role?
  - Who do they work with?
3. How can you find them?
  - Maybe you met someone at a course/workshop/conference/event?
  - Maybe you have heard about their work/seen something they have written or posted.
  - Ask your PI or supervisor/colleagues, if they have any good ideas
4. Create a list of a few people, who you have identified as potential mentors.
5. Once you have some people in mind, please get in touch with them (in your order of priority). The easiest way to do this is to send them an email, in which you outline what you'd like them to support you with (your objectives).
6. If they come back to you to say they would be happy to support you, you can arrange an initial chat, to see if you would like to continue in a mentoring relationship.