Academic Related Staff

Guidance Notes on the Role of the Mentor
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“Tell me and I forget.
Show me and I remember.
Involve me and I understand.”
Introduction

Welcome to the “Leadership and Management Development Programme for Academic Related Staff” mentoring scheme. These guidance notes have been designed to provide both parties involved in the mentoring process, the Mentor and the person being mentored, with some basic background information about mentoring to help ensure that the mentoring relationship is successful. The mentoring relationship is crucial to the success of the Leadership development programme. The guidance notes are therefore quite extensive for use as a resource if the mentoring process needs a helping hand. A workshop for mentors supports this programme and mentors are strongly advised to attend.

1. Why have a mentor?

Mentoring is rapidly becoming recognised world wide as a highly effective developmental process for employees in many diverse organisations. The UK higher education sector has recently invested in a number of collaborative mentoring schemes through the HEFCE’s Good Management Practice project work, and also through the Higher Education Staff Development Agency’s National Mentoring Scheme for Senior Managers.

In the Leadership Development Programme for Academic Related Staff participants have a number of elements to support their personal development, mentoring being one of them. The key elements of the programme are:

- A modular Development Programme consisting of a series of five workshops planned over 9 months
- A “coach” allocated to each individual on the programme - usually one of the programme tutors
- A “mentor” allocated to each individual on the programme
- Participation in Action Learning Sets
- Job experience/job shadowing
- A workbased project to consolidate the learning of the programme
During the programme participants will be at the centre of a web of personalised development options supporting the development of leadership behaviours and management skills that are essential for any future role. The mentor plays a key part in supporting this self-directed approach to learning and development.

The benefits of mentoring

To the Mentor:

- Challenge and stimulation
- Identify future potential of the person they are mentoring
- Mentors can learn from a mentee. Learning is a two way process
- Satisfaction at the success of their mentee: some may well overtake the mentor career wise
- Recognition of the mentor's counselling and development skills by the University.
To the Mentee:

- Ready and planned access to senior people as part of their personal development
- Support and challenge in formulating a clear sense of personal direction
- Career enhancement in terms of professional advice
- Quick induction into the formal and informal culture of the University
- Learning, understanding and working with organisational politics
- A role model who can be observed closely as well as from a distance to develop skills in a practical hands-on way.

To the University:

- Tangible and measurable gains if work tasks and projects are used as a development tool
- Demonstrates a commitment to training and development
- The learning curve can be reduced by tapping into people's experience directly
- Increase in the levels of motivation to all those involved
- More effective people by applying learning to the job in a structured way
- Developing the leadership and management skills vital for future leaders of research, teaching and other departmental and faculty activities.

Thinking about mentoring

There are three aspects to the mentoring relationship:

- A high degree of mutual trust - confidentiality is crucial
- The mentor helps another person become what they aspire to be
- The mentor helps another person realise his/her potential.

Most people who have never had a formal mentor before often find that they have already had some form of mentoring from someone who took a personal interest in their welfare and professional development - someone who was prepared to share their experience and knowledge to enable them to develop.
How long will it take?

The average time commitment is around 2-3 hours per month although more time is required at the beginning to start things off.

Choosing a mentor

The mentor for the University Administrators Leadership Development programme is likely to be a senior person within a participant’s own Department. It may be their line manager or someone whom the participant already knows quite well.

To help choose an appropriate mentor ask the following questions:

- Who would be a useful role model, displaying appropriate behaviours and management skills?
- Who would I trust to help me resolve a difficult situation in my professional or personal life?
- Who would challenge and support me to acquire a vision and purpose to take on a new direction in my working life?

The person who now springs to mind is your ideal mentor. If your mentor does not represent this ideal then it is important to move towards this ideal as part of the mentoring process. Remember all parties need to get something out of this in terms of personal development.

The mentor will help in linking your learning on the programme with your day to day work and personal development. They should both support and challenge you and help you think what actions you will take as a result of the programme, particularly how you will assess the success or otherwise of those actions.
Personal anecdote

When I joined the University I was asked after a few weeks to find someone to be my mentor. I asked Paul since we worked in the same Department and he seemed friendly and approachable. We set aside an hour each week; every Friday afternoon so I could talk through issues that were concerning me. We ranged over a lot of issues both personal as well as professional. There always seemed to be a link with both how I was feeling about home life and the level of performance I was achieving at work. In that sense it was an holistic approach. Unless I had confidence in Paul’s integrity it would have been difficult to discuss a lot of what was important to me.

Paul would always ensure that we left with action points and these would be the starting points for next week’s discussions. I could always ring or e-mail him between meetings if I needed to. As time went on I found that I needed less of Paul’s time as I had a clearer idea of the type of things I needed to do to help myself. It was invaluable to talk over small matters that I did not want to bother my manager with. The main thing I got out of mentoring was a picture of the University and my place in it. Thanks to Paul I quickly settled in and built up a strong sense of how my career might develop and what kinds of things I needed to learn and understand to make progress.

2. What does a mentor do?

Definitions of mentoring

"Mentors are influential people who significantly help you reach your major life goals".

"Mentoring is a protected relationship in which learning and experimentation can occur, potential skills can be developed, and in which results can be measured in terms of competencies gained rather than curricular territory covered".

"...it is a relationship rather than an activity".

Who would make a good mentor?

David Clutterbuck illustrates a lighthearted look at the role of the mentor in 'The Twelve Habits of A Toxic Mentor'. The real role of the Mentor is not to exhibit these habits!

- Start from the point of view that you - from your vast experience and broader perspective - know better than the mentee what’s in his or her interest
• Be determined to share your wisdom with them - whether they want it or not; remind them frequently how much they still have to learn

• Decide what you and the mentee will talk about and when; change dates and themes frequently to prevent complacency sneaking in

• Do most of the talking; check frequently that they are paying attention

• Make sure they understand how trivial their concerns are compared to the weighty issues you have to deal with

• Remind the Mentee how fortunate s/he is to have your undivided attention

• Neither show nor admit any personal weaknesses; expect to be their role model in all aspects of career development and personal values

• Never ask them what they should expect of you - how would they know anyway?

• Demonstrate how important and well connected you are by sharing confidential information they don't need (or want) to know

• Discourage any signs of levity or humour - this is a serious business and should be treated as such

• Take them to task when they don’t follow your advice

• Never, never admit that this could be a learning experience for you, too.
Are you ready to be a mentor?

Use this self-assessment tool to help you think about what the role means in practice.

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<tr>
<th>Potential Mentors</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you have at least 2 hours per month to meet in person or on the phone?</td>
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<td>2. Do you have knowledge, skills and the attitude that you wish others to develop?</td>
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<td>3. Do you encourage others by giving them praise and positive reinforcement?</td>
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<td>4. Do you enjoy learning from others who have less experience than you do in the University?</td>
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<td>5. Do you appear patient when teaching something to another person?</td>
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<td>6. Do you recognise the potential in individuals beyond what they see in themselves?</td>
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<td>7. Do you maintain strict confidentiality in a professional relationship?</td>
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<td>8. Can you willingly help someone without receiving the thanks or compliments you deserve?</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Do you give corrective feedback in a way that doesn’t discourage or defeat the person?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Do you have the coaching and counselling skills to be a mentor?</td>
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If you have scored yes in all boxes welcome to the mentoring role. Your experience and skills will be invaluable. If you have scored no in any boxes identify what steps you need to take in order that this can be ticked yes. If you scored no in more than six boxes mentoring is not for you at this stage!
What are the skills that a mentor needs to put ticks in the right boxes?

- Does not blame - stays neutral
- Will give honest answers
- Not intimidating - easy to approach at any time
- Knows what they are talking about - good at own job
- Actively questions
- Enabling, caring, open and facilitative
- Gives constructive and positive feedback
- Provides subtle guidance, but ensures mentees make any decisions
- Interested in the other person, showing genuine concern
- Willing to debate, challenge and discuss

Mentors have to possess a real interest in others and specifically in their development and learning. This is crucial, as it is this that drives their ability to put the issues and concerns of their mentees ahead of the other things that the rest of us find more important. The mentor’s role is essentially to accelerate the rate at which a person learns.

Mentoring is not to be taken on lightly, as it is potentially a powerful intervention in the development of others, and can, but does not always, involve having to deal with a lot of personal issues that may have had no other means of outlet or resolution.

Mentoring is not an exact science as both mentors and mentees have different ways of working and varying expectations of the role. It is therefore useful to work within a framework to get the most out of the mentoring relationship.

How to get the mentoring process started

It goes without saying that the first thing to do is identify a suitable mentor and agree with them that they are prepared to take on the role. Looking through these guidance notes will help people decide what they are really taking on.
Mentoring as an activity can be broken down into three separate phases:

1. Rapport
2. Diagnostics
3. Action Planning

1. Rapport
At this stage it is important that the mentor takes the lead and pays attention to developing the relationship. It is important to clarify the aims and objectives of mentoring so that both parties have a mutual understanding of what is involved. As a mentor you may have to think about how much time you can practically give. Is a weekly meeting desirable or achievable? Never promise anything you cannot deliver as it will impact on the quality of the relationship.

What would a mentor do?
- Ask open questions
- Listen to answers
- Negotiate an agenda.

Resist the temptation to give advice or tell the mentee what to do. Remember you want the mentee to do things for themselves.

What type of things would be said at this stage

What would you like to talk about today?
Tell me about your experience of....?
Let’s explore this issue some more
You said very little about X but that seems to be central issue of what we are discussing
What I understand you to be saying is?........
Is that right?

Always attempt to explore issues further, recap when appropriate, paraphrase and summarise to clarify and encourage mentee to focus on what is central to the issue you are both discussing. The key to the success of the mentor’s role is in asking questions the mentee may not ask themselves.
2. Diagnostics

This stage is the turning point in the process. New learning can make the mentee feel quite vulnerable, especially if they recognise that a way of behaving has outlived its usefulness and there is a need to change. Be supportive and sensitive so that when you have to challenge the mentee will be receptive. Progress at this stage can be slow and erratic. You may have to go back to building rapport to get the relationship back to a positive one.

What would a mentor do?

- Listen and challenge
- Ask open and closed questions to get to the specifics of the issue
- Agree priorities
- Share experience and illustrate with anecdotes and stories.

What type of things would be said at this stage?

- What do you think is the most important thing you have to work on?
- You have show real commitment in this situation. However there are some things that you seem to regret. Is that a fair comment?
- That reminds me of a situation I faced when I worked in…..
- Now that looks like doing … is a viable option, here is something I did in a similar situation that may be of use
- Well done, it feels like you have really got to the key issue here

This stage should not be rushed as poor understanding may lead to ill thought out actions.
3. Action Planning

If stages 1+2 are done well this stage is quite straightforward. Don't expect every meeting to end with an action plan. It may be appropriate to arrange a meeting to complete what you started in a previous meeting.

Remember the Mentee owns the solution or action even when they enlist your help to do something on their behalf because they do not have the power or influence to make a particular action happen.

What type of things would be said at this stage?

Let's look at the pros and cons of doing this.

Now that you have decided to do... is there anything else that you need to do to help this action happen?

How can I help you achieve this? Perhaps ... might help?

Let's spend some time discussing the mentoring process itself, as we agreed to do. Perhaps over lunch.

Mentors have to accept that they will have, in all likelihood, to put a lot more in than they get back.
3. The role of the mentee

Personal chemistry is important in a mentoring relationship. A lot as been said about what a mentor needs to do but this is a two way street. Mentees need to think about what they bring to the process.

Being a mentee involves

- Accepting a challenge willingly
- Doing what you say you are going to do
- Being committed to the process
- Being willing to discuss things openly
- Learning to take risks in order to make progress.

Within the three stages of the mentoring process a mentee will need to talk about

- Work related issues
- Career development
- Time management
- Personal issues
- Domestic issues.

Mentees need to clarify their expectations with their mentor. Agree with them at the beginning what their expectations are. These may include:

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<tr>
<th>Being challenged</th>
<th>Being supported and encouraged</th>
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<tr>
<td>Learning from examples</td>
<td>Learn how things work in the University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning from mistakes</td>
<td>Share critical knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving wise counsel</td>
<td>Develop self confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen and be listened to</td>
<td>Being assisted in career development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming self aware</td>
<td>Being given time</td>
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</table>
4. Are you ready to begin?

- **Planning for the first meeting**

  It is helpful to have an agenda for each meeting. What areas need to be covered? Agree what each person wants to get out of mentoring. Be clear about what you can and cannot do.

- **Getting to know each other**

  You may already know each other. It is important to establish trust and a way of working well together. Share past experiences and expectations. What do you have in common? View the first meeting as a social event aimed at building a longer term relationship. Both people need to come away with a positive attitude about the mentoring process.

- **Establish some ground rules**

  Agree the boundaries of the relationship. Respect confidentiality. This is important if the mentor is also a line manager who conducts a staff review on the mentee. How much time is being committed? Where and when are you going to meet? How will meetings be recorded - via the participant's learning log and Personal Development Plan?