

# Mentoring Information Sheet<sup>1</sup>

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## Why Mentoring?

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 Leadership Foundation's National Mentoring Scheme for Senior Managers.

## What is Mentoring?

Mentoring is defined as 'an informal and supportive relationship whereby a more experienced member of staff undertakes to help a new member of staff to learn his/her job and understand its context within the University. This echoes the sentiments of Megginson & Clutterbuck (1995) who describe mentoring as, "*off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking.*"

All mentoring relationships are unique and as such a mentor can provide support in a number of ways such as:

Sounding Board	to test ideas and suggestions on
Facilitator	to be able to point to potential opportunities, arrange introductions
Advisor	to provide objective advice on a range of issues, including career opportunities
Coach	to directly assist the mentee to improve a specific skill
Expert	to act as a source of technical/professional knowledge
Source of organisational material	to be able to explain University policies, culture, values
Role model	to promote and encourage positive behaviours in others
Source of feedback	to provide constructive feedback
Confidant	to express fears and concerns to
Motivator	to encourage the achievement of goals and boost morale
Challenger	to challenge assumptions and encourage alternative thinking

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<sup>1</sup> This information and advice was developed with Sophie Sowerby, Mark Crabtree, as a faculty member of Durham University's Coaching and Mentoring Group 2010-17.

## What are the benefits of mentoring?

### For mentees:

- Provides impartial advice and encouragement
- Develops a supportive relationship
- Assists with problem solving
- Improves self-confidence
- Offers professional development
- Encourages reflection on practice

### For mentors:

- Opportunity to reflect on own practice
- Enhances job satisfaction
- Develops professional relationships
- Enhances peer recognition
- It uses your experience, making it available to a new person
- It widens your understanding of the organisation and the way it works
- It enables you to practice interpersonal skills
- It provides personal satisfaction through supporting the development of others

## What Can I Expect?

Some mentoring can occur naturally in the workplace, but usually it needs some formal management to ensure that it happens. The success of mentoring depends on the quality of the working relationship developed between yourself and your mentor. Your commitment and enthusiasm are vital to making the relationship a success.

Your mentor will arrange your first meeting. At this meeting, your mentor will try to clarify with you the level and nature of the advice and support that you think you will need and that your mentor feels able to provide, this can be reviewed and revised at later stages.

As a mentee you should be prepared to

- learn from examples,
- learn from mistakes,
- listen and be listened to,
- be supported and encouraged,
- share critical knowledge,
- learn how things work within the University,
- develop in self confidence and awareness,
- be assisted with career development,
- be challenged.

This is not an exhaustive list and each mentoring relationship will be unique.

Do not worry about asking "naïve" questions about the University and do not expect your mentor to know all the answers. He/she should however be able to point you in the right direction for further information and advice.

## For Mentors

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

## What are the skills that a mentor needs to put into action?

- 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.

## Bibliography

[Mentoring: An Overview, by Mike Munro Turner](#) (last modified: 4 February 2010)