Mentoring
Mentoring relates primarily to the identification and nurturing of potential for the whole person. It can be a long-term relationship, where the goals may change but are always set by the learner. The learner owns both the goals and the process. Feedback comes from within the mentee - the mentor helps them to develop insight and understanding through intrinsic observation.

Meggison & Clutterbuck, 2005

Mentoring

Mentoring can be a highly effective personal development and empowerment tool, supporting staff to progress in their career. This guidance booklet aims to outline the essentials for a mentoring relationship, the role of the mentor and mentee, and the parameters of mentoring, without overburdening documentation or restrictive frameworks.

Mentoring is viewed as a professional partnership between two members of staff, normally working within a similar field or with similar experiences. It is a helpful relationship based on mutual trust and respect, aiming to act as an effective professional and personal development tool. The University mentoring relationship aims to create an environment where the mentee can benefit from the guidance, support and experience of the mentor. Mentoring itself relates to the identification and nurturing of the potential of a person through a longer-term relationship, in which the mentee can evolve their objectives over time.

Some key distinctions of the University Mentoring Programme:

- A supportive form of development
- Focus on helping the mentee manage their career and improve performance
- An agenda set by the mentee, with the mentor providing support and guidance
- Meetings that are reasonably frequent with flexible scheduling

Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction.

John C. Crosby
Role of the Mentor

The mentoring relationship is mentee-centred, focusing on their professional and personal development. It can include giving advice, information, exploring facts, sign-posting and supporting the mentee to enhance their empowerment and control of their development and environment.

The role of a mentor is to:

• Actively listen
• Question – to elicit facts
• Give advice on career development
• Offer a different perspective
• Draw on and share their own experiences
• Confront and discuss current issues
• Take the lead and make decisions in the early stages of the relationship

The mentor should encourage the mentee to:

• Clarify their understanding
• Review and reflect upon themselves
• Share their thinking and challenge assumptions
• Take responsibility for themselves and their action plan
• Make decisions to maximise the mentoring relationship

“The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.”

Steven Spielberg
The mentee is expected to be open, honest and receiving of support. This, in turn, allows the mentor to speak openly and honestly, building a stronger relationship.

The role of the mentee is to:

- Communicate their circumstances clearly, concisely and honestly
- Question their understanding
- Act upon career development advice
- Accept differing perspectives
- Accept support and encouragement
- Share their own experiences to aid discussions
- Take the lead; guide and make decisions when the relationship is established

“I think it is a very important part of what the university does. It is our mission. The university seeks to support development of individuals and students so I see this as an integral part of what we do as an University and something that I really want to support and I want be part of it.”

Mentor
Mentoring Relationship

Prior to meeting with your mentor, consider what you wish to gain from the relationship, ensure you commit the time beforehand, and anchor your objectives around skills and capabilities you are wishing to develop.

There should be a mutually agreed mentoring structure tailored to your relationship, possibly including:

- Length and objectives of the mentoring relationship
- Location, duration and frequency of meetings
- Format of meetings
- Note-taking
- Confidentiality

A mentoring relationship has been found to work best when the mentor is not too far removed from the level of the mentee. A mentor with a different background can also bring some benefits in terms of a fresh perspectives and diversify thinking and approach, although neither of these conditions are mandatory.

The First Meeting

Also known as the ‘Contracting’ or ‘Chemistry’ meeting, it provides the opportunity to agree the mentoring relationship, the logistics and ensure there is rapport; crucial to the success of the relationship. The mentee should bring an idea of their expectations and objectives to this meeting, enabling both parties to clarify what they expect to achieve and how they will work together. A potential agenda for the first meeting may include planning meeting structure, chosen objectives and exchanging contact information.

Future Meetings

It is usually the mentee that takes responsibility for organising future meetings which can be determined partly by the nature of the mentee’s objectives and the degree of confidence the mentee feels in their role. Between meetings, the mentee needs to ensure they continually self-assess strengths and development areas, make the best use of advice offered and take responsibility for making things happen.

“For every one of us that succeeds, it’s because there’s somebody there to show you the way.”

Oprah Winfrey
Mentoring Programme Support

Other core people may have an interest in the mentoring programme. The role of the line manager is to be aware of the existence of the mentoring relationship and supportive of the individual during the intervention. If any developmental action arises, the line manager may be able to fund resource that enables this development. However, the role of the line manager and mentor are two distinct, separate positions and it is therefore inappropriate for the mentor to also be the mentee’s line manager.

The mentee is at the heart of the mentoring relationship, and as such the driver of the mentoring programme, a peer of the mentor, and accountable to the line manager. The role of HR&OD is to ensure a structured mentoring developmental framework is in place. HR&OD are also able to provide advice, support and recommendations that further enhance the mentoring programme.

“I feel more empowered to impact upon my environment, to be part of the institution. To also understand the University better because before I was in the place where I felt very disconnected with the institution.”

Mentee
Closing the Relationship

At the first meeting, if either participant feels the relationship will not work, this needs to be communicated to the OD Partner. Although this is quite rare, it is recognised that we are individuals and this may happen purely through individual differences. Therefore, there is a ‘no fault’ clause.

Toward the end of the partnership, a structured and planned approach is most appropriate. The closing conversations allows for recognition and appreciation to be articulated, with a celebration of achievement. The normal duration of a mentoring relationship may be around two to three years. However, as the relationship matures, meetings may become less frequent.

There are a number of considerations to account for to ensure a meaningful close:

- **Be Proactive:** discuss and agree the expected duration and how the relationship will close; this can always be reviewed at a later date.
- **Respect your Mentor/Mentee:** If one person wishes to end the relationship, honour their wishes. You may choose to ‘leave the door open’ should their circumstances change.
- **Evaluate the Relationship:** Periodically review the health of the relationship, making sure both your needs are being met.
- **Review Progress:** regularly review the progress toward the achievement the mentee’s objectives. Make it a point to rearticulate objectives and renegotiate the terms if you chose to continue the relationship.
- **Learning Integration:** When closing the relationship, consider how to consolidate what has been learned. An open closure provides the opportunity for integration and learning to be captured and consolidated.

“My mentor was excellent and really helped me to see things from a different perspective that I hadn’t appreciated before.”

Mentee
Photography: For a list of photographers who have contributed to the University of Stirling photo library, please contact marketingtools@stir.ac.uk

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