

Mentoring of New Staff at the University of Greenwich

Introduction

The mentoring of new staff at the University is aimed at pairing the new recruit with a more experienced member of staff, who may or may not be working in the same area, for the purpose of providing support and guidance to develop an understanding of the workings of the organisation and their role within it. These arrangements will apply to both academic and support staff – mentors will be sought for all new permanent full and part time staff. Whilst the same principles of support can, and should, apply to short term and fixed term staff in the early stages of their employment it is unlikely that the ongoing, formal arrangements for mentoring will be necessary or applicable.

Why do I need a mentor?

The University's procedures for the induction of new staff are well established and operate via the induction checklist and local and campus based induction sessions. Mentors are a supplement to this process, usually outside of the line management chain, providing a way for you to explore actual or perceived gaps in your knowledge and to ask 'naïve' questions concerning the University and your work in general in a professionally safe environment.

What does a mentor do?

A mentor is a person who is able to support and encourage you, helping you to overcome obstacles or problems. In doing this the mentor will be employing the skills of coaching, facilitating and networking all underpinned by well developed communication skills and the ability to see things from different perspectives. You should not expect your mentor to have all of the answers but they should be able to act as an access and referral point to colleagues in the institution and beyond and help you to develop an understanding of the University and your role within it.

All mentors are provided with appropriate training and briefing to develop the skills and qualities necessary for an effective mentoring relationship.

Above all, the relationship with your mentor is a confidential one.

How will a mentor be allocated to me?

Although initiated by the People Directorate the ultimate responsibility for allocating a mentor to a new member of staff rests with your Pro Vice-Chancellor or Director, although your immediate line manager may have been asked to make a proposal.

As with any relationship the mentoring relationship takes time to develop. If you find, however, that you are unable to develop an effective relationship with the person assigned to you as a mentor you should raise the matter in the first instance with your line manager. If necessary the People Directorate is able to assist in identifying an alternate mentor for you in consultation with your Pro Vice-Chancellor or Director.

Who will my mentor be?

A mentor will not normally be your line manager. In broad terms they will be someone who has more experience of working at the University, who has the answers to some of your questions and can identify 'someone who can' if they personally do not know.

How frequent and how long will mentoring meetings be?

The University will aim to support the establishment of effective mentoring relationships for new staff with the allowance of time for mentoring meetings. It is likely that the nature of the relationship will develop from one which starts off with the provision of basic information in response to specific questions and develops into more in depth discussion of wider issues. In your first few weeks you will probably be in contact with your mentor fairly frequently but only for short periods of time. As time progresses and the relationship develops you may find that you are meeting less frequently but for longer periods. As a rough guideline, after the initial period of frequent, short meetings you can expect meetings of about an hour once a month.

How does mentoring link with other systems and procedures in the University?

Whilst mentoring of new staff clearly has links with the induction process it does not form any part of probationary assessments which will be made by your line manager. Neither is there any link between mentoring and appraisal or disciplinary procedures.

How long will I have a mentor?

There is no set time that you will have a mentor. Although the emphasis is on the provision of mentoring to new staff there is nothing to prevent the continuation of the relationship as long as both parties are agreeable and are gaining from it. Arrangements for taking stock of the mentoring relationship are built into the scheme. To help with this you should think about and discuss with your mentor:

- what am I gaining from the relationship?
- is my time in mentoring well spent?
- is the focus of discussions appropriate?
- what should the focus and emphasis be?
- how has the relationship changed?
- is the relationship still beneficial to both parties? In what ways?
- how do I want the relationship to develop?
- has the relationship reached a natural conclusion?

This discussion will remain confidential to you and your mentor. Any decisions to change or discontinue the relationship should be made jointly only after full discussion of the issues.

What do I do next?

Once the allocation of your mentor has been confirmed approach your first meeting with them with an open mind – remember that the relationship with your mentor won't just happen you will both have to work at it. Don't expect your mentor to be a mind reader - be prepared to raise and discuss issues with them. You will not get anything out of the relationship if you are not prepared to put anything in.

If you have problems in getting a mentor or are unhappy with the mentor allocated to you speak to your line manager or contact the People Directorate direct.