Mentoring Guidelines

Introduction

This booklet will give you an overview of University of Aberdeen Mentoring Scheme and is for those who are interested in becoming a mentor, and those interested in being matched with a mentor. It is designed to give you information on how the scheme works, answer any initial questions you may have and to help you decide whether or not the scheme is right for you.

If you decide to join the scheme, further information and guidance will be given on how best to develop your mentoring relationship as part of your induction onto the scheme.

Why Mentoring

In our 2015-2020 Strategic plan, the University of Aberdeen outlined ‘People’ as being at the heart of our vision. The plan outlines our commitment to create a supportive environment for staff, empowering them to achieve their potential and career goals. Mentoring is identified as one of the key development opportunities the University will make available for staff as part of this commitment. Mentoring functions as a supportive mechanism to aid staff in identifying and achieving their career goals. In addition, mentoring contributes to the University’s mission to create a culture of equality and diversity as it is a tool through which groups that are under-represented in more senior positions or in particular areas of the university can be supported to gain access to career opportunities.

Why do we need a formal mentoring scheme?

You may already have established a mentoring relationship informally and may be unsure of the benefits of a centrally managed mentoring scheme. However, establishing a mentoring relationship informally often relies on meeting the right person at the right time and means that all staff do not have equal opportunity to benefit from suitable mentors. A formal scheme ensures that all staff have equal access to mentoring opportunities and can be matched with the member of staff most suited to their needs. In addition, as part of the scheme you will benefit from the resources, training and support which will help you get the most out of your mentoring relationship.

What is Mentoring

Mentoring can be defined as ‘off-line help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking.’ (Clutterbuck & Megginson, 2006).

A mentoring relationship is:

- A confidential relationship
- Between two people with different levels of experience.
- There to facilitate professional development depending on the needs of the mentee.
- Focussed on identifying goals for the mentee and on achieving these goals.
- A safe space to facilitate learning and explore ideas.

Mentoring is not:

- Line management
- Counselling
- Coaching
How is Mentoring different from Coaching?
The university also offers coaching opportunities for staff, and while mentoring and coaching relationships may make use of similar skills and may touch on similar issues, they are different relationships with different purposes. The main differences between coaching and mentoring are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coaching</th>
<th>Mentoring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Short term</td>
<td>• Long term (12 months)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More Structured</td>
<td>• More informal/ Less structured.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Specific, immediate work related issues or goals</td>
<td>• Broader focus on the mentee’s needs and personal development</td>
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<td>• Current skills and performance</td>
<td>• Focus on identifying and achieving longer term career goals</td>
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<td>• Meetings are focussed on resolving issues/goals</td>
<td>• Directed by mentee; mentor provides a supportive, guiding role</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Coach does not need to be an expert in the area of work</td>
<td>• Mentor has experience/ skills in a relevant area</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Coach does not give advice</td>
<td>• Mentor may give advice</td>
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The Benefits of Mentoring

Benefits to the mentor
There are many benefits associated with being a mentor. It can be a very rewarding experience as well as a source of personal development. Benefits can include:

- A sense of personal satisfaction
- An opportunity to share experience and expertise
- Gaining a different perspective on issues you are dealing with directly
- Gaining a different perspective on the institution as a whole
- Developing interpersonal and communication skills
- An opportunity to reflect on your own practice
- Increased self-awareness and awareness of your own learning gaps
- Developing leadership skills
- Gaining insight into staff morale etc.
- Developing the ability to challenge and stimulate
- Raising your profile within organisation

Benefits to the Mentee
Mentoring offers a range of benefits to a mentee related both to your own personal development and to the opportunities associated with exposure to members of staff out with your own team, particularly those in more senior positions within the university. Some of these benefits include:

- A source of support through a transition
- An opportunity to learn from a role model
- Help in clarifying, setting and achieving development goals
- A space for voicing concerns and anxieties in confidence.
- Support in problem solving/ finding solutions to challenges
- Increased self-awareness and confidence
- Opportunity to receive honest and constructive feedback
- Increased network
- May open up other opportunities
- Developing learning, analytical and reflective skills
- Opportunity to explore new ideas and take risks
Benefits for the University
The Higher Education sector is undergoing a period of great uncertainty and change. Staff need to be equipped with the skills and resilience to manage the significant transitions they will face in the future. Mentoring is a way to facilitate the successful negotiation of such transitions. In addition, benefits to the institution can include:

- Improved diversity in senior management
- Improved equality and diversity (complements programmes such as Athena Swan and Aurora)
- Higher staff morale
- Achievement of strategic objectives
- Greater staff retention
- Supports succession planning
- Identifying potential in junior employees
- Feedback & alternative perspectives on the institution
- Facilitates communication and team work between different areas of the university
- Improved communication skills among staff
- More focussed, driven and satisfied staff
- Faster learning curve among staff
How the Scheme Works

Who’s involved?

- **Staff Development Team:** The staff development team in HR will oversee the running of the scheme and will provide ongoing support and training for those involved.
- **Champions:** Members of senior staff in each college and professional services who raise awareness about the scheme and encourage staff to participate.
- **Mentoring Coordinators:** Members of staff in each school who are there to support members and potential members of the scheme. Coordinators run regular drop-ins open both to staff wishing to discuss joining the scheme and to those seeking advice and support with any issue they are experiencing in relation to mentoring. Coordinators also use their networks and organisational knowledge to support the matching process. If you are interested in becoming a coordinator, please email mentoring@abdn.ac.uk

Timescales

- **Recruitment:** We aim to recruit new mentors and mentees twice a year, though you are welcome to sign up at any time and we will endeavour to match you if a suitable mentoring partner is available.
- **Matching:** provisional matches will be made within 1 month of the recruitment closing date.
- **The Mentoring Relationship:** It is expected that mentoring relationships will last for 12 months.
- **Coordinator Drop-ins:** Your school/service coordinator will hold a drop in every 3 months.
Training & Resources

- **Mentor Induction:** After joining the scheme Mentors will be provided with a full day or two half-days of ILM endorsed mentor training prior to being matched with a mentee

- **Mentees Induction:** Mentees will be invited to a 1-2 hour induction prior to their first meeting with their mentor (this may be before or after a provisional match has been made)

- **Action Learning & Networking:** We intend to schedule action learning groups/networking events for members of the scheme to come together and share their issues and experiences around mentoring. These events will function as a form of group support to get advice and resolve mentoring issues. In addition this will be an opportunity to network with other individuals on the scheme. More information will be available from staff development in due course.

- **Documentation:** In addition to these guidelines, Mentors and Mentees will each be provided with a handbook containing guidance on how to make the most of the scheme. Relationships will also be supported by our Ethical Code of conduct.

- **The Staff Development team will endeavour to provide with any support you need throughout the mentoring life cycle. If you feel you require further training or support, please do not hesitate to get in touch.**

The Matching Process

**Recruitment Events**

Prior to recruitment deadlines, the staff development team and mentoring coordinators will run recruitment events. These events are not only the chance for participants to find out more about mentoring and the mentoring scheme, but also an opportunity for the mentoring team to get to know you and to help you identify your needs prior to submitting your matching form. You are strongly encouraged to attend these events as this will give us a clearer idea of your needs when matching you with a mentoring partner.

**SUMAC**

The University is trialling the use of SUMAC, an online matching software designed specifically for mentoring by the University of St Andrews.

Mentors and Mentees will sign up directly to SUMAC using an online form. Based on the information inputted into the database, SUMAC will suggest appropriate matches. These suggestions will then be reviewed by the staff development team, with the support of Mentoring Coordinators, who will make the final matching decision.

There are a number of formal opportunities for both the mentor and mentee to either accept a match or ask to be re-matched: when the provisional match offer is made to the mentee, after the first mentoring meeting and 3 months into the match.

In addition, if at any other point you feel that your match is not suitable, you will be encouraged to discuss this with your mentoring partner, before informing the staff development team to request to be matched with an alternative mentor/mentee.
The Relationship

Relationship Overview

The diagram below marks out the stages you can expect your relationship to go through. Time scales are flexible and you may find that some stages overlap.

Initial Meetings- Getting to know each other and agreeing objectives (1-3 months): The mentee should take responsibility for setting up the first meeting. The first meeting, and those that follow should be focussed on building a rapport between the mentor and mentee. Building a relationship based on trust and respect is vital to the success of your mentoring partnership. You may also wish to begin discussing what the mentee’s objectives are within the relationship.

During these meetings you should agree on when, where and how often you will meet; establish the boundaries of your relationship, such as discussion topics and communication between meetings and agree the focus or goals of the relationship.

Exploration and Action Planning (3-6 months): The mentee and mentor should work together to set goals for the mentee and plan how the mentee is going to achieve these goals.

Maturation (6-9 months): This is the period of the relationship where the most work is done. The mentor will challenge the mentee more and the mentee will experiment with ideas and new ways of working.

Ending the relationship (9-12 months): After 12 months should be officially ended. You will be contacted by the staff development team for feedback and to discuss next steps.

During the last few months of your relationship you will begin to reflect on the relationship and prepare for the relationship coming to an end.

You can request to renew your relationship or be re-matched if you feel you have more to gain from a mentoring relationship. Requests to renew a relationship will be considered depending on the current needs of the scheme and demand for mentors.

How the Relationship Works

A time limited relationship

It is expected that the relationship will last around 12 months and you should plan the relationship accordingly. Relationships that go on too long can often become unproductive and even damaging. In addition, it is important for a sense of closure and achievement that the relationship is formally ended as opposed to just fizzling out, which can leave either party unclear or dissatisfied.

It is up to the mentor and mentee to decide the frequency and remit of their meetings, but it is recommended that these will occur around once a month during the 12 months.

Goals

The mentoring relationship should focus on identifying and achieving personal development goals for the mentee. During the initial meetings the mentor can help the mentee think about defining their career ambitions and personal development goals.
**Review Meetings**
At various intervals throughout your relationship you will be encouraged to conduct review meetings. These meetings will be the opportunity for both the mentor and mentee to reflect on the relationship, assess if the relationship is still meeting your needs and where you are in relation to the mentee’s goals. At this stage you can make any required adjustments to the relationship.

A good time to carry out your review meetings may be at the 3-month check-in and 6-month evaluation points.

**Confidentiality**
The mentoring relationship is confidential between the mentor and mentee. Issues discussed within the mentoring relationship should not be shared with the mentee’s line manager or anyone else. In exceptional circumstances these may be shared with a member of staff responsible for the mentoring scheme.

Any passing of information between the mentor and the mentee’s line manager should go through the mentee. It is up to the mentee what they share with their line manager, though we strongly encourage mentees be open with their line manager about their involvement with the scheme.

All information you provide will be stored securely on SUMAC and will only be accessible by mentoring coordinators and members of the HR team. Anonymised data may be used for reporting purposes.

**No Fault Divorce**
At the 3 month stage, after you should have had a few meetings with your mentor/mentee, you will be contacted for an update on how the relationship is progressing.

At this stage either party will be given the opportunity to end the relationship without any negative ramifications or stigma. We encourage you to discuss your intention to end the relationship with your mentoring partner prior to doing so.

If you feel you wish to end the relationship at any time after this point, for whatever reason, you may do so. We strongly encourage you to discuss this with your mentoring partner before contacting the Staff development team to inform them that the relationship has been ended.

**Feedback & Support**
You will be requested to provide feedback at various stages of your mentoring process. Feedback is not mandatory but we strongly encourage you to participate in the feedback process as this helps us to improve the mentoring scheme and ensures we are meeting the needs to staff throughout the university, particularly in the early stages of implementation.

We also welcome feedback at any point during your contact with the mentoring scheme. To provide feedback, email mentoring@abdn.ac.uk

In addition, support will be available from your mentoring coordinators and the staff development team throughout the mentoring programme.

**Line Management and mentoring**
While you do not need your line manager’s permission to join the scheme, we strongly recommend that you discuss your involvement in the scheme with them.

As a general rule, we will notify your line manager once you have joined the scheme. However, we are aware that in some cases this may not be appropriate. If you do not wish us to contact your line manager, please get in touch with us as soon as possible, preferably before joining the scheme.

Sometimes line managers may be concerned that their authority is being undermined by the mentoring relationship. However, mentoring is ‘offline’ support separate from a line management relationship. A
A mentor will never be a mentee’s line manager, nor should the mentor assign the mentee projects or other work. The mentor may, however, set the mentee key tasks to complete between meetings to aid their personal development.

**Being a Mentor**
The role of a mentor is often described as that of a ‘critical friend’. A mentor uses their skills, experience and knowledge to facilitate the mentee’s development and support them to achieve their goals.

**What is expected of a mentor?**
As a mentor, you will take the lead from your mentee, who is responsible for setting goals, planning meetings and drawing up agendas. You will expected to meet your mentee on a monthly basis, be willing to share your skills and experience, to support your mentee and to provide a safe environment for your mentee to be open and honest. A mentor can take on many roles within the mentoring relationship using a range of skills and behaviours. Typical roles are outlined in the diagram below. You may not use all of these and may change roles depending on the needs on your mentee. You may also be suited to some roles more than others:

**Is being a mentor right for me?**
There are many skills, qualities and behaviours that make a ‘good’ mentor, however, many of these can be developed through training and within the mentoring relationship itself. In general, it is hoped that potential mentors will possess the following qualities:

- Wants to be a mentor
- Has time to devote to the relationship
- Is empathetic & non-judgemental
- Has good communication skills and is open and honest
- Is able to give constructive feedback
• Adapts to the specific needs of the mentee
• Is self-aware and willing to learn
• Has a wide range of current skills to pass on
• Has a good understanding of the University
• Has a genuine interest in developing other people
• Is able to bring good humour to the relationship

If you are unsure whether being a mentor is right for you, you can join the scheme and discuss your needs further with a Mentoring Coordinator, who can advise you on the suitability of the scheme for you, as well as on any support we can give you to develop the skills required to be a mentor.

Being a Mentee
Most people can benefit from a mentor at some point in their lives. Though this may not be appropriate for you at all times. You might consider having a mentor if there is a transition you need to make in the workplace, if you feel you want to refine your career goals, or there are particular barriers you want to overcome, areas you want to develop or other issues you may have. Mentoring can provide a space to talk about work-related issues that you aren’t comfortable discussing with your line manager.

If you are deciding on whether a mentoring relationship is right for you, you may want to ask yourself the following questions:

What do you need from a mentor?

Do you have time to commit to a mentoring relationship?

Is mentoring the right type of support for you at this time? Would coaching or counselling be more appropriate?

If you are unsure whether having a mentor is right for you, you can join the scheme and discuss your needs further with a Mentoring Coordinator who can advise you on the suitability of the scheme for you.

What is expected of a mentee?
Mentees are expected to take the lead in the mentoring relationship, this includes:

• Planning meetings
• Drawing up agendas
• Taking a lead in directing the relationship
• Completing tasks assigned by the mentor.

There are many qualities that make a ‘good’ mentee, yet these are often qualities that can be developed within the relationship. However, when embarking on a mentoring relationship, it is generally expected that a mentee will be:

• Willing to learn and develop
• Able to commit to the mentoring relationship
• Able to receive constructive feedback
• Willing to challenge and be challenged
• Willing to experiment and work outside their comfort zone
• Approach the relationship with respect, good humour and openness
• Able to be, or learn to be, reflective

How to Join the Scheme
If you would like to join the scheme, please fill in the sign-up form which can be found at: https://sumac.ac.uk/account/university-of-aberdeen/scheme/201
If you have any questions or require further information, please email: mentoring@abdn.ac.uk
FAQs

I am interested in being a coordinator

Great! Being a coordinator is a highly rewarding role and is a great opportunity to develop your interpersonal skills and widen your professional network. For more information on coordinator roles please email mentoring@abdn.ac.uk

I am signed up as a mentor, why haven’t I been assigned a mentee?

Once you sign up to being a mentor, your details are added to the database for you to be matched with a suitable mentee. If you have not been matched this may be because you do not currently match the needs of any mentees. However, this is likely to change as new mentees join the scheme.

If, after induction, we feel that you require further support before embarking on a mentoring relationship, this will be communicated to you and we will do our best to support you to develop the required skills through additional training.

How much time does it take?

All potential mentors are required to attend mentor induction training which will take place over one day or two half days.

All mentees are required to attend a half day induction before being matched with a mentor.

In terms of your mentoring relationship, it is for you to decide how much time you each commit to the relationship. As a general guide we recommend that you set aside 1.5-2 hours per month for the mentoring relationship.

Can my mentor be from a different area from me?

Yes. Unless you specifically request otherwise, we will try to match people from different areas of the university as one of the benefits of mentoring is the opportunity to expand your network. Furthermore, having a mentor from a different department means that the person is less likely to be involved or linked with any of the issues you discuss.

Can I choose my own mentor?

You can request to be matched with a particular mentor, however, we cannot guarantee that the mentor you request will be available for mentoring; they may already be in a mentoring relationship or they may not have the capacity to take on a mentoring relationship.

Why is the relationship time limited? Can it continue for longer than 12 months?

Mentoring relationships work best when there is a clear goal to work towards. If a mentoring relationship is allowed to continue beyond this it can become at best unproductive and at worst, damaging. In addition, if a relationship is allowed to continue after most of the work has been completed, then the relationship generally fizzles out without a clear ending. This prevents closure for both the mentor and the mentee.
If you feel that after 12 months you have more to gain from your mentoring relationship, and if both parties agree, you can request for the relationship to be extended for another 12 months. Alternatively, if you feel you would benefit from a different mentoring relationship, then you can request to be re-matched.

**What if my mentoring relationship isn’t working?**

There are various opportunities to discuss your mentoring relationship with your mentoring partner as well as with your mentoring coordinator throughout the scheme and you are encouraged to take advantage of these. If you encounter problems with your relationship beyond these opportunities, we would encourage you to discuss these with your mentoring partner. If this is not possible and/or you (both) wish to end the relationship then you should contact your mentoring coordinator.

**I want to change my preferences, how do I do this?**

We can help you do this, please contact mentoring@abdn.ac.uk

**I want to change my role**

Many mentors also have a mentor of their own. If this is something that interests you and you are already signed up to the mentoring scheme, be that as a mentor or mentee, please email mentoring@abdn.ac.uk. Please do not simply fill out another form, as this will create a duplicate profile on SUMAC which can hinder the matching process.