

## Mentoring Policy

### Introduction

Mentoring is an important activity designed to support all staff members at all stages of their careers. A staff member's mentor should be outside of their line management structure and preferably somebody not involved in their day-to-day work, and conversations with a mentor should be confidential.

The School provides mentors to all new members of staff and for staff applying for promotion. Staff members should also be offered mentors where appropriate when changing roles (e.g. career transition points) or when engaged in training. The mentor-mentee relationship should help the member of staff familiarise themselves with new processes and structures, with the aim to support and enable professional development of the mentee. The School also provides an Academic Support Network that is administered through the School Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Committee. Please see the School's BB site for more details on this, or contact [scfpculturechampion@reading.ac.uk](mailto:scfpculturechampion@reading.ac.uk)

### Aims

This policy aims to set out School procedures to help promote successful formal mentoring relationships that provide appropriate support for the mentee.

***This should complement and not replace existing mentoring guidance provided by the university.***

Additional advice on mentoring can be found here:

<https://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/supportingyou/sp-personalandprofdev.aspx>

The mentoring process should be a positive and useful support for a mentee, and it will often have advantages for the mentor as well. The following guidelines are aimed at equipping the different parties involved with the information necessary for them to conduct a positive mentoring relationship. The responsibility for making the mentoring process work is with the mentor and the mentee.

The aims of the process are:

- to provide advice and encouragement on all aspects of a professional role
- to help in identifying and planning personal development
- to provide a 'sounding board' for the discussion of:
  - the organisational culture and values of the University;
  - personal performance issues
  - to provide constructive feedback in planning of personal research, teaching and learning and other roles
  - to provide access to networks or contacts.

### Responsibility of mentoring process and allocation of mentors

Responsibility for assigning mentors and in evaluation of the mentor process, ensuring that mentor meetings take place and are effective, lies with the Head of School, with support from

the School Administrator. The HoS will appoint mentors in consultation with line managers and the School Administrator will ensure that mentors have completed appropriate training and that mentoring meetings have taken place. The School will maintain a central document listing mentor/mentee pairings and the start/finish dates anticipated for each, together with a list of staff whom are trained and available for mentoring.

Mentors are assigned for a number of reasons, and evaluation is carried out two-months into a mentoring relationship to ensure that the support provided to the staff member is appropriate and helpful.

A mentor is offered to staff as below:

1. For all new staff members at all grades and contact types, both probationary and non-probationary. For probationary staff members the relationship will formally be in place until probation, and then reviewed. For non-probationary staff a mentor will normally be assigned for one-year in the first instance.
2. A mentor will be offered to all staff moving on to a new and significant administrative or leadership role. A mentor will be assigned during this period for a minimum of six-months but can continue beyond that period where there is benefit.
3. For all academic staff leading up to submitting a case for promotion in line with university guidance as part of the academic promotions procedures.
4. For all staff who request mentor support as part of the PDR. A mentor will be assigned for one-year in the first instance, or as appropriate for the individual circumstances.
5. To support staff enrolled on significant training programmes; for example, EDMAP, FLAIR, Ed.D. In these cases the duration of the formal relationship will link to the duration of training.

### **Core expectations for the mentoring relationship**

Apart from enabling the process to achieve the aims set out above, the general role of the mentor is to help the mentee to come to their own conclusions about issues that they are facing. This will involve some discussion of the mentor's own observations and experiences. The following points suggest the way in which the mentor should conduct discussions with the mentee:

- listen actively to the mentee's views
- ask open questions
- reflect back feelings
- make suggestions but avoid being prescriptive
- within a meeting summarise its main themes
- there is no need to keep a written record but you can keep a confidential aide-memoire if it is agreed by both parties
- give constructive, positive and precise feedback.

The role of a mentor is not the same as a line manager, and if the mentee is struggling in their role the mentor should not try to "manage" them. Rather, the mentor should continue to follow the approach described above, enabling the mentee to develop their own strategies to deal with their situation. In such a situation the mentor may wish to direct the mentee

towards other University support services such as Human Resources, the Centre for Staff Training and Development, the Harassment Advisers, and the Employee Assistance Programme

(<https://www.reading.ac.uk/closed/humanresources/workingatreading/humres-EmployeeAssistanceProgramme.aspx>)

The mentor has no role in reporting to the manager of the mentee unless it has been specifically discussed and agreed by the mentor and mentee. It is important that the confidentiality of the mentoring relationship is maintained. In the case where either the mentor or mentee is unhappy with the mentoring relationship and it is not working, they should contact the HoS who will consider reallocating the mentee to a new mentor. The HoS is more than happy to be contacted directly, but if the individual feels more comfortable doing so they can also raise the issue via any member of the School Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Committee.

### ***Core expectation of mentors***

- The role of the mentor is to help the mentee come to their own conclusions in how to overcome obstacles and how to take the next steps in their career development.
- All mentors should have received formal mentoring training and have identified themselves as available to support staff in a formal mentoring relationship.
- A mentor is expected to be non judgemental in their support, and to be accessible. The mentee should be able to feel comfortable about asking for meetings and seeking advice.
- The mentor is expected to arrange initial meetings with the mentee and then to agree the level of formality and frequency of meetings thereafter. At the early meetings the two should agree about how the relationship will proceed to ensure that basic expectations on both sides match.
- Meetings should be confidential.
- The mentor should not take on a managing role when supporting a mentee who is struggling with particular aspects of their role. Where possible the mentor can direct the mentee to other university support within HR or CQSD.

### ***Core expectations of the mentee***

- Responsibility for making a mentoring relationship work lies with both mentor and mentee. If the mentee is open with the mentor, for example, the mentoring process will be more beneficial.
- The mentee should be prepared for meetings and keep to agreements of regularity and formality of meetings.
- The mentee should be willing to ask for advice and to ensure the mentor is kept informed of successes and problems.

### **Evaluation**

Following the mentoring process, both parties will be asked to evaluate its effectiveness and to provide feedback on how the scheme may be improved. All feedback will be anonymous. Mentoring relationships can be extended beyond normal timescales where requested and both parties agree. Both mentor and mentee will be asked to comment on the effectiveness of the

process early into the process (approximately two months in) to make sure that the match between mentee and mentor is working. Where a problem is highlighted the opportunity to change mentor will be provided.