School of Politics, Economics, and International Relations Peer Mentoring Scheme

The School of Politics, Economics, and International Relations (SPEIR) is committed to supporting and developing its staff and recognises mentoring as a valuable experience for both the mentor and the mentee. This scheme is designed to complement other sources of support within the School and across the University and offers the opportunity for colleagues to be mentored by staff other than their line manager with regards to their professional development and challenges they face in their work. The scheme is optional and flexible, and can be adjusted to suit the needs of both mentee and mentor.

In supporting the scheme, SPEIR Senior Management recognise the need for colleagues to take some time during their working hours to focus on their development and also support the scheme by acting as mentors.

Definition and Scope

What is Mentoring?

Peer mentoring is a formal, voluntary partnership between a mentee and a mentor, the latter being a more experienced colleague who shares the same working environment with the mentee but is not their direct line manager. The aims of the process are: to provide advice and encouragement on either several or selected aspects of a professional role, help in identifying and planning professional development, provide a 'sounding board' for the discussion of longer-term professional goals and self-reflection, motivate and support an employee with skills development and growth, and provide insight into the role and organisation.

The mentoring scheme is available to all staff in SPEIR. It is designed to be an optional, flexible scheme for staff at all career stages who would benefit from guidance and support either with regards to a specific aspect of their professional development or for more general professional advice.

The scheme does not replace the new staff induction, the mentorship scheme for new staff and early career researchers (usually during their probationary period), or the mentorship scheme for staff applying for promotion. It also does not replace reviews and guidance provided by line managers regularly and through the PDR process, handovers regarding specific administrative roles, or specific guidance relating to, for example, grant applications or research activities provided by the RDL. It also does not replace the range of courses available via the University's People Development Team (including the UoR Mentoring Scheme).

Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring can bring benefits to both the mentee and the mentor. For mentees, it constitutes an excellent opportunity to explore personal motivation, skills, and thought processes in confidence with an experienced colleague. It provides insight through reflection, generates greater self-awareness, and can lead to enhanced opportunities for further career development. For mentors, it provides an opportunity develop new skills, build relationships, develop enhanced job satisfaction, and understand different points of view.

Benefits to the Mentee

Benefits will vary for individuals, but it is likely that receiving mentoring may help with:

- settling in and developing networks more quickly
- understanding the culture, professional behaviours and values of the University
- overcoming feelings of isolation
- receiving advice and encouragement
- having access to an informed second opinion
- help with problem solving
- gaining insight into own performance through a 'critical friend'
- identifying development needs and opportunities
- drawing on another person's perspective
- reflection on our behaviours and approach, increasing personal awareness
- developing knowledge or skills
- building confidence
- dealing with change
- responding to a challenge
- balancing work with personal life
- guidance on career development

Benefits to the Mentor

Mentoring can be extremely rewarding for the mentor in the following ways:

- developing their own skills and expanding their experience
- learning about other staff experiences within the University
- finding personal satisfaction from seeing a colleague develop and flourish and in contributing to an open and supportive culture within the School
- acting as a catalyst for own personal development and change
- having access to different ideas and perspectives
- having the opportunity to discuss professional issues that there would not normally be the chance to do
- gaining insights into their own practices, approaches, thinking, and behaviours
- enhanced organisational reputation
- networking opportunities with other mentors

How it Works

Staff interested in becoming mentors should have been in their post for at least 12 months. They must complete the Successful Mentoring Workshop provided by People Development, which runs frequently throughout the academic year, and should gain support from their line manager. Where there are sufficient numbers, a special training for SPEIR staff will be arranged. Upon completion, staff will be able to join a pool of available mentors within the School.

In addition, staff interested in becoming mentors should consider the following:

- ✓ Do I have the capacity in my workload to be active in the scheme?
- ✓ Am I prepared to be proactive in liaising with my mentee?
- ✓ Do I listen well and ask open questions?
- ✓ Can I give honest and direct feedback in a constructive way?
- ✓ Can I create a safe but challenging learning environment that suits the needs of different types of people?
- ✓ Do I have a proactive approach to my own development to appreciate the importance of development for the (new) member of staff?

✓ Am I likely to have empathy with the problems faced by the members of staff?
✓ Do I have a balanced view of the importance of each facet of the University?
✓ Do I fully understand the University's Values and Behaviours?
✓ Are there any diversity issues that should be taken into account e.g. gender, race, disability, LGBT+, etc.?
✓ Have I informed my line manager of my willingness to act as a mentor?

Staff seeking mentoring should gain support from their line manager. They will either be able to select their mentor themselves from the pool of available mentors or seek advice from their line manager to select the right mentor for their development needs. The Politics and Economics Heads of Department and the D&I Lead will retain general oversight of matching in order to ensure fairness and avoid over-burdening particular members of staff. Mentors should not be a mentee's direct line manager and they should be on a similar grade or above. Careful consideration should go into whether it would be beneficial to have a mentor from outside one's department or not (please note that for mentors outside one's school, individuals should contact the mentorship scheme run by People Development).

The mentoring relationship is expected to last for around six months, although it may be renewed or continue informally after that time; shorter mentorship relationships may be appropriate in some circumstances, depending on whether staff are seeking more general advice or guidance on a specific aspect of their professional development. They usually come to a natural end as agreed between the two parties. However, either party can end the mentoring relationship at any time with no blame attached, for example if the mentoring relationship is not working or there is a personality clash.

The time commitment is recommended to be around one 1-hour meeting per month, but this should be confirmed between the mentor and the mentee at the start of the relationship in line with specific aims and to manage expectations from both sides.

Responsibilities

Both parties have a responsibility to ensure that the mentoring relationship is of mutual benefit and it is based on trust, confidentiality and equality. By participating in the scheme, both parties agree to abide by the Ethical Code of Practice for Mentoring, as shown in Appendix A.

Mentees should:
- create a positive relationship based on open communication
- respect mutual trust, for example sharing personal and confidential information
- arrange each meeting, set the agenda and make the time for it. Each meeting typically lasts for one hour, although this can vary with agreement from both parties
- keep their mentor informed of progress and any problems at each meeting
- ask for help or advice
- prepare for and participate in meetings
- work to achieve actions and/or targets within deadlines as agreed with the mentor
- agree the frequency and location of the meetings with their mentor
- be committed to the scheme

Mentors should:
- provide guidance based on their past experience in a sensitive and straightforward way that deals with the mentee's concerns
- create a positive relationship based on open communication

- commit to arranged meetings
- empower the participant to solve problems rather than give solutions
- be constructive with any criticism
- take an opportunity to develop their own skill base, get feedback from the participant, and consider own development alongside that of the mentee
- be interested in the participant and their objectives
- keep an eye out for anything that would be of interest to, or support, the mentee
- respect the confidentiality of the conversations with your mentee, subject to the exceptions described in the next section
- not over-commit to mentoring i.e. mentor a maximum of two people at the same time

Good Practice

The role of a mentor is not the same as a line manager and if the mentee is struggling in their role then the mentor should not try to manage them. Instead, the mentor should follow the responsibilities highlighted above, encouraging the mentee to develop their own strategies for resolving the situation. If appropriate, the mentor may recommend that the mentee seeks assistance from other University support services such as Human Resources, Occupational Health, People Development, Harassment Advisors, and the Employee Assistance Programme, provided by EmployeeCare or to external sources of support such as their GP.

Both the mentor and mentee have a commitment to each other to maintain confidentiality both during and after the mentoring relationship. However, there may be some circumstances in which the mentor might need to seek assistance and disclose the reasons for this. Examples may include if the mentee is behaving in a way that is of considerable concern, appears to be going against University policy, acting illegally or in ways that raise concerns for the mentee's or others' safety. The mentor should discuss concerns with the University support services or external authorities. If possible and appropriate, this should be done with the mentee's consent and permission. The mentor should not contact the mentee's line manager, unless this has been discussed and agreed with the mentee.

Review of the Scheme

In order to keep the scheme relevant and effective, mentors and mentees will be asked to take part in feedback activities. This is likely to be in the form of an annual survey or focus group. The review will aim to evaluate the training provision, matching process, and utility for both parties, but not the performance of the participants or the success of individual relationships.

Last updated: May 2022.

APPENDIX A

Ethical Code of Practice for Mentoring

- ✓ The mentor's role is to respond to the mentee's developmental needs and agenda; it is not to impose his or her own agenda

- ✓ Mentors must work within the current agreement with the mentee in relation to confidentiality, in a way that is appropriate within the context

- ✓ The mentor will not intrude into areas the mentee wishes to keep private unless invited to do so. However, he or she should help the mentee recognise how other issues may relate to those areas

- ✓ The mentor will be sensitive to issues of culture, religion, gender, sexuality, disability, race, age and all other aspects of diversity

- ✓ Mentor and mentee should aim to be open and truthful with each other and themselves about the relationship itself

- ✓ The mentoring relationship must not be exploitative in any way, nor can it be open to misinterpretation

- ✓ Mentors need to be aware of the limits of their own competence and operate within these limits

- ✓ Mentors have a responsibility to develop their own competence in the practice of mentoring

- ✓ The mentee must accept increasing responsibility for managing the relationship; the mentor should empower them to do so and must generally promote the mentee's autonomy

- ✓ Mentor and mentee should respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring that they do not impose upon the other, beyond what is reasonable

- ✓ Mentor and mentee share responsibility for the smooth winding down of the relationship when it has achieved its purpose – they must both avoid creating dependency

- ✓ Either party may dissolve the relationship. However, both mentor and mentee have a responsibility to discuss the matter together as part of mutual learning

- ✓ The mentee should be aware of his or her rights and any complaints procedures

- ✓ Mentors must be aware of any current law and work within the law

- ✓ Mentor and mentee must be aware that all records are subject to statutory regulations under the Data Protection Act 1998.