**Guidance for Mentors**

These guidance notes have been designed to provide you with information about mentoring, the role of the mentor and factors to consider both before and throughout the mentoring partnership.

Mentoring is an equal, non-hierarchical partnership between two people in which a series of development conversations take place. Commonly, one person (the mentor) uses their experience, expertise and professional skill set to aid the development of the other person (the mentee).

**What does mentoring mean at the university?**

Our university is a thriving learning environment for all.

Whilst some learning is gained through formal routes such as workshops and courses, the power of learning informally through methods such as mentoring is not to be understated.

Effective mentoring can not only empower and inspire all members of our university community to fulfil their potential but, over time, support the creation of a culture of collaboration where we openly share our work, achievements and knowledge with colleagues across the organisation to aid the development of others.

**Being a mentor:**

As a mentor, you will have more experience and a higher level of expertise in areas that your mentor is seeking to develop. Therefore, your role is to provide support, encouragement and guidance to your mentees through a series of informal development conversations.

Below are important traits to adopt to ensure a successful and effective mentoring partnership:

* **Remain non-judgemental.** We all have our own frame of reference from which we base the decisions we make. Whilst you may be more experienced or skilled than the person you are mentoring, it is imperative that you remain non-judgemental and supportive if a decision they make is different to what you would have chosen.
* **Share your experiences.** Effective mentors share their experiences and provide information as and when it is wanted, whilst recognising that they must not impose their own agenda. Please only share what you feel comfortable in sharing.
* **Not act on behalf of the mentee.** It is important to remember that mentees decide what actions they take forward or act upon as a result of your conversations. Although there may be things that you can help with, further action should be determined by the mentee.
* **Challenge, encourage and support.** Give constructive feedback and coach your mentee in the development of various skills. Encourage them to explore what they want to develop or gain and support them to do so.
* **Ask open and probing questions.** Asking these can help a mentee greatly explore the situation at hand and encourage them to think from different perspectives.
* **Empower your mentee.** Ensure that the mentee gains confidence and independence as a result of mentoring and is empowered to take full and effective responsibility for their development.
* **Encourage your mentee to share their learning.** We all have areas of speciality and experiences that can enhance and inspire the growth of others. Why not encourage the continuation of learning by encouraging your mentee to identify ways that they can share their knowledge?

**Getting started- your first meeting**

Although mentoring partnerships do not need to be overly formalised, it is important that you both discuss your expectations and hopes when you first meet.

It is also useful for you both to discuss and agree to the guidelines below:

* **Confidentiality:** in regards to mentoring partnerships, this term means any matters that are discussed between a mentor and a mentee should be treated as confidential unless there is concern that a party is at risk of harm to themselves or others.
* **Openness:** the mentor and mentee should be open and truthful with each other. They should also feel comfortable to express any matters that they do not want to discuss or talk about.
* **Respect:** in addition to respecting each other, both mentors and mentees should respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring that they do not impose beyond what is reasonable.
* **Meetings:** the frequency and length of meetings should be mutually agreed. It may also be helpful to discuss the means of contact between meetings for minor issues.
* **Location:** both you and your mentee must be comfortable with the location of meetings. Whilst casual settings often work well, you must give due regard to confidentiality.
* **Voluntary:** the mentoring partnership is entirely voluntary for both people and it may be terminated by either person after discussing the matter with one another first, ensuring mutual respect and understanding of the conclusion.

Once these guidelines are discussed, the mentee is usually expected to outline what they would like to be mentored on and the type of knowledge, skills, experience and guidance they would like from you. You should encourage them by actively listening to them and asking open questions accordingly.

At the end of each meeting, you should prompt reflection and action by asking them what actions they will take forward as a result of your conversation.

For further information, please contact develop@essex.ac.uk