

**Focus on People - Professional Services Mentoring Pilot**



**Scheme Handbook**

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# Introduction

This guidance sets out the detail of the Focus on People (FoP) Professional Services Mentoring Scheme (PSMS) pilot. You can find out about the scheme objectives, the benefits for mentors and mentees and how the scheme operates. The scheme makes use of an online platform, MentorNet to facilitate and coordinate mentoring within and across Professional Services. Further resources, support, training and a practical toolkit are also signposted to support participants on their mentoring journey.

# What is Mentoring

Mentoring can be a powerful tool to assist staff in developing within their roles, professional life and careers. It can help mentees to develop their skills, knowledge and capability and to fulfil their potential. It is a voluntary arrangement through which, an experienced individual, outside the normal working relationship, holds regular meetings and discussions and takes a personal interest in guiding and supporting the development of a less experienced person in progressing within and beyond their immediate role.

A mentor may be a sounding board, someone to help work through a mentees ideas and throw light on their path. The value of mentoring is that it allows an individual to work on an objective, with an impartial “thinking partner” who will enable them to focus on the issues that are important to them and to arrive at self-generated solutions. It is a confidential non-judgmental and constructive partnership.

Mentoring is not a replacement for line management, supervision, one-to-ones, appraisal or PDR, performance management or support in cases of harassment or grievance. Neither is mentoring counselling or therapy - although the mentor may help the mentee to access more specialised support if it becomes apparent that this is needed. The mentor does not act on behalf of the mentee. It is the mentee’s responsibility to take action and, where relevant, the mentor’s to assist the mentee in reaching decisions about action and/or reflect upon the consequences of such action.

The Professional Services Mentoring scheme aims to match a person with relevant experience with an individual who wishes to benefit from this experience and to provide support for both mentees and mentors in maximising the benefits of their mentoring partnership. Matches may be made across professional functions and divisions where possible and appropriate. This may benefit mentees and mentors by providing exposure to other parts of the University, increasing networking and sharing best practice across the University.

# What type of mentoring is available under the Professional Services Mentoring Scheme?

The scheme promotes a non-directive or ‘facilitative’ style of mentoring akin to coaching. Mentoring is not necessarily or primarily an advisory role; mentoring often works best when, rather than offering advice, the mentor actively listens to the mentee and encourages them to take responsibility for their own development.

A mentor is usually, but not always, someone who is working at a more senior role but peer mentoring can also be valuable where people can offer different experiences and perspectives.

Mentoring is usually a one-one relationship, but pair or group mentoring may be requested. For example

* Two or more mentees may ‘share’ a mentor; this way, there is a mixture of senior and peer experience in the relationship;
* Three or more peers may form a mentoring group or circle, meeting regularly to mentor each other and take turns at mentoring and being mentored.

The mentoring application form provides the opportunity for a mentee to specify their objectives and preferences for the type of mentoring they would prefer. The matching process will aim to provide a suitable mentor where available.

# Aims and objectives of the scheme

The Professional Services Mentoring Scheme’s overall aim is to assist mentees to achieve personal and professional growth through a mentoring relationship that provides support as they progress and develop within the University. Equally the scheme also offers benefits to the mentor and to the University.

The objectives of this scheme are:

* To provide networking and collaboration opportunities for individuals within and across Professional Services
* To challenge individuals and help them understand their strengths, potential and development opportunities
* To help mentees in planning their development and advancing in their professional life/careers
* To give mentees exposure to experienced/more senior colleagues
* To equip mentees with knowledge and skills to develop and fulfil their potential
* To improve peer to peer support for colleagues
* To enhance personal effectiveness, commitment, motivation and engagement
* To broaden awareness and knowledge of the wider University supporting individuals to add value and contribute effectively

# Information for prospective mentees

## Why have a mentor

A Mentor can be a useful resource at any point in your career whether it’s at the start, at the end, or at any point in between. Mentoring can give you the boost you need at different stages of your career – for example when new to the University; to extend influence or improve effectiveness in an existing role, to ease transition between roles; to progress a career or change direction; to help ‘hit the ground running’ when starting in a new role.

A mentor can:

* Act as an impartial sounding board. They create valuable time and space for a mentee to take a step back and reflect on where they are now, where they might want to be, and how they might get there.
* Contribute advice, information and viewpoints based on their own knowledge, experience and expertise; such independent and objective contributions can be very valuable
* Assist in achieving change and/or specific goals

## The benefits for a mentee

There are many potential benefits for the mentee to gain from the mentoring relationship including:

* Building a **network** of expertise to draw on
* Providing support, encouragement and building **confidence and self awareness**
* Providing a **sounding board** outside the usual work area
* Gaining independent constructive **feedback** e.g. to enhance performance
* Providing support to find **solutions** to challenges and problems
* Developing a **greater understanding of the University** and an insight into what is needed to grow professionally within it
* Benefit of advice, information and viewpoints based on the **mentors knowledge, experience** and expertise
* Helping to achieve **change and/or specific goals**
* Acquiring **knowledge** and developing **skills** e.g. interpersonal communication
* Providing personal **contact and connection** promoting feeling part of the University and its community
* Encouraging **collaboration** and sharing of ideas and best practice across the University

## What can a mentee expect?

To get the most out of mentoring a mentee will need to be clear about what they would like to achieve from a mentoring relationship and take responsibility for making things happen. The success of a mentoring relationship depends very much on the mentees approach.

A mentor may not always be able to help a mentee with all their objectives and in some cases it may be appropriate for a mentee to have a further mentor (with different skills and expertise) following the conclusion of a first mentoring relationship.

## The role of the mentee

Mentoring is a two way process although the mentee is expected to drive the relationship forward and to be proactive about setting objectives for the relationship, scheduling meetings and maintaining a record of agreed tasks and goals.

A mentee is expected to be:

* Willing to enter the relationship with a clear set of initial objectives
* Honest and transparent when sharing information
* Committed, for example attending planned sessions and taking actions/completing tasks agreed with their mentor
* Willing to learn and to challenge their views, behaviours, assumptions and ways of working (e.g. prepared to step out of their comfort zone and consider new ways of doing things)
* Able to ask for and receive feedback
* Willing to provide feedback to the mentor (e.g. what you find most and least useful) and discuss any issues as openly and honestly as possible
* Professional in their relationship with a mentor, for example respecting agreed ground rules and being punctual, being sensitive to the individual - culture, gender etc.
* Committed to reflecting on own practice, learning and progress (what went well, what could have been done differently etc.)

## How to apply to be a mentee

Staff in Professional Services roles can apply to be mentored under this scheme.

If you wish to be a mentee please register your interest by emailing the mentoring coordinator at [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk). You will then be sent a quick start guide to using MentorNet and a link to register on the platform.

Further detail about the registration process is available in ‘The Process’ section of this guidance.

Please be aware that there are a limited number of places available in this pilot scheme for mentees in each Service area. If it is not possible to accommodate your request at the time of your application the mentoring coordinator will contact you to consider the options and alternatives that may be available.

# Information for prospective mentors

## Why be a mentor

A common motivation for individuals volunteering to be mentors is a desire to ‘give something back’ especially where they believe their experiences can be of use to the progress of less experienced colleagues. Mentors often find satisfaction in helping others progress and succeed.

Mentoring also provides the opportunity for a mentor to develop their own skills in areas such as interpersonal communication, active listening, providing constructive feedback, coaching, problem solving, leadership and motivating of others. The skills required to be an effective mentor transfer well to a wide range of contexts and can also assist a mentor with their professional and career development.

## The benefits for a mentor

While the focus of the mentoring relationship is primarily on the development needs and opportunities of the mentee there are also many benefits for the mentor including:

* Encourages self-reflection and **refreshes own view** of work/knowledge (reflection on own practice providing new perspectives and ideas)
* Enhances **satisfaction** e.g. helping others develop/fulfil their potential
* Enhances **peer recognition** (e.g. raises professional profile) and professional relationships
* Provides an opportunity to **give something back**
* Expands **networks** and contacts within the University
* Enhanced **skills** including communication, interpersonal, leadership, people development, active listening, feedback and coaching
* Enriched **CV**/Portfolio
* Allows **sharing of good practice, experience and knowledge** with another member of staff

## What can a Mentor expect?

Mentors are encouraged from all Professional Services roles, across all grades, where they can share professional experience and contribute to the development of others.

A mentor will be an experienced member of staff (not necessarily more senior) who will take on the role of guiding, advising and facilitating a defined aspect of the professional development of a mentee. They will provide support to the mentee to enable them to try out new ideas and may constructively challenge a mentee where appropriate and beneficial. A mentor is not expected to take direct action on behalf of a mentee.

The mentoring relationship should provide a supportive environment in which the mentee feels able and willing to express any concerns as well as their ideas and aspirations. The mentor should be comfortable with holding such conversations and respectful of confidentiality where appropriate.

Mentors will be provided with training, support and guidance during the mentoring relationship, further details of this are provided below.

## The role of the Mentor

During a mentoring relationship a mentor is likely take on a number of different roles involving a range of skills. These will vary according to the needs of the mentee, the particular situation, and the mentor’s areas of expertise. Examples of some common mentor roles are provided below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Mentor roles** | **Example** |
| Sounding board | Someone to test ideas and suggestions |
| Facilitator | Point to potential opportunities, arrange introductions and access key people |
| Adviser | Provide objective advice on a range of issues, including career opportunities |
| Coach | Assist the learner to improve a specific skill |
| Expert | Be a source of technical/professional knowledge |
| Organisational knowledge | Explain and clarify and university policies, culture, politics and values |
| Role model | Promote and encourage positive behaviours in others |
| Source of feedback | Provide objective and constructive feedback on development |
| Confidant | Listen to fears and concerns |
| Motivator | Encourage and motivate the mentee to achieve their goals, and boost moral |
| Challenger | Play devil’s advocate, challenge assumptions, encourage different ways of thinking |

## The attributes of a mentor

A mentor will be an experienced member of staff with a good understanding of working in their professional area.

It is expected that a mentor will:

* Have volunteered to act as a mentor and be committed to the process
* Be in a position to dedicate appropriate time to making the mentoring relationship a success (usually about one hour per month)
* Act as a confidential and non-judgemental sounding board
* Listen well, question constructively and offer supportive challenge when needed
* Encourage reflection, and independent and creative thinking
* Give constructive feedback and provide new insights
* Be prepared to share experience, knowledge, advice and expertise to help develop others
* Have a genuine interest in developing potential in others
* Be encouraging and supportive and recognise achievements
* Have an enthusiastic and positive attitude towards their own work, other people and the University
* Understand the importance of trust and respect in the mentoring relationship and be sensitive to the mentee - culture, gender etc.

The mentor is not expected to be an expert on every subject they are asked about. Mentors are not expected to solve mentee’s problems for them but part of the role is to act as a sounding board for discussion of problems identified by the mentee. Through a process of active listening, reflecting back feelings and opinions observed from the mentee and asking appropriate open questions, mentors can help mentees to reflect upon their own progress, clarify issues and help them towards resolving their problems and/or reaching their objectives.

It is helpful to keep a brief record of the meetings, noting what has been discussed and agreed, and the objectives for the next meeting. The online platform MentorNet allows mentors and mentees to record these via an activity log as well as to share documents.

Each potential mentor will be asked to provide a brief biography (no more than 250 words) on their online profile in order to assist the process of matching mentees with mentors.

## Mentor training and support

The Professional Services Mentoring Scheme provides training and support for mentors.

It is recommended that mentors complete ‘[Mentor for Impact – Start Mentoring](https://www.udemy.com/course/mentoring/)’, <https://www.udemy.com/course/mentoring/> a free, 52 minute, online course provided by Udemy which includes a certificate of completion. The course looks at: the essential qualities of a good mentor, structure for mentoring meetings, structure for GROW model conversations, framework for sharing your experience through storytelling and tips to motivate your mentee to follow through and get results.

A mentoring workshop will also be provided by a representative from People and Organisational Development (POD). Please contact [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk) for details of the next course available.

The toolkit section of this guidance signposts you to additional information, suggestions for further reading and templates for your use.

The mentoring coordinator can assist if you have queries or require additional information about the scheme. Please contact [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk) in the first instance.

## How to apply to be a mentor

Staff in Professional Services roles can apply to be a mentor under this scheme.

If you wish to be a mentor please register your interest by emailing the mentoring coordinator at [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk). You will then be sent a quick start guide to using MentorNet and a link to register on the platform.

Further detail about the registration process is available in ‘The Process’ section of this guidance.

Please be aware that there are a limited number of places available in this pilot scheme for mentors in each Service area. If it is not possible to accommodate your request at the time of your application the mentoring coordinator will contact you to consider the options and alternatives that may be available.

# The Process

## Registration

If you wish to volunteer as a mentor or mentee please register your interest by emailing the mentoring coordinator at [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk). You will then be sent a quick start guide to using MentorNet and a link to register on the platform.

The registration will require you to complete an online form.

The form asks prospective **mentees** what they hope to gain from being mentored, what sort of mentor they are looking for (e.g. a peer or a more senior person? A mentor with a particular skill or experience?). The form also asks for basic information such as job title and length of time in post etc.

The form asks prospective **mentors** what they can offer a mentee in terms of their experience and skills and about their mentoring preferences e.g. preference for career stage of mentee and time and frequency of meetings.

If you are unclear regarding your suitability for the scheme you are encouraged to email your query to the mentoring coordinator at [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk)

The mentoring coordinator can also be contacted with other queries related to the scheme and/or the MentorNet online platform if you are unable to find the answer to your question in this guidance.

Existing mentoring partnerships within Professional Services can be registered on the MentorNet platform if the mentor and mentee wish so that their contribution can be recognised under the scheme. Please email [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk) for further information about how to register an existing mentoring partnership.

## The matching process

Matching the mentoring partnership is a critical part of the mentoring process. The mentor and mentee matching will be made on the basis of the information provided at registration via the MentorNet platform. Skills and experiences offered by prospective mentors will be held on the system and the specific areas in which a mentee is seeking support can be matched against those recorded for prospective mentors.

Once a mentee has registered on MentorNet, they will be able to search through available mentors’ biographies and rank these by order of preference/affinity. We would recommend not selecting more than 4 at one time, and searching by keyword and areas of expertise. The mentee should identify any of these potential mentors with whom they have an existing personal or professional relationship that could compromise the mentor’s ability to provide impartial advice. The scheme coordinator will oversee the matching process.

Matches can be made across Professional Services where appropriate and if suitable mentors are available. The key determinant of matches will be the skills and experiences offered and sought by mentors and mentees. The duration of relationship, frequency, timing and type of mentoring sought may also be considered.

If either party does not believe the proposed match will lead to a productive mentoring partnership they should inform the relevant mentoring coordinator so that consideration for a further matching exercise can be made.

## The role of the mentoring committee and mentoring coordinators

The mentoring committee has overall responsibility for the scheme. The committee is comprised of representatives from a variety of Professional Services roles. All members of the committee share a common interest in improving staff development opportunities for Professional Services roles. If you would like to find out more about the mentoring committee please contact [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk).

The mentoring coordinators for each service area provide a key role in the day-to-day support for the mentoring scheme activities. They are responsible for the development, promotion, coordination and evaluation of the scheme. If you would like to find out more about the mentoring scheme coordinators for each service area please contact [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk).

Together the committee and coordinators are responsible for overseeing the recruitment and training of mentors; matching mentors and mentees; the effective promotion of the scheme and monitoring the effectiveness of the scheme by seeking regular feedback and evaluation from mentors and mentees.

## Mentoring timescales and trajectory

Mentees and mentors can register to join the scheme at any time. The matching process can take place when there are a sufficient number of mentors and mentees registered on MentorNet.

The frequency and method of contact will be agreed within each individual mentoring partnership. The mentee should be the driver behind the mentoring relationship (e.g. it is their responsibility to make contact with their mentor and follow up meetings).

The length of mentoring partnership will vary in each case. A typical, traditional mentoring relationship may involve approximately 1 hour per month for 6 to 12 months and the relationship will come to an end when the mentor and mentee feel that they have achieved their goals.

The typical phases of a mentoring relationship are preparation, negotiation, enabling and closure. If you would like to find out more about this, additional information is signposted in the toolkit.

The mentoring coordinator should be notified when the mentoring relationship is concluded via the following address [professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:professionalservicesmentoring@admin.ox.ac.uk).

## Mentoring meetings

**The first meeting:**

At the first meeting the mentor and mentee should discuss what they expect from the mentoring partnership and agree the aim of the relationship. A shared understanding of the mentoring partnership and its objectives is crucial to its success.

It is suggested that an hour session is provided for the first mentoring meeting: the first 15 minutes as a personal introduction, then 45 minutes focussing on the objectives, the structure for future mentoring and any specific parameters.

Meetings may be face to face or virtual (e.g. via Teams) depending on any special requirements (e.g. social distancing) or flexibility requirements. Guidance on virtual mentoring is available in the toolkit.

The following topics may be discussed during the first mentoring meeting;

* any common ground/experiences/values
* relevant career history
* purpose of the mentoring partnership and objectives/goals
* practical arrangements: including expectations (mentee and mentor), how you will reflect, clarify and answer questions after the meeting, how you will agree actions and set the agenda for the next meeting, how you will work together, arrangements for future meetings

The mentee may wish to follow up the first meeting with a draft mentoring agreement including any agreed actions.

**Mentoring agreement**

A template mentoring agreement is available in the toolkit if you wish to use it.

The agreement is used as a reference for both the mentor and mentee. It outlines the commitments of both parties during the time they will be working together. It sets out the purpose of the relationship and the agreed goals. It also confirms the practical arrangements for mentoring meetings and how the relationship will be documented.

Finally, the agreement asks both parties to confirm that they are happy to work with each other and for agreement that the details of their relationship are confidential.

The agreement can be shared using the MentorNet system.

**Before each mentoring meeting**

Before a mentoring meeting it may be useful for the mentee (and mentor) to set aside some time to reflect on the last conversation. It may also be helpful for the mentee to send a short summary of what they would like to discuss at the next meeting in advance so that the mentor has time to consider it and carry out any research if required.

**Meeting structure/content**

The structure of a mentoring session will be based on the individual mentoring relationships; however as a guideline it may be useful to structure the meetings in a simple format to avoid any confusion and to avoid deviating from the main discussion points.

At each meeting you might consider the following steps:

1. Start with a discussion of what you have achieved since the last meeting, any challenges you have faced and reflect on any issues you previously discussed
2. Develop your discussion further with your mentor
3. Make a plan and set any actions

The following topics are examples of areas that might be discussed at mentoring meetings:

* Reflection on induction process
* Reflection on professional progress
* Identification and exploration of professional concerns or barriers
* Identification and exploration of development needs
* Identification of any information needed and ways of acquiring it
* Action planning
* Review of progress (against the objectives agreed in the mentoring agreement)
* Provision of feedback
* Discussion of any issues/concerns that the mentee may have

## Support for mentors and mentees

The mentoring coordinator is available to mentors and mentees to provide support and to discuss any questions or concerns either party may have.

## 

## The end of the mentoring partnership

Mentoring relationships should ‘round up’ and conclude in a final meeting. It is useful for the mentee to reflect on what they have considered and learnt with the mentor over the time of the partnership, and, where appropriate, for the mentor to help the mentee to set new goals and action plans for the future.

## Evaluation

Both the mentor and mentee will be asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire to feedback their experience, which enables the success of the scheme to be monitored and to facilitate future improvements and developments.

# Further information, resources and toolkit

A toolkit of resources is available to support the scheme. You can access this on the MentorNet platform under the ‘resources tab’ in the left hand margin. The resources include the following:

* Process diagram
* Template mentoring agreement
* Goalsetting worksheet
* GROW model structure worksheet
* Powerful questions for mentoring conversations
* Active listening skills
* Feedback cycle
* Phases of a mentoring relationship life cycle
* Guidance for virtual mentoring

You can find further guidance on mentoring and details of other internal mentoring schemes on the POD website <https://pod.admin.ox.ac.uk/mentoring>.

External to the University the following resources may be of helpful.

* Udemy online mentor training and resources/templates - <https://www.udemy.com/course/mentoring/>

Mentor for impact – Start mentoring -The module provides a certificate of completion and downloadable resources. The course looks at: the essential qualities of a good mentor, structure for mentoring meetings, structure for GROW model conversations, framework for sharing your experience through storytelling and tips to motivate your mentee to follow through and get results.

[www.udemy.com/course/mentoring/](http://www.udemy.com/course/mentoring/)

* Linked in learning resources (search mentoring) <https://help.it.ox.ac.uk/courses/molly#LinkedInLearning>
* Lynda.com resources including:

Why mentoring matters

[www.lynda.com/Business-tutorials/Kat-Cole-Why-mentoring-matters/2814010/2227044-4.html](http://www.lynda.com/Business-tutorials/Kat-Cole-Why-mentoring-matters/2814010/2227044-4.html)

Getting a mentor and being a mentor

[www.lynda.com/Leadership-Management-tutorials/Getting-mentor-being-mentor/585229/666639-4.html](http://www.lynda.com/Leadership-Management-tutorials/Getting-mentor-being-mentor/585229/666639-4.html)

Becoming an effective mentor

[www.lynda.com/Business-Skills-tutorials/Mentoring-others/144200/150490-4.html](http://www.lynda.com/Business-Skills-tutorials/Mentoring-others/144200/150490-4.html)

Encourage mentoring relationships

[www.lynda.com/Business-Skills-tutorials/Encourage-mentoring-relationships/797725/5036810-4.html](http://www.lynda.com/Business-Skills-tutorials/Encourage-mentoring-relationships/797725/5036810-4.html)

* Insala – an online platform sharing resources on mentoring and communication skills: <https://www.insala.com/Articles/mentoring-skills.asp>
* The European Mentoring and Coaching Council - <http://emccuk.org/>- an organisation which promotes international good practice in mentoring and coaching
* https://www.mindtools.com/search?search\_term=mentoring
* Megginson, D., Clutterbuck, D., Garvey, B., Stokes, P. and Garrett-Harris, R. (2006) *Mentoring in Action.* London: Kogan Page