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The University of Manchester

Mentor Information Pack



Manchester Gold

Staff Career mentoring programme

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Welcome to Manchester Gold

Welcome to the Manchester Gold Staff mentoring programme and thank you for agreeing to act as a mentor. Mentoring is recognised as an excellent way to support career development, improve knowledge of occupational roles, and to network with colleagues.

What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a powerful way for people to learn a variety of personal and professional skills and is thought to be one of the oldest forms of experienced influence. The term 'mentor' first appeared in *The Odyssey* by Homer, and since then, it has been used to describe a trusted adviser, friend and counsellor. In modern times, many people have benefited from mentors, including those who have achieved greatness in the fields of arts, politics and sport. Mentoring is increasingly recognised by HR professionals as one of the most effective ways to help staff to develop their potential in the workplace.

G.F.Shea in the book *Mentoring: A Guide to the Basics*, states that 'mentors are people who, through their action and work, help others to achieve their potential'. Mentoring is a collaborative development activity which is rooted in the mentee's self-management. This enables the mentee to:

- Foster self-reliance, self-confidence and a belief in their own potential;
- Identify their own development needs and goals;
- Write their own development plans;
- Solve problems by analysing, reflecting and enhancing their self-awareness.

Consequently, the mentor acts as a conduit of self-discovery and reflection and gives the mentee space and time to make their own decisions. This may mean taking the role of:

- Facilitator-helping to set and achieve goals and identify opportunities to develop;
- Sounding board-offering the opportunity to try out new ideas in safety;
- Listener-giving time and space and helping to problem solve;
- Coach-giving encouragement and feedback;
- Networker-helping to develop connections;
- Role model-examples to learn from;
- Critical friend-telling the truth, even if it hurts;
- Change agent-challenging the status quo;
- Visionary-being inspirational.

The extent and frequency of these roles will depend on the relationship established with the mentee while mentoring.

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Manchester Gold Mentorship

Manchester Gold provides your mentee with the opportunity to discuss professional and career related issues with you. The process can help them to:

- Assess their career situation;
- Get support in either continuing along their current career path, or exploring other options;
- Develop relevant career management skills such as negotiation and interview techniques;
- Develop new networks;
- Improve their confidence.

Mentoring is distinct from other developmental processes because it is one-on-one and confidential, allowing more in-depth discussions of the following areas:

- Culture and Politics - mentors and mentees may discuss the unwritten aspects of an organisation, and how best to operate within this framework.
- Personal and Career Development - the mentee may explore ways to perform more effectively in the work place, either by addressing skill gaps or by changing working styles. Mentoring allows specific problems to be discussed openly in a risk free environment. You could help the mentee to explore a potential future career path, looking at the various options open to them.
- Occupational Knowledge - your mentee may wish to gain an insight into key current and future trends within the occupational sector they wish to pursue. Such core information will allow them to make informed choices when planning the next step in their career path.
- Networking - this is a key aspect of the mentoring process that can aid career and professional development. You may be able to assist your mentee in making further contacts by introducing them to colleagues and other managers. As a result of discussions with your mentee, you should be able to identify what knowledge you can bring to the relationship and what experience may be sourced from elsewhere.

The Benefits of mentoring…

…for the mentee

- Developing a greater understanding of the University, how it functions and career paths within it
- Developing skills and reflecting on working styles
- Improving self-confidence
- Feeling they are supported in making key decisions

…for the mentor

- Improved job satisfaction
- Developing mentoring skills
- Reflecting on personal working practices whilst assisting the mentee
- Helping a colleague to develop or progress

…for the organisation

- Mentoring can encourage staff retention
- Increased motivation amongst the workforce
- Staff who understand better the work of colleagues and the functioning of the organisation
- Developing a supportive culture
- Confirm its commitment to organisational learning and continuing professional development

Mentor Feedback on the benefits of Manchester Gold

- “Being a mentor helps with your own personal development"
- "Buidling confidence in ourselves and also in the mentees"
- "I feel emotionally fulfilled that I am helping make a difference in the lives of other colleagues"
- "Help to make a difference to others"
- "The support that you get from the group, especially as a new mentor"
- "My mentee has very much engaged with the process and has really just needed pointing in the right direction. I think they have benefitted from an outsider's view on what the possibilities are and how to go about getting where you want to go"

Conduct of meetings

Both the mentor and the mentee need to be comfortable with the location, content, style and length of meetings in order for the partnership to develop. It can be a good idea to discuss these things up front, and the agreement in your induction pack provides a platform to do this.

Location

Meetings may take place in person or online, however it is often better if the location is neutral, so try to avoid each other's offices. If you meet in a coffee shop, do consider noise levels and whether you will worry about being overheard. Some colleagues may also find noisy environments distracting or distressing.

Frequency and length

There is no absolute prescription as to the frequency and length of meetings, however we normally recommend a minimum of four meetings lasting between 60 and 90 minutes.

Content

As this programme is related to career development, discussions would relate to careers and professional development. However, the detail of these discussions will depend entirely on the individual needs of the mentee and the skills and experience of the mentor. The beauty of mentoring is that it is not prescriptive, but tailored to each individual's needs.

If your mentee is experiencing difficulties beyond the scope of professional development, it may be that another service is more appropriate. Pease refer to the 'Alternative Support section within this document for more information of the services available to staff.

Starting, Maintaining and Ending Mentoring Relationships

Starting a mentoring relationship

When starting the mentoring it is important to establish that mentor and mentee have the same expectations and how the relationship will work for them. The best way of ensuring this and avoiding potential misunderstandings in the future is to complete a mentoring agreement which will establish the ground rules for the relationship. This is sometimes called a 'contract' or 'agreement' between you. Although these are formal terms the important point is to have a discussion about how you are going to work together. A template 'Mentoring Agreement' is available in the appendix based on the information below. For your discussion you might want to discuss some (or all) of the following when you first meet:

- **Confidentiality**
  Agree that you will not disclose to anyone else what you discuss during mentoring meetings unless with her/his agreement. Agree how you will describe the partnership to others.
- **Frequency, timing and location of meetings**
  Agree how often and how long you will meet. This could be more frequently at the beginning then at later stages. It can be useful to meet in a space where you won't be disrupted frequently and could possibly be over lunch or coffee.
- **Contact arrangements**
  Discuss how and when to get in touch, any 'no-contact' times and how quickly to expect a response.
  Meeting arrangements
  How the meetings will be structured, e.g. will an agenda be agreed in advance, or will the approach be more flexible. Agree if meetings and actions will be recorded.
- **Goals / aims**
  Agree a common purpose and goals that will direct the mentoring relationship. Discuss expectations and identify potential issues
- **Honesty**
  Open and honest communication is important for a mentoring relationship. Discuss how you want to give and receive honest feedback to avoid strains to the relationship in the future.
- **Privacy**
  It is important to agree what you are prepared to talk about other than the topic for which mentoring has been sought in order not to overstep any boundaries.
- **Line manager**
  Discussing how the line manager will be involved and how the relationship with him/her will be managed is especially important when mentor, line manager and mentee are in the same department.
- **Ending**
  Discuss how the mentoring process will be reviewed as you progress. Discuss ways to end the relationship that are comfortable for mentor and mentee at the very beginning. This makes it easier at the end.

Recording your mentoring agreement using the 'Mentoring Agreement' template is a useful way to document the basis for your relationship that you can refer back to if necessary.

Example Contracting Questions for a First Meeting

- What outcomes/learning objectives are mentee and mentor aiming for?
- What are the core topics we want to discuss?
- What is the mentor responsible for?
- What is the mentee responsible for?
- What are the boundaries of confidentiality in our mentoring relationship?
- How often do we meet and who takes primary responsibility for arranging meetings?
- How long are the sessions likely to be?
- Where are we going to meet?
- Who will arrange room bookings?
- What are the arrangements for cancellations?
- How are the agenda and learning goals set?
- What about contact between sessions? What format will this take?
- What involvement or expectations (if any) do any third parties have of the mentoring relationship?
- Who will responsible for logging mentoring activity and progress?
- How are we going to record key outcomes and learning?
- How will we know if things are going well?
- How often do we review our progress to make sure the mentoring is effective?
- What will we do if things are not going well? How will we end the relationship if either party thinks it is not working out?
- How will we close the mentoring relationship after a successful outcome?

Progressing the First Meeting

At the first meeting it is important that you clarify mutual expectations of the mentoring relationship. After contracting consider the following as ways of starting a conversation and introducing yourself to each other:

- Share your current skills, knowledge and experience and ask of those of your mentee;
- Explore any development activities your mentee is currently undertaking;
- Discuss the career successes of your mentee;
- Explore the career goals/expectations of your mentee. What knowledge, skills, experience, motivation and commitment will be needed to achieve these;
- How can mentoring help your mentee to achieve their aspirations;
- Any concerns you might have regarding the mentoring relationship and how these might be addressed.

Setting Goals

A useful way to structure the initial conversation with a mentee and bring it to a conclusion is to encourage them to think about setting goals – what do they want to achieve during their mentoring?
Mentees have been provided with a 'Goal Setting Reflection Worksheet' in their Mentee pack which can support goal setting. You can also find useful SMART goals resources, including a video overview and template.

As a mentor encourage your mentee to set goals by:

- Let the mentee decide on what is a suitable goal
- Encourage the mentee to talk through their options
- Challenge the mentee about their goals – are they realistic?
- Support them to set targets on the way to their goals
- Reassure them that goals can change over the course of the mentoring relationship and this is normal

Subsequent meetings

Consider:

- Are you expecting an agenda from your mentee before the meeting
- Have you reviewed the previous meeting and are there any actions/outcomes to discuss;
- Identify what information you will need in order to get the best out of the meeting;
- Check whether you need to bring any information to the meeting;
- It might be helpful to spend the first few minutes of the meeting reminding yourselves of what was covered the last time you met and if you have actions/outcomes to discuss;
- Is your mentee clear on their objectives for the meeting;
- Has your mentee reviewed what has happened since the last meeting;
- Has your mentee's objectives changed.

Mentees have a 'Mentee Preparation Worksheet' within their Mentee pack to support their preparation between meetings and encourage progress and preparation.

Ending a mentoring relationship

As part of the programme, mentoring relationships typically conclude around 10 months after they begin. At that point, the Manchester Gold team will prompt you to reflect on whether to formally end the relationship or continue informally. If you are concerned about how the relationship is working, or if it should finish earlier, tell your mentor/mentee. If you are unsure whether the mentorship should continue, discuss the question with your mentor/ mentee, and you can also contact the Manchester Gold team for advice.

It is important to discuss from the beginning how you will end the relationship. There can be a variety of reason for ending the relationship:

- The relationship has fulfilled its purpose. Most mentoring relationships are started to help the mentee achieve a particular goal and once this has been achieved another mentor might be more appropriate
- The mentor and mentee are not really getting on, or finding the relationship is not effective
- A change of priorities or commitments

At the end of the mentoring relationship, look back over the time and discuss what went well and what you might do differently another time. Comment constructively on each other's handling of the role.

Reciprocal Mentoring

The Manchester Gold Programme is a traditional mentoring dynamic, whereby the Mentor is a more experienced colleague offering support to the mentee with less experience. This standard form of mentoring relationship is the expectation for both parties within the pairing. However, during the natural course of many mentoring relationships, an element of reciprocal mentorship may emerge.

Reciprocal mentoring is a collaborative relationship where both individuals bring unique skills, experiences, or perspectives that benefit the other. Unlike traditional one-way mentoring, both participants take on the roles of mentor and mentee, creating a dynamic and mutually enriching experience.

How It Works:

Informal Approach
Reciprocal mentoring often develops naturally. As conversations unfold, each person may share insights, offer guidance, or provide feedback based on their strengths. The roles of mentor and mentee can shift fluidly throughout the dialogue, depending on the topic or situation.

Example: During a standard meet up, one person might offer career advice while the other shares insights on digital tools or emerging trends. These exchanges happen organically and are driven by curiosity and mutual respect.

Formal Approach
Both parties may choose to make the reciprocal nature of the relationship more explicit. This involves:

- Discussing the arrangement: Agree that both parties will act as mentors and mentees.
- Setting shared goals: Identify specific areas where each person seeks support or development.
- Structuring sessions: Allocate time within meetings to focus on each person’s goals. For example, the first half of a session could focus on one person’s development, and the second half on the other’s.

The benefits of a this more formal approach ensures balanced support.

Develop your Mentoring Skills

As you continue to meet with your mentee it is useful to remind yourself of the skills to practice in mentoring. Listening, questioning, and giving feedback are all important skills to develop while mentoring.

All mentors are encouraged to attend a half-day Mentor Skills workshop delivered through Learning & Organisational Development, to support you to develop or refresh your mentoring skills. These are offered as you start your mentoring relationship.

Also available to both mentors and mentees is the online Mentoring Skills Guide from the university which you can use to support your development at any time.

Active Listening

Active listening can seem a very passive activity, though it actually involves a lot of hard work, because it involves not only hearing the words but also accepting, understanding, checking and clarifying them.

To show that you are listening:

- Focus on the speaker;
- Maintain appropriate eye contact;
- Look relaxed but not to the extent that you seem disinterested;
- Be attentive to body language as well as what is spoken;
- Listen to 'how' words are spoken;
- Acknowledge and encourage the speaker through verbal and non-verbal gestures and nods;
- Keep an open mind;
- Don't interrupt;

There are several techniques which can help in exploration and good listening:

- Paraphrasing-restating what the speaker said but in your own words;
- Clarifying-checking out your understanding;
- Echoing-picking up a key word and repeating it back with a slight questioning tone;
- Asking for examples;
- Summarising-show you understand by drawing together what you think you have heard;
- Silence-giving space and time to the speaker.

Questioning Skills

Alongside listening, asking questions in an open, positive, thought-provoking and non-threatening manner is an essential mentoring skill. Questions can have a variety of functions such as:

- Gaining information;
- Assessing issues;
- Highlighting important points;
- Deepening understanding;
- Directing the dialogue and moving it forward;
- Raising awareness;
- Reframing;
- Clarifying;

- Expressing an interest in the subject matter.

Asking too many questions can result in the mentee feeling as though they are being interrogated, so be clear on the purpose and impact of your questions.

Open questions can put people at ease, they show that you are interested in them and positively encourage people to talk. These questions begin with, how, why and what. Other useful questions which can encourage the mentee to elaborate and explore issues are:

- 'Can you say a little more about that?'
- 'In what way?'
- 'What are you thinking of, specifically?'
- 'Can you give me an example?'
- 'What impact did that have on you?'
- 'How do you feel about that?'
- 'How would you implement that?'
- 'What are the costs and benefits to that approach?'
- 'Describe how you might deal with this challenge?'
- 'Can you explain the thinking behind the idea?'

You may need to ask a closed question if you are checking out specific information such as:

- 'Did you get the research grant you applied for?'
- 'Do you find your role difficult?' however this could be rephrased to
- 'How do you find your role?'

Avoid multiple and leading questions such as:

- 'How did you feel about that, what did you do about it and what happened as a result?
- 'Do you think you did that because you were upset?'

Further Help and Information

If you require further help and information at any stage please contact manchestergold@manchester.ac.uk and a member of the team will contact you.

Resources and Guidance for Mentors:

Visit the MyDevelopment Canvas catalogue for a range of learning opportunities to enhance your mentoring practice and build coaching skills, including courses such as Mentoring Skills and the Coaching: Zero to Hero series.

How to be a Good Mentor: Ted Talk playlist

Coaching for Non-Coaches - This introductory course is for all colleagues who want to learn the essentials of coaching who have had little to no experience of coaching previously.

Diversity, Inclusivity & Equity - Resources to support your mentoring relationship

Mentoring through differences

Making diverse mentoring relationships work

Disability can be visible or invisible. These courses have some helpful insights into creating an inclusive and equitable workplace which may support an inclusive mentoring environment.

Supporting neurodiversity in the workplace

Best practices on communicating with your neurodivergent colleagues

Inclusive and equity for disabled colleagues

Tools for Mentoring

Tools and prompts to support your mentoring conversations:

- Wheel of Work - a tool for mentoring or coaching that helps explore the world of work, what areas people want to change and where they can set goals.
- Personal Values Tool - uncovers the values shaping your choices at work and how you approach your professional life.
- Personal Strengths Assessment – a short 15 minutes self-assessment to help individuals identify their strengths and best qualities.

- SMART goals resources including a video overview and template.

Signposting to Alternative Support

During your mentoring relationship you may find it useful to signpost mentees to other areas of support.

- UoM wellbeing services
- Disability Advisory and Support Service DASS
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion team
- Occupational Health services
- All staff areas are assigned a People Partner
- For development and training a range of online, self-directed and workshop opportunities are available: Talent Development

Alternatives to Mentoring

Sometimes a different approach to a situation is required or emerges through a mentoring relationship. This may include:

Coaching: a less directive form of development from mentoring which can help those facing more complicated situations or low confidence. A coach will ask questions and encourage individuals to think about their options. If you think your mentee would benefit from coaching then they should contact University Coaching scheme

Counselling: which focuses on the past and exploring how it is impacting on the present. Help is available through:

- UoM counselling and mental health support services
- The HealthHero Assist Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) is a confidential and independent counselling and information service. Support is free and confidential.

For further explanation of the differences between mentoring, coaching, and counseling, see the external resource:

How Do Coaching, Mentoring, and Counseling Differ? – an article on PositivePsychology.com.

Appendix 1: Mentors - Frequently Asked Questions

What commitment is involved?

Manchester Gold Staff will take up approximately 15 hours over a 8-9 month period. This includes attendance at all events, attendance at workshops, preparing for meetings and the face-to-face meetings themselves.

What if I can't deliver what my mentee expects of me?

You will have been matched with your mentee based on their requirements corresponding with your experience and skills as detailed on your application form, so in most cases you will be able to help. The programme induction will equip you with some basic tools to help you carry out your role and will set your mentee's expectations – in other words, your mentee shouldn't expect you to guarantee them a promotion! You will find an agreement in your induction pack that can help form the basis of a discussion around expectations.

You may find that you cannot help them on every objective and you may want to concentrate on key areas. It may also be that you signpost your mentee to other contacts if you feel you are not the best person to help them in certain areas. Remember that mentoring is a subtle art – often it is the small things that count like offering an impartial ear, understanding a predicament and providing encouragement.

However, if the match was wrong and things really aren't working, be open with your mentee and let them know how you feel. If you decide it is best not to continue, please let the Manchester Gold team know.

Who will I be matched with?

You will have been matched with a mentee on the basis of your application form. When you registered you were asked about the skills and experience you have to offer, along with the option of specifying the kind of a person you are looking to mentor. When a mentee registers, they specify what areas they are seeking support in and what skills and experience they are looking for in a mentor. Your mentee will have been chosen on the basis of these forms.

Do I have enough experience to be a mentor?

The level of experience needed really depends on what the mentee is looking for. Mentees register with very different needs such as; help in adjusting to a new job and faculty, taking on more responsibility, managing staff, gaining an understanding of the university and how it works, knowledge of job hunting, improving confidence or it may be something more specific - so you will be matched according to what the mentee is looking for.

Mentors have tended to come from across the University including project managers, lecturers, senior research fellows, technicians and supervisors. We welcome applications from all members of staff.

How do I bring closure to the mentoring relationship?

Manchester Gold Staff has a specific timeline and closes with a celebration and review event. This is an ideal time to bring closure to the relationship, although many mentors and mentees do agree to stay in touch informally beyond this.

I have not heard from my mentee in a while and I am concerned that the relationship is not progressing.

The mentee should drive the relationship: we ask them to arrange the meetings and set objectives. At the first meeting you should discuss preferred methods of communication, work schedules and availability and even set up rough dates for the meetings. This should avoid problems of this kind. However, some mentees may need more support than others - they may be nervous about making contact, or may be struggling to prioritise time when they will concentrate on their personal development due to a heavy workload. You could try to make contact with them, and if you are still experiencing problems, contact a member of the Manchester Gold team.

Our meetings seem to be running out of steam.

Although the mentee should drive the relationship and set objectives, the mentor should spend time thinking about how to meet those objectives, and perhaps planning activities for the mentee. Signposting mentees to other contacts, externally and internally, is very useful and will help the mentee build contacts, as well as providing further points for discussion. There are some suggested tools and activities in the resources section of this document. You could also reach out to the Manchester Gold Mentor community Teams channel for tops and suggestions. The Manchester Gold team can also provide support and guidance: manchestergold@manchester.ac.uk

Where should the meetings take place?

Meetings can take place either online or in person as suits both parties. Mutually convenient places which suit both parties are best. Some mentors have the meetings in their offices, others in cafes, training rooms etc. It is often best to meet somewhere neutral, confidential and to consider noise levels.

What if I decide I don't want to continue with the programme?

Please contact the Manchester Gold team and your mentee ASAP.

Do you have any tips and advice about how to get the most from the programme?

- Be organised and committed
- Take notes
- Prepare for meetings
- Set and agree objectives
- Be open and curious
- Be punctual and re-schedule with plenty of warning
- Give the relationship time to gel
- Attend the workshops and events
- Engage with your fellow mentors within the Teams channel

Appendix 2: Tips for Virtual Mentoring

If you are meeting your mentee virtually you can have a valuable and mutually rewarding relationship. Mentoring relationships can make use of a mix of in-person and online meetings and successful mentoring meetings can be conducted online.

Mentoring from a distance requires an over-emphasis on communication, checking in on each other, and making sure the other person's needs and expectations are being met. This one-page guide contains some tips and best practice for having an effective remote mentoring relationship remotely.

1. Establish expectations

When in a virtual mentoring relationship, it's even more important to agree expectations for how you will communicate and work together. Make sure you both understand what each wants and expects. Find what works with both of your schedules, taking into consideration which tool of communication you'll use and how much availability you'll make for each other.

2. Build in more structure

Remote mentoring relationships require more structure and communication than face-face relationships, so it's important to determine how often you'll be in touch and through what formats. Maintaining that rhythm will help ensure that you're communicating regularly enough to have an impact. For each of your meetings, set an initial agenda and a loose plan so that there is some structure coupled with the freedom to adapt. It's likely the structure may change over time, especially as you get to know each other better.

3. Be accountable to each other

It's a lot easier to postpone or put off meetings when they are on Teams or Zoom, but it's essential to make sure your scheduled meetings do not go by the way-side. More than ever, this is the time to show up for one another and maintain the relationship, and to bring it to appropriate closure when it's time for that. Don't just let the relationship fade away. Equally, if you said you would look into a certain situation for your mentor or mentee, do it. Follow up on tasks you assigned one another. Establish upcoming projects, steps, or actions for both of you before your next meeting and give updates on what you are both working on.

4. Minimise distractions

Find a quiet place (with an appropriate backdrop for those video calls) that minimizes distractions so that you can focus on the conversation. Consider turning off your phone notifications, listening more intently than usual and looking at the other person (rather than your own video) for subtle nonverbal cues that may be harder to dissect virtually than in person. Video calls may also require being more patient as there may be a lag, so don't be afraid to ask for more clarification and over communicate to avoid any misunderstandings.

Appendix 3: Mentoring Agreement/Contract

For discussion	Comments
Confidentiality Agree that you will not disclose to anyone else what you discuss during mentoring meetings unless with her/his agreement. Agree how you will describe the partnership to others.	
Frequency, timing and location of meetings Agree how often and how long you will meet. Agree where you will meet.	
Contact arrangements Discuss how and when to get in touch, any 'no-contact' times and how quickly to expect a response.	
Meeting arrangements How the meetings will be structured, e.g. will an agenda be agreed in advance, or will the approach be more flexible? Agree if meetings and actions will be recorded.	
Goals / aims Agree a common purpose and goals that will direct the mentoring relationship. Discuss expectations and identify potential issues. Use the 'Mentee Goal Setting Worksheet' to develop your thoughts.	
Honesty Discuss how you want to give and receive honest feedback to avoid strains to the relationship in the future.	
Privacy Agree what you are prepared to talk about other than the topic for which mentoring has been sought in order not to overstep any boundaries.	
Line manager Discussing how the line manager will be involved and how the relationship with him/her will be managed.	
Commitment How will both parties prepare for meetings? Consider using the 'Mentee Preparation worksheet' in the Mentee pack.	
Ending Discuss how the mentoring process will be reviewed as you progress. Discuss ways to end the relationship that are comfortable for mentor and mentee at the very beginning.	