MENTORING CIRCLES

Supporting Research Staff
in the Medical Sciences

Mentoring Circles

Mentoring Circles support research staff across the Division by encouraging self-reflection, increasing networking opportunities, and providing access to senior researchers outside of mentees' home departments.

With one senior mentor and three or four mentees, Mentoring Circles are proving a great way of allowing researchers to meet others from outside their department and giving them the space to discuss issues outside of their immediate research project.

"Meeting people from other departments and hearing both new perspectives on my situation and similar concerns to mine makes me feel less alone."

"Great to have 'neutral' feedback from people in a similar situation. Often it is surprisingly useful to simply describe a problem and (with advice) arrive at a series of possible actions."

Who can be a mentee?

Anyone from a participating department who is employed for the purpose of research. Many mentees are postdocs but we also have more senior researchers, lab managers, statisticians, research nurses...It is open to any researcher and we will try to match you as best we can with people who have similar goals to you.

This scheme is not open to students but a range of support is available from:

> www.ox.ac.uk/students/welfare
> ousu.org
> ox-fest.org/mentoring

You should also speak to your supervisor if you require any additional support.

Who can be a mentor?

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Any experienced researcher or academic can be a mentor. You should be willing to pass on experiences you have had and be interested in developing yourself and others.

Mentors are facilitators who allow their mentees to discover their own direction by offering guidance. Some mentoring relationships rely on the mentor offering advice from their own experience and perspective; while this will be a part of your role, this scheme is more about you listening and creating the space for your mentees to reflect on whatever issues are important to them, to allow their peers' perspectives as well as your own to inform their thinking, and to encourage them to take action.

If you have had some experience in motivating a team or been a mentor you will already have many of the skills necessary for this scheme. You should be able to build trust, rapport and confidence among the group in a non-threatening and friendly space. You will act as an enabler, helping the mentees to realise their potential and uncover hidden talents or abilities while your mentees actively engage in a non-judgemental, caring yet challenging manner. We particularly encourage mentees who have 'graduated' from the scheme to become mentors themselves.

The impact for mentors

"Became more in touch with certain challenging aspects of postdoc life at Oxford."

"Confidence that I can make a difference to people."

"I've really enjoyed supporting my mentees in discussing their career aims and how to get there. It's also helped me develop more skills to support PDR for my own team."

How much time will I have to commit?

Mentoring Circles should run initially for a 12 month period (or for at least four meetings) but the relationship may continue by mutual consent. Face to face meetings should be agreed upon and scheduled at the first meeting. Sessions should be held at a mutually convenient location, which can be the mentor's office and should generally last for at least an hour. Individual meetings will be available at the discretion of the mentor; however, please note that the mentor is not obliged to offer this to their mentees.

Mentees in a circle are encouraged to meet more regularly and peer to peer mentoring can also take place between meetings via email to sustain the momentum of the meetings and support each other through any specific concerns.

"It was useful to have time away from work, and in a supportive environment, to reflect on personal and career goals."

What other support is available?

At the end of this booklet you can find links to the wide range of support for research staff available at the University. The aim of the scheme is that you will come away with actions to follow up, so there may well be training that you have identified, people you want to talk to, or further self-reflection, that the University can help you with.

Before you start your mentoring, both mentees and mentors will attend a morning's introductory session, to ask questions and to set the scene for the mentoring programme. We will also be in touch with participants part way through the year to see if there are any workshops, resources, or information that we can provide to complement the conversations you're having within your circles.

If you have any issues or queries at any time in the programme, you can always feel free to contact Dr Brid Cronin or Dr Laura Hodsdon, Researcher Development Officer. **(Between May 2016 and April 2017 please contact Charlotte Smith at charlotte.smith@medsci.ox.ac.uk)**

brid.cronin@medsci.ox.ac.uk   laura.hodsdon@learning.ox.ac.uk

Resources

The following pages provide some prompts and tools to help guide your thinking or for you to use in the sessions.

Other resources and links can be found at
www.ox.ac.uk/supportforresearchers

www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/research/resources for researchers

SMART Objectives

The best way to make the most of mentoring is to make sure that you set yourself concrete goals, ideally at the end of each meeting. Ask yourself whether your actions are:

Specific – rather than 'I want to improve my relationships with colleagues', say 'I want to improve my relationship with Prof Bloggs by leaving our monthly meetings with a set of actions with which we are both happy'.

Measurable – rather than 'I'll publish more', 'I'll publish two articles'

Achievable – is it possible? You might want to deliver five lectures to improve your teaching experience, but do there exist the opportunities to do so?

Realistic – it's good to have aspirations, but if you've delayed for this long taking on extra management responsibilities are you sure you'll be able to do so now? Perhaps there is something else stopping you.

Time-bound – Perhaps the most important one: give yourself a deadline, and ask your mentoring circle to keep you accountable!

SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis is a way to think about your strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats associated with them. It can provide a good starting point for discussion and tease out some actions you might consider taking. Text adapted from www.mindtools.com

Strengths
Consider your strengths individually and in relation to the people around you. If having a particular skill is a job requirement then it may be more of a necessity than a strength. Don't be modest – be as objective as you can.
• What do you do better than anyone else?
• What do other people (and your boss, in particular) see as your strengths? (If you don't know, perhaps you could ask them?)
• Which of your achievements are you most proud of?

Weaknesses
• What tasks do you usually avoid?
• What are your negative work habits (for example, are you disorganized, or are you poor at handling stress)?
• What skills do you need to develop?

SWOT Analysis

Opportunities
• Do you have any contacts who can help you, or offer good advice? How could you add to that?
• Is there a need or gap in the research that no one is filling?
• Are there any networking events, classes, or conferences that you could attend?
• Could you take on some any extra projects or responsibilities in your current role?

Threats
• What obstacles do you currently face at work?
• Is your job (or the demand for the things you do) changing?
• Could any of your weaknesses lead to threats?

Strengths	Weaknesses
Opportunities	**Threats**

Researcher Development Framework

Mentoring Circles

The descriptors and areas of the framework can help you to think about the various skills and experience that you will have as a researcher. What would you like to develop more, either because you want to be more confident or because you need it for your career development (or both)? Why haven't you done so yet?

Collegiality
Team working
People management
Supervision
Mentoring
Influence and leadership
Collaboration
Equality and diversity

Subject knowledge
Research methods: theoretical knowledge
Research methods: practical application
Information seeking
Information literacy and management
Languages
Academic literacy and numeracy

Communication methods
Communication media
Publication

Analysing
Synthesising
Critical thinking
Evaluating
Problem solving

Working with others (D1)

Knowledge base (A1)

Cognitive abilities (A2)
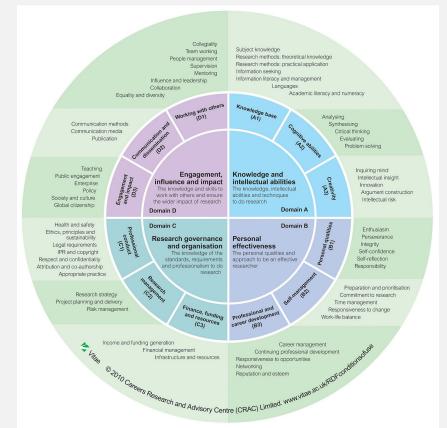
Communication and dissemination (D2)

Creativity (A3)

Teaching
Public engagement
Enterprise
Policy
Society and culture
Global citizenship

Inquiring mind
Intellectual insight
Innovation
Argument construction
Intellectual risk

Engagement, influence and impact (D3)

Engagement, influence and impact
The knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research
Domain D

Knowledge and intellectual abilities
The knowledge, intellectual abilities and techniques to do research
Domain A

Personal qualities (B1)

Enthusiasm
Perseverance
Integrity
Self-confidence
Self-reflection
Responsibility

Health and safety
Ethics, principles and sustainability
Legal requirements
IPR and copyright
Respect and confidentiality
Attribution and co-authorship
Appropriate practice

Professional conduct (C1)

Domain C

Research governance and organisation
The knowledge of the standards, requirements and professionalism to do research

Domain B

Personal effectiveness
The personal qualities and approach to be an effective researcher

Preparation and prioritisation
Commitment to research
Time management
Responsiveness to change
Work-life balance

Self-management (B2)

Research strategy
Project planning and delivery
Risk management

Research management (C2)

Finance, funding and resources (C3)

Professional and career development (B3)

Career management
Continuing professional development
Responsiveness to opportunities
Networking
Reputation and esteem

Income and funding generation
Financial management
Infrastructure and resources

Vitae

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Record of Discussion: Meeting 1

Area Identified:

Actions:

Support Needed:

Record of Discussion: Meeting 2

Progress since last meeting:

Area Identified:

Actions:

Support Needed:

Record of Discussion: Meeting 3

Progress since last meeting:

Area Identified:

Actions:

Support Needed:

Record of Discussion: Meeting 4

Progress since last meeting:

Area Identified:

Actions:

Support Needed:

Further Information:
Support Services and Advice

Support for researchers website
www.ox.ac.uk/supportforresearchers

Parents and carers information
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/parentsandcarersinformation

Childcare Services www.admin.ox.ac.uk/childcare

Occupational Health www.admin.ox.ac.uk/uohs

Harassment advice
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/harassmentadvice

Equality and Diversity Unit www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop

IT Services www.it.ox.ac.uk

University and College Union (UCU)
www.oxforducu.org.uk

Further Information:
Societies and networks

Oxford Research Staff Society www.oxrss.ox.ac.uk
OxRSS is a collective voice for research staff at the
University of Oxford and provides opportunities to network
socially and professionally across the University.

Join the Research Staff mailing list by sending a blank
email to researchstaff_subscribe@maillist.ox.ac.uk.

Research Staff Twitter account Follow @ResStaffOxford
for forthcoming events and useful info.

Black and Minority Ethnic Staff Network
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/race

Oxford Women's Network
www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/gender

LGBT Network www.admin.ox.ac.uk/eop/sexualorientation

University Club www.club.ox.ac.uk
The University Club is a sports and social members Club
for staff, graduates and alumni.

Further Information:

Career and Professional Development

Careers Service www.careers.ox.ac.uk
Free, impartial and objective advice to assist research staff in making well informed decisions about their career. It offers: careers advisers who work specifically with research staff; one-to-one confidential careers guidance; feedback on CVs and applications and help with interview preparation; career management workshops and seminars specifically designed for research staff.

Medical Sciences Division Skills Training
www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/skillstraining
Programme for graduate students and research staff.

Oxford Learning Institute www.learning.ox.ac.uk
Provides personal and professional development for all staff at the University, including; personal development (Springboard and Navigator), assertiveness, managing upwards, and a programme for Principal Investigators.

lynda.com, a huge library of video-based, online learning resources covering IT and Design skills and personal development.