Maynooth University

Mentoring Policy

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General queries on the policy can be made to people.development@mu.ie

Definitions

For the purpose of the Maynooth University Mentoring Schemes, the following definitions apply.

Mentoring: In its broadest sense is the process by which an individual (the Mentor) guides the career and development of another (the Mentee). It can be used as a reflective space where the Mentee can take responsibility for and discuss their development. Mentors can help by highlighting issues and by assisting the Mentee in planning ways through them.

Mentee: shall be understood to mean an individual whose career is guided by a more senior colleague.

Mentor: shall be understood to mean an individual in a more senior role, who guides the career and development of another (mentee).

Conflict of Interest: A conflict of interest is a set of circumstances, relationships or events that could impact on the objectivity of the mentoring relationship.

1. Introduction

Enabling our people at Maynooth University to develop is key to its success. We want to create a University wide learning culture that empowers individuals to take charge of their own development. By creating the right environment, staff can develop and grow, supported throughout their journey by a robust developmental review framework and a future career development framework. Through developmental review conversations, staff members can reflect on their progress, set meaningful goals and give and receive feedback, making their developmental journey both dynamic and impactful. The ongoing review conversations should foster clear, open and two-way communication regarding ways of sustaining and improving individual development and identifying and addressing individual needs.

Mentoring can play a crucial role in organisational development, talent management, and in fostering a culture of continuous learning. It aims to enhance the experience and engagement of staff.

Mentoring, through reflection on the part of the Mentee and guidance and support from the Mentor, allows for a mutual beneficial learning exchange to occur, based on knowledge gained through experience. The focus of mentoring in this situation may include:

- Analysis of strengths, challenges and areas of development.
- Support as a career development tool, to nurture and develop staff through sharing knowledge and information.
- Honing teambuilding and interpersonal skills.
- Developing collegial networks which are intra- and inter-disciplinary.

Mentoring, coaching, giving and receiving feedback are essential skills for managers and Heads to have as part of their people management responsibilities. It may also be appropriate to encourage mentoring within departments.

This policy refers to the mentoring schemes provided centrally by HR for staff. These mentoring schemes are for staff who wish to have a person assigned to them who is independent of their department, to work through a development goal with them.

Mentoring in the University is not designed to specifically identify an individual's suitability for promotion, either through personal promotion schemes or by appointment to a higher grade but aims to facilitate and increase the effectiveness of individual's participation in these processes.

2. Purpose

The purpose of the Mentoring Policy is to outline how staff can be involved in mentoring as a Mentor and/or Mentee.

The purpose of the University Mentoring Schemes are to support the professional growth of the individual at any stage of their career.

The overall aim of the formal mentoring schemes for all University staff is to provide a platform through which experiences can be shared on a one-to-one formal basis and provide development support to staff. Mentoring aims to enhance staff career development and performance and develop further flexible personal, professional and leadership opportunities for staff as part of the Career Planning and Development Framework.

3. Policy Scope

Mentoring is available to all part-time and full-time staff on permanent and temporary contracts in the University and is optional.

This policy will apply to all staff of the University who:

- have at least one year remaining on their contract of employment, from when the mentoring is due to commence[1].

Mentoring Schemes are available for the following categories of staff:

- Administrative, Technical, Professional, Support Staff (12 months cycle)
- Academic Staff (12 months cycle)
- Research Staff (6-12 months cycle)

4. Policy Principles

Mentoring in Maynooth University is underpinned by the following principles:

- Ownership of the mentoring process rests with the Mentee, and they drive the mentoring agenda. This is referred to as being Mentee Led.
- Engagement in a mentoring relationship is on a voluntary basis for both the Mentor and the Mentee.
- The mentoring relationship is confidential, discussions between the Mentor and the Mentee must not be divulged to a third party unless with the agreement of both parties.
- It is a partnership built upon trust and mutual respect.
- The Mentor empowers the Mentee to take responsibility for their own learning and career development.
- Mentoring discussions must be dedicated to work related issues and exploring solutions.
- The relationship places no obligation on either party beyond its developmental intent.
- Mentoring is distinct and separate from other management processes in the University e.g. Promotions, Tenure Track, Performance Management, etc.
- Handling workplace relationship issues can be dealt with in the mentoring process, but mentoring is not the forum for dealing with specific workplace issues around relationship issues with colleagues (there are alternatives supports for these types of issues).
- Mentors will be selected as per the selection process outlined below.
- There is no requirement to keep written records.

Mentoring is not
- for dealing with underperformance issues.
- for dealing with personal issues/ counselling.
- for promotion or sponsoring of the individual.
- for taking on the problems/work of the mentee.
- for dealing with specific relationship issues.

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[1] For staff on the Research Mentoring Scheme only, this duration can be at least 6 months, due to the short-term contract they are offered.

5. The Mentoring Process

It is important that any process for selecting mentors identifies staff who are willing and capable of taking on the role of mentor.

The principles for selecting mentors and pairing mentees with suitable mentors are as follows.

Mentor Selection

- All mentors will come from within Maynooth University.
- Mentors will be required to complete an Expression of Interest Form, a link to their CV/biography can also be included.
- Mentors will be selected based on their experience and the skills they can bring to the mentoring as stated in their Expression of Interest Form.
- Mentors must be willing and available during the mentoring period to be a mentor.
- It is recommended that a mentor does not mentor more than one mentee each year. However, this is left to the discretion of each mentor.
- It is not guaranteed that all staff who express an interest in being a mentor in a particular year well be paired with a mentee.
- All Mentors and Mentees must complete the relevant mentoring workshop before participating in the mentoring. This workshop should be completed every 3 years for those involved in the mentoring.

Pairing Mentors and Mentees

- Pairing will be based on meeting the criteria above and on specific skills and competencies that the Mentee needs and wants to develop.
- The person who the Mentee directly reports to should not be the Mentor as part of the mentoring scheme. However, mentoring is a useful skill as part of manager/staff relationship.
- Mentees will be paired with someone outside of their department unless there is a specific goal the Mentee wishes to be mentored on, which requires someone having a detailed understanding of their role. In this situation the selected Mentor will have the option to decide if they will or will not mentor the person.
- The Mentor will be at least 1 grade above the Mentee at the time the mentoring pairing is finalised.
- Pairing will depend on the number of suitable staff who expressed an interest in being a mentor, who can match the goals of the mentee.
- Mentees will be asked about the suitability of the Mentor for them in advance of confirming the pairing.
- The Mentee does not have to accept the Mentor they are paired with; however, they may not be a suitable alternative mentor available for them and therefore they may have to wait until the next year to participate in the mentoring.
- The Mentor does not select who they will mentor, however, if there is a conflict of interest with the mentee they are paired with, they should disclose this to the mentoring co-ordinator.
- Priority will be given to those who have not previously availed of mentoring through the Mentoring schemes in the University.
- It is not guaranteed that all staff who express an interest in being a mentor in a particular year will be paired with a mentee.
- Staff who are being coached will not be offered mentoring in the same academic year. This is to allow staff who are not availing of coaching priority access to the mentoring.
- A panel of mentors is formed for each scheme annually.
- Where possible there will be a gender balance on the mentor panel.

- People Development, HR will have responsibility for choosing suitable mentors for all schemes and pairing them with mentees.
  - The Faculty Deans (Academic Mentoring Scheme only) and People Development will pair mentees and mentors that have expressed an interest in the process and meet the criteria, using the Expression of Interest Form information and ensuring there is a gender balance.
  - For Academic Mentoring, the Mentor and Mentee will be paired with someone in their own faculty, in the first instance.
    - In the situation where it is an academic in a leadership role or moving into a leadership role who is looking for mentoring on leadership, it may be appropriate to pair them with a senior leader from across all areas of the University.
    - If a staff member applying to be mentored feels the goal they wish to discuss in the mentoring would benefit from a mentor from another faculty and a suitable mentor is available in another faculty, this can be accommodated.
    - In the situation where there are more staff available to mentor in one faculty than another, they could be paired with someone from a different faculty, where there are more mentees than mentors.
  - For Research staff the mentor will be selected from across research and early career academic roles.
  - For Administrative, Professional, Technical and Support mentoring schemes, the Mentee will be paired with someone in that job category (Admin paired with Admin, Technicians with Technicians etc.), in the first instance.
    - In the situation where an Administrative, Professional, Technical or Support staff member requests a mentor from a different category this will be explored and accommodated where a suitable mentor is available.

Participation in mentoring will be subject to available capacity. It may not be possible to find a suitable mentor or mentee for each expression of interest received and therefore being appointed as mentor or mentee is not guaranteed.

As with all relationships there is a natural cycle to a mentoring relationship. The first part of the cycle is about building rapport. Once trust has been established the relationship will move towards setting out expectations and ground rules around the mentoring process. From there the initial goals for the mentoring will be agreed and it will move into its productive phase where both the Mentor and the Mentee see the benefits of the relationship. As time moves on circumstances for either party may change, and the mentoring goal will be reached or brought as far as it can go. It is important that both parties are aware of this latter phase of maturation and a decision can be made to bring the mentoring to a close.

The mentoring will continue for 12 months sequentially (6 to 12 months for the Researcher Staff Mentoring Scheme *only*) from when the scheme commences. It is recommended that a maximum of 8 sessions would take place in that period, it may be that less are required. The mentoring does not continue past the scheme duration e.g. 12 months.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Role of the Mentee

The Maynooth University Mentoring is mentee led, meaning the Mentee should own and initiate the process for their mentoring. The Mentee drives the mentoring agenda for each session based on the SMART goal they defined as part of the initial mentoring meeting with their mentor.

The Mentee has a role in ensuring the success of the mentoring partnership which includes:

- A willingness to engage in the mentoring.
- A willingness to commit time and energy to learn and develop.
- Appreciating and respecting the commitment on the part of the Mentor.
- Being open and honest in discussing with the Mentor what it is they would like to achieve from the partnership.
- Maintaining confidentiality.

6.2 Role of the Mentor

The role of the Mentor will shift according to the needs of the mentee. They may be a role model or sounding board at times and at other times challenger, advisor or facilitator. However irrespective of role, the Mentor must demonstrate the highest professional standards and demonstrate a range of personal attributes in each of those roles, including:

- An interest in developing themselves and others.
- Excellent listening ability.
- Being accessible and available.
- Being capable of building trust and maintaining confidentiality.
- Remaining constructive, with the focus on the development of the Mentee.
- Sharing knowledge and work/volunteering experiences with the Mentee.

The skills required by the Mentor include listening, communication, feedback, questioning and interpersonal skills. The role of the Mentor is to:

- Listen to and encourage discussion.
- Guide and encourage the Mentee to reach their own conclusions.
- Advise the Mentee about organisational issues and strategy.
- Help navigate the inner workings of the University.
- Provide and discuss feedback.
- Encourage growth and development.
- Help the Mentee with their personal development planning and implementation.
- Work with the Mentee to identify and understand career related skills, interests and values.
- Help the Mentee plan strategies to achieve mutually agreed upon professional and personal goals.
- Serve as a role model to demonstrate successful professional behaviours.
- Help build skills and expand vision

6.3 Role of the University Executive Members

The main responsibilities of UE will be to:

- Act as champion for mentoring within their own units and across the University.

The Faculty Deans will,

- work with People Development to appropriately pair mentors and mentees within their faculty, on the academic mentoring scheme.

6.4   Role of Head of Department

The main responsibilities of the Head of Department, which can be extended to the individual's manager will be to:

- Act as champion for mentoring within their own department.
- Discuss the impact of the mentoring with those who complete it from their department.

6.5   Role of People Development, Human Resources

People Development will have responsibility for oversight of the mentoring process and supporting any administrative aspects of the mentoring process. This responsibility will include:

- Having an overall knowledge of the mentoring process.
- Supporting the University Executive members and Heads of Departments in the rollout and promotion of the schemes.
- Organising briefing sessions and mentoring workshops as appropriate for all stakeholders involved in the process.
- Co-ordinating expressions of interest from potential mentors and mentees.
- Maintaining a record of the staff involved in mentoring relationships.
- Pairing of mentors and mentees.
- Developing relevant support and guides on mentoring for staff.
- Dealing with queries on the mentoring schemes.
- Supporting mentors and mentees involved in the mentoring schemes.

7. Impact of Mentoring

The Mentoring will be evaluated mid-way through the scheme and at the end of the scheme by People Development, HR. It is encouraged that heads of department discuss the impact of the mentoring with those who complete it from their department, ideally through their Developmental Review.

8. Data Retention

The documentation associated with the Mentoring Schemes shall be stored in accordance with the University's Records Retention Schedules.

Monitoring and Review

The Director of Human Resources or their nominee will monitor the application of the policy. This policy shall be reviewed after a period of 3 years.

Effective date: In line with the launch of each new scheme from January 2025.