

Mentoring Frequently Asked Questions

What is Mentoring?

The aim of the mentoring initiative is to provide a platform through which experiences can be shared on a one-to-one informal basis, providing support to people at various stages of their careers. The UL Mentoring Scheme further develops the mentoring culture and climate of UL by including all employees, male and female: faculty, staff, research and technical.

The UL Mentoring Scheme is an extension of the existing scheme developed by the Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Graduate Studies Office, which provides a framework for the mentoring of new faculty.

What is the definition of Mentoring?

Mentoring is a relationship in which a person with relevant experience and expertise counsels, guides and helps another individual to develop both personally and professionally. Mentoring is essentially about learning – identifying, facilitating, supporting and celebrating learning. Both mentee and mentor can benefit from the mentoring process. The purpose of the relationship is helping people to help themselves.

What are the benefits of the Mentoring relationship?

The Mentoring relationship is mutually beneficial to the Mentor and the Mentee. It is important to stress that although a mentoring relationship is usually focussed on developing the Mentee there are many benefits for the Mentor including development of their own skills and increased job satisfaction from reflecting on their own role and experiences.

How much time would be involved if I volunteered to be a Mentor?

It often takes less time than you expect to volunteer as a Mentor. A Mentor can be explicit about the time they are prepared to give and this can be agreed with the Mentee at the outset. The duration of the mentoring relationship is one year

For the Mentor:

Why become a Mentor?

- Do you want to help someone to achieve their potential?
- Do you want to share your personal knowledge and experience?
- Do you want to help people to develop themselves?
- Do you want to add to your personal network?
- Do you want opportunities to reflect on your own job and gain new insights?
- Do you want to share concerns about equality issues?
- Do you want to give something back to the University by helping less experienced staff members?

What do I need to become a Mentor?

- Are you a good listener?
- Can you maintain confidentiality?
- Can you encourage people and provide appropriate feedback where necessary?

What training is available for Mentors?

- Mentor Training Workshops are provided annually.

For the Mentee

When might you need a Mentor?

- When developing a career plan?
- When starting a new job?
- When preparing to move to a new job?

Why might you need a Mentor?

- To help you to prioritise and focus better
- To help you to achieve your potential
- To share experiences with a more experienced staff member
- To increase your support network
- To share concerns about equality issues

How do I find a Mentor?

Some departments have their own mentoring schemes for new faculty members – you should check with your Head of Department to see if that is the case within your own Department. In addition, all employees are welcome to apply to the University's Mentoring Scheme. Within the UL Mentoring Scheme the Mentor will not have direct managerial responsibility for you.

How often should I meet my Mentor?

The partnership lasts one year. How often you meet depends on your personal circumstances i.e. availability to meet but we recommend a minimum of 6 times a year. Meetings should last between 30 mins to 2 hours. Some people have more "email type meetings" after the initial couple of face-to-face meetings. This is entirely up to you and your Mentor.

Where should we meet?

This is up to you to decide. Some people meet in coffee shops, some in the office of Mentee or Mentor, some off campus.

What should we talk about?

This will depend on what the Mentee's wishes are. However, some common topics are (in no particular order); advice on work life balance; how to say no; how the University works or doesn't; schemes you can apply for; reading/advising on grant applications or papers; help with career planning; how to obtain funds for conference attendance; sabbatical arrangements; impact of children on career; supervision of staff and research students; time management etc.

What would a typical meeting with my Mentor/Mentee entail?

In general the meetings work best if they are structured. The following points are helpful for both parties to consider:

- Think about what you want to achieve before you meet.
- Be proactive about arranging meetings and making requests.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.
- Set a date and time for the next meeting.
- Give feedback!
- Do what you promise to do.
- Always set an agenda and action points.

I'm not sure if it's working out with my Mentor/Mentee - what should I do?

If you are experiencing difficulties within the mentorship relationship try to talk it through with them. If that doesn't succeed contact a member of the Mentoring Committee who will be more than happy to help you.

(Who are the committee? / What is their role and how can they support me as a Mentor/Mentee?)

The membership of the Mentoring Committee and their Terms of Reference are available on www.ul.ie/HR/Mentoring