Research mentoring in Higher Education in England

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1 Executive summary

This report describes the findings of primary and secondary research carried out by Chrysalis Research and the University of Brighton. The aim of the research was to understand the practice, purpose and impacts of research mentoring or coaching schemes that exist in universities. The research comprised a literature review and an email survey of Heads of Schools/Research Centres at the University of Brighton carried out by researchers at the University of Brighton, followed by case studies of six university departments in England, carried out by Chrysalis Research.

Evidence from the literature review and the case study research suggests positive outcomes from mentoring. The benefits are reported at both the personal and institutional level:

- **Personal** in terms of job performance, career progression, increased confidence and resilience for mentees, and personal satisfaction for mentors

- **Institutional** in terms of loyalty and retention of staff, greater trust, improved job performance, a stronger focus on research and, ultimately, higher-quality research outputs.

Mentoring programmes require a considerable investment in terms of staff time. Even where there is no central resource or training, mentors and mentees must commit to meeting and working together, and this is rarely recognised in workload allocations. Staff time and the availability of a pool of suitable individuals to act as mentors are the biggest challenges to implementing a successful mentoring programme.

The email survey of Heads of Schools/Research Centres at Brighton indicates some form of formal or informal mentoring scheme exists in most Schools and some Centres but the degree of scheme management is varied. Some schemes do not appear to be documented and no School or centre indicated that they had yet undertaken a formal evaluation of the scheme.

The mentoring schemes in the other Universities that provided the case studies took many forms:

- Dyadic mentoring schemes were most common, often between junior and senior staff; one scheme was a peer-to-peer group mentoring scheme.

- Mentoring often took place within research groups or clusters, but one scheme spanned different departments.
- Mentoring focused on different issues including induction, research outputs or skills for a research career.
- The schemes involved both formal and informal approaches.

The research highlighted that different approaches can work well depending on the institutional context of the scheme and the overall aims of the programme, but all depend on the commitment to, and understanding of, the mentoring scheme by mentor and mentee alike.

Despite the diverse range of formats and purposes, it is possible to identify elements of programmes that were reported to be successful.

- Most importantly, both parties must share a common understanding of the specific aims of research mentoring, driven by the needs of the mentee. This can be supported or reinforced by training or written guidance for mentors and mentees.
- Matching suitable mentors to mentees is also vital in ensuring a successful mentoring experience. This is no easy task and depends on the needs of the mentee, the skills and experience of the mentor, and the personal characteristics of both. Mentors should be senior to the mentee in terms of experience, though not necessarily by position in the university. Keeping mentor relationships separate from management relationships is recommended to avoid competing priorities.
- The literature suggests that a higher frequency of meeting between mentor and mentee leads to greater success as does encouraging mentees to initiate meetings. The case studies suggest that meetings spaced between three and six months apart maintain the momentum of the relationship while allowing time for the mentee to implement action points arising from the discussions.
- A dedicated resource to help administer, promote, monitor and review the mentoring programme can be valuable. There should always be a clear means of obtaining feedback on pairings and resolving conflicts or problems.
- A loose structure and guidance on processes can help support mentors and mentees and frame their expectations. At the same time, there should be no rigid diktats on how the relationship should proceed, only guidance on what is known to work.

Many of the programmes in the case studies were mandatory, which set a positive expectation that mentoring would take place, and an entitlement that made it easy for mentees to access a mentor. Others were voluntary, and benefited from the willingness and commitment of both parties that comes with making an active choice. What the two approaches have in common is the mentors' and mentees' shared view that mentoring is of value and that the programme can be tailored to the specific needs of an individual mentee.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

Most higher education institutions operate a mentoring or coaching scheme of some kind. The purpose of these schemes varies and, in some cases, different schemes operate within a single institution. Most commonly, mentoring or coaching is provided for students but many universities also have staff mentoring schemes, for example to support staff in their career development, to increase the number of women in senior roles, or to improve links with the community.

The University of Brighton commissioned Chrysalis Research, an independent research organisation, to work with the School of Social Sciences to carry out primary and secondary research. The aim of the research was to understand the practice, purpose and impacts of research mentoring or coaching schemes that exist in universities.

The project team at the University of Brighton carried out a review of existing literature. The team gathered and reviewed secondary evidence about research mentoring or coaching schemes in UK universities. Chrysalis Research carried out primary research: in-depth interviews with staff in six departments at five universities to explore practice within these institutions.

This report describes the findings of the primary and secondary research with a view to Identifying recommendations for a research mentoring or coaching scheme for the University of Brighton and the specific needs of University of Brighton staff.

2.2 Methods

Literature review

The University of Brighton carried out a preliminary review of key peer-reviewed literature on research mentoring. A comprehensive search of academic search engines using key words and constraint terms yielded a high number of bibliographic references. The analysis focused on the

38 most relevant journal articles that provided findings based on robust research. From these, a shortlist of 12 studies was analysed in more detail to identify the main findings about good practice in research mentoring.

The summary of the literature review is found in Section 2.

Email survey: mentoring at the University of Brighton

The Head of School and Head of Research in each of the University of Brighton's ten Schools were asked to respond to a series of email questions relating to the possible existence of research mentoring within the School or Research Centre. Of the 20 heads who were sent an email, 19 responded. The answers were occasionally somewhat contradictory between Heads of Schools and Heads of Centres and perhaps warrant further investigation.

Primary research

The primary research comprised in-depth interviews with staff at universities that carry out research mentoring or peer-to-peer coaching. Between April and July 2015, Chrysalis Research carried out 34 interviews in six departments in five universities, including two Russell Group, two post-1992 institutions and one non-aligned institution. The university departments were recruited through professional networks as potentially demonstrating good practice.

A range of disciplines within the social sciences was covered by the primary research, including Education, Geography, Politics and Psychology, plus one pan-departmental scheme.

Each interview took 45 to 60 minutes and the majority of interviews were conducted face to face. Where face-to-face interviews were not possible, telephone interviews were used. Figure 1 shows the interviews conducted.

Chrysalis Research, with the support of the researchers from the University of Brighton, developed a semi- structured interview guide informed by the findings of the literature review for the primary research interviews. The core guide was tailored to produce a guide for mentors and mentees, and another for the mentoring lead. The discussion guides are found in Appendix 1.

At each institution, interviews were conducted with mentors, mentees and the research and mentoring lead. The research mentoring lead is the member of staff responsible for strategic oversight of the research mentoring scheme. Interviews with research mentoring leads focused on understanding the context and rationale of the research mentoring scheme, their perceptions of the strengths and limitations, and its likely future direction.

Figure 1: Interviews about research mentoring or peer coaching

Case Study	Date	Interviews completed	Notes
Case Study 1	17 June	5 participants	Peer coaching model within research group
Case Study 2	7 May	Mentor lead 4 mentors 2 mentees	6 interviews in total, includes one paired mentor/ee interview
Case Study 3	1 April	Mentor lead 2 mentors 3 mentees	
Case Study 4	15 July	Mentor lead 4 mentors 3 mentees	Two mentees interviewed by phone late July
Case Study 5	5 June	Mentor lead 2 mentors 1 mentees	
Case Study 6	July and September	Mentor lead 2 mentors 2 mentor/ee	Interviews by phone

2.3   Structure of the report

Section 3 provides a summary of the literature review and Section 4 summarises the findings from the email survey. Both the literature review and the email survey were carried out by the University of Brighton. These are followed in Section 5 by an outline of each of the six case studies carried out by Chrysalis Research. This section describes each mentoring scheme in terms of their individual aims, structure and outcomes.

Section 6 is a discussion of the key themes arising from the case studies. It highlights points of commonality and difference, the benefits and challenges of mentoring, and incorporates summary findings from the desk research where pertinent.

The concluding section, Section 7, identifies elements of successful research mentoring programmes with a view to making recommendations for a research mentoring programme at the University of Brighton.

3 Summary of the literature review

A literature review was carried out by researchers at the University of Brighton to glean a deeper understanding of research mentoring in Higher Education. This section summarises the nature and potential benefits of research mentoring based on a critical review of 12 relevant papers.

3.1 Definitions of research mentoring

Research mentoring is a field of knowledge in the social sciences that has received little attention. The specific needs of mentoring for the career development of researchers have been addressed in only a small number of studies (Rath, 2012), even though the potentially powerful role this process plays in the development of the research career has been increasingly recognised (Keyser et al., 2008).

Research mentorship has traditionally been defined as the process through which early career researchers learn the norms and rules of their academic settings, develop and strengthen research skills and acquire the values and behaviours necessary to further enhance their careers (Keyser et al., 2008; Lumpkin, 2011; Mathews, 2003; Rath, 2012). This process is typically through a relationship between a less experienced researcher, the mentee, and a more experienced one, the mentor (Bean, Lucas & Hyers, 2014; Keyser et al., 2008; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008; Savage, Karp & Logue, 2004; Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007; Xu & Payne, 2014).

Dyadic relationships and the power relationships that surround them have been questioned, with some advocating group mentoring and with other forms of mentoring, including *ad hoc* mentoring and mentoring for staff development throughout the academic career (Marcellino, 2011; Mathews, 2003; Rath, 2012; Sorcinelli & Yung, 2007).

3.2   The nature of effective mentoring

Effective mentoring programmes are normally aligned with the culture of the organisation (Bean, Lucas & Hyers, 2014; Godden, Tregunna & Kutsyuruba, 2014; Marcellino, 2011; Rath, 2012), and formal mentoring programmes should have clear and well-defined purposes, roles and expectations. Both mentors and mentees should be fully aware of what is expected from them in this position (Keyser et al., 2008; Lumpkin, 2011; Marcellino, 2011; Mathews, 2003; Mullen & Huttinger, 2008; Rath, 2012) and regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms are presented as being highly important in order to adjust the mentoring programmes to the specific needs of all participants and to regulate power relationships. Feedback and power relationships are sensitive issues and there are reports of instances where mentors have used their positions to have the mentees work for the benefit of the mentors' careers (Keyser et al., 2008; Lumpkin, 2011; Marcellino, 2011; Mathews, 2003; Mullen & Huttinger, 2008; Rath, 2012).

Higher frequency of contact between mentors and mentees is associated with improved mentoring outcomes and some studies recommend that, in a formal mentoring scheme, there should be regular scheduled mentoring meetings booked during working hours (Bean, Lucas & Hyers, 2014; Lumpkin, 2011; Mathews, 2004).

Effective communication, both between mentor and mentee and between the mentoring scheme participants and the senior management groups of the higher education institutions, is also shown to have a key role in effective mentoring programmes, as clarity of purpose and of rules is one of the most important drivers for successful mentoring schemes.

Incentives such as time allocation or salary benefits are presented in the literature as important mechanisms for effective mentoring programmes. (Keyser et al., 2008; Lumpkin, 2011; Marcellino, 2011; Mathews, 2004; Mullen & Huttinger, 2008; Rath, 2012).

3.3   The benefits of mentoring programmes

Evidence suggests that academic staff, particularly early career staff, involved in formal mentoring schemes have greater success, in terms of academic progress and retention at the institution, than those who do not have mentors (Bean, Lucas & Hyers, 2014; Lumpkin, 2011; Marcellino, 2011; Mullen & Huttinger, 2008; Savage, Karp & Logue, 2004; Sorcinelli & Yun, 2007; Xu & Payne, 2014).

Benefits of mentoring for both mentors and mentees include impacts on performance, with higher numbers of publications and funding grants for mentees, reduced job turnover and enhanced career advancement. Social and psychological impacts such as increased confidence both for mentees and mentors, enhanced organisational culture and the cultivation of a culture

of loyalty towards the organisation have also been reported (Lumpkin, 2011; Mathews, 2003; Mullen & Hutinger, 2008).

The lack of formalised mentoring programmes can lead to disparities in career advancement and job performance for potential beneficiaries of mentoring, as involvement in informal mentoring will depend greatly on researchers' willingness to approach other colleagues to become their mentors and on colleagues' interest in continuing in a process that is not formally evaluated or supported (Bean, Lucas & Hyers, 2014; Rath, 2012).

4 Research mentoring at the University of Brighton

This section summarises the findings from an email survey sent to Heads of School and Heads of Research in Schools and Research Centres at the University of Brighton. A total of 19 of the 20 heads responded.

Formal mentoring schemes were found to be in operation in 10 Schools or Research Centres. Nine respondents said there was no formal mentoring scheme in operation in their School or Centre although four of these described some form of informal mentoring. Only seven respondents provided a start date for the mentoring scheme and four indicated that the scheme was introduced during 2014. Of the 19 respondents, five provided some formal policy documents or guidelines concerning their mentoring schemes.

Six respondents claimed that the mentoring scheme is in place for any colleagues who wish to take advantage of it. One stated that it was available to all colleagues who had completed doctorates, four said that mentoring was targeted at early career academics, one answered that it was targeted specifically at female academics, and two that it was based on specific research projects. Five did not say at whom the mentoring scheme was targeted.

Nine respondents revealed that mentoring pairings were made by the senior management teams while two stated that it was the mentee who chose the mentor. Eight did not answer this question.

All of the 10 respondents who answered the question concerning the existence of incentives for mentors and mentees indicated that there is currently no specific incentive for participation in the mentoring scheme, even though some Heads of Research said that the existence of incentives could help the mentoring scheme to work better, particularly with the allocation of specific time for mentoring activities. One Head of Research had requested this type of support

from the School's Senior Management Group and indicated that a workload allocation would be provided to research mentors from September 2015.

Responses about the roles that mentors take in the mentoring scheme were very similar and included providing guidance on careers and University of Brighton processes, reviewing draft papers and research proposals, and providing advice on grant writing and funding sources.

At the time of the survey, none of the schemes had been formally evaluated so it is difficult to state with any degree of confidence whether research mentoring at the University of Brighton has been successful or not. One of the Heads of Research stated that success 'depends greatly on the mentor'; while another felt that research mentoring had contributed to improved Research Excellence Framework (REF) results.

5 Case studies

This section describes each of the six case studies explored during the research. Each model is described in terms of its processes and outcomes, and depicted visually.

The definition of mentoring identified in the literature review (see 3.1) was loosely applicable to the primary research case studies, which were generally dyadic in nature (one mentor to one mentee, but usually many mentees to one mentor) with the mentor the more experienced of the pair. Early career researchers were the focus of the dyadic mentoring schemes.

All of the case studies were selected because the mentoring focused on research careers, and most of the mentoring relationships had a strong focus on research skills, most frequently writing skills for bids or journal articles, developing an understanding of suitable journals for publication, and strategies for building a career in research. However, while research was the focus of the mentoring relationship, it was far from the totality of it. The degree to which the case study departments implemented research mentoring, as opposed to pastoral mentoring or more general career mentoring, varied considerably.

Most of the mentoring relationships we explored in our research had a strong element of general mentoring, sometimes pastoral mentoring. Mentors and mentees in the research described a range of benefits, including helping new staff find their way around and settle into the new organisation, and personal and moral support.

The element that was universal to the case studies was mentoring for career development, whether that is a research role, teaching, or just making progress in academia. Research mentoring as defined in the literature was certainly a part of what we saw, but we would describe most of the case study models as career mentoring for researchers, not necessarily research mentoring.

Throughout the rest of the report we use the term 'mentoring' and use 'research mentoring' only when it was used by a particular participant.

5.1   Case Study 1: Peer coaching

Mentoring model

The research comprised five face-to-face interviews, two with research directors, two with research associates and the last interview with a lecturer.

Mentoring takes the form of a peer support group within one of the University-recognised research centres. Every week throughout the year the group meets for an hour to discuss written papers, e.g. for conferences or journals, and the following week to discuss research bid submissions. Prior to the meetings, the research directors send out reminder emails with attachments in preparation for the meetings.

This is a research centre-based initiative however everyone within the school is invited to attend the meetings. The group ranges from four to 12 members at each session and members are not obliged to attend every week. During the meetings members share their bids and papers and the group provides constructive feedback. If individuals are unable or unwilling to attend the meetings because they are reluctant to present their ideas in front of the group then the research director will have a one-to-one meeting with them.

The group was set up in 2004 and initially focused on bid writing, not only to improve the quality of bids but also to encourage submission of bids in order to receive additional funding. Following the success of the bid writing group, the writing group was introduced in 2010-2011, which had a greater focus on writing papers for journals and conferences.

Case Study 1: Peer Coaching
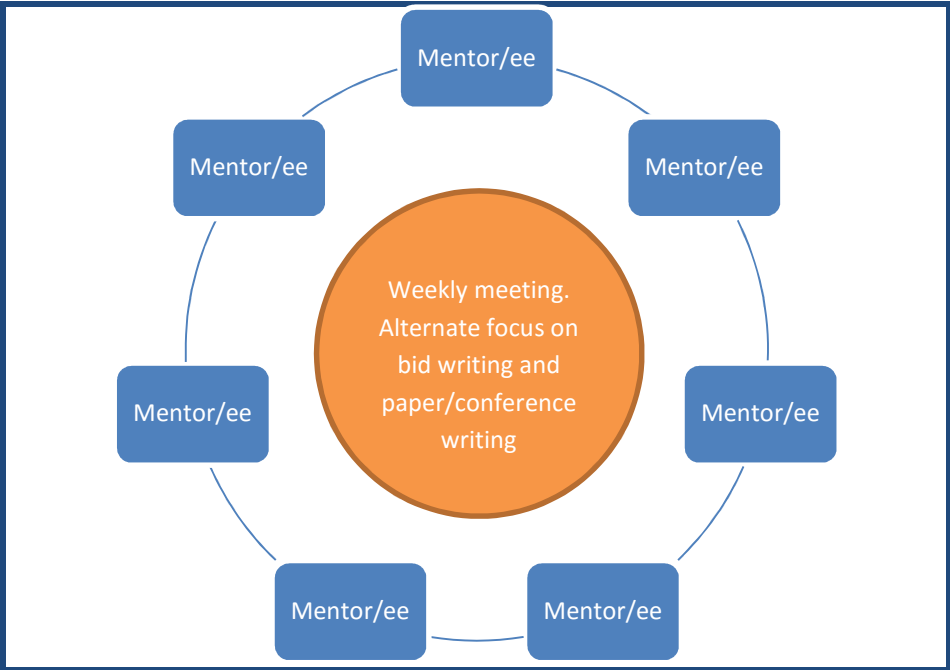
Discussion

An important element of the groups, and the factor that underpins their success, is the participatory and collaborative nature of the meetings, which is also reflected in the ethos of the department. The bid meetings are not competitive because of the supportive nature of the department and because all staff want to '*improve and make the bids stronger*'. Members – who acted as both mentor and mentee to one another – felt the group meetings were supportive and no one felt intimidated or judged because everyone's opinion is valued equally.

> *Just because you're a professor or a junior researcher, you've still got something to contribute and you've still got some knowledge and some experience, so it is a levelling experience.*

> Mentor/mentee

During the paper writing meetings, members discuss the progress of their paper and how it is structured. For one member, this helped her restructure a conference presentation into a written paper and helped her decide on which case studies to include. Members also receive guidance on the appropriate journals to target for publishing their articles. Members of the group felt they received constructive advice from peers who act as '*critical friends*'.

> *You don't come away thinking people have just paid it lip service, there is a critical analysis in a very supportive way.*

> *You can sometimes gain real insight. People will say, 'Oh I wouldn't go for that journal because my experience is they're looking for something else. Have you thought about this journal because we've had some success in that journal?'*

> Mentor/mentees

At bid meetings, the members review outlines of proposals and discuss impact strategies and budgets. Some of the bids are written with other departments at the university and in collaboration with other universities and these colleagues are invited to attend the meetings, although in practice those outside the research centre tend not to attend further meetings. The research directors would like to make the meetings more open to other sections within the school, however they wonder if it may be harder to be as open and supportive as they are now with colleagues outside the core group, particularly if the group were to grow in size.

The bid meetings motivated one interviewee to write more bids because she was encouraged by listening to others discuss their ideas and wanted to be part of the collaborative process. In addition to discussing the bids and papers, they will also have strategic conversations which focus on capacity building and the strategic direction of the department.

New colleagues are encouraged to attend the meetings because it helps them feel part of the team. At the beginning, some new members were not as confident to contribute and would mostly listen at meetings. However, because the meetings are informal and everyone is

supportive, members became more confident to offer feedback and present their own papers and bids.

> *I didn't feel comfortable commenting in the beginning, like what I knew wasn't valid in a way. But that did decrease, and nobody ever put me under pressure to feel like I had to talk or I that I was being stupid because I wasn't saying anything. Then gradually as I've started to do more, I felt like I could contribute more.*
>
> Mentee

Those interviewed provided examples of how they have benefited from the support of the groups.

- It has improved their technical knowledge of writing and submitting bids and increased their knowledge of what research councils are expecting.

- It has helped them gain confidence in their own work and presenting at conferences because they have the support of their team

- It has helped them become more resilient when faced with criticism of their work.

- It has helped reinforce the team ethos of the department and helped members feel less isolated.

The peer support groups are different from traditional one-to-one mentoring in that members are able to draw upon experience and knowledge from all of the group members and the focus is mainly on papers and bids. However, some interview participants revealed that they would benefit from individual mentoring that was more focused on their personal, rather than their research, needs. They wanted to be able to discuss their career progression and areas of their work which they are finding more challenging.

5.2   Case Study 2: Cascading mentoring

Six individuals were interviewed; because of this cascade model, two interviewees were both mentors and mentees. The remainder were mentors only.

Mentoring model

This mentoring scheme has evolved over the last 10 years from an informal system into something more structured, in which everyone apart from professors is assigned a mentor. Most staff working in the department, therefore, have a mentor. Mentors and mentees are matched by the leaders of the relevant Research Group or Centre based on research interests. A

mentor might have several mentees at any one time – most mentors have up to five mentees although at least on mentor has ten – but there is no maximum number.

Case Study 2: Many-to-one mentor, cascading
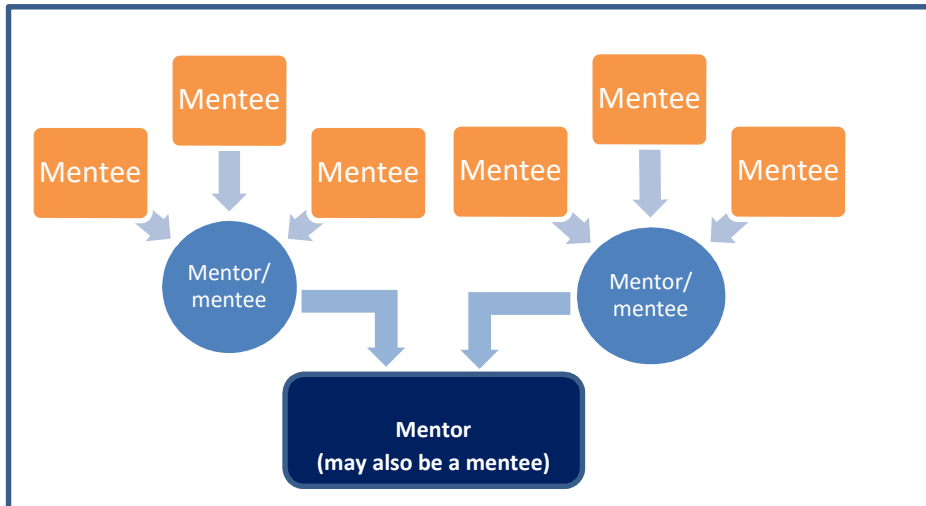
Discussion

One of the most salient features of this programme is its flexibility. Minimal guidance is given to participants on the aims of the programme, how often mentors and mentees should meet or what the content of their meetings should be. Nor is training provided to mentors on how to carry out their role. Meetings are very much driven by the needs of the mentee with a focus is on research-related topics. Often emotional support is given (allowing mentees to '*get issues off their chest'*) but meetings can also be task-driven, for example discussions about which journal to submit a paper to, writing a book review or how to pursue funding opportunities.

> *It's amazing how many times people have got feedback from a journal and say, 'Oh they hate it' or, 'It's all rubbish', and actually you look at it, and say that's really quite an encouraging review.*

Mentor

Mentees' needs depend partly on what stage they are at in their research career and one strength of the programme is that it accommodates staff with different levels of research experience: from those at the beginning of their career to highly experienced researchers. The flexibility of the system was a conscious decision on the part of the Research Mentoring Lead and she recognises that one of the biggest challenges of implementation is building a system that meets the needs of everyone.

The benefits of having a research mentoring programme in place can be seen at both a personal and departmental level. Mentees gain a sense of confidence from developing their research skills and building their own academic reputation. One mentor spoke about mentoring being part of '*developing good academic citizenship'*, and the sense of wanting to give something back

to less experienced researchers was strong. Mentors gained confidence from the realisation that they had knowledge that could be shared with their mentees and that, as they became more experienced in research themselves, they had more to offer their mentees. Supporting more junior members of staff in this particular way also benefits the department at large (and by extension, the university) by creating a research culture and promoting research excellence.

> *It actually builds quite a good research ethos within the School, which is positive for morale, I think, and motivation for everyone, because a lot of our people come from teaching and have been in schools, so they don't really understand how a university works…In terms of the university as a whole, it contributes towards the idea of having the research culture and it contributes towards the REF, and it contributes towards income generation.*

> *The idea is everyone's got a point of contact, and everyone's got a research plan and a goal.*

Mentors

Feedback on the mentoring programme was, on the whole, very positive. The commitment and support of the Research Mentoring Lead was felt to be a strength of the programme. She, in turn, said it is important to be clear about how mentoring fits with the broader research goals and vision of the department:

> *It's really important to have a clear vision of where the research in the School as a whole is going…So it's a kind of coherent picture that you're trying to put people into [through research mentoring] because if you don't know where you're going as a communal unit, then you can't help people map out the sort of spectrum of research engagement that they might want to have.*

Research Mentoring Lead

Having the right people in place as mentors is also key. The Research Mentoring Lead suggested that individuals should have nurturing qualities and there should be a recognition that senior staff with impressive academic records are not the only individuals able to deliver good mentoring.

Although the programme is generally felt to work well, some areas were identified for further improvement. Mentors would like some training or even the opportunity for informal discussion with other mentors about their role so they can draw on models of best practice in their interactions with mentees.

One mentor suggested that it would be useful to have a way of documenting the process. He felt this could be in the form of a short document (just one side of A4) that offers a means to record goals agreed with mentees. This could be made an optional feature of the programme so that individuals who wish to maintain a less structured approach are able to do so.

There was agreement that line management and mentoring should be kept separate. Not all line managers in the department are researchers so the mentoring scheme does add a valuable function for staff who wish to pursue a research career. Interviewees felt that line managers should not mentor the individuals that they manage and vice versa to help maintain this distinction.

5.3   Case Study 3: Research cluster mentoring

Case Study 3 comprised interviews with three mentors (including the lead mentor) and three mentees, all of whom are based within the same department.

Mentoring model

Each mentor is in charge of a research cluster (comprising around 15-20 mentees) which meets as a group once a month to discuss research and share ideas. Staff choose a cluster which is closest to their interests and their mentor is whoever runs that particular cluster. Ideally it is someone with good interpersonal skills who is experienced and shares the research and methodological interests of the mentee. Mentors expect that mentees prepare for meetings, take responsibility for their own development and carry out any agreed actions. No formal training is offered to mentors or mentees.

Case Study 3: Three senior staff mentoring staff within their respective research clusters
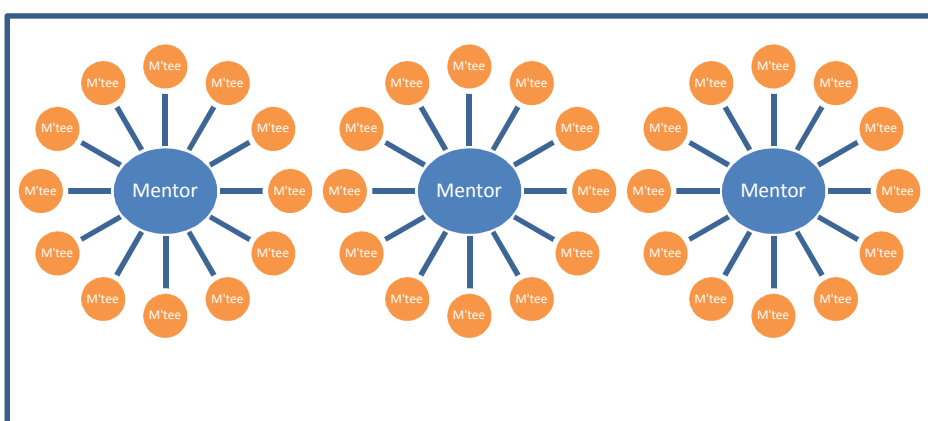
Discussion

The scheme is intended to allow staff to focus on their development as a researcher rather than to address other teaching or management responsibilities.

> *Meetings are held to review what they've done, to give them encouragement,
> to answer their questions, to work with them.*

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

One-to-one meetings are held between mentor and mentee once or twice a year. There is a form to complete which covers areas such as achievements, goals for the next three to five years, publications, conference presentations and grant applications. This is a formal process; the form is logged with the department and links with the personal development review (PDR).

The scheme also has a substantial informal aspect; one-to-one meetings take place where no notes are taken and mentees can seek both practical help (e.g. advice on writing research papers, where to publish) and emotional support (e.g. how to cope with a grant being rejected) support. The scheme also goes beyond the one-to-one mentor/mentee relationship and fosters intra-departmental relationships with other staff and students through the monthly research cluster meetings. These are seen as being useful by both mentors and mentees, and offer members the opportunity to discuss research plans, present their work and provide feedback to others. The combination of the individual and group aspects was seen as important by those involved.

> *I think it needs to have that one-to-one dimension and the collective dimension
> to it. So it needs to be part of a culture rather than just a separate process.*

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

> *I think research mentoring isn't just between me and the research mentor…
> because the way the cluster works with kind of mentoring each other….But it
> does mean we support each other and mentor – promote – that kind of
> support in the group.*

<div align="right">Mentee</div>

In a similar vein, the benefits of the mentor programme were seen to encompass the personal and the departmental. At a personal level, mentors enjoyed seeing their mentees develop and grow more confident in their research skills. One mentor said it was good for her own morale to feel that she is contributing to their development:

> *There's a great delight in seeing the great wealth of talent and interest and
> expertise that people have. It's very uplifting and is one of the things in my job
> that gives me satisfaction.*

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

Other mentors explained that it helped hone their listening and communication skills and it helped mentees to understand what is expected of them as researchers within the department, for example in terms of the number and type of papers they should be aiming to publish. Mentees agreed that participation in the mentoring programme was beneficial. They found it

useful to discuss ideas with their mentor and to ask for advice on research-related matters. One mentee who came from a teaching, rather than research, background found the mentoring experience valuable for getting advice on how to write academic papers and which journals to submit her research to: activities she had never done before.

For the department, the benefits of having a mentoring scheme in place were also felt to be valuable. The programme has resulted in some significant tangible outcomes for mentees. This included two mentees being awarded Marie Curie fellowships, publication of papers in high quality journals and staff attending international conferences.

Despite this positive feedback, both mentors and mentees felt the scheme could be improved. The research cluster model means that each mentor has around 15 to 20 mentees each. Mentors identified this as a challenge which could potentially have a significant impact on workload. The mentors did mention that, for the scheme to be sustainable in the longer term, it will have to be scaled up by recruiting more mentors, and restructured by having a greater number of research clusters, comprising fewer mentees in each. The time commitment on both sides is substantial; one mentor commented that some mentees feel they do not have enough time for carrying out research in their day to day jobs let alone for being mentored. Mentors explained that more support and recognition of the scheme from the university would be appreciated.

One mentor was not aware of similar schemes in other departments and would like the university to actively promote it. Otherwise it can feel as if the department mentoring scheme is not endorsed by the university, even if that is not the intention. Mentees felt that the programme could be better advertised and provide greater clarity about what is required. One mentee was not aware of it until she had her induction.

> *It could be more transparent – clearer expectations on how many meetings*
> *you can expect to have. The aims of the programme should be clear.*

> Mentee

Any expansion of the scheme, either within the department or university as a whole, would need to address the concerns about the number of mentees to each mentor as well as other concerns. One mentor felt that training should be given; many of her colleagues are mentoring without any training. Mentors and mentees could be matched more carefully and more time allocated to mentoring to ensure that both sides get the most they can from the process. In addition, because of the way this particular scheme has been set up (i.e. mentoring being embedded in the research clusters), it is not unusual for a mentor to also be an individual's PhD supervisor or line manager. Mentors commented that at the very least there should be a clear separation of these roles but that, ideally, they should be carried out by different individuals.

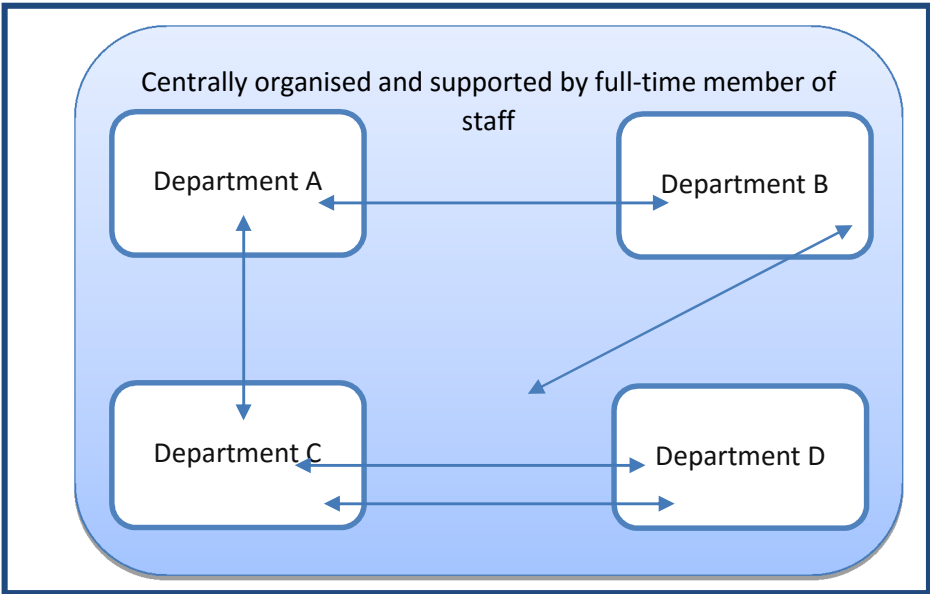## 5.4   Case Study 4: A pan-departmental approach

Case Study 4 comprised a total of seven one-to-one interviews: the mentoring lead who was the central coordinator of the scheme, three mentors and three mentees.

Mentoring model

All mentees are paired with a mentor in a different department. There are 75 mentors and mentees registered on the scheme.

The mentoring programme appeared to be well organised and professionally managed. The mentoring lead is responsible for coordinating the scheme across the university. Based in the human resources team, she delivers the training and undertakes the mentor-mentee matching process. She also organises regular informal sessions where mentors can meet and discuss their experiences and any challenges encountered.

Case Study 4: Cross-departmental, centralised organisation, one to one

Centrally organised and supported by full-time member of staff

Department A

Department B

Department C

Department D

The programme is offered to anyone who feels they require support in their career as a researcher and interviewees provided a variety of reasons for taking part. Participation is entirely voluntary, which meant that mentors and mentees were open about what they wanted to achieve from it and committed to the process. The voluntary nature of the scheme was also seen as an important factor for success. Indeed, the mentoring lead described an occasion where one member of staff was instructed by her line manager to sign up and it did not work.

Discussion

Mentors and mentees are deliberately matched from different departments. This maintains a degree of objectivity and it doesn't become intertwined with pastoral mentoring or departmental line management.

There was a perception that the mentoring lead was very good at matching the mentors and mentees as the relationships were very positive and productive.

> *He [the mentor] had a similar background and is very much involved in the line of work I am.*

> *She was a similar age and running her own research group and I think from that perspective she was able to give me some good advice because she'd actually been through a lot of those successful steps.*

<div align="right">

Mentees

</div>

All three of the mentors interviewed said they had decided to be a mentor because they wanted to 'give something back' and to support more junior researchers in mapping out a career path. They reported that it was something they felt they would have benefited from when they were in the early stages of their career, or they wanted to give the kind of help they received. This was especially valued by mentees as they are often employed on a series short-term contracts and do not have time and space to consider a longer-term career path.

> *In the broadest terms my experience of being a contract researcher on fixed-term contracts was very negative. I'm motivated and love doing science, I really enjoy learning new things but the existence on short fixed-term contracts, generally working for fairly thankless supervisors was not a pleasant experience.*

> *I've been through all of that and I suppose I say, 'Do as I say and not as I did', so hopefully people will learn from my experience...I genuinely want to help out a little bit and give back a little bit of what I've had.*

<div align="right">

Mentors

</div>

The interviews did reveal that the programme was more focused on career mentoring for researchers than research mentoring per se. Some mentees had used it to discuss different aspects of their research projects with which they needed help. However, generally mentees' reasons for taking part were that they wanted an opportunity to discuss their CV, identify future employment opportunities, and think about next steps for their career both within and beyond the university.

I thought it would be really helpful to have someone help, be objective about the skills and attributes that I already have and if there are any gaps that I need to fill for moving on to further work afterwards.

<div align="right">Mentee</div>

Interestingly, the mentoring lead described the focus of the scheme to be more about addressing learning needs that they may not cover with their line manager and to have an honest discussion about their learning needs with somebody that wasn't their line manager; '*a clean space to be able to say, "I don't know what I'm doing with this"…It's not a supervisor relationship and we're clear about that'*.

Mentors and mentees meet around three to four times in six months. Both mentors and mentees were given clear guidance on the role of the mentoring programme and what it can and, importantly, can't achieve in this time frame.

The central coordination, training and matching process were felt to be pivotal to the success of the programme. Both mentors and mentees were surprised that they took part in the training session together but agreed that this was a positive experience. For mentors, it allowed them to see things from the mentees' perspective. For mentees, it overcame many preconceptions about more senior members of academic staff.

I thought it would be just a room full of mentors but we weren't which I think was a positive to do it that way. You're sitting on both sides... you learn what it's like to be on the other side of the desk.

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

The training also helped to provide clarity about the role of the programme from the start. Clarity around expectations was important, particularly for mentors if they encountered an issue which they felt they were unable to handle, such as bullying from other staff or a mentee feeling they did not 'fit in' to the department. On such occasions, having a central coordinator was felt to be essential so that the mentor could refer the mentee somewhere for additional support.

[The mentoring lead] has been very clear on what the limits of the mentoring scheme are, and that the purpose is to sort of help you move yourself forward rather than carry you.

<div align="right">Mentee</div>

Mentors and mentees are advised that the content of meetings should be kept very open and flexible. Mentors allow the mentee to guide what they want to cover. Some paperwork is used for guidance and setting objectives but it is not considered to be a tick-box exercise or too burdensome.

We just go out for coffee and a chat and I try not to dominate the conversation and try to get them to tell me about what they want and how they might get there.

Mentor

My mentor was just doing a lot of listening and then helping me to get a bit of a plan, some objective.

Mentee

Both mentors and mentees explained the outcomes and benefits of their participation. Mentees provided examples of the ways it had helped, for example:

- It has improved their confidence in their skills and ability in their area of research and how to convey these more clearly

- It has allowed them to take a step back and look at their career path and future choices

- It has prompted them to apply for other research roles.

For mentors, it has helped them reflect on their own practice and supervising skills elsewhere, e.g. when being a research supervisor for students or line managing. It has impacted on management of their own researchers, realising the problems they may encounter.

The experiences of the interviewees were extremely positive. One of the recommendations was for greater recognition of the programme's achievements across the university.

5.5   Case Study 5: Three strands of mentoring

Case study 5 comprised interviews with two mentors (including the mentor lead), one mentee and the coordinator for research.

Mentoring model

Case Study 5 uses mentoring for different purposes. The main mentoring programme offers a pastoral element for new members of staff. There is also research support mentoring in recognition of the role mentoring can have to improve funding bids, and an element of mentoring used in line management and performance reviews. These are described in more detail below.

Case Study 5: Three strands of mentoring
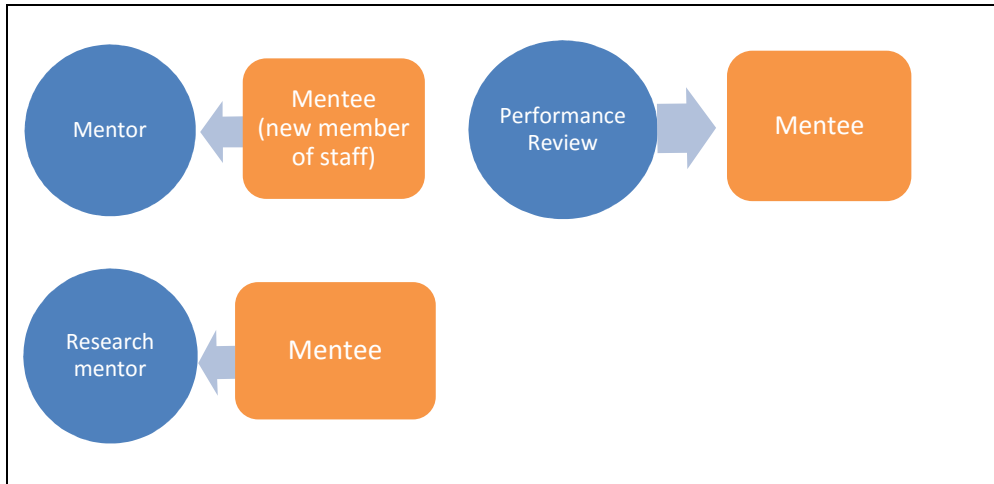
Mentoring as part of an induction*:* As a requirement of their induction, all new staff members are appointed a mentor who works with them for the first year. The relationship may then continue informally after the 12 months. Typically, mentors are members of staff who are in the early stages of their career and have been with the department for four to five years. The rationale for selecting a junior member of staff as a mentor is that they will have direct personal experience, being new to the university, and will be able to relate better to new members of staff. The role of the mentor is to be supportive and to be the first person that a mentee can turn to if they have questions or need advice. The relationship is intended to help the mentee integrate into the department and to develop their own role within the team. The overall aim of the mentoring programme is to create a supportive and harmonious department where everyone works closely together.

> *They're just there in a supportive capacity and you're really talking about somebody who is a critical friend, who can work with you and show you the ropes.*
>
> *You come to an institution and there's lots of things that are going to be unfamiliar. It's useful to have somebody as a first point of call to turn to.*
>
> Research coordinator

The mentor lead is responsible for matching the mentee and mentors. The research coordinator meets with all new staff and explains his role to the staff and the how the research in the department operates.

Mentoring to improve funding applications: In relation to research mentoring, the university has recently instituted an internal review process for submitting applications to research councils such as the Natural Environment Research Council and the Economic Social Research Council. Recently, the councils have implemented new measures designed to raise standard grant success rates which means that each university can submit only a limited number of applications from across the university in any given core area. Although the internal review process was not formally recognised as mentoring, the research coordinator felt that the skills

and process of mentoring have an important role to play within it. Before applications are submitted, there is a rigorous process in place whereby applicants have to identify others who have been successful with research funding. They are expected to work with them closely in terms of sending drafts and receiving feedback and rewriting the applications. This process has been implemented to ensure that only the highest quality bids go forward to research councils. At the time of the interviews, it was too early to know the impact of the internal review process.

Mentoring for line management and performance review: The induction mentoring programme is kept separate from line-management responsibilities. However, all new staff members are on probation for their first year and the head of department will meet with them to discuss their progress. Following their first year with a mentor, all staff members have a personal development review and are graded on a five-point scale. Their assessor will play the role of part-mentor, part-evaluator at this time. The review is intended to evaluate staff members' achievements and look at their career progress. This first year review differs from the mentoring role because it aims to evaluate their progress and success as well as to support career progress.

Discussion

One mentor said he enjoyed the experience of mentoring. He believed that one of the key elements of the programme is to help mentees balance lecturing, teaching and university administration. He also felt that he benefited from developing a long-term relationship with his mentees.

> *One of the people I've mentored, I frequently write research grants with. I'm working on a project with her at the moment as well. Another guy I mentored, I will regularly give work to him to have a look at and he will pass it back to me.*

> Mentor

The research mentoring program has helped mentees understand the challenges of applying for grants and as a result has made them more resilient to negative feedback. According to the research coordinator, it is important for academics to get used to their work being rejected and critiqued. It has also helped new staff members become more established, raise their profile and develop networks.

> *Getting to know people, getting them settled in networks, getting to know new networks, find out how the university works and how people should do these things and not others…*

> *The fact that within a year of all new staff starting they all appear to be very quickly up to speed, I'm suspecting that the mentor process is playing its part.*

> Mentor lead

The mentee felt that it was not only important to have a supportive mentor but also to have an ethos of reciprocal support within the department as a whole.

> *It is not just about having a good mentor in place but about having a group of colleagues that work together. I think the strength of this department is in its collegiality and people's willingness to give time to each other and help each other out. I think that actually that is just as important, if not more important.*

<div align="right">

Mentee
</div>

The mentee recognised that mentoring had helped her balance her responsibilities of delivering lectures and carrying out the administrative tasks necessary for her to be successful. The mentee would like additional support from the university to manage the administration which would allow her more time to focus on the research. In addition, she was unsure of her career progression and who she could ask for guidance.

> *[I'm] less successful at the moment in keeping up on the research side of things, just because those first couple of years where the teaching demands are so high, and having to do the PG CAP and everything, you have less time for research.*

<div align="right">

Mentee
</div>

The research coordinator and mentor lead agreed that, for a successful mentee and mentor relationship to develop, the mentor needed to have a mix of personal skills and subject-specific skills. The mentee felt that it was important for the mentor to understand their research interest and career aspirations. Empathy was also mentioned by the mentee and the mentor lead as key to having a successful relationship.

> *To be able to listen, to be able to be empathetic, to be able to impart wisdom and knowledge in a way that will be taken up by the person you are trying to impart it to…So there's a mix of the personal skills and the subject-specific skills that people are looking for.*

<div align="right">

Mentor
</div>

Key to the success of mentoring in this department was the informal nature and loose structure of the meetings. This allowed the mentee and mentor to develop their relationship naturally without it being forced. The mentor lead recognised that an informal mentor programme would not work for all individuals, as some people would need more structure than others.

To improve the programme, interviewees felt that mentors needed to have some formal training to prepare for the process and to have a good understanding of mentees' individual needs. With regards to research mentoring, mentors and mentees wanted additional support to access large research grants. In order to develop the relationship further, the interviewees felt it would be beneficial for mentees to have guidelines on the topics and conversations that they could have with their mentors and to set out the overall objective of the discussions.

5.6   Case Study 6: Many mentees to one mentor

Interviews took place with five staff in one faculty: the mentor lead, two mentors and two mentees (both of whom have also been mentors). All interviews were conducted by phone.

Mentoring model

Research mentoring was introduced two years ago as a mandatory initiative for all faculty staff. The mentor lead had researched good practice in research mentoring before introducing the current system. She described the system's aims as two-fold: improving trust between colleagues and boosting the faculty's research outputs. She had introduced a structured formal system that links directly to staff appraisals, and is backed up by monitoring and training. The mentor lead is confident that the system is of good quality and has been accepted by staff.

> *We're confident now that the research mentoring across the faculty is both comprehensive and of a very high quality standard.*

> Mentor lead

Mentors are drawn from senior staff, usually within each department, and are typically Professors or Readers although Senior Lecturers are sometimes used. Several mentees report to one mentor – one mentor reported he had as many as ten mentees, although the other mentors interviewed had about five. The intention is that mentees can choose their mentors from a selection identified by senior managers, and that mentors and mentees will be matched on the basis of shared subject interest, although in practice choice for the mentees can be restricted. The mentor lead said that mentees could select a mentor from another department within the faculty if there was no one suitable within their own department.

Case Study 6: Many to one mentor
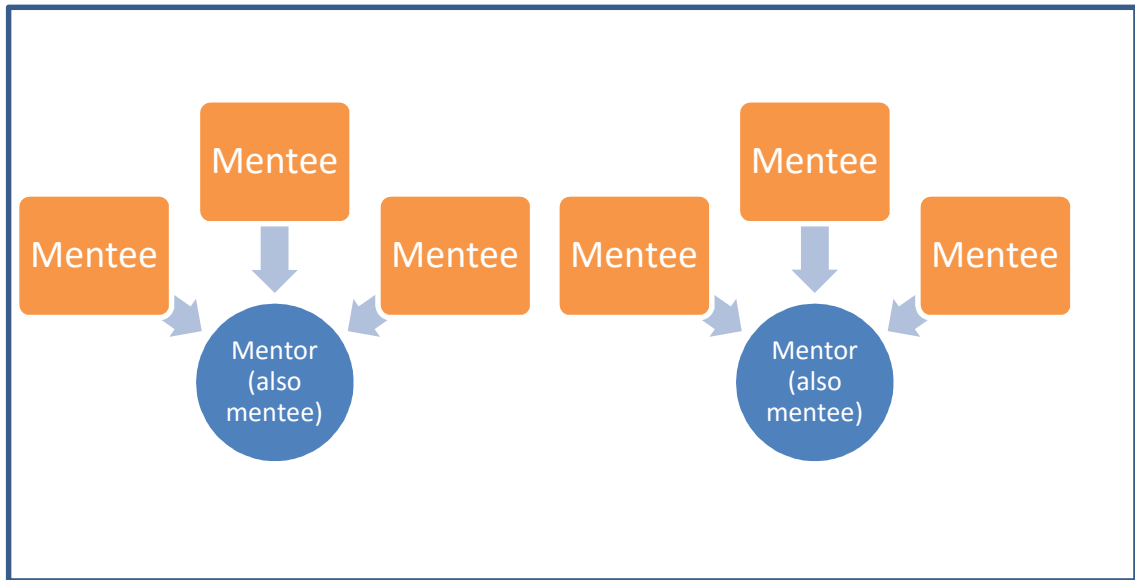
Mentees are obliged to meet their mentors twice a year and annual checks are conducted to make sure all staff have logged the meetings. In discussion with their mentor, the mentees complete an annual one-page personal research plan. This consists of a semi-structured form that reviews progress on mentees' planned activities and records outcomes. The plan is then submitted to the head of department, the associate dean of research and other senior managers as part of the career development and staff appraisal process.

The faculty runs non-mandatory training workshops for mentors, designed to focus on two aspects: mentors' active listening skills and ability to build others' confidence, and also mentors' skills in guiding mentees towards the REF and other research outputs. However, none of the participants had attended the workshops, so we were not able to gather evidence of the training's effectiveness.

Discussion

Both mentees acknowledged that senior managers attempt to match mentors with mentees on the basis of shared research interest but felt that their mentor's research interests did not overlap sufficiently with their own, making it difficult for the mentor to give them meaningful advice. It is worth noting that both mentees are mid-career academics and mentees at other career stages may have a different view.

Neither mentee was able to find an appropriate mentor with a subject interest that closely matched their own. One mentee had selected the mentor he found most '*agreeable*' to work with, but found that they were able to offer only generic advice, while the other had to rely on guidance from peers outside the faculty as his mentor's specialism differed from his own. Both mentees wanted a stronger match between mentors' and mentees' research interests.

To be most effective [the mentor should] know the field in which people work, so you know what journals to target, what conferences to go to, what workshops. ...If you don't know that, you just end up giving generic advice such as write to a journal, go to a conference.

Mentee

The mentor lead is introducing workload allocation for research mentoring to support mentors in carrying out their mentoring duties. The mentor lead felt that providing a workload allocation would also be useful in emphasising to all staff the value of research mentoring. Workload allocation might go some way to alleviating the workload issues for one mentor, the only subject specialist for a particular area, who mentors ten members of staff. He was concerned that the time he devotes to mentoring could reduce his effectiveness in other areas of his role, such as income generation.

[Research mentoring] is a hidden cost, you just get on and do it, it's not necessarily something that's acknowledged and it can be very time consuming.

Mentor

Although mentees, in discussion with mentors, complete an annual personal research plan that feeds into the staff appraisal, the mentor lead recognised that it is important to distinguish between line management and mentoring, in order to maintain the relationship of trust between mentor/mentee. The longer term aim is for complete separation of line management and mentoring. However, at present this is not always the case, which mentors and mentees were uncomfortable with. Mentors were particularly concerned that some staff were '*wary*' about the linking of the personal research plan to the appraisal and doubted whether the fusion of line manager and mentor was advisable.

Mentors and mentees had mixed views about what they had gained from their mentoring meetings. Neither of the mentees felt that research mentoring had had any effect on their careers. They concluded that research mentoring was not appropriate for people like themselves who were in mid-career, and preferred to work independently, seeking advice when needed from the university's research centres or their peers. However, it is possible that, as mid-career staff, they are not representative of the views of mentees more generally.

In contrast, the mentor lead and the two mentors were satisfied that mentoring allowed them to make an active contribution to mentees' careers, such as:

- Easing junior staff's transition from PhD studies into an active research career

- Improving the standard of journal articles

- Conducting CV reviews

- Helping with research bids

- Assisting with study leave plans

- Encouraging mentees to find synchronicities between their research and teaching.

Above all, mentors and the mentor lead felt that research mentoring was important in helping to create a supportive working environment. The mentor lead believed that the new system created greater openness between colleagues, which was conducive to more fruitful research. She also felt it raised the profile of the faculty and strengthened the research clusters. Research mentoring, she thought, helped academics to plan their research careers more effectively. The mentors agreed that mentoring has encouraged and sustained a more academic culture.

> *[Research mentoring] is doing a job which doesn't happen just by itself. People who do PhDs are closely supervised, and then they get an academic job. They're told …'Right, go off and do, you know, high quality research', and people don't know how to do that.*

<div align="right">Mentor lead</div>

> *[Research mentoring] is something that creates the appropriately supportive culture, makes people feel valued, gives them a venue where they can discuss things openly – ask advice, have someone they can go to.*

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

None of the research participants cited any hard outcomes, such as research papers or personal career progression, which had directly resulted from mentoring, but neither did any see this as an issue. The research participants agreed that it was important for research mentoring's emphasis to be on supporting staff, rather than on directing or pressuring staff to attain specific targets; in the words of one mentor, '*mentors should not become tormentors'*.

The personal research plan, mentoring training and light-touch monitoring appear to be helpful in promoting the faculty's research culture and, overall, the research mentoring works well. Mentors and mentees felt that it could be stronger if staff were consulted about how the aims of the research mentoring could link more closely to staff's needs, while other options such as collective or group mentoring were suggested. Sharing the aims and benefits of research mentoring might also help create greater commitment to, and understanding of, the system.

> *You need to design something that not's just a lofty ideal but done in a way that can fit into those working practices and you have to talk to staff to find out what those working practices are.*

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

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6 Making mentoring work

In this section we explore the benefits and challenges associated with mentoring schemes. We highlight six key features that were common across the case studies and reflect on the impact these features have on the mentoring schemes.

6.1 Benefits of mentoring

The literature review highlights the benefits of mentoring schemes for job performance and career development, as well as social and psychological impacts for the individual. The primary research echoed these personal benefits and career benefits, as well as positive institutional outcomes, that participants attributed directly or indirectly to the mentoring experience.

Personal outcomes

We heard in interviews that the mentoring and coaching schemes produced personal benefits for mentor and mentee alike. Mentees in particular developed confidence in their abilities. The mentoring relationships were clearly highly supportive and mentors were well-versed in listening and providing positive, constructive advice where it was asked for. For some, confidence came from the process of talking to someone and getting their encouragement to do, perhaps, what they might have done anyway. The mentor nudged and steered, rather than pulled or forced, so mentees received affirmation of what they could achieve.

One mentor described in surprised tones how she had encouraged a mentee to (successfully) further her career. The mentee appeared to know what was required to progress but lacked the confidence to achieve this, ultimately sending papers for review which led to a new job. This was a common story, of mentors effectively saying, *'Yes, I think you should do that'* and showing mentees that they already knew the answer, had the right approach, the right skills or ability.

It's just giving them the push and the confidence. She did end up writing these papers and getting a lectureship and now has started a new job. Yet she did all that on her own and she had it all in place anyway because she'd been running courses for them voluntarily and she had the manuscripts ready to send.

Mentor

Related to confidence was a resilience that mentors believed was a necessary characteristic. Accepting criticism of your work – even embracing it – is part of an academic's job, and early career researchers can struggle with criticism, particularly those who lack confidence. The mentoring relationship was a safe environment in which to talk about the difficulties a mentee has encountered and get support from someone who has had similar experiences.

If you get referee's comments and they're a little negative, or they're not what you hoped, it's sort of, 'Here's how you deal with them, here's how you revise your paper, here's how you write the letter saying how you address them, here's how you pick yourself up again'. You know, that kind of thing.

Mentor

It's just quite nice to have somebody experienced. What happened during the session was very simple practical steps, suggestions, things that didn't really solve the problem, but I think have set me on a trajectory to understand where I'm going.

Mentee

Mentors also felt they gained from the experience of being a mentor. Many had been mentors to more than one person over time which was testament to the benefits they gained. The most frequently cited personal outcome for mentors was a sense of having given something back. This altruistic outcome, said by one to be an extension of their teaching role, was a key incentive for getting involved as a mentor and it was evident in most of the mentor discussions we had.

For me it is to give back the things that were given to me, lots of people helped me on my way and were very generous with their time and help

Mentor

…the satisfaction of seeing people growing and making progress and getting enjoyment from what they're doing.

Mentor

Not only do mentors feel better for helping others, they also see tangible benefits for themselves. This may be from reflecting on their practice by explaining to others, developing

their personal skills or even building their own confidence through the self-affirmation of mentoring another.

> *I suffer from imposter syndrome, and I think sometimes I've under-estimated the sort of tacit knowledge and the experiential knowledge I've got. So when I start to explain to people about networks or an abstract, it's made me actually realise over the period of time of being here how [much] experiential knowledge I've developed.*

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

Career outcomes

One of the specific aims of research mentoring is to help develop a career in research. This requires the development of research skills, but also networking, building a strong set of publications and contributing to grant applications. It also requires developing a fuller picture of what career pathways might be possible, skills such as learning how to write stronger job applications, and knowledge such as understanding where to publish.

Several mentors and mentees said that these skills and attributes were developed through metnoring. Many of the mentoring discussions or targets described by participants were focused on career development, and many of the benefits included career progression. Mentoring played a key role in supporting researchers in their broader career and helping to identify next steps.

> *I took a fresh look at where I was with my career…I became much more open and receptive to the value of those sorts of things in terms of career. The mentoring sessions opened my eyes to these possibilities.*

<div align="right">Mentee</div>

> *[Research staff] can be side-lined in the annual review. Up until this year there's not been a specific review focused on researchers, whose contracts are frequently short-term and where their natural career progression is less clear. So I think having a scheme that's devoted to researchers and their career is incredibly powerful.*

<div align="right">Mentee</div>

> *I think they value just someone showing an interest in their career and it's made me realise how little time we do spend talking to them about what they want to do next.*

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

Institutional outcomes

Positive outcomes were not restricted to individuals. A large part of the value of research mentoring is in the benefits to the department and the university as a whole through '*enriching the research environment*', as one mentor expressed it.

The quality of research improves through the improvement in individuals' skills and their increased engagement, and perhaps also their loyalty. It also improves through an increased focus on research and research skills and a stronger research ethos, which keeps research at the top of the agenda.

> *Everybody seems to find it useful, and we get a really positive response because it's a way of keeping research on the agenda, and making sure that people have time, because in the past when people went to their personal development review, they would talk about all the teaching they have to do, and other responsibilities, and research would kind of fall off the agenda. So it's a way of preserving that.*

Mentor

> *I think people are more open about their research and also more confident that what they're doing is interesting and good…[That's evidenced] in terms of research activities like departmental seminars. Several of our research centres have a whole programme of activities and I've noticed a greater involvement in both of those.*

Mentoring lead

> *It improves the REF ... It helps in terms of bidding, bringing income into the university…The university is getting much more skilled researchers, more motivated researchers, more supported researchers, more successful researchers...it's a great win for them.*

Mentor

6.2   Challenges of mentoring

The case study interviews revealed more benefits than challenges. The biggest concern was time, in terms of the time spent on administration of the scheme itself, and mentors and mentees finding the time to meet.

The setting up and implementation of a mentoring programme was very time-intensive. Most of the case studies were within a single department or research group so the scale was usually

manageable – though not insignificant – as part of the lead mentor's management role. However, in Case Study 4 where there was a dedicated external resource – the mentor lead located in the human resource team with no teaching or research responsibilities – the mentoring programme was able to expand more comfortably and include aspects of monitoring, review, promotion and training that were not possible alongside a senior management role in a university department.

Similarly, and particularly where mentors had multiple mentees (Case Studies 2 and 3 in particular) the demands on the mentors' time were considerable. In none of the departments we visited was there a specific allocation of time within mentors' (or mentees') workload model, and, although some participants said that it was not uncommon for requirements of their job not to have an allocation, this did put pressure on mentors and mentees.

Almost universally, however, the value of mentoring and the participants' commitment was sufficient to motivate mentors and mentees to make time. There were isolated complaints that mentors were unable to find time to meet, and some mentors reported that in the past mentees had failed to attend agreed appointments. However, the latter incidents usually had other factors associated with them and reflected a lack of commitment. Otherwise both parties felt that the time was well spent.

> *It can be very labour intensive, but I consider it to be a really important part of my work, because it's about developing research and developing a culture of research, where people find it important, and that's my core goal in my work.*

> Mentor

A small number of mentors reported examples of where mentoring had not been successful and they usually blamed a lack of commitment or direction on the part of the mentee. Mentors and mentees felt strongly that the process should be driven by the mentees' needs, and the implication of this was that when a mentee had no clear purpose the process fell down. One mentor also reported a mentee dropping out because they lacked so much confidence in their ability they found it too difficult to have their perceived failings exposed, even in a supportive and safe environment.

The biggest challenge, but one which most participants felt they successfully addressed, was matching mentor and mentee appropriately. This was such a difficult and sometimes unpredictable exercise that it was essential to have the option of being able to swap mentor without it being seen as a failing on either side. The fact that mentoring relies on personal interactions and that people have such diverse personalities and needs made it inevitable that some mentoring relationships would be less successful than others.

> *It is very uneven, I would be the first to say that I think, partly because of time, partly because of motivations, and partly because, despite my best intentions to get people matched up in terms of interests and orientations and personalities, there's sometimes a problem. So if you were talking to everybody here, you would talk to some people for whom the formal system works really,*

6.3   Common features of the mentoring schemes

Each of the mentoring schemes we explored was particular to that institution; each department had developed a scheme in response to the needs of the department and the staff and had evolved over time. The schemes ranged from a centralised system – where the mentoring lead was based in the human resources team and responsible for recruiting, matching, training and supporting mentors and mentees – to a peer coaching model that was supportive but much less structured. Others were more traditional dyadic mentoring relationships set within a single university department.

In this section we explore the ways that each department's implementation varied on a number of common themes:

- Matching of mentor/ee

- Links with line management, supervision or performance

- Whether the scheme was voluntary or mandatory

- Training

- Organisation and administration, including documentation

- Setting expectations and targets

Matching

In most case studies with dyadic mentoring relationships, mentees were assigned a mentor. In one case study, some mentees were able to choose their mentor at the outset of the mentoring process. Where mentor and mentee were assigned, the matching was always done according to some criteria, which usually related to the purpose of the scheme or the particular needs of the mentee. The experience of the mentor and factors such as their fields of expertise were commonly cited as the main reasons for assigning mentees to particular mentors. Most mentees and mentors appeared satisfied that the matching process was appropriate and in most cases led to suitable pairings.

There were benefits in matching within subject disciplines and across different disciplines. In most of the schemes we saw, mentor and mentee were in the same department and most participants felt that this was an important factor in the success of the scheme. Mentor and

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mentee shared common ground and both were working towards improvement that had benefits for their department, faculty or school. There was some evidence, however, that a more removed pairing had equal, if not greater, benefit, provided there were other commonalties, such as sharing subject disciplines from the same broad family, such as the arts.

In Case Study 4 the matching process was more involved than elsewhere. Mentees completed a form when they joined the mentoring scheme that detailed their experience and what they hoped to achieve from having a mentor. The mentoring lead then actively matched mentor and mentee to ensure a suitable pairing. Mentors, too, were able to indicate what they felt they could offer a mentee and express any preferences. One mentor, for example, wished to mentor only women because she felt strongly about promoting women in science.

The separation in terms of subject discipline was said by some to be a positive advantage. It further removed the line-manager or performance element from the mentoring relationship and helped to avoid any conflicts of interest, including any sense of competitiveness. It also highlighted how a common subject was not essential. Across all of the traditional dyadic mentoring schemes, the matching of mentee and mentor was seen as an important factor in the success of the mentoring relationship and finding common ground was an important part of matching, but the Case Study 4 cross-departmental model and the comments of those in other case studies showed that the common ground could be related to skills, activities or CV writing.

The REF was a common point of discussion and some mentors spoke of the importance of supporting early career researchers in improving the quality of their papers. Others talked more generally about the skills that researchers need to have to progress.

> *One of the components that I think is good in mentoring is for the mentor to have a very good working knowledge of those higher level systems, whether it's the REF or promotion, and be able to talk about them in plain English with the mentee but also to be able to personalise them for the mentee. So rather than talking broad statements like always, to show how they relate to that specific person and that specific person's circumstances.*

> Mentor

Career stage was another important factor to consider in matching mentor and mentee. Most relationships were between a mentee and more senior mentor, and this approach was widely thought to be most productive in allowing the mentee to learn from their mentor's greater experience. However, the gap in experience or seniority should not be too great since this could detract from the principle of mentor and mentee sharing some common ground.

> *If somebody comes in as a brand new lecturer and they're teamed up with a mentor who's been here for three or four years the idea is that the person who's doing the mentoring can remember what it was like when they first stepped through the door and the needs people have in that context.*

> Mentor

*It was nice because some of the people who were there as mentors weren't
scary strong characters. So some of them were people who I thought, 'Actually
I could do that as well', a step down the line.*

Mentee

Underpinning the particular criteria on which the mentor and mentee were matched was mutual respect, which includes the acceptance and understanding on both sides that the mentor has something to offer the mentee. For the mentor this includes seeing that the mentee is willing to learn and has a goal or goals in mind. For the mentee it includes valuing the experience of the mentor, and recognising a shared interest or aspiration.

*You have to have some respect for the other person as a researcher, and if you
don't see them as a particularly good researcher, you're not going to feel quite
comfortable being guided by them...It helps if the person to a certain extent
shares your methodology...if your research mentor is way off in the other
paradigm, that can be very uncomfortable.*

Mentee

In three of the schemes, mentors had several mentees at any one time. Usually this was limited to no more than three or four mentees, however in Case Study 3 there were only three mentors and each had between 15 and 25 mentees assigned to them. Another case study department gave mentees a choice about who their mentor should be, however there was some evidence that this choice was limited in practice to only three or four senior members of staff and, as a result, some mentors had a relatively high number of mentees.

Despite what appeared to be a heavy workload in terms of the number of mentees, no mentors complained or felt that it was inappropriate for them to have so many (in relation to other schemes) mentees. They did recognise that it did put pressure on them in terms of workload but felt that the benefits for the mentors, and for themselves, made it worthwhile.

Only in Case Study 4 were mentors limited to having only one mentee at a time, although many of these continued a relationship of sorts beyond the formal mentoring period, sometimes for many years. This was valuable for mentees in continuing their development, and rewarding for mentors in seeing their mentee progress.

Links with line management, supervision or performance

Participants in our research believed that there was potential for conflict between mentoring and management. Mentors and mentees felt that a mentoring relationship had to be open and honest, unfettered by concerns about being judged on their ability or aptitude to do their job. Mentees wanted to be able to talk about aspects of work they were struggling with, to be able to ask questions without feeling they should know the answers, and to be open about their career ambitions, which might be in conflict with the needs of the department.

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These issues were most clearly recognised in Case Study 4, where the pan-departmental approach allowed mentors and mentees to be purposefully matched so that they were in different departments. In the other case studies there was potential for conflict, but the awareness of this conflict appeared to be sufficient to avoid it. In the peer coaching model in Case Study 1, senior and junior staff from the research cluster were part of the discussions. The supportive environment that had been developed meant that none of the mentees we spoke to felt intimidated by more senior staff being present and were able to speak openly and critically about the papers and the bids. In case studies where mentor and mentee were matched within departments, line management relationships were generally avoided in mentoring pairs.

Importantly, in all of the case studies with dyadic mentoring, mentees were aware that they could change their mentor if they were uncomfortable for any reason. Mentors recognised that it was important to have a no-blame facility to change mentor. Any problematic line management, personality, or other potentially damaging issues arising from the matching could therefore be addressed.

Voluntary or mandatory mentoring

In most schemes there was an expectation that all staff, or all staff at a certain level or in certain roles, would have a mentor. Only Case Study 4 was explicitly voluntary, although Case Study 5 was more of a universal offer than a mandated scheme. In Case Study 4 mentors and mentees were invited to participate and there was a process of joining and being assigned to mentoring pairs. Case Study 1, peer coaching, was less clear-cut. Members of the research cluster were expected to participate but attendance at every meeting was not expected.

Mentors and mentees across all six of the case studies talked about the importance of mentees driving the relationship. Participants believed that the needs of the mentee should determine the goals that were set and in some cases should drive the frequency of meeting. In Case Study 4 this principle was taken further so that the needs of the mentee drove the creation of the mentoring relationship. Prospective mentees were invited to take part, and to some extent were 'sold' the benefits of having a mentor, but only they made the choice – an active choice – to participate. As a result, almost by definition, the mentoring relationship would have a purpose. The time-bound nature of the mentoring (six months initially, although this could be extended) reinforced this highly focused, objective-driven and mentee-driven mentoring. Making mentoring mandatory, according to this mentoring lead, would risk undermining that focus.

> *If they can't see the benefit, and if they've not spotted their own opportunity and their own need, making it compulsory, they might meet and just sit there and I would not want the sense that anybody had wasted their time.*

> Mentoring lead

In the same scheme, mentors also volunteer. That means that the mentors arrive with a desire or a need themselves, rather than feeling it is part of their job and something they just have to do. Mentor and mentee therefore come together with a very positive purpose.

Three schemes were more overtly mandatory; there was an expectation that all staff at a certain level or in certain roles would have a mentor. Having a mentor was more of a default status than a requirement, however, and those interviewed felt that there was no sense of coercion to take part. All people we spoke to understood the potential benefits of having a mentor and it is likely that these benefits were sufficiently clear as to be persuasive. The expectation of having a mentor was therefore largely a positive, since it meant that more people experienced mentoring than otherwise would have done, rather than a negative obligation. For most of the participants – mentors and mentees – the positive purpose that naturally emerged through both parties volunteering in Case Study 4 was to a large extent replicated in mandatory schemes because of the shared understanding of the benefits – not only to the mentee, but to the mentor, the department, or the institution as a whole.

One mentor described an unsuccessful mentoring pairing that was undermined largely by an unsuitable matching (they were friends as well as colleagues) but was forced upon them nevertheless. The sense of purpose was absent, as was any belief that the mentee would gain anything from the relationship. This highlights one potential failing of a mandatory mentoring scheme. Such unsuitable pairings become more likely where there is limited supply of mentors.

> *We didn't take it as seriously as the plan was intended, we met simply formally because we had to. His work is unrelated to the field in which I operate. So we both did it because we were obliged to do it principally....[He] has been around for nearly as long as I have. I'm more senior only in terms of job title and the very idea that he would need mentoring, or that I would be a suitable person to mentor him, just seemed to me very, very strange.*

> Mentor

Such cases were rare. The scope of this research did not extend to people who had actively chosen not to have a mentor, nor did our interviews include anyone who was explicitly and consistently negative about mentoring. Nevertheless, the discussions in the mandatory mentoring schemes highlighted that mentoring was not necessarily for everyone, which suggests that a voluntary programme may be more successful.

This again goes back to the principle of mentee-driven mentoring relationships. A researcher who does not have a need, or does not recognise they have a need, is an unsuitable participant for a mentoring pair. The following quotes were typical, and interesting in that they suggest that mentoring should be offered selectively, or voluntarily, rather than comprehensively or with compulsion. However, the tenor of the discussions as a whole, including these interviews, more strongly makes the case for demonstrating to individuals what they might gain from the research mentoring experience, and only including people at the time that they are ready.

Some people need mentoring and some people don't, and some people need it more and some people need it less, but that's for people to find out in that system.

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

If there's someone who's not interested in research, leading ducks to water and so on, there's no point putting a lot of resources in front of someone who's just not interested in it.

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

Promotion, persuasion and perhaps patience are therefore more important than whether or not a research mentoring scheme is voluntary or mandatory. The right pairing is critical, however, and if a mentee cannot see the value of the relationship in general terms or specifically with that mentor, the mentoring is likely to founder.

Training

A formal training programme for mentoring was rare across the case studies. In two case studies training was offered, though it was mandatory in only one of those.

The purpose of training in both case studies was similar. It was primarily aimed at mentors and designed to convey the purpose of the mentoring relationship and ensure that expectations were set and met. In Case Study 4 the training comprised a mandatory induction workshop, which mentees also attended. This sent a very deliberate message that the relationship is two-way, and allowed mentors and mentees to mix and understand one another's perspectives better. Both mentors and mentees found this joint training approach highly effective.

In Case Study 6 the mentor training set expectations and also had an explicit skills element, focusing on listening skills, and was designed carefully to reflect research mentoring.

My prime objective [in the workshops] was to get people to reflect on the different things that go on in mentoring and to think about [that]. At one end of the spectrum, it's all about listening - sort of active listening. And at the other end of the spectrum it's about talking about how you can maximise your potential to be entered for the REF. So at one end of the spectrum it's very sort of human focused, and at the other it's very instrumental.

<div align="right">Mentoring lead</div>

I think [the workshops] are really useful especially for the first session so that we've got some framework of what to do.

<div align="right">Mentor</div>

In both of these case studies, the training for mentoring was positioned, and received, as an opportunity even if it was a requirement, and it was well received by those taking part. It was not an onerous requirement, nor did it present a restrictive approach to mentoring.

In case studies where there was no training made available, some participants felt that some input would have been helpful, although none said that the lack of training was detrimental to the mentoring. They welcomed the freedom that was implied by an absence of a training programme – having such a programme might suggest that there was a right or wrong way of mentoring or being mentored – but felt that some light-touch guidance might have been useful. Some suggested that this might take the form of a simple handout, with some basic guidance on, for example, the importance of setting goals or how frequently to meet.

> *I can imagine it just on a piece of A4. So, start of the year, here's your objective; mid-year, here's the meeting, here's the notes of the meeting, how far we've got; end of year has the objective been met.*
>
> Mentor

> *I don't think I'm particularly good at coming back in a more structured way reviewing what might be a range of things that they might want to do…I could benefit from a more structured input in terms of what my role as a mentor might be.*
>
> Mentor

Others felt that there was a great deal of good practice and experience hidden in their mentoring activities which could be shared with others, either in the same department or elsewhere in the university.

> *I think there'll be some merit in actually pulling it together. We've been doing this for some years, let's see what the experiences are and find common areas, convergent themes, key points, things that go wrong.*
>
> Mentor

> *I think it would be good to share the practice across the university because I know colleagues in other schools don't have any mentoring at all, other professors are not expected to mentor and they don't have mentees. This is a good model that could be shared with our departments, could be adapted or developed to work for them.*
>
> Mentor

Training was a useful element of the mentoring activity we saw in the case studies, but equally important was informal support from colleagues. In the peer coaching model of Case Study 1 staff talked of the sense of support that the bid and report writing groups gave them. This sense

of community was not exclusive to the peer coaching model. In many of the other models we heard about a group ethos developing through the mentoring scheme.

Organisation and administration

In none of the case studies were notes or minutes kept of mentoring meetings, most participants felt that this would undermine the private and confidential nature of the discussions. The discussions were also very often informal – typically meeting for a coffee and a chat – so note-taking was also seen as counter to the tone and mood that mentors were trying to create. Many of the mentors and mentor leads said that they kept a record of the fact that meetings had taken place, but this was not seen as essential.

The main administration was in setting up the mentoring pairs. This was a significant undertaking and, in Case Study 4 where there was central organisation and administration, it was highly effective. The mentoring lead was able to gather and review information about prospective mentors and mentees which meant that matching was appropriate. The mentor lead was also able to field queries and concerns from mentors and mentees and suggest resolutions to any problems. Crucially, the mentor lead was also able to encourage mentors and talk to them about their needs and their experience. This was an important factor in retaining mentors beyond their initial six-month commitment and steadily increasing the pool of mentors in size, experience and quality.

> *Key elements of success are to have very well organised databases of information about research activities...having sufficient expertise and enthusiasm in the mentors themselves that know what they're doing and skills, mentoring skills.*

> Mentor lead

In most case studies the mentoring lead was a senior member of staff and often also a mentor. There was therefore a considerable drain on his or her time and administration inevitably suffered. The process of recruiting and allocating mentors, promoting the benefits and raising awareness of mentoring, and managing those wanted to take part as a mentor or mentee, could all be handled more centrally.

> *I actually think the support the university could offer is in redistributing some of that workload to administrative experts, who have that expertise in how to do these things.*

> Mentee

Setting expectations and targets

Most of the discussions with mentors and mentees, and staff taking part in peer coaching highlighted the importance of setting clear expectations for the mentoring activity. Some of this

could be done through training while some is best managed, discussed and agreed within the mentoring pair or members of the group.

Mentors and mentees need to understand the potential benefits and the limits of mentoring. Many of the mentors and mentees felt that discussing the purpose of the mentoring meetings, and the mentee setting clear goals for what they wanted to achieve, was an essential part of the first meeting.

> *I don't want them to come in thinking that if you have three coffees with me you're going to end up a professor. That's not quite how it works.*
>
> Mentor

> *I think really there's part of the mentor's role that you're there to facilitate the person finding themselves and finding their own path and there is a bit of curbing your natural instinct to say, 'Do this this and this', to saying, 'Where do you want to go?' A much more open approach and trying to draw out what matters to the individual, what their sense of what they would like to do with their life is.*
>
> Mentor

> *[The mentoring lead] has been very clear on what the limits of the mentoring scheme are, and that the purpose is to help you move yourself forward rather than carry you.*
>
> Mentee

The initial discussion might include the frequency of meetings and the period of time over which they would meet, if these had not already been set. Apart from the peer coaching model, mentors and mentees felt that meeting three or four times a year was an appropriate target; giving enough time for something to change in between or a goal to be achieved, but not so long that the relationship became passive. Based on the interview findings, between three and six months appeared to be optimum time between meetings.

Some of the case studies set time limits on the mentoring relationship ranging from six-months to two years, although this was often extended. This was felt to be a stronger approach than an open-ended arrangement because it lent itself to working towards a specific outcome.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

In looking at practice in mentoring and research mentoring, we have identified a range of different models, developed over time to meet the particular needs of each department or institution. Despite the diversity in implementation, we are able to identify elements of successful programmes, which are drawn from the literature review and from case studies.

The desk research identified that effective mentoring programmes:

- are aligned with the culture of the organisation

- have clear and well-defined purpose, roles and expectations

- are sensitive to power relationships, and are separate from line management and performance

- have frequent and regular contact between mentors and mentees

- have effective communication between mentors and mentees and between the mentoring scheme participants and the senior management groups

- have incentives such as time allocation or salary benefits.

The primary research largely supports these findings and has demonstrated some of these aspects in practice. In particular, we would emphasise the need for:

- Ensuring both parties share a **common understanding** of the specific aims of research mentoring. These aims should be driven by the needs of the mentee and will ideally be expressed in terms of one or more tangible outcomes. For research mentoring these goals might be focused on career development and research skills.

- **Separation from line management and performance**: Mentees can be more open when they know that the discussion is confidential and will not impact on their manager's perceptions of their abilities. Keeping mentor relationships separate from management

relationships is a key part of ensuring the mentoring discussions have a single focus on the needs of the mentee, unfettered by competing priorities.

- **Regular, but not intensive contact**: The case study research suggests that meetings spaced between three and six months apart maintain the momentum of the relationship while allowing time for the mentee to implement action points arising from the discussions. This should not preclude more or less frequent contact, provided that expectations are clearly set out and consideration is given to what can be achieved in the time available.

- **Careful matching**: Alongside the management and clarifying of expectations and goals, matching suitable mentors to mentees appeared to be the most important factor in ensuring a successful mentoring experience. The relationship needs to be based on trust and respect, and mentor and mentee should share some common ground, be that in career trajectory, subject discipline, research interests or other areas. Mentors should be senior to the mentee in terms of experience, though not necessarily position in the university, but should not be so far removed or different from the mentee that the mentee feels intimidated by the mentor, or that their experience is not relevant or is out of their reach.

- **Training or induction** for new mentors and mentees appears to be valuable in setting expectations and ensuring positive outcomes. In the absence of formal training or induction some written guidance may be useful in outlining what can and cannot be achieved through mentoring.

- **Support**: Ideally the mentoring would also be supported by a dedicated resource, an individual or individuals who can administer, promote, monitor and review the mentoring programme. This support may or may not be the same person who matches mentor and mentee. The central, neutral resource is also valuable in giving an outlet and possible solution if problems occur.

- **Structure and informality**: Although initially appearing to be contradictory, the two can be used to describe the same mentoring programme. A loose structure, and guidance on processes can help support mentors and mentees and frame their expectations. At the same time there should be no rigid diktats on how the relationship should proceed, only guidance on what is known to work.

- **Willing involvement**: Many of the programmes we saw were mandatory, which set a positive expectation that mentoring would take place, and an entitlement that made it easy for mentees to access a mentor. Others were voluntary, and this benefited from the willingness and commitment of both parties that comes with making an active choice. What the two approaches have in common is the mentors' and mentees' shared view that mentoring is of value and that the programme can be tailored to the specific needs of an individual mentee.

- **A large pool of suitably skilled mentors**: This element is perhaps the hardest to achieve both in size and quality, but of enormous benefit to a scheme.

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Appendix 1: Discussion guides

Two semi-structured discussion guides were developed for the case study interviews, based on the outputs from the literature review. One guide was used for mentors and mentees, and another for the mentoring lead.

Research Mentoring in HE

Discussion guide for interviews with mentors/ees

Introduction

Thanks for agreeing to take part

Introduce self and Chrysalis Research – independent researchers. We're doing the research on behalf of the University of Brighton to understand what constitutes good practice in research mentoring in HE. *Offer project information sheet and talk through.*

We are here to understand how research mentoring has been working here [NB adapt language as appropriate]. We'll be talking to those who have been involved as mentors or mentees, as well as to [role of person with the research mentoring lead] who has an overview of mentoring here. [NB, throughout, ensure distinction between research mentoring and any other mentoring is made clear].

If interviewing as part of a matched interview, specify that you are also interviewing their mentor/ee, but that the interviews are in strictest confidence and we won't disclose to the other, what one partner has said.

We're interested in your views – it doesn't matter if your views are positive or negative, we just want to understand your experience and how it informs your view of mentoring in HE.

The research is confidential, so we won't report your name or anything that can identify you individually. We will record the discussion just to help us with our analysis and an anonymised transcript will be provided to the research team at Brighton. *Clarify that no personal or other identifying information will be passed on in the transcript, and that the transcripts will not form part of any publication. However, anonymised data including quotes, will be used in the reports and other dissemination* **Gain consent for recording and sharing the transcript.**

The interview will last around 45 minutes [schedule interviews minimum 1 hour apart in case of overrun and for breaks]

Start recording

Ask participant to describe him/herself: name, role and how long at the university

Topic	Discussion points
	- **Key questions in bold** - Follow ups and probes in light print, these will vary depending on interviewer response and time available. - Keep to broad timings in the block and ensure minimum 15 mins for outcomes and effectiveness section.

Purpose and model
 	
(15 mins)
	• **How did you get involved in research mentoring? [NB, throughout, ensure distinction between research mentoring and any other mentoring is made clear, adapt language to suit the circumstances]**
	
	   o Did you volunteer or was there an expectation or obligation? PROBE extent to which they were encouraged to take part, or they had to push to get involved
	
	   o Did you start as part of your induction and if yes what form did this take
	
	• **Describe how research mentoring works here**
	
	   o How often do you meet? Is it face to face, phone, email? Has this changed since you started?
	
	   o How effective do you find this means of communication? Why do you feel this?
	
	   o Do you feel you would like to meet more or less often? Why do you feel this?
	
	• **Are you allocated time in a workload model for these meetings and if yes how is this done?**
	
	   o Do you formally record meetings and what does this involve?
	
	• **What do you understand to be the aims of research mentoring?**
	
	   o To what extent is research mentoring similar to or different from other formal staff development?
	
	• **What areas of your career do you need most help with from your mentor and why? [What areas do you focus on with your mentee?]**
	
	   o Eg research skills, publication record, conference record, obtaining outside funding, relationships with colleagues, competition/expectations, emotional or pastoral elements

The relationship in action **(15 minutes)**	• **How were you matched with your mentor / mentee?** o To what extent was there any element of choice? • **How do your respective roles at the university influence the relationship, if at all? PROBE to establish whether there's a power dynamic, or any imbalance in terms of hierarchy, and whether this has positive or negative impacts.** • **How successful has the 'match' of mentor / mentee for you personally? Why?**

	o How would you describe your relationship with your mentor / mentee, in general?
	o How has your relationship with your mentor / mentee evolved over time?
	o To what extent does your mentor understand your needs and goals?
	o Is there an opportunity to change mentor/ee if the relationship isn't working out?
	• **How do you work with your mentor/ mentee?**
	o to understand your / mentees' needs?
	o to set goals?
	o to assess, review and reflect on progress?
	o How directive is the relationship? Why do you say that? PROBE to see whether mentor or ee is leading the discussions and/or overall aims.
	• **Does the mentoring relationship focus sufficiently on the areas you need it to? How would you change it?**
	o How open and honest can you be in the discussions? Are there any conflicts in being totally honest?
	• **What could your mentor / you do differently to better support you / mentee?**
	o Have you discussed these issues?
	• **How has the content or format of your relationship changed or evolved over time?**
	o What were the triggers for any changes?
	o To what extent have they been successful or unsuccessful?
	• **What role can those outside the mentor/ee relationship play to support them?**
	o What would you do if you had a problem with the mentoring or the relationship?
	• **To what extent does the university or department support your mentoring relationship?**
	o What support does it provide, eg time, training, help with managing the workload?
	o How useful is this?
	• **What else could the university do to support research mentoring in general or you in particular?**
Outcomes and effectiveness	• **What impact has taking part in research mentoring had on you?**
	o In terms of knowledge, skills, experience, confidence, morale, motivation, career progression

(15 mins)	o What hard and soft outcomes can you point to: Publications, conferences, research skills, culture of the university?
	o What evidence do you have for its success or otherwise?
	• **What have you learnt from your mentor/the mentoring experience that you wouldn't have done without it?**
	o How do you know?
	• **What were the main reasons why research mentoring has been unsuccessful / successful?**
	o Probe on time, match of skills/knowledge, personality, information and training, relevance to career goals and current job role.
	• **What are the key elements of a successful research mentoring programme?**
	o What makes a mentoring relationship work most effectively?
	o What inhibits success?
	• **How well do you think research mentoring is established in the practices and culture of the university/department?**
Sum up	• **How would you change the way research mentoring is organised here?**
	• **What are the key considerations for any university wishing to successfully establish research mentoring?**
	o What are the key dos and don'ts from your experience?

Thanks and close

Research Mentoring in HE

Discussion guide for interviews with research mentor lead

Introduction

Thanks for setting up the day

Introduce self and Chrysalis Research – independent researchers. We're doing the research on behalf of the University of Brighton to understand what constitutes good practice in research mentoring in HE. *Offer project information sheet and talk through.*

We are here to understand how research mentoring has been working here. [NB, throughout, ensure distinction between research mentoring and any other mentoring is made clear – adapt language as appropriate]. We'll be talking to those who have been involved as mentors or mentees, as well as to you for your overview of research mentoring here.

We're interested in your views – it doesn't matter if your views are positive or negative, we just want to understand your experience and how it informs your view of mentoring in HE.

The research is confidential, so we won't report your name or anything that can identify you individually. We will record the discussion just to help us with our analysis and an anonymised transcript will be provided to the research team at Brighton. *Clarify that no personal or other identifying information will be passed on in the transcript, and that the transcripts will not form part of any publication. However, anonymised data including quotes, will be used in the reports and other dissemination* **Gain consent for recording and sharing the transcript.**

The interview will last around 45 minutes [schedule interviews minimum 1 hour apart in case of overrun and for breaks]

Start recording

Ask participant to describe him/herself: name, role and how long at the university

Topic	Discussion points
	- **Key questions in bold**
	- Follow ups and probes in light print, these will vary depending on interviewer response and time available.
	- Keep to broad timings in the block and ensure minimum 15 mins for outcomes and effectiveness section.

Purpose and model
 	
(15 mins)
	• **What is the aim of research mentoring here? [NB, throughout, ensure distinction between research mentoring and any other mentoring is made clear, adapt language to suit the circumstances]**
	
	   o How does it seek to support mentees, develop knowledge and skills
	
	   o How does research mentoring link to mentors' and mentees' continuous professional development?
	
	   o What is the evidence base for your approach? Eg is there an underpinning theoretical framework, what literature has been used to make the case for this approach?
	
	• **Please could you outline how research mentoring works here?**
	
	   o Informal or formal design?
	
	   o Mandatory or non-mandatory?
	
	   o Pan-university: what are the differences between departments?
	
	   o Request copies of any written material including models, training programmes, registration materials [REQUEST IN ADVANCE]
	
	• **Who participates?**
	
	   o as mentees? (graduate students/ junior staff – how defined)
	
	   o as mentors? (all staff / professors / other senior staff / doctoral students - how defined?)
	
	   o How are mentors and mentees matched to one another? Is there any element of choice, self-selection? What are the dynamics like in terms of level of seniority, or relative experience between mentors and ees
	
	   o Duration of relationship, frequency of contact, mode of contact, duration of contact
	
	   o Do mentees have multiple mentors? Either concurrently or consecutively.
	
	• **Has there been any resistance to taking part and why did this occur?**
	
	• **Who or what were the drivers to initiating research mentoring here?**
	
	   o How long ago was it set up?
	
	   o Who was involved in setting it up?

	• **Why was it set up**
	o Was the focus eg career development, publications, university policies or culture, emotional or pastoral elements?
	o Were there any barriers at an institutional, departmental or individual level?
	o Have the aims changed over time? How and why?
	o Has the structure changed over time? How and why?
	• **Are mentors and mentees allocated time in a workload allocation model for these activities and if yes how is this carried out?**
	• **Does research mentoring stand alone, or does it link to any other university career development activity,** eg from the HR department or a research CPD programme?
	• **What demand is there for research mentoring at the university?**
	o How do people find out about it?
	o Has demand increased or decreased since inception? Why do you feel this has happened?
Supporting the relationships (10 mins)	• **To what extent do you monitor and support the different mentoring relationships?**
	o What material is available for mentors/ees to help them get started? Eg about setting goals, assessing progress
	o Do they feedback to anyone about how well the relationship is working?
	o How are any problems dealt with?
	o What records are kept of meetings? Are they formally logged? Why is this?
	• **What happens if an issue raised can only be tackled by involving a line manager or person in authority?**
Outcomes and effectiveness **(**15 mins)	• **Do you carry out, or have you done in the past, any formal or informal evaluation of research mentoring?**
	o If so, probe for details and outcomes.
	• **What impact has taking part in research mentoring had on participants?**
	o In terms of knowledge, skills, experience, confidence, morale, motivation?
	o To what extent does it support career development, publications, continue university policies or culture, emotional or pastoral elements

	○ What hard and soft outcomes can you point to: Publications, research skills, culture of the university, reduced turnover, ○ What evidence do you have for its success or otherwise? **Is there any benefit for mentors as well as mentees?** Please explain **What impact has mentoring had on the university or department?** ○ Probe for evidence, measures **What are the key elements of a successful mentoring programme?** ○ What makes a mentoring relationship work most effectively? ○ What inhibits success? ○ What role can those outside the mentor/ee relationship play to support them? **What future changes are planned for research mentoring here?** ○ How would you set it up if you were starting again?
Sum up	**Why does the university/department support research mentoring?** **What could the university do differently to help mentors and mentees?** **What are the key strengths and weaknesses of the scheme** **What are the key considerations for any university wishing to successfully establish research mentoring?**

Thanks and close