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# Research Mentorship scheme

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## Frequently Asked Questions

### *What is a mentor?*

Mentors are people who, through their action and work, help others to achieve their potential (Shea, 1992). Someone who supports people to manage their own learning in order to maximise their potential, their skills, improve their performance, and become the person they want to be (Parsloe, 1992). Mentorship can be seen as a Gift of Wisdom from one person to another, through building a trusting relationship that focuses on the learning and development needs of the mentee.

### *Why might I need a mentor?*

Education and research funding may not be sufficient to enable you to achieve your goals. People following a clinical academic career are more likely to succeed if they receive additional support and guidance from those who have proved themselves successful in combining recognised research output, excellence in clinical practice and success in building research capacity (Whitworth 2007). You will be more likely to have a greater sense of personal achievement and success.

### *Do I have to have or be a mentor?*

Not at all, this is a voluntary scheme that you can engage with if you would like to. There are no disincentives for not taking it up. Some people will seek their support through other avenues and that is completely fine.

### *I already have a supervisor or line manager, why do I need a mentor?*

Mentorship is not the same as either research supervision or line management, and it is not intended to conflict with these other roles. A mentor has no other agenda than to support you in achieving your career goals and to enable you to think about the challenges and opportunities on the way. A mentor is there to focus on you and does not advise on other academic matters, such as methodology, analysis or employment conditions. They may however help you to consider funding opportunities, collaborations and networks.

### ***What skills do I need to be a mentor?***

If you think you would like to become a mentor the main attribute is motivation to support others. The ability to listen and ask the right questions are also important. You don't have to be a Professor or PI, seniority is not the main criterion. But life and research experience do obviously play a significant part in enabling others. The role is voluntary and altruistic and does not attract a work allocation allowance.

### ***What are the benefits of mentorship?***

For the mentee:

- Improved performance and productivity
- Enhanced career opportunity and career advancement
- Improved knowledge and skills development
- Self-awareness
- Leadership development
- Greater, confidence, well being and motivation

For the mentor:

- Improved performance
- Greater job satisfaction, commitment and self-awareness
- New knowledge and skills acquired
- Leadership development
- Enhance professional network and involvement in a community of mentoring and discovery

### ***How much time does it take?***

Most mentors-mentees decide between themselves what time allocation to put into the relationship. On average, people tend to meet for about 1-1.5 hour every 6 weeks or so. Meetings are best face to face but can also work successfully by skype or email. Mentees often find keeping a reflective notebook helpful alongside the meetings.