

Academic Staff & LSE Fellow Mentoring Guidance 2019-2020

Introduction

The School expects that all academic staff and particularly those in the early stages of their career at the School should receive constructive advice on career development from senior colleagues. In this context, the role of the mentor is considered to be important. The School has in place two approaches to structuring career development conversations between academics:

- A **Mentoring Scheme** for post-Doctoral LSE Fellows and pre-Major Review academic staff as well as, on their request, for post-Major Review staff.
- An **Academic Career Development Review (CDR) scheme** for academic staff who are not yet (full) Professors. Full details of the CDR scheme can be found [here](#).

Both schemes aim to give academic staff guidance on how to make effective use of their career within LSE both for their own development and their contribution to the School. There is separate provision for staff on research contracts for both mentoring and career development meetings, full details of which can be found [here](#).

The mentoring scheme is **distinct** from the CDR scheme. Mentors give informal and frequent advice and provide a listening ear throughout the year, whereas formal CDR meetings take place annually and are normally conducted by the Head of Department (HOD). Importantly, the mentor cannot be the one holding the CDR meeting.

To benefit from mentoring, mentees should be receptive to the advice and encouragement that the mentor can offer. Therefore the relationship must be a positive and trusting one.

Any matters discussed between the mentor and mentee should remain confidential unless by mutual agreement third parties are consulted. However, the mentee may, without reference to the mentor, consult with the Head of Department if s/he feels the relationship is not a productive one. In this case, the Head of Department will, if possible, endeavour to assign a different mentor. Equally important for the mentoring relationship to work, mentees must not place unrealistic expectations on their mentor and must not over-burden them with demands.

Who should have a mentor?

- All post-Doctoral LSE Fellows
- Pre-Major Review academic staff

On their request, post-Major Review staff can also be assigned a mentor. If the employee is 0.2FTE or less, mentoring is optional. A discussion should be held with the employee about whether or not they would like to be allocated a mentor.

At the start of the academic year, HR will send all departments and centres a list of staff who should be allocated a mentor that session. The department should review the list and ensure that it is correct and provide HR with the name of the mentor for each member of staff. Mid-year, HR will also send departments/centres a list of new starters who should be assigned a mentor

Mentors for pre-Major Review academic staff are reported to the Promotions Committee at its first meeting of each session.

Who should be a mentor?

The mentor will normally be a senior member of academic staff within the mentee's department. Exceptionally a colleague from outside the department may act as a mentor (for example if they are closest to the mentee's research interests). The member of staff holding the annual CDR meeting with the mentee cannot be the mentor. Staff on any form of academic leave should not normally be appointed as mentors.

Frequency of meetings

All mentors are expected to arrange with new colleagues allocated to them dates and times for discussions throughout the year. For the first 2 years, meetings should normally be taking place at least once per term, after which they can take place as and when needed, although not less than once annually. However, given the informal nature of mentoring it is expected that the majority of mentoring may also well take place outside of specifically scheduled meetings.

The substance of the mentoring relationship

The role of the mentor is three-fold:

- to assist the mentee in developing an understanding of the expectations placed upon them as academics within the Department and the School;
- to provide a listening ear and informal guidance to the mentee, such that they can work out how to address any challenges they face in their work situation;
- to act as an advocate for mentee (e.g. if their workload allocation appears over-extended, or if they face difficulties with other colleagues in the Department).

The matters which fall within the scope of mentoring will depend on the specific case. Not intended as prescriptive, such matters **may** include:

- Research performance, with particular consideration of the individual's research trajectory, research achievement record, publication record and guidance on where to publish, contribution to the Research Excellence Framework, involvement in grant funding applications and engagement more broadly in the research community in the School, as well as in the discipline.
- Teaching contribution, teaching quality and teaching innovation (be that curricular or teaching process innovation), and feedback from teaching surveys.
- PhD supervision (note: pre-Major Review staff should not be expected to take on a primary supervisor role for research students, but should have the opportunity to develop their supervisory skills as second supervisor).
- Research and teaching administrative arrangements and contributions.
- Wider contribution to the academic life of the School, collegiality and citizenship.
- Potential for contribution to the School's external activities (e.g. Enterprise LSE, Summer School, international institutional links).
- Training and development needs.

When the mentor is providing a listening ear/acting as advocate, possible issues that **may** arise could include:

- Achieving appropriate balance between the different elements of the academic role.
- Issues arising from writing, research approach, dealing with journals and publishers etc.
- Reading and commenting on draft papers/chapters and offering guidance on publication outlets (mentees must be aware that mentors can only do so for a small number of writings).
- Challenges from teaching.
- Upset arising from and ideas on constructive response to challenging feedback from students, colleagues or reviewers.
- Addressing issues related to diversity of all kinds with students and colleagues.
- Managing administrative load.

- Work/life balance.
- Adapting to LSE and its environment.

To some extent, the mentor relationship has similarities to coaching. It is important that the relationship is kept professional. It is also important for both parties to ensure that they do not over-reach reasonable bounds in terms of professional expertise and for the mentor where necessary to seek guidance/advice from others (e.g. if concerned about the new staff member's health/well-being).

In some cases, it may be appropriate for the mentor to advise the mentee to discuss detailed matters with other colleagues in the department/centre and/or to contact colleagues elsewhere in the School (e.g. Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC), Research Division or the Careers Service). Note that all departments have a [HR Partner](#) from whom staff can seek advice should it be necessary (e.g. for guidance related to disability, flexible working, caring responsibilities), and that many academic staff are members of the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU). There is also a [staff counselling service available at the School](#).

The School offers support for new and existing mentors, such as mentoring development sessions. Further information is available [here](#). The mentor should feel able to offer criticism and advice which the mentee, whilst encouraged to listen carefully, is not obliged to take.

What the mentor is NOT responsible for

The mentor is very much a 'guide on the side'. It is not his/her role to 'line manage' the mentee, and the mentor is not responsible for the mentee's career success within the School. In particular, mentors cannot make commitments to the mentee on behalf of the Department regarding the mentee's likelihood of passing Interim or Major Review or the prospect of a successful promotion. Such advice must come from the CDR meeting and is ultimately a decision of the Promotions Committee. Equally, it is up to the mentee to decide what s/he does with any advice proffered.

The role of documentary materials in the mentoring relationship

There are no written requirements related to mentoring, or any necessity for the mentor or mentee to share documents. However, if both are agreeable and have time, there may be benefits from sharing:

- Research papers (including reviewer feedback and how this is handled)
- A brief email log of matters discussed.

Mentoring skills

Effective mentoring is about building a supportive relationship based on listening, mutual respect and trust. It requires skills and sensitivity on both sides.

The mentor can build this relationship through:

- Establishing initial expectations on both sides.
- Being available at times agreed.
- Listening.
- Being open to answering questions.
- Drawing on experience and offering models – be it in research or teaching (e.g. encourage the new member of staff to come to observe you teach, see your materials, read your articles, share your reviewer feedback etc before asking to see theirs).
- Offering insight.
- Being willing to question and challenge the mentee to reflect on their work.
- Sharing networks/contacts.

- Being willing to give both positive encouragement and critical constructive feedback.
- Seeking/giving feedback on the mentoring relationship – and agreeing when this relationship comes to an end.

The mentee also needs to work at this relationship through:

- Indicating what you expect from the mentoring relationship.
- Being available at times agreed.
- Coming with questions/ideas/things to explore and discuss.
- Having ideas on objectives and ways forward.
- Listening.
- Being ready to adapt – both yourself and the ideas you gain from your mentor.
- Being willing to accept both positive encouragement and critical constructive feedback.
- Giving/seeking feedback on the mentoring relationship – and agreeing when this relationship comes to an end.

The mentor should feel able to offer criticism and advice which the mentee, whilst encouraged to listen carefully, is not obliged to take.

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Some helpful tips

The School has also developed some helpful tips for mentors and mentees – available [here](#).

Additional Links:

[CDR guidance and form](#)

[Additional support for mentors/mentees – some helpful tips.](#)