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CIRCLE ISP
Good Practice Guide

4

Approaches to Mentoring and Setting Up an Institutional Mentoring Programme

The Association of Commonwealth Universities

vitae
realising
the potential
of researchers

Contents

About this Guide

This Guide is number 4 of a series of 6 CIRCLE ISP Good Practice Guides developed by the CIRCLE Programme to help institutions design and deliver a successful Institutional Strengthening Programme, a change management process, to support the career development of researchers as part of research capacity strengthening.

This Guide draws on the experience of the CIRCLE Programme, and the lessons learnt by the institutions that have taken part.

This Guide explains the different approaches to mentoring, how they differ from academic supervision, and how to set up institutional mentoring programmes for researchers using tools such as the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF).

Content in this Guide is expanded and developed upon in further Guides.

You can access all of our Guides on both the ACU website and the Vitae website.

Mentoring as a Key Part of Researcher Professional Development

Mentoring has become a popular way to support the career development of researchers either informally or in a formal institutional programme.

"Mentoring means to support and encourage people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be."

Eric Parsloe, The Oxford School of Coaching & Mentoring

Institutions approach mentoring in different ways, and schemes can include:

- Formal institutional mentoring policies and systems

- Mentors as an additional support resource who are not the mentees research supervisor

- Research supervisors who incorporate mentoring as an approach supervising their researchers

In a research context, mentoring:

- Focuses on the career development of the researcher outside of the supervision of research

- Empowers the researcher to find their own solutions to challenges and to plan their own career development

- Enables the researcher to establish a career path within the context of the institution's strategic objectives through guidance, support, encouragement and informed feedback

- Allows the researcher to develop a realistic assessment of their capabilities and areas for development to make informed career decisions

A mentoring relationship can boost the confidence of a researcher to write a paper, to contribute to writing a grant, or to present at a conference. The commitment to action is central, giving researchers impetus and encouragement to develop their careers for the long term.

Mentoring is a powerful development tool for researchers and offers extensive benefits to the mentor, mentee and the institution.

The following benefits are commonly reported by mentees:

- Improves self-confidence

- Offers professional development

- Provides advice and information

- Encourages reflection on practice

- Provides personal support

- Improves effectiveness

- Develops self-awareness

- Gives access to a 'sounding board' for concerns, issues and ideas

Mentors also benefit from mentoring. Mentors involved in institutional programmes report that mentoring:

- Refreshes own view of work

- Enhances job satisfaction

- Encourages self-reflection

- Encourages a proactive role in learning and development

- Develops professional relationships

Mentoring also gives the institution an opportunity to:

- promote a culture of personal and professional development

- share desired institutional behaviours and attitudes

- directly improve staff morale and performance

- retain and encourage high performers and potential future academic leaders.

Why is mentoring considered to be a key priority for an ISP?

Mentoring was included as a key component of CIRCLE following recommendations outlined in the Foundations of the Future Report. This report, along with two others, were created as part of The Nairobi Process; a series of discussions, facilitated by the ACU and the British Academy, around Africa-UK research collaboration and the provision of researcher support in African higher education.

"The report was an attempt not only to set out the difficulties that African researchers faced, but to conceive of practical ways of tackling these, with a particular emphasis on how collaboration with UK colleagues might help. Looking specifically, and in greater detail, in this paper at the early stages of a researcher's career brings many of the wider problems facing research into clearer focus. It is evident that without strong support and mentoring early in a scholar's career – the period during which they emerge from the research training of the PhD to establish themselves as fully-fledged academics – the future of high-quality African research will be in jeopardy, and prior investments in doctoral level training will be imperilled. To quote again from The Nairobi Report, "Sustaining research, and training successive generations, depends on the flow of ideas, knowledge and skills

from experienced researchers to their junior colleagues." In short, a change of emphasis towards support for early career researchers is essential if the next generation of scholars is to be nurtured, and if they are to be able in turn to reproduce themselves to ensure the vitality of research into the future. Advancing early careers does not mean that only junior researchers are supported. Acknowledging the critical place of senior academics in the process – and their own research needs and interests – is vital, and mechanisms which support both to work together need to be explored."

Foundations of the Future Report, p iv

To address these recommendations, the strengthening of provision of academic mentoring for early career researchers became a key priority for CIRCLE, particularly the establishment of formal mechanisms to enable effective delivery and management of mentoring programmes within our institutions.

You can read more about The Nairobi Process and the three consequent reports on the ACU Website: https://www.acu.ac.uk/focus-areas/early-careers/nairobi-process

Approaches to Institutional Mentoring

Institutional mentoring has a range of considerations:

- how the mentoring is managed at an institutional level

- who takes on mentoring responsibilities

- what approaches are used in the mentoring conversations.

Mentoring is identified in The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) as a competency of successful researchers, under Domain D: Engagement, influence and impact. The RDF can be used to explore the competencies of the mentoring supervisor in more detail. In the CIRCLE programme, this activity was undertaken by CIRCLE Champions to identify the key competencies of CIRCLE mentors and the training required to develop mentoring capabilities.

All researchers should be given be the opportunity to develop mentoring skills as part of leadership development.

THE MENTORING SUPERVISOR

One of the major differences between supervision and mentoring is that the former is often task-oriented (e.g., completion of a thesis or dissertation) whereas the latter is more about caring for an individual's long-term development (Acker, 2011).

The role of a research supervisor is to oversee the work of the researcher and progress in their research, to ensure that they are carrying out their tasks correctly and efficiently. This may involve proofreading, editing, ensuring that training needs are being addressed and that deadlines are being met. A supervisor may give guidance on the nature of the research, research methodology, academic standards and skills (such as scientific writing, research ethics etc.), writing for publication and general academic progress.

A supervisor can include elements of mentoring when working with a researcher, but the function of mentoring is different to supervising. A 'mentoring-supervisor' may adopt techniques of coaching to support the researcher as well as the research. A 'mentoring supervisor':

- Helps researchers find their own solutions to short term challenges, through coaching techniques
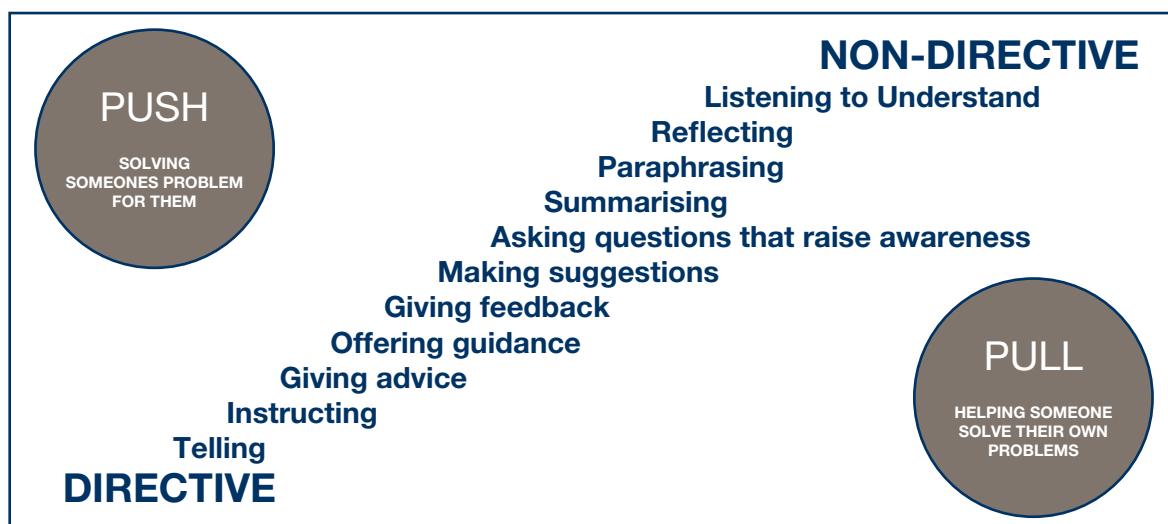
- Mentors the longer-term career development of the researcher

- Supervises when focusing on the research rather than the researcher

Research supervisors may wish to adopt a mentoring approach to supervising their researchers. This involves balancing attention to researchers' broader career development needs with the conduct and output of research. This is a dynamic relationship which both mentor and mentee must navigate with clarity. Conflicts of interest may occur between transparency in communications of a personal confidential nature and delivering the research. The table below shows the different dimensions to be managed by the mentoring supervisor. The focus may shift between the research and the researcher, and a mentor may have to be directive (functional conversations) and non-directive (career development conversations) at different times. Mentoring may be established on a voluntary, self-selecting basis with a personal agreement or be part of a structured institutional mentoring programme with formal arrangements.

The different dimensions of mentoring supervision are outlined in the table below.

DIRECTIVE AND NON-DIRECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Mentoring supervisors may need to become aware of the differences between directive and non-directive communication as shown in the diagram below. Mentoring communication tends to belong in the non-directive area, such as listening, reflecting, paraphrasing. Whilst research supervision, especially with urgent deadlines and quality control, may tend to belong in the directive area of telling, instructing and giving advice. Mentoring supervisors should aim to 'pull', helping researchers to solve their own problems including their career decisions and avoid 'push', which involves solving problems for the researcher.

PUSH — SOLVING SOMEONES PROBLEM FOR THEM

NON-DIRECTIVE
Listening to Understand
Reflecting
Paraphrasing
Summarising
Asking questions that raise awareness
Making suggestions
Giving feedback
Offering guidance
Giving advice
Instructing
Telling
DIRECTIVE

PULL — HELPING SOMEONE SOLVE THEIR OWN PROBLEMS

Effective Modern Coaching, M. Downey, 2014

Some institutions prefer to keep a distinction between the role of the mentor and that of a supervisor, with different staff taking on the different roles, resulting in two support resources for the mentee.

The role of the mentor is to provide support to the researcher as a person in terms of their career development. This may involve:

- advice on academic and non-academic career goals and development

- providing advice and support in navigating the institutions ways of working and internal culture

- acting as a sounding board for the mentee

- providing access to networks and contacts

- offering feedback to the mentee on their experiences.

Effective Mentoring

An effective mentoring relationship consists of a number of elements that are managed jointly by the mentor, the mentee and the institution.

A good mentoring relationship, in general:

- Enables an individual to benefit from a more experienced colleague who can pass on knowledge, experience and open doors to opportunities

- Usually (but not necessarily) involves a mentor who has more experience than the mentee

- Is not generally delivered through line management or research supervision

- Focuses on the individual's career development

- Can be particularly effective for individuals in times of transition and change

- Can be a voluntary, informal or self-selected arrangement or part of a formal institutional mentoring programme

CIRCLE adopted a model of mentoring that was that was separate from supervision, emphasising the importance of multiple sources of support for researchers.

Personal and Professional Competencies of Mentors

There are many different roles that a mentor can take, and effective mentors can adopt a variety of different roles during a mentoring session according to the needs of the mentee, such as for example:

- Facilitator

- Sounding board

- Listener

- Coach

- Giver of encouragement and feedback

- Networker

- Role model

- Critical friend

- Change agent

- Challenger of assumptions

- Visionary

- Inspire

During the CIRCLE programme, our CIRCLE Visiting Fellows identified the attributes they would like in a mentor which are set out in the table below. Gaining information like this from your researchers can help shape your training and policies for mentors at your institution.

Ethical	Listening	Punctual	Encouraging
Experienced	Efficient	Good rapport	Knowledgeable
Open minded	Problem Solving	Integrity	Generous
Flexible	Articulate	Honesty	Patient
Approachable	Networked	Empowering	Confidential

Formal Mentoring vs Informal Mentoring

Many universities manage a formal programme for mentoring researchers, typically involving some of the following:

- Institutional policy and guidance on mentoring

- Training to prepare mentors and mentees

- Matching of pairs according to their needs, skills and experience

- Encouraging agreement of ground rules and boundaries

- Providing third party support

- Offering a framework for a learning contract

- Agreeing levels of confidentiality

- Evaluating the programme

There is evidence that matching mentors to mentees increases the success of mentoring and tends to work best if the mentor is external or in a different department to the mentee, to avoid a conflict of interest.

Mentoring in an informal context is also common, e.g. a researcher could approach a more experienced researcher for advice or support. There may be no formal ground rules or boundaries, although it is likely that confidentiality will be expected, and some shared sense of the purpose of the relationship. The mentoring could be short or long-term and might involve:

- support in developing confidence with an area of work

- learning a new skill

- making useful connections and expanding networks

- discussing career direction

The formality of the mentoring programme often depends on where the programme is initially developed, the visibility of the programme and the support received from key members of senior staff. There is no right or wrong approach to mentoring, with institutions preferring formal or informal programmes for a variety of reasons. However, at its core the mentoring relationship must enhance the career development of the researcher.

Using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) to support Mentoring

The Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) provides a framework to assist professional development planning for researchers and provides a useful foundation for mentoring.

Mentees can use the RDF to identify competencies they wish to develop and seek mentoring support to progress competencies relevant to their careers such as networking, communication, work-life balance or leadership.

Further information on the RDF and how it was created can be found in Appendix A.

Collegiality
Team working
People management
Supervision
Mentoring
Influence and leadership
Collaboration
Equality and diversity

Subject knowledge
Research methods: theoretical knowledge
Research methods: practical application
Information seeking
Information literacy and management
Languages
Academic literacy and numeracy

Communication methods
Communication media
Publication

Analysing
Synthesising
Critical thinking
Evaluating
Problem solving

Teaching
Public engagement
Enterprise
Policy
Society and culture
Global citizenship

Inquiring mind
Intellectual insight
Innovation
Argument construction
Intellectual risk

Health and safety
Ethics, principles and sustainability
Legal requirements
IPR and copyright
Respect and confidentiality
Attribution and co-authorship
Appropriate practice

Enthusiasm
Perseverance
Integrity
Self-confidence
Self-reflection
Responsibility

Research strategy
Project planning and delivery
Risk management

Preparation and prioritisation
Commitment to research
Time management
Responsiveness to change
Work-life balance

Income and funding generation
Financial management
Infrastructure and resources

Career management
Continuing professional development
Responsiveness to opportunities
Networking
Reputation and esteem

Working with others (D1)

Knowledge base (A1)

Cognitive abilities (A2)

Communication and dissemination (D2)

Creativity (A3)

Engagement and impact (D3)

Engagement, influence and impact
The knowledge and skills to work with others and ensure the wider impact of research
Domain D

Knowledge and intellectual abilities
The knowledge, intellectual abilities and techniques to do research
Domain A

Domain C
Research governance and organisation
The knowledge of the standards, requirements and professionalism to do research

Domain B
Personal effectiveness
The personal qualities and approach to be an effective researcher

Personal qualities (B1)

Professional conduct (C1)

Self-management (B2)

Research management (C2)

Finance, funding and resources (C3)

Professional and career development (B3)

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Vitae

Setting expectations and objectives

It is important that both the mentor and the mentee are clear on what to expect from the mentoring relationship before it is underway. Not only should the institution provide clear guidance on the parameters of the mentoring programme and expected outcomes, but the mentor and mentee should also decide what boundaries will be put into place and how to proceed with their mentoring relationship.

It can be helpful to consider how to structure the mentoring relationship, and for mentor and mentee to address the following questions to agree the best way of working. Answers to these questions can be used to form a 'statement of expectations' with a clear understanding of what the mentor and mentee expect from each other.

In an institutional programme this may be set for everyone by the Mentoring Co-ordinator (discussed below), but it is sensible even in informal mentoring arrangements to discuss the following:

PURPOSE

- What is the purpose of the mentoring? Consider wider institutional purpose (e.g. additional support for early career researchers) as well as individual

- Why did the mentor decide to take on this role?

- Why did the mentee decide to request additional support?

HOW TO STRUCTURE THE SESSIONS

- How will the mentor carry out the role?

- What are the clearly expressed expectations of a mentee?

- Who will bring the agenda to the session?

- Who records actions from the meeting?

- How will the mentor and the mentee communicate?

- How often, where and when will mentoring meetings take place?

INTERACTION DURING A MENTORING SESSION

- How will both parties engage in the discussion?

- What approaches are preferred? E.g. active listening or probing?

- What will interactions focus on? E.g. exploring feelings/needs/ideas/assumptions?

- How will the mentor and the mentee agree on and review actions to be undertaken?

It is the responsibility of the mentee to drive the mentoring session and to proactively undertake agreed actions and prepare for the mentoring session. The mentee may be asked to:

- Identify what challenges they might face or are already facing

- Set up the initial meeting with supervisor/mentor

- Discuss and agree frequency, length and reporting of sessions

- Establish how their relationship will work - 'I would find it helpful if you would'

- Agree a structure for their sessions

Every mentoring arrangement should have an agreed time-scale, whether it continues until the researcher resolves a challenge, for a set period of time, or is an ongoing relationship. The mentor and mentee should agree on how and when to end the arrangement if desired by either participant, or as required by the institution.

Managing the mentoring relationship

Consistent management and review of the mentoring relationship, ideally by an external party, is crucial in ensuring that expectations are maintained and that both the mentors and mentees are sufficiently protected by the institution.

Management of the mentoring relationship could involve:

- Ensuring that each mentoring relationship is in line with institutional policy

- Reviewing consistency of meetings

- Measuring of impact of the mentoring on mentors and mentees

- Identifying need for further training or support

- Removing or reassigning mentors or mentees

The management of mentoring relationships highlights the importance of formalising any mentoring programme within your institution. This ensures that data is systematically collected, thereby enabling monitoring and evaluation activities to take place.

We will now explore how to set up a formal mentoring programme for your institution.

Your Institutional Mentoring Strategy

Most of our CIRCLE ISP Implementation Groups initially launched their mentoring programmes within Climate Change Departments due to the scope of our programme. The content of their mentoring training was specific to this particular research topic, with many Groups having to adapt content when programmes were scaled up across the wider institution.

To help your ISP Implementation Group design your strategy, here are some approaches by our Groups.

Start with a pilot

Most of our CIRCLE ISP Implementation Groups found that launching a small-scale mentoring pilot was a more manageable way to start a mentoring programme, and to determine the level of interest in the wider institution.

Starting with a pilot mentoring programme is a helpful way of testing if your mentoring programme provides sufficient support and resources for a successful mentoring relationship. It can also help your Implementation Group to assess what mentoring styles and methods are most successful for early career researchers, and to learn about the common challenges that mentors are being asked to advise on.
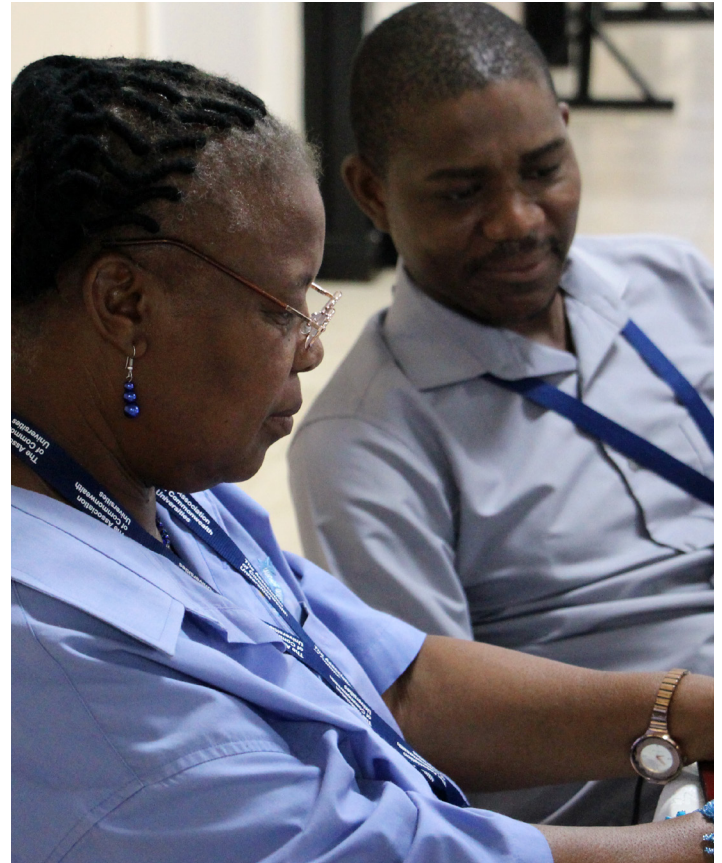
CIRCLE Case Study: Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT), Zimbabwe

With only very limited resources, CUT established their mentoring programme with just 9 mentors and 9 mentees within the Climate Change Department. As a result of training through CIRCLE, they were able to utilise the expertise and experience that mentors had already developed, avoiding the cost of formal training. By working with these mentors, the ISP Group was able to monitor progress and put together a Mentoring Handbook, which was used to promote the programme to senior staff. Once further resources were available, the Implementation Group organised a two-day training workshop to launch their larger-scale mentoring programme, which included 70 early career researchers and 20 supervisors, and was run by those who took part in the previous small-scale programme.

Scale to department

Some of our Groups focused their mentoring programme on a particular department. Training therefore included information on departmental policies and targets, and trends within that area of research specialism (if applicable). Scaling up to a departmental mentoring programme of course depends on the size of your department and the nature of work taking place. Consideration should be given to the number of senior staff available to take on the roles of mentors, their availability, and the nature of early career researcher contracts and workloads.

Departmental mentoring programmes should be co-managed with departmental administrative staff, with your ISP Group working closely with the Head of Department. An agreement on management as well as data to be collected in monitoring and evaluation activities is also helpful and will mean there is further support in reporting successes.

Selecting the department in which to launch the mentoring programme may not be easy. It is best to start in a department with which members of the ISP Implementation Group have strong links and familiarity with the staff and structure.

Training workshops may need to be adapted to account for higher numbers of participants and can be included in any regular departmental training calendars.

Scale to institution wide

The final step in creating a formal institutional mentoring programme is to enable research staff from across the institution to take part. Gaining senior support and involvement from Heads of Department will be critical in the successful delivery of your mentoring programme.

Training workshops may need to be run more frequently to accommodate higher numbers, although we don't recommend that you increase the number of participants per workshop too drastically at any stage.

You may wish to produce different versions of training and support materials for participants, or you can adapt ones you have already produced so that they are more generic and accessible for everyone.

Implementation of an institutional mentoring policy will usually occur when a mentoring programme is delivered on this scale, allowing each department to be aware of expectations and management processes in place.

TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

Your mentoring programme should include a series of training workshops and resources for participants. These can be delivered at any point during your mentoring programme, or at any stage of the mentoring relationship.

It may be useful to offer training on the following topics at varying stages of your mentoring programme:

Launch/Introduction to the Mentoring Programme

- Awareness raising training for Heads of Departments/ Line Managers of potential Mentors/Mentees
- Mentoring vs Supervision
- Application Process for Mentors and Mentees

Resources:

Mentoring Policy, Mentoring Strategy, Application Forms

Post-Acceptance onto Mentoring Programme

- Mentor workshop on mentoring process including best practice, internal resources, safeguarding and monitoring and evaluation
- Mentee workshop on mentoring process including setting expectations and objectives, internal resources, safeguarding and monitoring and evaluation

Resources:

Mentoring Handbook(s), Mentoring Guidelines, Mentoring Policy, Monitoring and Evaluation Materials

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During Mentoring Process

- Managing and evaluating mentoring relationships
- Internal resources and safeguarding

Resources:

Mentoring Policy, Mentoring Handbook(s), Mentoring Guidelines

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End of Mentoring Process/Individual Relationships

- Managing relationships post-mentoring
- Reporting and evaluation

Resources:

Monitoring and Evaluation Forms, Monitoring and Evaluation Reporting Template

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Depending on the size and scale of your mentoring programme, you may decide that your mentoring training sessions are best run face-to-face or that resources are made available online. Your may run your training within certain Departments or, if the programme is institution wide, you may run multiple sessions of each workshop for all participants.

As mentioned, most of our CIRCLE ISP Groups initially launched their mentoring programmes within Climate Change Departments, due to the scope of our programme. The content of their mentoring training was specific to this particular research topic, with many Groups having to adapt content when programmes were scaled up across the wider institution. Consider who will take part in your mentoring programme and ensure that content is appropriate.

MENTORING POLICIES

Finally, and most importantly, all of the above should be wrapped up into a formal institutional policy. Having a policy in place ensures that activities are carried out to a certain standard and that the programme is in line with the institutions wider strategic plan.

It will also provide a framework for allocating and managing resources and how to accommodate any institutional change and development.

A formal policy also provides reassurance to participants, and is a valuable resource for staff involved in the management of the programme.

We will look at setting up a formal mentoring programme in the next section.

Setting up a formal Institutional Mentoring Programme

Broader Concept of Institutional Mentoring Programmes

Your institution may already have an informal mentoring programme that is running successfully and without issue. Informal programmes within CIRCLE institutions were usually small in scale and promoted through word-of-mouth or recommendations from individuals already involved. There are however many issues that can arise when mentoring programmes that are not formalised, including inconsistency in the quality of mentoring relationships, uncertainty over duration of relationship and extent of support to be provided, and a lack of protection for mentors or mentees that require safeguarding.

A formal mentoring programme enables the institution to:

- Identify key challenges and obstacles facing early career researchers

- Monitor the impact of the mentoring relationship on mentors and mentees

- Standardise support provision and offer multiple sources for advice

- Carry out interventions on mentoring relationships that are not up to standard

- Identify groups who need additional support (i.e. female academics, new recruits)

- Improve commitment to the institution by both mentors and mentees

- Produce comprehensive guidance on mentoring and its benefits

Formalising your mentoring programme requires investment and support from senior staff members and departments and will likely require the development of a comprehensive package of training and guidance materials. The content you will require for your programme will rely on the approach that your institution decides to take to the mentoring programme.

Institutional approaches

There are a variety of institutional approaches to mentoring programmes, which can be shaped by your institutional strategy, the desired scale of the programme, your priorities and the level of resources available. You might wish to consider some of the following approaches in your institutional approach to mentoring:

- Voluntary opt-in programmes

- Part of the academic management process

- Find your own mentor

- Led by HR function, department or faculty

- Links to annual reviews

- Institutional Code of Practice for Mentoring

- Programme of training for mentors

- Mentor-mentee matching programme

- Targeted to specific group

- Inclusive and open to all

Refer to your Gap Analysis to help determine which approach would work best for your institution.

MENTORING WITHIN YOUR ISP

When developing a formal Institutional Mentoring Programme, it is useful to assign co-ordination responsibility to one of your Group members.

This role of the Mentoring Co-ordinator would also be supported by a senior champion, who has expertise and experience of your institution.

The Mentoring Co-ordinator may not necessarily manage the mentoring programme for the whole institution but will ideally lead on relevant activities within the ISP Action Plan, establish formal training and guidance for mentors and mentees who are taking part in the programme, and co-ordinate all mentoring activities that take place across the institution.

The Mentoring Co-ordinator might wish to have a discussion with groups of potential mentors and mentees (or current mentors and mentees if an informal programme is already in place) to help develop resources such as handbooks or an institutional policy around mentoring sessions, asking questions such as:

- How would you structure a mentoring session?

- How would you know the mentoring session had been successful?

- What should be included in a checklist for mentoring relationships for mentors?

- What about a checklist for mentees?

- What are the common challenges facing early career researchers? What solutions have been successful?

- What are the common challenges facing senior researchers? What solutions have been successful?

- What benefits would you expect from a mentoring relationship?

- What support would be helpful for the mentors/mentees from the institution?

These questions will ultimately assist the Mentoring Co-ordinator to design their formal mentoring programme.

Experience from CIRCLE

When CIRCLE began in 2015, just 3 institutions out of 31 had formal mechanisms in place to mentor early career researchers effectively. By 2018, 20 of our institutions had formal mechanisms in place. Our institutions have been able to provide us with valuable expertise on formalising mentoring programmes and the challenges they faced in designing successful, effective and manageable mechanisms to support mentoring.

"Although informal mentorship might arguably have been taking place in our university system; it is not structured. It is not skill specific. It is difficult to evaluate and cannot be easily translated into the developmental needs of the university. The benefits of a structured [formal] workplace mentorship programme includes:

- *Creating a learning culture in the workplace environment*
- *Promoting personal and professional development*
- *Reducing the cost of learning*
- *Decreasing stress and anxiety in the environment*

- *Increasing job satisfaction by creating a positive environment*
- *Developing mutual healthy relationships that benefit both mentors and mentee*
- *Developing individuals who will be willing to volunteer to mentor others"*

Excerpt from the Mentorship Programme Proposal Paper developed by the ISP Implementation Group at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Nigeria

The success of actions that focused on mentoring was one of the most variable within the CIRCLE ISP. Proposed activities ranged from the creation of resources such as mentoring handbooks and mentoring policies, to delivery of training workshops and actual matching of mentor and mentee pairs.

Here are some useful findings on designing and implementing formal mentoring programmes from reports submitted by CIRCLE ISP Implementation Groups.

Reported challenges

- Clearly communicating the distinction between mentoring and supervision – there is often confusion between the roles and what is expected from mentors
- Improving recognition of the benefits of mentoring, particularly for mentors – there were many misconceptions about the benefits, with senior staff often believing that the role of a mentor involved becoming overloaded with extra work that would not positively contribute to their own development
- Gaining senior support for proposed mentoring policies – arranging

time with senior staff and navigating the often-complex bureaucratic systems within the institution can be cumbersome and difficult

- Matching mentor and mentee pairs – mentees often identified high ranking or more visible members of senior staff as potential mentors, objective methods of assignment were required
- Creating efficient monitoring and evaluation tools – mentors and mentees often complained about long and complicated reporting processes. Time-effective surveys or brief meetings were preferred.

Reported successes

- Quick identification of training facilitators for mentoring workshops – predominantly CIRCLE Visiting Fellows and other staff with positive experiences of mentoring volunteered to deliver training and provide expertise.
- Successful delivery of a series of training workshops on why mentoring is important and how to benefit from mentoring relationships – this increased publicity and provided clarity on the details of the programme

- Higher than anticipated interest in the programme – further supports the need to scale up the programme and produce more training
- Increased visibility of the work of the ISP Groups – senior staff responded well to the proposed programme and potential impact of mentoring for the institution

CIRCLE ISP Implementation Groups also helped us to identify key elements of successful programmes.

Key elements of successful programmes

When planning your institutional mentoring programme, you might wish to discuss with others:

- How you identify, support and recognise those who have the values and qualities to become mentors

- How you institutionally support mentors with integrity and without exploitation

- How you set boundaries for the institution, the mentor and the mentee

- How you create a critical mass of mentors

- What alternative models can you create for a mentoring experience when resources are scarce

- How you strengthen mentoring skills in supervisors

- How you measure the success of your activities

The CIRCLE ISP Champions agreed that, in order to be successful, an institutional mentoring programme should have:

- Clear information and guidelines that address defined roles, implementation, monitoring, support, evaluation and feedback

- Formal policies for the wider programme to ensure consistency

- A formal strategic plan with leadership and champions for mentoring

- Consideration on how to ensure the sustainability of the mentoring programme

- A co-ordinated approach, ideally through the ISP Group or a mentoring team/unit

- A clear training and development programme for mentoring skills and capabilities

- An inclusive agenda, which is gender sensitive, inter-disciplinary, and promotes diversity

- Provision of rewards and recognition for mentors to incentivise best practice

- A quality assurance system and complaints procedures to ensure safeguarding

- Procedures to evaluate output and impact

Now we'll look at these in more detail:

HANDBOOKS AND GUIDELINES

Many of our CIRCLE ISP Implementation Groups produced comprehensive handbooks for individuals using the mentoring. Some institutions chose to produce separate handbooks for mentors and mentees, while others chose to develop a combined handbook covering both sides of the mentoring relationship. The handbooks provide a detailed overview of the Mentoring Programme, why it was developed, the predicted outcomes, and the responsibilities of all parties involved.

APPLICATION, SELECTION AND MATCHING PROCESS

In order to ensure that mentors are suitable and that they are appropriately matched with mentees, a robust application, selection and matching process should be put into place.

APPLICATIONS TO THE MENTORING PROGRAMME

Applicants to the mentoring programme should be provided with application guidance and application forms, as well as information on the selection and matching process.

If your mentoring programme is limited in scope, you should ensure that both mentors and mentees are able to take part in the programme.

It may be useful to disseminate a formal job description for the role of a mentor, particularly if mentoring responsibilities will be formally recognised by your institution with regards to promotions and rewards.

Some institutions like to give mentees the option to nominate or choose preferred mentors, while others use their own criteria for the matching process. Mentees should however have the choice to select certain criteria for their mentor, for example, their gender or area of academic specialism.

The development of application forms will both assist applicants in preparing to take part in your mentoring programme and will also offer a collection of useful data for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

Our CIRCLE ISP Group from the University for Energy and Natural Resources have provided a copy of their application forms for your reference. These can be found in Appendix B. Your application forms may include different criteria and required information. You can adapt these for use in your own mentoring programme.

CIRCLE Case Study: University for Development Studies, Ghana

Here is an example of the contents covered by a Mentoring Handbook for Senior Members and Senior Staff (i.e. Mentors) from the University for Development Studies (UDS), a participating institution in the CIRCLE ISP:

- Background
- What is Mentoring?
- Types of Mentoring
- Core principles of mentoring relationships
- Values of Mentoring
- Goals of Mentoring
- Overview of Mentoring in the UDS
- Qualities of a Mentor in UDS
- Process of Mentoring
- Responsibilities in UDS in the Mentoring Programme
- Responsibilities of a Mentor
- Responsibilities of a Mentee
- Reward System within the University Mentoring Programme
- Responsibilities in Mentoring
- Mentor-Mentee Relationship
- Avoid these pitfalls
- The Role of Communication in Mentoring
- The Gender Dimension of Mentoring
- Monitoring and Evaluation of the Mentoring Process

MANAGEMENT

As mentioned above, we recommend that your ISP Implementation Group assigns one of its members the role of Mentoring Co-ordinator, who will take responsibility for all mentoring related actions and activities within the ISP Action Plan.

The Mentoring Co-ordinator may wish to assign some smaller tasks to other members or obtain assistance from external staff members. This is particularly common when the mentoring programme is scaled up and covers multiple departments across the institution. Ultimately however, the Mentoring Co-ordinator should maintain oversight of the delivery of the mentoring programme and its impact on early career researchers.

Your ISP Implementation Group should ensure that the mentoring programme is effectively managed, that it is delivered in line with any policies or strategies in place, and that related actions are carried out according to timescales within the ISP Workplan.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

In order to effectively assess the success and impact of your mentoring programme, it is good practice to have monitoring and evaluation activities included in its design. Not only will this enable your ISP Implementation Group to assess engagement with your mentoring programme, and any need for further training or guidance, but also allows you to gather data on the impact of the programme, which can be critical in gaining senior recognition and support for expansion across the institution. You can use the following methods to monitor and evaluate your mentoring programme:

- Pre-, During, and Post-mentoring forms assessing confidence/ability in key areas of development

- Feedback forms/surveys for Mentors/Mentees on the quality and impact of the mentoring relationship

- Anonymous feedback forms/surveys

- Comparison of data on research outputs/promotions/staff satisfaction in Departments carrying out the mentoring programme (before and after its implementation)

- Focus groups with mentors/mentees

- Surveys on level of interest of mentoring for those uninvolved

- Development of case studies on successful mentoring relationships

You may also wish to produce regular reports on progress and achievements of your mentoring programme, to be made available for all staff and students at your institution.

Further support in the CIRCLE ISP Good Practise Guide Series

You may find the following guides useful for the next stage of your ISP:

Guide 1: Designing an Effective Institutional Strengthening Programme for Researcher Career Development

This Guide shows you how to set up your own Institutional Strengthening Programme for Researcher Career Development by introducing each of the design and delivery stages. This includes how to establish your ISP Implementation Group, carrying out your Gap Analysis, preparing and implementing your Action Plan, and how to monitor success.

Guide 2: Engaging People with your Institutional Strengthening Programme

This Guide provides information on how to engage stakeholders with your ISP, how to create a communications plan, and various tips on keeping your institution updated on your progress and achievements and embedding activities into "normal business".

Guide 3: Enhancing Institutional Researcher Development Programmes

This Guide introduces the concept of Researcher Development Programmes (RDP) and explores how to design an effective training programme using an experiential learning approach. The Guide also covers how you can scale up your workshop to a full-scale institutional programme of training support.

Guide 4: Approaches to Mentoring and Setting up an Institutional Mentoring Programme

This Guide explains the different approaches to mentoring, how they differ from academic supervision, and how to set up institutional mentoring programmes for researchers using tools such as the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF).

Guide 5: Institutions: using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework to enhance researcher development provision and develop researcher competencies

This Guide explains how institutions can use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) as a framework for supporting the professional development of researchers within their institution.

Guide 6: Researchers: using the Vitae Researcher Development Framework for professional development planning

This Guide explains how individual researchers can use the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) as a framework for supporting their own professional development.

Appendix A: How was the RDF Created?

In the first instance a literature review was undertaken of the other frameworks to consider whether a researcher specific framework was needed. As a result of the review it was recommended that a framework specifically for researchers was required to focus on the attributes, behaviours and knowledge that successful researchers need to develop throughout their career. The RDF is internationally accepted as a framework for the career development of researchers.

Over 100 interviews were undertaken with researchers from a range of backgrounds, career stages, disciplines, geographic locations, types of research institute and level of career, and analysed using a phenomenographic approach. Interviewees were asked, 'what attributes, behaviours, knowledge is required for a successful research career?'. Over 1,000 characteristics were cited. Due to the large data set, further input was sought from senior researchers, institutions, funders, experts, and other relevant stakeholders, via consultation, workshops and working groups. As a result, the characteristics were clustered into 4 main areas (Domains), and 63 descriptors representing the wide range of competencies of successful researchers.

Below you can see the visual graphic of the RDF, with characteristics divided into 4 main domains. Each domain is divided into 3 sub-domains, each divided again into a number of descriptors.

Appendix B: UENR Mentor and Mentee Application Forms

UENR MENTEE APPLICATION FORM			
Name:			
Title:		**Gender:**	
Phone:		**E-mail:**	
Area of Discipline / Specialization:			
Position/Rank*: * Position/Rank refers to whether you are a Senior, Associate Professor or Full Professors. Please note that prospective mentors should be Senior lecturer and above. *Lecturers who have submitted their documents for promotion to Senior Research Scientist can serve as mentors *However Lecturer with more than four years in service and other expertise could also apply.			
To help us make the best mentor-mentee match, please complete the attached questionnaire. The information will be used to match you with a mentee who has similar interests and can benefit most from your guidance. All information will be strictly confidential and will be used only for program administration purposes.			
The areas of science or career development in which I would be most effective in providing guidance to a mentee are	☐ Improving visibility		
	☐ Publishing or research		
	☐ Identifying funds or accessing resources, laboratory facilities		
	☐ Career planning, both short and long term goals		
	☐ Networking opportunities		
	☐ Others (please specify)		
My top three professional strengths are	a.		
	b.		
	c.		
I would prefer to work with a mentee who (complete where appropriate)	☐ Needs specialized scientific mentoring in		
	☐ Is interested in conducting research or publishing in the following area		
	☐ Wants to concentrate on leadership and people skills		
	☐ Others (please specify)		
Tick which is applicable to you	☐ I have previous experience in mentoring		
	☐ I do not have previous experience in mentoring		
Tick which is applicable to you	☐ My previous mentoring experience was formal		
	☐ My previous mentoring experience was informal		
The person I would like to be my mentee should be	☐ Male	☐ Female	☐ No preference
I would prefer my mentee to be from (tick one)	☐ Same research field	☐ Outside my research field	☐ No preference
Other comments			
Signature: **Date:**			

UENR MENTOR APPLICATION FORM

Surname/last name	First name
Department	**Date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY) (optional)**

Mobile No.

Email address (compulsory)

Highest Educational level	Awarding Institution	Year awarded

Major academic discipline (check one)

☐ Agricultural technology
☐ Agricultural engineering
☐ Agronomy
☐ Hospitality
☐ Fire and Disaster management
☐ Planning and sustainability
☐ Languages and General Studies
☐ Civil Engineering
☐ Nursing
☐ Mechanical Engineering

☐ Horticulture
☐ Biological Science
☐ Natural resources management
☐ Chemical sciences
☐ Renewable Energy
☐ Environmental engineering
☐ Entrepreneurship and Resource Management
☐ Chemical engineering
☐ Mathematics and statistics
☐ Electrical and electronic engineering
☐ Other (please specify)

Your current role at the University

Current position		Start date: (Month/Year)
Previous position		**(Year) to (year)**

Potential mentors
Please propose the names of two scientists from the University who could possibly serve as a mentor to you.

1………………………………………… 2……………………………………………

Applicants signature………………………….. Date……………………..

Acknowledgements