

# **Establishing a Mentoring Programme**

## **for Newly Recruited Academics**

### **1. Introduction**

Academic mentoring is an essential component in the contemporary life of a Newly Recruited Academic (NRA). Academic mentoring programmes are widely practiced in many recognized universities around the world. In the process of academic mentoring, an experienced senior faculty member guides a junior faculty member by way of providing advice, guidance and support in the development of the junior faculty members' knowledge, skills and competence in the workplace. Academic mentoring is a supportive mechanism that encourages and enables NRAs and junior academics to pursue professional development across the whole spectrum of their work in the university. Mentorship is a collegiate relationship between an experienced academic (mentor) and a novice inexperienced academic (mentee).

The benefits of academic mentoring are not limited to the mentee alone. The mentor and the university/ faculty also benefit from the process. On the one hand, the mentorship programme helps the mentee to understand and integrate into the life of an academic, to learn about ethical academic conduct, and to focus on one's academic and career goals. On the other hand, academic mentoring provides the mentors with a deep sense of satisfaction by being able to support and guide junior colleagues in their development as academics; while the process provides them, in turn, an opportunity to keep abreast with the changing dynamics of the broader academic environment. Therefore, a well-structured academic mentoring programme is of great importance to the faculty and the university as a whole. It contributes to the overall enhancement of staff performance development and talent attraction as well.

At present, although informal mentoring mechanisms exist at the Departmental level, a formalized and well-structured academic mentoring programme is not implemented in the Faculty of Arts. Therefore, it is imperative that a formal academic mentoring programme is introduced to the Faculty of Arts.

### **2. Objectives of the Mentoring Programme**

The academic mentoring programme of the Faculty of Arts plans:

- To help NRAs familiarize themselves with the exciting life of an academic and the broader academic environment surrounding the University;
- To guide NRAs, develop attributes required for the 21<sup>st</sup> century university academic and thereby meet the expectations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century learner;

- To promote the development of effective research skills of NRAs, and to help in developing academic research and publishing profiles of the NRAs;
- To guide NRAs in enhancing their knowledge and skills required for effective teaching;
- To assist/guide NRAs to understand and comply with professional ethics/etiquette;
- To develop awareness of the student-assessment/evaluation system and the examination procedures of the Faculty/University;
- To provide guidance to the NRAs in the development of their career goals and skills;
- To provide opportunities to NRAs to work collaboratively with their peers and seniors, at the Department and the Faculty;
- To provide NRAs with the necessary guidance that will help them develop the productive and right balance between teaching, research and administration.

### **3. Structure of the Mentoring Programme**

This academic mentoring programme will be applicable to NRAs [i.e. newly recruited academics at the level of Lecturer, Lecturer (Probationary) and Assistant/Temporary Lecturer]. The programme is comprised of two tiers of mentoring, namely:

- Faculty-level mentoring
- Departmental-level mentoring

#### **3.1 Faculty-Level Mentoring**

Faculty-level mentoring is to be implemented as a facilitated group mentoring programme. Its overall aim is to provide NRAs with a broad introduction to the life of an academic, who will also be a member of a broader Faculty-community. The following are some of the key features of the Faculty-level mentoring component:

- The Faculty, with the assistance of the Departments, will firstly identify the NRAs at the beginning of each academic year.
- The NRAs are expected to attend a series of sessions conducted by senior academics, on selected themes/topics which are of relevance to all academics at the Faculty (see list below).
- This will be a well-structured and systematic component, aimed at promoting the larger purposes of an academic who works as a member of a Faculty-wide community.
- This component will be initially conducted for a period of six months, even though it is planned to be implemented as a sustained and long-term component of the mentoring programme.
- The mentoring programme offered by the Faculty is a way of providing NRAs with an intellectually stimulating series of talks, discussions and knowledge-sharing sessions,

whereby they will be exposed to interactions with senior academics and colleagues of the Faculty.

- The following is a tentative, non-exhaustive list of themes to be addressed in the proposed sessions:
  - On research, writing and publication avenues;
  - On professional ethics;
  - On the 21<sup>st</sup> century academic and the learner;
  - On assessment and evaluation in learning and examination related matters;
  - On collaboration with peers/collegiality;
  - On self and peer-evaluation;
  - On career goals and expectations;
  - On effective time and work management.
  
- A pool of mentors from the Faculty of Arts will be identified, for each academic year, to assist in delivering sessions on the selected themes. This will be done after finalizing the thematic areas that need to be addressed.
  
- In addition to the sessions conducted under the identified themes, once or twice a month senior academics will be invited for informal discussions on their research work, publications, recent career achievements, etc.
  
- It is suggested that the Faculty appoints a diverse and representative committee, consisting of 7-10 senior staff members, to implement the Faculty-level mentoring component.
  
- NRAs who are in between 1-3 years of service can be considered for the programme. (NRAs who have not yet completed 3 years of service will be considered for the programme).

### **3.2 Departmental-Level Mentoring**

This component is mainly focused on the relevant discipline-oriented mentoring, and is aimed at helping the NRAs familiarize themselves with an academic life which is closer to their respective areas of specialization. This component will also provide the NRAs a deeper understanding of subject specific pathways, including an understanding of any knowledge/research gaps that exist in their respective fields of expertise. The following are some of the key elements of the Department-level mentoring component:

- A mentor/mentors will be appointed for each NRA by the Department. In this regard, the Department will have adequate flexibility in the matter of deciding how mentors are to be assigned, in consultation with the NRA.
- Records of the mentoring sessions are to be kept by the mentees and the mentors.
- Mentees are to maintain a reflective journal/notes.
- Mentees are also to be given a fixed number of hours of free mentoring with other academics in addition to the formally appointed mentor.

### **3.3 Responsibilities of the Mentors**

The following are some of the key responsibilities of the mentors:

- Provide overarching guidance and support to the NRA in the identification of his/her academic objectives, goals and professional development avenues;
- Provide constructive and prompt feedback when such is sought by the NRA;
- Facilitate the development of academic networks which promote further career development;
- Respect the rights, integrity and independence of the NRA, so that the NRA has the autonomy to shape and plan the development of his/her academic career;
- Develop a close, collaborative and ethical relationship with the NRA so that an environment is created whereby the NRA can safely and confidently share/exchange views and opinions with the mentor;
- Discuss about teaching, research/writing and other activities related to the discipline with the NRA, especially when such discussion is requested by the NRA;
- Follow up on the progress of the NRA after mentoring is completed.

### **3.4 Responsibilities of the Mentees**

The following are some of the key responsibilities of the mentees:

- Take the initiative in communicating with the mentors, and maintain regular contact with the mentor;
- Identify a set of career objectives and goals (short/long term), on which guidance and advice can be sought from the mentor;
- Reflect on, and discuss with, the mentor the areas in which guidance and support of the mentor is required for further improvement;
- Actively engage in the mentoring process in order to get the maximum benefit from the mentor-mentee relationship;

- Take the initiative in developing one's own teaching, research and administrative competencies, while making appropriate use of the guidance and advice rendered by the mentor;
- Ensure regular communication with the mentor, while keeping personal records of such meetings;
- Respect the numerous professional commitments and the busy work-schedules of the mentor when seeking prompt feedback.

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