



DEPARTMENT OF  
**ONCOLOGY**



**NUFFIELD**  
**DEPARTMENT OF**  
**SURGICAL SCIENCES**

# RECOGNISE Mentoring Handbook

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## Introduction

This document is intended to assist prospective mentors, mentees and other members of staff, including graduate students, by defining what RECOGNISE (the suRgEry onCOloGy meNtorIng SchEme) is, identifying the benefits for all concerned and outlining some practical guidance regarding the operation of the Scheme.

Some mentoring occurs naturally and informally in the workplace, but it usually needs some coordination to ensure that it happens for all those who want mentoring. RECOGNISE aims to provide that coordination and actively facilitate the building of relationships across NDS and Oncology units.

### What is Mentoring?

You may find it useful to be mentored (or coached) at different stages of your professional life – perhaps when new to the University, in transition between posts, when wanting your career to progress or change direction, for support in balancing work and family life, returning to work after a career break, or for some other reason.

But what is mentoring? Mentoring is a powerful personal development process that can be an effective way of helping staff to progress in their careers and life more generally. It should be viewed as a confidential non-judgmental relationship that can facilitate a wide range of learning and development, rather than a management tool.

Within the mentoring relationship, the mentor acts as a sounding board for the mentee and, although work-related issues may feature in discussions, it is important to remember that the focus is on personal development. Concerns regarding mental health and wellbeing or harassment and bullying should be directed to the appropriate people.

Mentoring in this scheme is a voluntary arrangement through which one person volunteers their time to support a mentee in a confidential, non-judgemental relationship. A mentor may act as a “sounding board” or a “thinking partner” and will offer constructive support to enable the mentee to develop themselves. A mentor will listen to a mentee and encourage them to take responsibility for their own development.

Matches will be made according to the requirements of the mentee and the speciality of the mentor. This may result in a match with a mentor within NDS or the Department of Oncology, or it could result in being matched to an external mentoring scheme that better suits the mentee’s circumstances, e.g. the MSD peer mentoring scheme or the PSS Mentoring scheme. In either case, a meeting will be held between the mentee and the organiser of the scheme to discuss the proposed match and to offer the mentee support and guidance. This will take place before the organiser meets with the proposed mentor to discuss the match.

### Aims and Objectives of the Scheme

RECOGNISE’s overall aim is to assist mentees to achieve personal and professional growth through a mentoring relationship that provides support as he/she progresses and develops within the University.

RECOGNISE aims to:

- Build a framework of support for both mentees and mentors
- Facilitate career and personal development planning via mentoring
- Enhance personal effectiveness and motivation
- Improve communication, interpersonal skills and networking within NDS and Oncology and the wider university
- Give mentees and mentors time for reflection on current practices
- Challenge pre-conceived ideas held by either the mentee or mentor
- Improve the quality and commitment of the community within NDS and Oncology

Who is Eligible?

**All 3<sup>rd</sup> year DPhil students can register to be mentored.**

**To be eligible to register as a mentee**, staff must **either** have 12 months length of service (or more) **or** have 6 months remaining on their contract. **To be eligible to register as a mentor**, staff must have at least twelve months' experience in a higher education institution (or equivalent) to be mentor. This is to ensure mentors have the experience, skills and understanding necessary to help mentees to consider their career goals and development needs within the specific context of the University.

Why Do We Need a Mentoring Scheme?

It is almost certain that mentoring-like relationships already exist within our departments without any formal mentoring scheme. Such relationships are valuable and should continue where it works for both individuals. However, informal mentoring can present problems where, for example, the different parties start with different expectations of the relationship. In addition, informal mentoring puts the onus very much on the individual seeking a mentor to find one. The introduction of an inter-departmental scheme will, it is hoped, expand the opportunity for mentoring to a much larger group of staff and provide mentees access to mentors external to their own department.

RECOGNISE will be self-driven. It will rely on mentees to take responsibility for their own learning and development through a mentoring relationship. For some staff, it may be preferable to participate in another mentoring scheme within the university, such as the MSD peer mentoring scheme or the Oxford Senior Women's Mentoring network. In such cases, we will endeavour to support mentees as they join these schemes. RECOGNISE forms part of our commitment to improving opportunities for all staff by supporting them in realizing their full potential.

Why Have a Mentor?

A mentoring scheme is a well-recognised method of delivering effective support for professional and personal development in a range of large organisations. But why should you seek a mentor? A mentor can:

- Act as an impartial sounding board. They create valuable time and space for a mentee to take a step back and reflect on where they are now, where they might want to be, and how they might get there.

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- Contribute advice, information and viewpoints based on their own knowledge, experience and expertise; such independent and objective contributions can be very valuable
- Facilitate in achieving change and/or specific goals to enhance a mentee's professional and personal life

The combination of these is what can make a mentoring relationship so beneficial and productive.

If you wish to be a mentee please complete the registration form for mentees, available for NDS staff [here](#) and available for Oncology staff [here](#). NDS staff who have any questions about the scheme should email [mentoring@NDS.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@NDS.ox.ac.uk) and Oncology staff should email [mentoring@oncology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@oncology.ox.ac.uk).

## Why Be a Mentor?

Mentoring helps the mentor to develop their own transferrable skills. The mentoring relationship helps the mentor to:

- Develop their own strengths (and those of the mentee)
- Challenge assumptions and clarify misunderstandings (on behalf of both mentor and mentee)
- Work with people from different contexts and backgrounds
- Practise offering positive and constructive feedback
- Generate workable solutions together in a mutually respectful way
- Motivate, advise and support whilst empowering someone to make their own decisions and take responsibility for their own actions and development.

And, of course, there is the satisfaction and reward of helping someone else progress and succeed. Mentors can be anyone from all staff groups and all grades who can share professional and/or personal experiences. All staff, irrespective of job role, with 12 months experience in a higher education institution (or equivalent) who feel they have a contribution to make in helping others develop are encouraged to volunteer as potential mentors.

If you wish to be considered as a potential mentor or wish to discuss the role of mentor further please email [mentoring@NDS.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@NDS.ox.ac.uk) (for NDS staff) or [mentoring@oncology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@oncology.ox.ac.uk) (for Oncology staff) in the first instance. All mentors will be provided with additional information and offered training prior to starting a mentoring partnership.

## The Mentoring Committee

The overall responsibility for RECOGNISE rests with the RECOGNISE Mentoring Committee (RMC). The Committee comprises representatives of NDS and Oncology and has staff from a variety of functions at different career stages. All members of the Committee share a common interest in improving staff development opportunities in NDS and Oncology.

The Committee is responsible for the recruitment and training of mentors; matching mentors and mentees; the effective dissemination of the availability and benefits of the

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Scheme to all staff and monitoring the effectiveness of the Scheme by seeking regular feedback from mentors and mentees.

The current membership (2022) is:

- Emily Hotine – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisor (NDS)
- Kea Hinsley – Training Project Manager (Oncology)
- Gemma Horbatowski – HR Advisor (NDS)
- Elena Mikhaleva – HR Administrator (Oncology)

## Information for Prospective Mentors

### What Can a Mentor Expect?

A mentor will be an experienced member of staff (not necessarily senior) who will take on the role of guiding, advising and facilitating a defined aspect of the professional and/or personal development of a mentee. They will provide support to the mentee to enable them to try out new ideas and, when this may benefit the mentee, will challenge them. A mentor is not expected to take direct action on behalf of a mentee.

The mentoring relationship should provide a non-threatening environment in which the mentee feels able and willing to express their concerns and anxieties as well as discuss their ideas and aspirations. The mentee must feel assured that their confidentiality will be respected and that their discussions will not be reported back to their line manager or any other party without their agreement. For the relationship to be effective, it needs to be built on mutual trust and respect.

### The Role of a Mentor

During a mentoring relationship, a mentor is likely take on a number of different roles involving a range of skills and behaviours. These will vary with the needs of the mentee, the particular situations, and the mentor's areas of expertise. No one role is more important than another.

Sounding board	Someone to test ideas and suggestions
Facilitator	Point to potential opportunities, arrange introductions and access key people
Advisor	Provide objective advice on a range of issues, including career opportunities
Coach	Assist the learner to improve a specific skill
Expert	Be a source of technical/professional knowledge
Source of Organisational Knowledge	Explain university policies, culture, politics, and values
Role Model	Promote and encourage positive behaviours in others
Source of Feedback	Provide objective and constructive feedback on development
Confidant	Listen to fears and concerns
Motivator	Encourage and motivate the mentee to achieve their goals, and boost morale
Challenger	Play devil's advocate, challenge assumptions, encourage different ways of thinking



## The Attributes of a Mentor

A mentor will be an experienced member of staff with a good understanding of working in the area of their expertise.

They will:

- Have volunteered to act as a mentor and be committed to the process
- Be in a position to dedicate sufficient time to making the mentoring relationship a success (usually one to two hours per month, although relationships with infrequent meetings will require less time)
- Be prepared to share experience and pass on skills to others
- Have a genuine interest in developing potential in others for the future
- Have an enthusiastic and positive attitude towards their own work, other people and the University
- Be able to gain the trust of other people

## The Expectations of a Mentor

The mentor will:

- Appreciate the differing experiences and needs of their mentee
- Respect the importance of trust in the mentoring relationship
- Ask open and appropriate questions
- Reflect back feelings and opinions that he/she observes
- Make suggestions without sounding prescriptive

The mentor is not expected to:

- Be an expert on every topic they are asked about
- Manage the mentee's performance/give appraisals
- Support the mentee with their mental health/wellbeing (see [Appendix A](#) for alternative mental health resources)
- Support the mentee through bullying and/or harassment grievances (see [Appendix A](#) for alternative bullying and harassment resources)
- Act as an emotional support/a person to 'vent' to

## The Benefits for a Mentor

While the focus of the mentoring relationship is primarily on the development needs and opportunities of the mentee there are also benefits for the mentor, including:

- Refreshes own view of work
- Encourages self-reflection
- Develops professional relationships
- Enhances peer recognition
- Provides an opportunity to give something back
- Provides closer and greater networks and contacts within the University
- Develops management and leadership skills
- Enhances their CV/Portfolio
- Allows sharing of experience and knowledge with another member of staff
- Provides satisfaction of helping others develop and fulfil their potential

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Mentors are not expected to solve mentees' problems for them but part of the role is to act as a sounding board for discussion of problems identified by the mentee. Through a confidential process of listening and questioning, mentors should help mentees to reflect on their own progress, clarify issues and help them towards resolving their own problems. It is a good idea to keep a record of the meetings, noting what has been discussed and agreed, and the objectives for the next meeting.

In general, it is anticipated that a mentor will have no more than two mentoring relationships active at any one time.

## Information for Prospective Mentees

### What Can a Mentee Expect?

First and foremost, a mentee needs to be clear as to what they would like to achieve from a mentoring relationship and be prepared to take responsibility for making things happen. The success of a mentoring relationship depends very much on the mentee.

A mentor may not be able to help a mentee with *all* their objectives, and in some cases it may be appropriate for a mentee to have a further mentor (with different skills and expertise) following the conclusion of a first mentoring relationship.

### The Role of the Mentee

Mentoring is a two-way process; however, the mentee is expected to drive the relationship forward and be proactive about setting objectives for the relationship.

A mentee is expected to be:

- Willing to enter the relationship with a clear set of objectives
- Committed, for example attending planned sessions and taking actions agreed with their mentor
- Willing to learn and to challenge their views, behaviours, assumptions and ways of working
- Able to ask for and receive feedback
- Willing to discuss issues as openly and honestly as possible
- Professional in their relationship with their mentor, for example respecting agreed ground rules and being punctual

### The Benefits for a Mentee

There are many potential benefits for the mentee to gain from the mentoring relationship, including:

- Improving and building self-awareness and confidence
- Providing the opportunity to learn from a role model
- Offering professional development
- Providing advice and information
- Encouraging reflection
- Providing personal support and career development
- Developing various skills, particularly interpersonal and communication skills
- Strengthening the mentee's sense of belonging within the University and its community
- Promoting career assessment and providing impartial advice
- Allowing them to speak to someone outside their work area
- Offering the opportunity to network with staff and increase their knowledge of the University
- Increasing job satisfaction and motivation
- Providing a wider perspective and insight into the University and its culture
- Allowing sharing of issues in a confidential and impartial environment
- Helping to clarify and set development goals

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- Offering a safe environment to test out ideas and suggestions

## The Practicalities

The scheme will open to applicants on a rolling basis. Individuals who wish to volunteer to be a mentor or who wish to request mentoring are asked to complete the relevant registration form, available [here](#) for NDS staff and [here](#) for Oncology staff. Any individuals who are unclear regarding their suitability for the scheme are encouraged to contact [mentoring@NDS.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@NDS.ox.ac.uk) for NDS staff or [mentoring@oncology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@oncology.ox.ac.uk) for Oncology staff. The RECOGNISE Committee will match applicants with the most appropriate mentor/mentoring scheme on a regular basis.

It is envisaged that there will already be informal mentoring relationships within NDS and Oncology. People in such relationships are encouraged to register with this scheme by completing the online registration forms for mentor and mentee so that their contribution to their department can be formally recognised. If you have any queries about how to register an existing relationship via the registration forms, please contact [mentoring@nds.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@nds.ox.ac.uk) or [mentoring@oncology.ox.ac.uk](mailto:mentoring@oncology.ox.ac.uk).

## The Matching Process

The match is the critical part of the mentoring process. It needs to be right to achieve a productive partnership. The mentee will be matched to the most appropriate mentor/mentoring scheme on the basis on the information provided on their registration form. It is therefore important for the mentee to consider what they are hoping to achieve through joining the mentoring scheme and what kind of relationship will likely serve them best. Skills and experiences offered by prospective mentors will be held centrally and the specific areas in which a mentee is seeking support in will be matched against those recorded for prospective mentors.

The RECOGNISE Committee will identify potential matches for each mentee. They will then hold a brief meeting with the mentee to discuss their proposed matches **before** the proposed mentor is informed. The mentee should identify any of these potential matches with whom they have an existing personal or professional relationship that could compromise the mentor's ability to provide impartial advice. Occasionally, a mentee may wish to request a specific mentor; the RECOGNISE Committee will consider this request but cannot guarantee specific matches.

Matches will be made across the whole range of NDS and Oncology activities. Mentees may not always be matched with a mentor in the same speciality as them if there is another match that will offer better support in their development. The key determinant of matches will be the skills and experiences offered and sought by mentees.

After a first face-to-face meeting, mentors and mentees will be asked to confirm whether they believe the proposed match will lead to a productive mentoring relationship. If either party does not believe this to be the case then the relationship will not continue, in which case a further matching exercise will take place.

## A Mentoring Agreement

It is important that at the beginning of a mentoring relationship, both mentor and mentee agree on what they expect of each other. The best way to ensure this is to have an agreed

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note that covers the ground rules for the relationship. A brief and straightforward template that can be customised is available as [Appendix C](#) of this document and is available to download [here](#). The mentor and mentee should discuss such a note at the first meeting.

Topics to cover could include:

- The mentee's objectives for the mentoring relationship
- Areas for discussion, e.g. work/personal issues
- Confidentiality
- Contact information, e.g. how and when
- Meeting and location of meetings
- The intended length of the mentoring relationship, if known in advance

## Meetings

It is difficult to prescribe the number of meetings that will be needed in order for a mentoring relationship to be effective, as this is driven by individual needs. However, we suggest as a guideline that the mentor and mentee meet 5-6 times over the course of a year for approximately one hour at a time. The frequency and method of contact should be agreed within each individual mentoring relationship.

The mentee should be the driver behind the mentoring relationship; therefore, **it is the mentee's responsibility to make initial contact with their mentor.**

The first meeting should include agreement on future ways of working together (allocation of time, confidentiality, any limits to the role).

Subsequent meetings might include:

- Reflection on induction process
- Reflection on professional progress
- Identification and exploration of problems
- Identification and exploration of development needs
- Identification of information needed and ways of acquiring it
- Action planning
- The review of progress against the objectives agreed in the mentoring agreement
- The provision of feedback
- The discussion of issues and concerns of the mentee

## Ongoing Support

Support will be available to mentors and mentees internally from the RECOGNISE Committee.

Once a mentoring relationship is set up, the Committee will contact the mentor and mentee to check whether the relationship is continuing in order to maintain an up-to-date list of available mentors.

## RECOGNISE Pilot Programme

RECOGNISE will be launched with a 12-month pilot programme from April 2022 – April 2023. During this 12-month period, the scheme will operate as detailed by the handbook,

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with additional surveys and focus groups held periodically to evaluate the operation of the scheme and inform decisions and changes made before the scheme is officially launched.

Mentors will be recruited and trained by NDS and the Department of Oncology in the role of the mentor, while mentees will receive information on the role of the mentee and the limitations of mentoring. Only once mentors and mentees have received this information will they be matched and begin their mentoring relationship. This is to protect the mentor's time by ensuring their skills and expertise are put to best use and to ensure the mentee gains the maximum benefit from the mentoring relationship.

Upon completion of the pilot programme, the RECOGNISE Committee will contact all matches to inform them of the end of the pilot and check whether the relationship will continue. The Committee will then consider the feedback received and upon implementing any necessary changes, will officially launch the scheme.

## At the End of a Mentoring Relationship

The RECOGNISE COMMITTEE should be notified when the mentoring relationship is concluded. Both the mentor and mentee will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire to enable the Department to monitor the Scheme's successes and to facilitate future improvements.

## Further Information

### Within the University

- **[University of Oxford Support for Researchers](#)**  
An array of opportunities and tools available to help you develop your career.
- **[People and Organisational Development](#)**  
POD offers information on mentoring schemes and personal development.
- **[Oxford Senior Women's Mentoring Network](#)**  
The Oxford Senior Women's Mentoring Network (OxSWMN) is a mentoring scheme intended to encourage senior women to explore their leadership potential within academic life, or within an administrative career, for example as leaders of departments and divisions or in university governance.
- **[Pivot](#)**  
Pivot is a mentoring scheme for any member of staff at the University (including College employees) who identifies as Black and Minority Ethnic (BME). Mentees should be Grade 6 or above and identify as BME. They are supported by a more senior mentor (Grade 8 or above) who may or may not be BME.
- **[MSD peer mentoring scheme](#)**  
The Medical Sciences Division runs a peer mentoring scheme for all staff, which involves the formation of mentoring circles comprising 3-4 members of research staff and one more senior member of staff.

### Outside of the University

- **[The European Mentoring and Coaching Council](#)**  
An organisation that promotes international good practice in mentoring and coaching.



## Appendix A – Non-mentoring resources

### NDS

- [Wellbeing Guides/NDS Wellbeing Support Service](#)
- [Bullying and harassment information](#)

### Oncology

- [Wellbeing Guides](#)
- [Bullying and harassment information](#)

## Appendix B – A Template Mentoring Agreement

Name of Mentor:

Name of Mentee:

Purpose of the mentoring relationship and key goals:

Practical arrangements for meetings (location, duration and frequency):

Contact arrangements between meetings (telephone/email and frequency):

Arrangements for monitoring/recording progress and concluding the relationship:

### Confidentiality

We agree to keep the content of these meetings confidential.

Signature of mentee and date:

.....  
*Signature*

.....  
*Date*

Signature of Mentor and date:

.....  
*Signature*

.....  
*Date*