## **Why a Toolkit for Mentors?**

The aim of this toolkit is to:

* Provide potential mentors with information to effectively support and guide you during your mentoring relationship.
* Equip you with the necessary skills and knowledge to foster a productive and supportive mentoring relationship.
* Offer strategies for any mentoring challenges.
* Establish a consistent approach across the university, following best practice.

This Toolkit is organised as following. Section one describes what mentoring is and the role and requirements for mentoring. Section two describes how mentoring works at UCC and Section three sets out the process of a mentoring relationship

This toolkit is for any staff member interested in being, asked to be or has been identified as is a mentor.

## **Section 1: Introduction to Mentoring**

Mentoring is a structured developmental relationship in which an experienced individual (the mentor) provides guidance, support and knowledge to another person (the mentee) to help them grow personally or professionally. Effective mentoring fosters learning, confidence and goal achievement.

Mentoring takes place through a series of time limited, confidential one to one conversations. The relationship generally lasts 12 months with 5-6 confidential meetings taking place during that time.

### Mentoring Principles

* Mentoring in UCC is Mentee led
* Goal oriented (*concrete goals*)
* Operates in an environment of confidentiality, openness, trust & mutual support
* Is respectful of each other’s time, experience & difference
* Takes a collaborative and partnership approach
* Is non judgemental

### The Role of a Mentor

A mentor serves as a trusted advisor, offering insights, guidance, encouragement and constructive feedback and advice. Their role includes

* Supporting and advising on the mentee’s development
* Sharing experiences and knowledge
* Providing constructive feedback
* Encouraging critical thinking and problem solving
* Acting as sounding board, providing encouragement & source of knowledge, stimulating insight
* Creating new perspectives & different ways of thinking
* Supporting confidence building and helping the mentee to identify they may be unaware of
* Supporting & encouraging mentee to take positive action
* Helping mentee to understand how the organisation may work in practice
* Introducing mentee to peers & colleagues as relevant to assist them become familiar with & integrate into the wider University

### Why become a mentor?

By mentoring you may gain a clearer understanding of the challenges facing your own team / peers and see things from a different and broadened perspective. Mentoring provides an opportunity to develop & practice a more personal style of leadership. Witnessing another achieve their goal(s), increase their confidence, become more engaged improves one’s own job satisfaction.

If you demonstrate these characteristics, you are ideally suited to being a mentor. You do not require specific qualifications. We offer an online [Mentoring Briefing](https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/training/programmesandworkshops/mentoringbriefing/) regularly for all (interested) mentees and mentors. Staff Wellbeing & Development meet with staff on a one-to-one basis also to explain the mentoring process.

### What does a Mentor need to be effective?

A mentor’s effectiveness can be enhanced by the following:

* Professional experience: Relevant expertise or insights in the mentees area of development together with a willingness to share this experience
* Leadership and communication skills: Ability to actively listen, communicate effectively, and provide encouragement and constructive feedback
* Mentoring Training: Formal training in mentoring, professional or leadership development can be beneficial
* Emotional Intelligence: Self-awareness, empathy and strong interpersonal skills
* An understanding of available supports and organisational knowledge can also be useful in signposting the mentee to relevant information & resource and guiding the Mentee through the organisation

### What kind of areas or topics are covered in mentoring?

These will be very varied but can include for example:

* Career change situations
* Managing transition to a new role
* Confidence building
* Handling new environments effectively
* Building understanding, judgement and developing problem solving skills
* Building a network

## **Section 2: Mentoring at UCC**

Mentoring is available to any staff member at any time during their career at UCC. Mentoring is a mentee led initiative i.e. the mentee takes responsibility to organise meetings, follow up on actions etc.

Given the nature of the relationship, there should not be a reporting relationship between mentor & mentee. A mentor is not a counsellor or trainer and can signpost the mentee to the appropriate supports available in UCC if needed [(Staff Support Tree](https://www.ucc.ie/en/media/support/hr/staffwelfareanddevelopment/SupportTreeImagePDF.pdf)).

### Who has or can have a mentor in UCC?

Mentoring is available to all staff. Any staff member who would like advice & guidance from someone more experienced to develop a goal(s)/skill(s) through confidential one to one conversations is invited to consider engaging with a mentor. Some staff may be appointed a mentor automatically i.e. newly appointed staff are appointed a mentor by the recruiting selection committee to support the staff member in their new role. Mentoring is also part of the programme for participants of the Aurora Leadership programme.

### Is mentoring mandatory in UCC?

Mentoring is strongly recommended to support the development of staff. However formal mentoring is included for academic appointees as part of the Probationary & Establishment process.

### How is a mentee matched with a mentor in UCC?

The mentee’s needs & goals are considered and then a staff member with experience relating to these is identified. They may or may not work in a similar area.

For newly appointed staff, the selection committee decide on the most appropriate mentor. If any staff member is interested in having a mentor, Staff Wellbeing & Development work with them in clarifying their goals and identifying an appropriate mentor. The development of the [Mentor Panel Directory](https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/mentoring/mentorpaneldirectory/) also provides another source for identifying potential mentors. A staff member can contact a mentor directly from the Directory but is encouraged to advise Staff Wellbeing & Development and attend one of the online [Mentor Information Sessions](https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/training/programmesandworkshops/mentoringbriefing/).

### **How Mentoring Works**

Mentoring is a collaborative and structured process that typically involves the following stages:

### **A.** **Establishing the Relationship**

#### ‘Coffee & Chemistry’

As a mentee led initiative, the onus rests with the mentee to contact you as their mentor and set up their first meeting. Before the first official meeting, the mentee and you as the mentor are encouraged to meet for a ‘Coffee & Chemistry.’ This provides an opportunity to find out a little more about each other.

#### Your First Meeting

At the start of a mentoring partnership, it is important to lead the discussion and to discuss how mentoring will work and what your expectations are of each other.

#### Mentoring Contract Checklist (Verbal or Written)

This checklist will ensure you have agreed on the most important aspects of the mentoring relationship from the beginning.

1. **Expectations** (of each other, of the relationship, of what both parties will learn).
2. **Confidentiality** (should any third parties be informed? If so, what can be discussed with them about the relationship and the discussions?).
3. **Duration of relationship**
4. **Meetings** (frequency, duration, location, in person or online) \*
5. **Broad purpose and goals** (what the Mentee hopes to achieve)
6. **Review and evaluation** (of how mentoring is going and how the mentee is making progress in achieving their goals).
7. **Roles and responsibilities** (preparing for meetings, setting the agenda, ensuring the
8. meetings take place, setting goals).
9. **How feedback will be handled** (trust and openness).

\*Meetings held in person help to build up trust more easily and quickly, however it is appreciated that this is not always feasible where for example staff are working in open plan offices.

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### **B.** **Identifying goals and objectives**

#### Goal Setting

It is particularly important that the mentee is as clear as possible on what they hope to achieve from the mentoring opportunity. Good goal questions that you as the Mentor may ask the mentee include:

1. What do you want to achieve in your mentoring relationship?
2. How would you wish things to be different in 12 months’ time versus now?

As a mentor, you may assist the mentee to develop SMART goals i.e.

* **Specific** – What are you trying to achieve?
* **Measurable** – Have you clear metrics for success so you can track your progress?
* **Achievable** – Is your goal ambitious but also realistic?
* **Relevant** – Is your goal aligned with your own learning or career needs?
* **Timely** – By when will you achieve your goal?

### **C.** **Regular meetings and progress tracking**

At least 5 and 6 meetings over the course of 12 months are required to gain from the mentoring relationship. Some mentors and mentees will choose and agree to meet more often.

As there may be some time between meetings, mentees are strongly encouraged to note down the key points of their discussion and the actions to be completed before the next meeting. This can be shared with their mentor after the meeting and assists the mentee in tracking their progress. This should then be reviewed by mentee and mentor at the beginning of the next meeting.

Mentees can be encouraged to keep a ‘Progress Journal’ themselves during their mentoring relationship. Writing down one’s goals helps to keep track of their intentions and stay accountable to themselves, serving as a reminder of what needs to be done to reach these goals.

All subsequent meetings can begin with a recap of what was covered in the last meeting and the actions the mentee committed to achieving. As the Mentoring relationship moves forward it is important to review progress against the objectives you first set.

As a mentor, your role will be to provide constructive feedback regularly. This will assist the mentee understand their strengths and areas for growth.

### **D.** **Ending the relationship**

As a mentee’s goals should be specific and time limited, staff are encouraged to engage in the mentoring relationship for approximately one year. At the end it is beneficial to discuss what has been achieved and any remaining goals. Mentors will offer feedback and discuss any future support or resources that might be helpful. Acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of the mentoring relationship. Finally, expressing gratitude (both mentee & mentor) for each other’s time and contributions, concluding the relationship on a positive note.

### **Section 3:** **Confidentiality & Support**

Confidentiality is paramount and a key part of the mentoring relationship. Confidentiality can only be broken if there is a legal or well-being reason requiring a disclosure to be made. For advice or support, you may wish to contact Staff Wellbeing in confidence without disclosing the name of the individual you are concerned about.

During the course of the mentoring relationship, you may wish to signpost the mentee to any of the following supports. The mentee’s own line manager may be an initial source of support.

* [Staff Support Tree](https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/wellbeingdevelopment/wellbeing/supportinguccstaff/)
* Staff Wellbeing Advisor
* [Employee Assistance Programme](https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/eap/)
* [Relevant HR Business Manager](https://www.ucc.ie/en/hr/people/hr-business/)

### What if the mentoring relationship does not work out?

All mentoring relationships take time to build up trust and a connection. If, however after discussing with your mentee, that you both feel for example it is not a good match or personality issues are too great, no blame is attributed, and both agree to conclude the mentoring relationship. If this should happen, newly appointed staff should discuss identifying a different mentor with their manager. For all other staff, please contact Staff Wellbeing & Development who will work with you to identify another suitable mentor.

## Summary

* Mentoring in UCC is mentee led i.e. the onus rests with the mentee to progress
* The relationship lasts approximately 12 months with on average 5 – 6 meetings
* The match will depend on the goals and needs of the mentee and the experience of the mentor
* Any staff member can be a mentor to another in UCC
* Mentoring information sessions are provided regularly to mentees and mentors to ensure both parties clear on their roles and responsibilities
* A directory of mentors is currently being developed composed of interested women mentors. This will be developed overtime to include anyone interested in mentoring
* Staff Wellbeing & Development oversee UCC’s mentoring programmes and very happy to meet with anyone interested in finding out more.