

# MENTORING FOR RESEARCHERS

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**Friday, 28 February 2025**

A TRADITION OF  
INDEPENDENT  
THINKING



**UCC**

University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

# Let's get the most out of this morning



**Email:** Switch it off & be present



**Microphone:** When not speaking, please keep it on mute



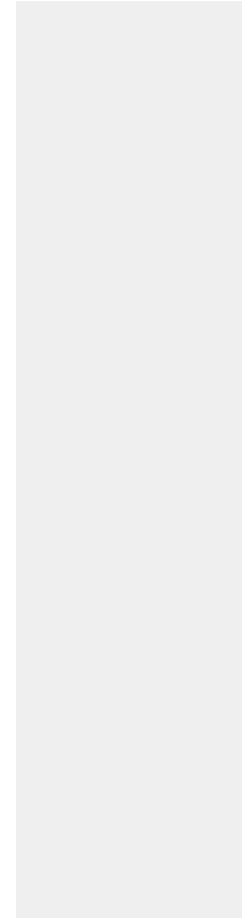
**Camera:** If possible, do have your camera on



**Participate:** Just use the 'raise hand' function if you have a question or wish to comment & click to take it down afterwards. The more interactive, the better!



**Confidentiality:** Everything we discuss is confidential



# Briefing Objectives

## Part 1

- Clarify what mentoring is
- Examine purpose & benefits of mentoring
- Review roles of mentee & mentor
- Confidentiality

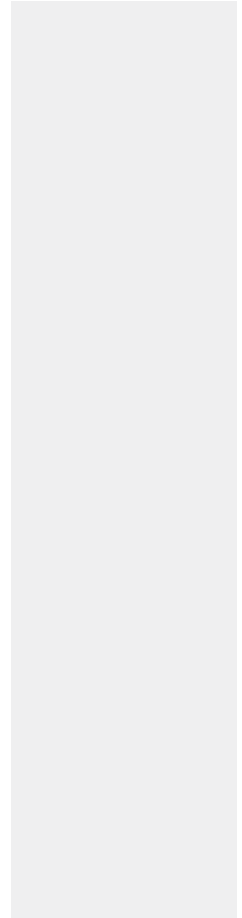


## Part 2

- Examine how working with a mentor can support you to navigate and advance your research career
- Consider your personal objectives for mentoring, and the type of mentor you want to work with
- Describe the characteristics of an effective mentor, and good mentoring practice

# What does mentoring mean to you?

- Structured process where experienced individual (mentor) helps another person (mentee) to develop his/her **goals** & skills through time limited, confidential one to one conversations
- Supportive relationship - role of the mentor to help, advise & provide information & guidance to mentee.
- May work in similar areas or share similar experiences
- Relationship based upon mutual trust & respect
- No line management relationship between mentee & mentor
- Match based on mentee needs / goals, experience of mentee & mentor personal styles



# Mentoring vs. Training & Coaching

## Training

- Directive - focussed on meeting set learning outcomes and skills gaps

## Mentoring

- Directive guidance & advice based on experience

## Coaching

- Non-directive - encourages autonomy
- Forward looking

# Principles

- Mentee led
- Goal oriented (*concrete goals*)
- One can avail of mentoring at any stage in your UCC career
- Environment of openness, trust & mutual support
- Both parties respectful of each other's time, experience & difference
- Partnership approach
- No hidden agendas & non judgemental
- Confidential process

# Your Goals?

- What is my current situation?
- Why I choose to participate?
- What do I want to achieve in my mentoring relationship?
- On completion what would success look like?

**Source:** IMI /30% Club Network Mentor Programme

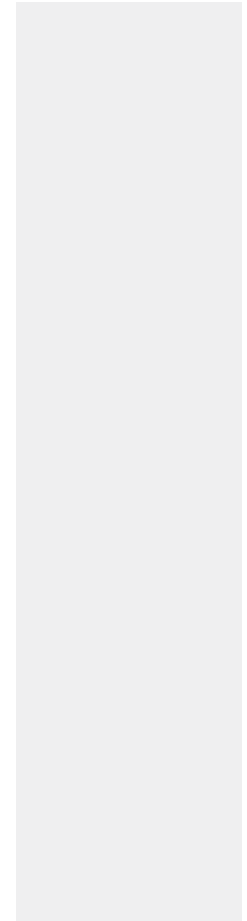
# 'Expectations'

Mentors:

'Expectations of your mentee'

Mentees:

'Expectations of your mentor'



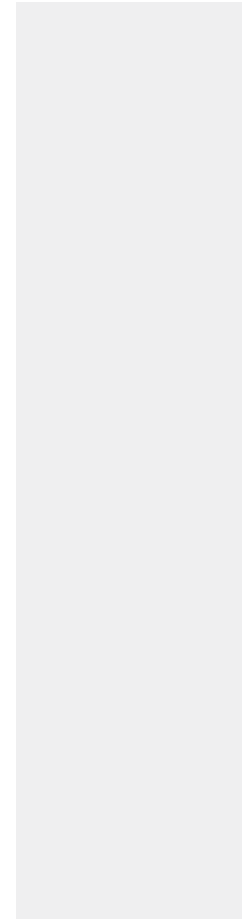


# Role of Mentee

- Actively engage with mentoring process & appointed mentor
- Drive the process - take responsibility for managing mentoring relationship including meeting commitments, arranging meetings etc.
- Set clear objectives and goals & realistic expectations around delivering on development needs
- Communicate directly, honestly & openly, be curious, pose questions, share ideas
- Be willing to listen & take on board constructive feedback & advice
- Retain responsibility for own learning

# Role of Mentor

- Provide guidance & support in addressing identified development needs
- Act as sounding board, providing encouragement & source of knowledge, stimulating insight
- Create new perspectives & different ways of thinking
- A figure with whom mentees can discuss their aspirations and concerns; who will listen; provide constructive feedback, challenge as appropriate
- See positives in mentee that they may be unaware of
- Support & encourage mentee to take positive action
- Help mentee to understand how things operate in UCC including the unspoken norms & values
- Introduce mentee to peers & colleagues as relevant to assist them become familiar with & integrate into the wider University
- Mentor has no responsibility for actions & decisions of mentee



# Some Practicalities

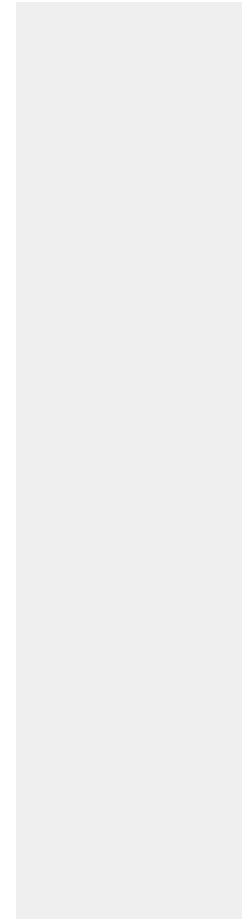
- Partnership generally lasts one year
- Can be up to 6 times annually but up to individual circumstances
- Duration of each meeting – decided between pairs, on average 60-90 minutes
- Meetings can occur where it suits both people



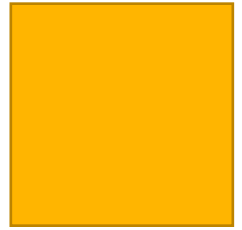
# 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting - Some suggestions

'Coffee & Chemistry' & then.....

- Getting to know each other
- Discuss & clarify expectations & goals
- Boundaries – what is in & out
- Confidentiality
- In between contact?
- Post meeting follow up?
- **Mentee led process**



# Confidentiality



What does confidentiality mean you and your mentor/mentee?

In what circumstances would confidentiality need to be broke and how would this happen?



# Mentoring and Research

Mentoring conversations are not limited to a mentoring programme and can take place with a range of supporting players, and in a range of different ways

Everybody needs a Mentor...but it's horses for courses (= what is suitable for one person or situation might be unsuitable for another)

# Mentoring and Research

## Informal mentoring

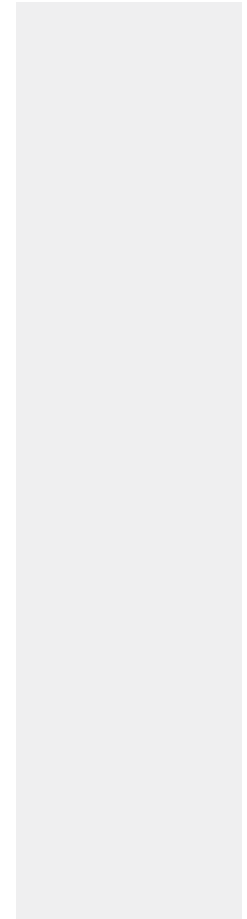
### **PI or Supervisor (back in a minute)**

### **Peer networks and communities**

- Insights into research careers
- Updates on discipline developments in institutions relevant to your research area
- Support, critical feedback
- Also available through professional bodies and societies

### **“Institutional” mentor**

- Norms or working cultures within your department/school/college/university
- Awareness of key contacts (i.e. HR, Finance, Research Office)
- Usually pairing managed by institution
- Confidential space if outside of own department



# Mentoring and Research

## Informal mentoring

### Research Career Development Professionals (i.e. HR Research, Careers Services)

- Support in career and skill development
- Directions to relevant training (including FORMAL mentoring programmes)
- Knowledge of your rights, roles and responsibilities as a researcher (employment/contract side)

### Research Officers

- Guidance and feedback on funding strategies
- Knowledge of your rights, roles and responsibilities as a researcher (research side)
- Fit/eligibility for funding calls



# Mentoring and Research

## Informal mentoring

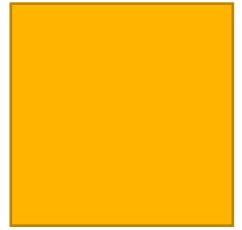
### Sponsors

- Specific role in career development → career advocate acting on your behalf
- Use their reputation to help you
- Give you access to opportunities and resources



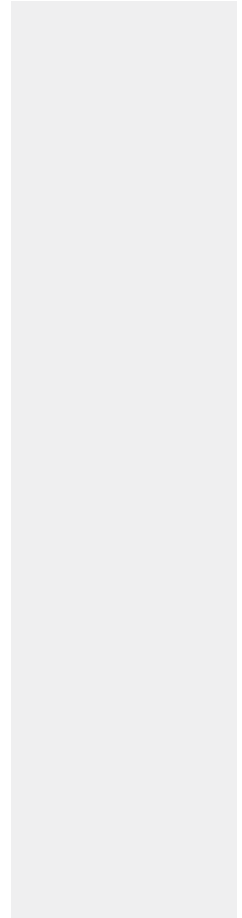
# Mentoring and Research

## Informal mentoring



### Sponsors (examples)

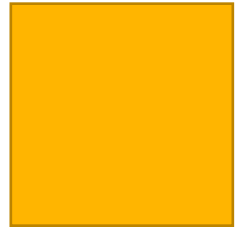
- Link to research fellowships (i.e. John Smith Foundation, charitable organisations)
- Talent Development Programmes
- Prestigious PI in your field



# Mentoring and Research Career Gains

Increased confidence and self-awareness  
Knowledge of role responsibilities and future  
career options  
Setting goals  
Contacts with networks  
Organisational tools and techniques  
Publication plans  
Work/life balance strategies  
Improved workplace relationships

# Mentoring and Supervision



The Supervisor/PI as an informal mentor

## **Pros:**

Professional advice

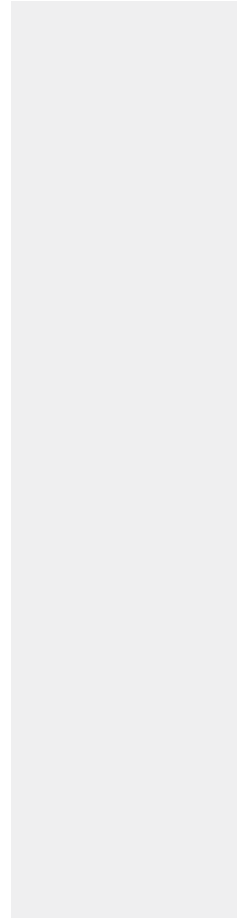
Access to career opportunities (i.e. funding)

Advice on skill and idea development

## **Cons:**

Hierarchical relationship (i.e. line manager)

Stakeholder in your research progress and success  
= guidance influenced by their interest



# Mentoring and Supervision

Supervising and mentoring are two different practices.

## **Supervision (or line management)**

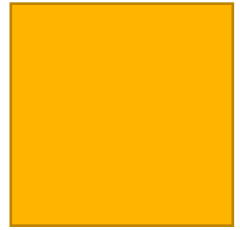
- It is a legal requirement
- It involves directing actions and overseeing tasks
- Setting KPIs, assessing, evaluating
- Goal: accomplish organizational or educational objectives
- Outcomes are required, not necessarily desired

## **Mentoring**

- It is a voluntary, mentee-led initiative
- No assessment or evaluation, only constructive feedback
- Goal: discuss objectives set by the mentee
- Outcomes are desired and willingly pursued, not required

# Mentoring and Supervision

## Vitae Researcher Development Framework



Sub-domains  
and descriptors

Phase 1

### D1 Working with others

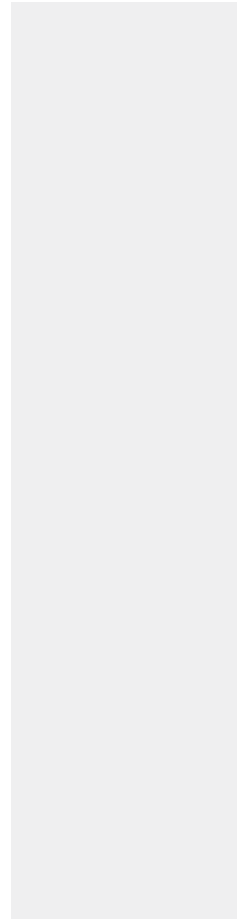
#### 4. Supervision

Engages in peer support and evaluation, and undergraduate support and assessment.

#### 5. Mentoring

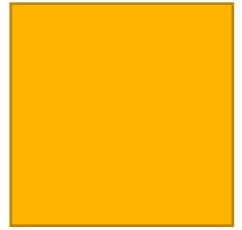
Effectively supports the learning of others when involved in teaching, mentoring, demonstrating or other research activities. (E5)\*

Recognises the importance of mentorship and receiving mentoring.



# Mentoring and Supervision

## Vitae Researcher Development Framework



Sub-domains  
and descriptors Phase 2

### D1 Working with others

#### 4. Supervision

Provides support and advice to peers and less experienced researchers.

Takes on co-supervision role.

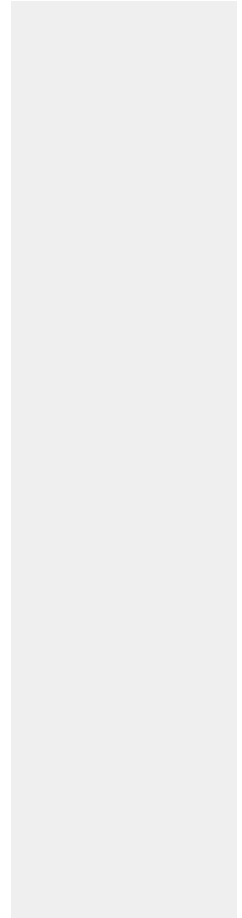
Welcomes feedback on own supervisory skills.

#### 5. Mentoring

Develops skills as a mentor and uses own mentorship effectively.

Encourages peers and less experienced researchers to present at conferences, write and publish joint or individual papers.

Acts as a mentor to students.



# Mentoring and Supervision

## Vitae Researcher Development Framework

Sub-domains  
and descriptors

Phase 3, 4 and 5

### D1 Working with others

Encourages the development of autonomy in others.

**4. Supervision** Takes on lead supervisor role. Supports the development of supervision skills in others.

Keeps up to date with supervision policy and procedure.

Actively seeks feedback on own supervisory skills and techniques; provides feedback for less experienced colleagues.

**5. Mentoring**

Acts as mentor to less experienced colleagues.

Helps mentees and other people to see opportunities and take up new challenges.

Identifies potential in others; empowers people.

Sets challenges but builds and develops confidence; manages the over-confident.

Is a role model. Shares networks; creates opportunities for others.

Shapes the mentoring strategy of own institution.

Involves people in decision making and leadership roles, promoting their autonomy.

Nurtures talent; develops skilled researchers.



# Mentoring – EU Policy

## Research Comp



### 5. Build mentor-mentee relationships

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Mentor individuals by providing emotional support, sharing experiences and giving advice to the individual to help them in their personal development, as well as adapting the support and guidance to the specific needs of the individual and heeding their requests and expectations. Vice versa, as a mentee, seek support and advice provided by the mentor.

- Supports others through teaching and advisory activities.
- Acknowledges the importance of receiving mentoring, and actively seeks support and advice.
- Encourages less experienced colleagues to seek guidance and advice.
- Acts as a mentor to less experienced colleagues.
- Develops confidence and manages over-confidence in mentees.
- Engages with existing national and international mentorship programmes.
- Influences policies on mentor-mentee relationships.
- Nurtures talents, identifies hidden potential in mentees, and contributes to the development of outstanding and resilient researchers.

# Over to you....

1. Are you interested in having a **mentor**?
  - What goals/objectives would you like a mentor to offer support & guidance on?
  - Have you a mentor in mind?
2. Interested in being a **mentor** to a researcher?
  - Brief outline of your experience & areas you could assist with.

Contact [marykate.oregan@ucc.ie](mailto:marykate.oregan@ucc.ie) or [maryniamh.horgan@ucc.ie](mailto:maryniamh.horgan@ucc.ie)  
to progress or discuss further.

# Questions and Answers



# SUPPORTING UCC STAFF

## RESOURCE TREE SHOWING STAFF RESOURCES

The "Acorn to Mighty Oak" has come to symbolise students' academic and professional development journey throughout their time at UCC. We believe this is also true for our staff. In alignment with this rich metaphor, the support services available to our staff are presented in the form of a **Resource Tree**. This tree depicts the support services and resources available to staff and provides links to further information about each service.

