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A hand wearing a white latex glove is holding a clear petri dish. Inside the dish, several circular bacterial colonies are visible, appearing as white, fuzzy spots with dark centers. The background is dark, and the lighting is focused on the petri dish. The overall image has a scientific and laboratory feel.

# TU DUBLIN MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR RESEARCHERS

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# 1. Guidelines

Each researcher is encouraged to join the TU Dublin Mentoring Programme which includes a specific session for researchers.

Mentoring is an informal learning process in which the mentor, a more skilled or experienced person, acts as a role model to the mentee. Mentoring is a goal-oriented partnership that aims to enhance and nurture professional and personal development. Through reflection on the part of the mentee and guidance and support from the mentor, there is a mutually beneficial learning exchange based on knowledge gained through experience.

Confidentiality is essential and a key part of the Mentoring Programme. There must be a high degree of trust and confidentiality which should be agreed between the mentor and mentee at their first mentoring meeting through the Mentoring Agreement<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. The role of the mentor

The mentor gives the mentee a broader institutional/sectoral focus which supports the mentee's personal and professional development. The mentor offers advice and provides the mentee with an open and confidential forum where they can discuss their strengths, weaknesses, concerns and ideas. The mentor will not however manage or be responsible for the mentee or their performance. It may arise during the mentoring partnership that a mentee requests advice or guidance that is outside the boundaries of the mentoring partnership. In such cases, the mentor should refer the mentee to the appropriate University's policy or department for guidance.

Mentoring benefits mentors in many ways:

- It improves the mentor's leadership and coaching skills.
- It provides an opportunity for self-reflection, and personal satisfaction particularly from seeing junior staff progress.
- It provides great visibility for the recognised involvement in a programme of strategic importance to the University and a sense of purpose for sharing the knowledge acquired so far and giving back to the University and society.
- It expands the mentor's horizon by providing potential for networking and new connections for future research collaborations.

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<sup>1</sup> A Mentoring Agreement Template is available at <https://www.tudublin.ie/research/support-for-researchers/researcher-career-development/workshops-and-supports/mentoring/>

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- It can strengthen a grant application as funding bodies increasingly value an active mentoring programme and often encourage senior staff to be mentors.
  - It is a great opportunity for Reverse Mentoring whereby the mentor will acquire new knowledge and expertise thanks to the mentee's own strengths.

### 3. The role of the mentee

The mentee should be committed to the mentoring process and take responsibility for compiling the meeting agenda and contacting the mentor to schedule mentoring meetings. The mentee should trust the mentor and be open to having their ideas, concerns, issues challenged. The mentee will not be told what to do or given solutions to problems, instead, they will be given advice and guided by their mentor in making a decision or solving an issue.

The benefits of a mentoring programme for the mentee are numerous:

- Gain practical advice, encouragement and support for their personal and professional development.
- Expand the mentee's network and connections.
- Provide intellectual stimulation and direction.
- Develop the mentee's communication, negotiation and influencing skills.
- Provide specialist knowledge in the mentee's field of research.
- Identify SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) goals and establish a sense of direction for their career development.

### 4. Matching mentor and mentee

Research mentees and mentors are normally matched by the Researcher Career Development Manager on the basis of the learning needs identified by the mentee through the learning needs exercise and indicated in their Mentee Matching Form<sup>2</sup> and the competencies and strengths indicated by the mentor in their Mentor Matching Form<sup>3</sup>. A good starting point for the first mentoring meeting is to discuss the mentees learning goals and expectations from the mentoring programme. A sample First Meeting agenda is provided as a guide below:

#### First Meeting Sample Agenda

- The mentee will describe their
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<sup>2</sup> Available online at <https://forms.office.com/e/dtSrkybkmp>

<sup>3</sup> Available online at <https://forms.office.com/e/BPJyrrFvXV>

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- personal and professional learning needs
  - goals for the mentoring programme / learning outcomes
  
  - The mentor and Mentee will discuss and sign the Mentor Agreement which should include
    - expectations
    - confidentiality
    - location of meetings
  
  - Review the effectiveness of the meeting and recap the mentee's actions and decisions.
  - Agree next meeting date.

## 5. Duration and Evaluation

Both mentor and mentee should be patient, it takes times for a mentoring partnership to become effective.

Normally, the mentoring partnership will proceed as follows:

- Mentor and Mentee will meet once a month for approximately one hour for 12 months.
- Ideally the first meeting should take place two to four weeks after the mentor-mentee training is complete.
- The mentoring agreement and boundaries should be discussed at this meeting.
- Meeting two should take place no later than three-four weeks after the mentoring agreement has been decided.
- Subsequent meetings are then scheduled at monthly intervals.

All line Managers should be advised by the Mentee that they wish to engage in the TU Dublin Mentoring Programme to agree time to attend mentoring meetings.

The Researcher Career Development Manager will periodically check in with both mentors and mentees to ensure that the partnership is going well for them and will invite them to complete a survey questionnaire at the end of the programme to evaluate the mentoring process and the training and support available through People Development. At any stage during the programme, both mentor and mentee can contact the Researcher Career Development Manager to seek advice or guidance.