

# School of Chemistry Mentoring Policy

## 1. Introduction

This document provides guidelines for mentoring new faculty and early stage researchers. The objective is to help new faculty members and researchers plan their careers with the advice of their more experienced colleagues. Whilst designated mentors will be made available to assist, in all instances the initiative resides with the mentee. The following ground rules are suggested:

### Ground rules for the Mentor-Mentee Relationship:

- The mentee is expected to contact the mentor to set up the first meeting, at which both parties should reach a clear understanding of what to expect from the other. They should agree on the frequency, duration, and place of meetings.
- Mentees should be encouraged to formulate their career goals clearly, define any problems they perceive and bring specific problems to meetings for discussion.
- Mentors cannot guarantee outcomes; they can offer support, encouragement and useful information.
- Mentees are free to choose whether to act on this advice or not.
- In the case of new faculty, mentors should give advice freely without expectation of reward or collaborations

Connecting mentors and mentees requires commitment on both sides. In the case of new faculty, the assignment of a mentor may be by the HoS or by asking senior faculty to volunteer based on research interest and input from HoD. In either case there are clear responsibilities for each of the individuals involved.

In the case of early-stage researchers the mentor is typically the PI of the grant that funds the postdoctoral researcher, i.e. their supervisor. However, in many instances, it is desirable for the mentee to build a network of advisors beyond their immediate supervisor (see below).

## 2. New Faculty Mentorship

### The Responsibility of the Head of School

When a junior level academic appointment is made, the HoS will assign a mentor or request that the HoD assist in selecting a mentor. The HoS may also consult with the new faculty member. The identity of the mentor should, if possible, be indicated in the offer letter from HR. The HoS is responsible for advising new faculty on matters pertaining to academic reviews, and advancement.

### The Responsibility of the New Faculty Mentor

The mentor should contact and introduce themselves to the new faculty member in advance of his/her arrival. Commit to meet with mentee on a regular and agreed basis, particularly during the first two years. The mentor will provide informal advice to the new faculty member on aspects of teaching, research and committee work or to direct the new faculty member to other appropriate individuals (see detailed discussion Section 3). The mentor

should treat all dealings and discussions in confidence and there will be no evaluation or assessment of the new faculty member on the part of mentor.

### **The Responsibility of the New Faculty Member**

The new faculty member should keep his/her mentor informed of any problems or concerns as they arise. When input is desired, the new faculty member should leave sufficient time (particularly in the case of grant proposal and paper submission processes) to allow his/her mentor the opportunity to review and critique drafts.

## **3. Building the Mentor-Mentee Relationship**

A successful relationship is dependent on sharing knowledge and experience in a timely manner. It requires commitment on the part of the mentor and mentee. This may take several forms. Below, is a list of activities and discussion topics that can help promote a successful mentor-mentee relationship.

### **Tips for New Faculty Mentors:**

- Exchange CVs with your mentee to stimulate discussion about career paths and possibilities.
- Ask about, and encourage, discussion on accomplishments. Provide constructive criticism and impromptu feedback.
- Use your knowledge and experience to help the junior faculty member identify and build on his/her own strengths.
- Commit to and comply with a regular meeting schedule
- Discuss annual performance reviews with the junior faculty member to include: how to prepare, what to expect, how to deal with different outcomes. Preview any critical documents before they are submitted to the HoS.
- Aid the junior faculty member in exploring the institutional and school culture, i.e. what is valued? What is rewarded? What is required for promotion?
- Share knowledge of important university and professional events that should be attended by the junior faculty member.

### **Tips for New Faculty Mentees:**

- Show initiative in career planning: write a personal statement about your educational philosophy (to be amended as needed). This will be necessary as part of any future promotion application.
- Exchange your CV with your mentor for discussion.
- Communicate early and often about research proposals and grant applications
- Realize that your success is important not just to you, but also to your school and the university. Consider that "going it alone" doesn't work that well for anyone.
- Make your scheduled meetings with your mentor a priority, and take advantage of e-mail and the telephone to keep in touch informally.
- Be willing to ask for help.
- Begin assembling your own "advisory team" of supporters and advisors in the university community.

- Make and maintain contacts with other junior faculty, within your school as well as in other schools.
- Become familiar with the resources available to support and strengthen your teaching and research.
- Assemble a library of information about your institution and school: the latest strategic plan for your school or institution can be a helpful guide.
- Set a meeting with your HoS to discuss expectations for tenure and promotion, if appropriate.

## **Relevant FAQs (SUGGEST A SEPARATE LINK TO THIS SECTION)**

### **Topics for Discussion: New Faculty Mentors-Mentees:**

- How is the school organized? (committee structure, etc.). How are decisions made? What are the opportunities for junior faculty involvement?
- Are support staff available to junior faculty? What can be expected of support staff? What supplies and expenses are covered by the school? Are there other resources available to cover expenses related to teaching and research?
- What conferences should the junior faculty attend? How much travel is allowed/expected/supported? How do you choose between large conferences and smaller events? What can you do at professional gatherings to gain the type of exposure that can lead to good contacts, and potential names of reviewers for promotion?
- Authorship etiquette: On collaborative efforts, how are the authors listed? Where do postgraduate students' names go? How important is first authorship? How is alphabetical listing of authors viewed?
- Where should you publish? What should you publish? How much/how often? What are your school's expectations regarding publication before tenure and promotion? How do chapters in edited collections/conference proceedings compare? Where should your publishing energy go: is a single-author book always preferable to an edited collection? When is it time to worry if you haven't published?
- Is it worthwhile to send published reports to colleagues here, and elsewhere? What's the line between sharing news of your accomplishments and appearing self-congratulatory?
- Should you give presentations within your department? How often? How are colloquia in your department organized? What are the opportunities for your postgraduate students to present their work?
- Should you give presentations about your work at other universities /public settings? How often? How important is this? If it is important, how do you get invited to give these talks?
- Is collaborative work encouraged or discouraged in your department/school/fields? With other members of your department? With international colleagues? With colleagues who are senior/more established? How important is it to have some (or all) single-author papers to your credit or papers with multiple authors in which you are first author or senior author?

### **Discussions related to Teaching:**

- Will you be expected to assemble a teaching portfolio for your review? What goes into such a portfolio? What form should it take?
- What are you expected to teach? Postgraduate, undergraduate, seminar, lecture, practical, recitation, special topic, service course? Are some types of teaching more valued? How much flexibility is there in teaching schedules? Who controls the schedule?
- Which are the "good" subjects to teach? Is it good to teach the same course semester after semester, stay within a single area? Or should you "teach around"?
- Is it good to develop new courses? Specialized courses in your research area?
- How can you use a special topics course to get a new research project off the ground?
- How much time should you spend on course preparation? Where's the line between sufficient preparation and over-preparation?
- Are there school standards for grading? What degree of freedom do you have in determining course content?
- How are you evaluated on teaching? What importance is placed on peer observation of your teaching? On student evaluations? If senior faculty do observe your classes, who asks them to come? To whom do they report, and in what way? What resources are there for improving your teaching?
- If a classroom problem arises that you aren't sure how to handle, what are your options for seeking advice, help?
- What documentation related to teaching should you keep? Syllabi? Exams? Abstracts?

### **Discussions related to Student Supervision:**

- How important is your work with postgraduate students? How many should you expect to supervise? How many is too many? How much advising should you expect to do? How do you set limits on the amount of time/effort you invest in graduate students?
- How do you identify "good" graduate students? What qualities should you look for? How aggressive should you be in recruiting them to work with you? What should you expect from your graduate students? How do you identify a problem graduate student?
- How important is it to the school that you are a Ph.D. student advisor? On a Ph.D. student committee? Mentor for a senior sophister project?
- What are the qualifications/restrictions to becoming a Ph.D. advisor in the Graduate School?
- What should you keep in files on your students? Remember that you have to write reviews and recommendations for them.
- Should you hire postdoctoral researchers? What are the advantages/disadvantages?
- How are the pay scales set for the postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers set across Schools? Should you be involved in writing postdoctoral training grants for EU networks etc?

### **Discussions related to Service to School and University:**

- How much committee work should you expect to perform within your School? University? What committees should you push to serve on? Are there any you should avoid early on? How much time should you expect to devote to committees and other forms of service as a junior faculty member?
- How important is professional service outside of the university? How much paper and proposal reviewing is reasonable? Journal assistant editorships?
- How do you weigh the prestige of organizing a national event in your field versus the time commitment?

#### **Discussions related to Review Process:**

- How long is your appointment? When will you come up for review? What sort of reviews? What is the process? (What do you submit for review? When? How are the reviewers selected? Do you have a role in that process?)
- If you are responsible for submitting your own list of potential outside reviewers, how do you go about assembling such a list? What kind of reviewers should you try for? Are international and domestic reviewers regarded equally? How much prior contact with a potential reviewer makes them unsuitable for your list? (Is having been on a panel together acceptable, but not a professional friendship?)
- What information is important in your CV? Is there any activity too trivial to include?
- Should you send copies of congratulatory letters to your HoS, or simply retain them for your dossier? Is there a downside to self-promotion?
- How can you get feedback on how you're doing at any point in your early career?

#### **Discussions related to Personal Issues:**

- What policies on family and personal leave? How do you go about asking for such leave? Do you begin at the school level? Is there an appeals process if your request is turned down?
- What programmes/assistance does the university provide for childcare?
- How visible must one be in the department? Is it expected that you'll show your face every day? Is it acceptable to work at home?
- What problems does the university's Employee Assistance Programme deal with?
- What are the university's sexual harassment policies?
- If you're involved in a controversy or dispute, where do you go for help?

## **4. Mentoring early stage researchers**

Early stage postdoctoral researcher appointments are short-term by design. These appointments are meant to be periods of enrichment that allow young professionals the opportunity to build their skills and work towards achieving long-term career goals. Since the postdoctoral scientists make major contributions to the bulk of the Schools output, it is beneficial to all that their tenure is as productive and rewarding as possible. In turn, the School's role is to facilitate Postdoctoral Research Fellows so that they are successful in the next phase of their careers.

The chief objective of the programme is to ensure that all research staff have access to broad and sound advice about their career and personal development. The mentor is typically the PI of the grant that funds the postdoctoral researcher, i.e. their supervisor. However, in many instances, it is desirable for the mentee to build a network of advisors beyond the supervisor.

### **Mentoring Activities:**

Since the objective of the programme is to help to secure long-term career goals mentoring activities must focus on developing skills (research and communication), networking and raising profile of the postdoc within the peer community. The following identifies areas of professional and career development that may be targeted.

#### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – within a Research Group**

- Help your postdocs with core skill development – make them better, more rounded researchers.
- Offer training and hands-on experience in grant writing. Allow your postdoctoral research staff to participate in the crafting and reviewing of proposals. Encourage them to write short proposals to help secure their own funding.
- Provide opportunities for your postdocs to mentor students in the research group, which can provide them with useful supervisory and teaching experience. Couple this with guidance on effective mentoring and management skills.
- Provide guidance and training in successful presentation skills through presentations at group meetings, journal clubs, and/or colloquia.

#### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT – within Research Group**

- Provide input and feedback on your postdocs' job-search preparation, such as curriculum vitae (CV) development, drafting a research statement and teaching philosophy, practicing presentations, or rehearsing interviews.

#### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – School/University Level**

- Help integrate your postdocs into your local institutional community. For example, introduce them to School colleagues; make sure they are included on e-mail lists for

announcements, seminars and events; and, where appropriate, encourage their invitation to meetings with visitors and speakers.

- Help identify opportunities for postdocs to acquire some teaching experience, such as guest lecturing, graduate student seminars, and in undergraduate labs.
- Help identify and encourage participation in faculty development programmes that are open to postdocs, such as workshops on grant writing, first-time investigator procedures, or teaching techniques. Whenever postdocs are not invited, request if these programmes can be expanded for postdocs in the future.

### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT – School/University Level**

- Identify colleagues at the institution that have complementary research interests and could provide additional mentoring or guidance for your postdocs. Where possible, include their names and expertise.
- Find out if your institution's career centre offers career counselling or workshops that are open to postdocs. If so, promote your postdocs' participation in these activities.

### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT – Beyond University**

- Find ways to expose your postdocs to your professional networks, such as introducing them to your collaborators and involving them in community planning or working groups.
- Provide opportunities for your postdocs to expand their technical skill sets and broaden their networks by sending them to other facilities or labs to learn new techniques.
- Encourage your postdocs to participate in professional development programmes sponsored by your professional societies, such as grant-writing workshops.
- Recommend your postdocs as speakers or session chairs at regional, national and international conferences.
- Recommend your postdocs as manuscript reviewers to the journal editors with which you work.
- Nominate them for young researcher awards as appropriate

### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT – Beyond University**

- Encourage your postdocs to participate in career development programmes sponsored by your professional societies, such as resumé writing workshops etc.

## 5. Building the Mentor-Early Stage Researcher Relationship

A successful relationship is dependent on sharing knowledge and experience in a timely manner. It requires commitment and good communication on the part of the mentor and mentee. Below, is a list of responsibilities, activities and FAQs that will help promote a successful mentor-mentee relationship.

### Tips for Early Stage Researcher Mentor:

- Provide constructive feedback to the mentee
- Be honest, open and conscientious
- Be positive, but realistic
- Encourage the mentee to drive his/her own success
- Assist mentees with finding the right resources to help them attain their goals

### Tips for Early Stage Researcher Mentee:

- Communicate your goals for the mentoring relationship
- Be proactive in initiating mentoring interactions
- Be flexible and considerate of your mentor's time and commitments
- Be open to feedback and criticism
- Take responsibility for achieving your goals

### Topic for discussion:

- Ask your mentee how he/she is doing—in both life and work.
- Ask your mentee what he/she hopes to gain from the mentoring relationship. This will help guide your conversations and make them more productive.
- Tell your mentee your story—how did you get to where you are today? What challenges did you face and continue to face in your career?
- Offer a constructive critique of your mentee's writing or presentation skills. Be honest if your time is limited.
- Offer to introduce your mentee to colleagues in your field.
- Point out articles and talks that may be of interest to your mentee.
- Seek the guidance of HR if you are uncomfortable with a situation or conversation

## Relevant FAQs (SUGGEST A SEPARATE LINK TO THIS SECTION)

### Some things the Mentee should ask of themselves:

- What do I hope to obtain from this mentoring relationship?
- What can I and my mentor do to help meet expectations?
- What are my career goals? In what environment do I feel most comfortable working?
- What skills do I already possess that will be useful in meeting my career goals?
- In what areas do I need to improve?

### Some things you may want to ask of your Mentor:

- What is your story - the career path your mentor took to become a senior faculty member.
- What other affiliations does your mentor have? Have they served on committees in professional societies? Are they involved in organising conferences?



- What advice does your mentor have as you prepare for an interview or a major presentation at a conference? Can he/she provide feedback on your presentation?
- What advice does your mentor have in terms of positioning yourself for your next job?
- Can your mentor help you get more connected in your field?
- What steps and practices does your mentor take to maintain satisfaction in both work and life?
- What recommendations does your mentor have for helping you in areas that need improvement—i.e. communication skills, time management, organization?
- How do you deal with overly critical manuscript reviews?
- How can you learn more about the culture of the School?