Royal Veterinary College

Mentoring Guide & Code

Contents

Acknowledgements

This Guide and Code has been produced by the HR Team following consultation with staff across the College in 2008/09 about what mentoring at RVC should be for. The College is grateful to Claire Townsend of Impact Training & Coaching for carrying out the consultation, and to the following staff for their contribution:

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Introduction

Lifelong learning is the underpinning educational philosophy of the Royal Veterinary College, and the development of all our staff – academic, research and support – to ensure that they achieve their full potential in their chosen career is fundamental to our purpose as an institution.

Our Corporate Plan for 2009-13 seeks to deliver the College's mission to enhance its global reputation as an outstanding veterinary college through seven strategic aims, all of which are based upon the pursuit of excellence across our academic, clinical and business activity. The values we embrace as an institution support these aims, and are set out below.

Staff and students of the Royal Veterinary College will:
- Act with integrity, honesty, and informed courage of conviction
- Be committed to, and exercise responsibility for, their own personal, academic and professional development
- Show fairness, professional impartiality and diligence
- Value diversity across disciplines, cultures and expertise
- Be explicit and straightforward, compassionate and respectful in their dealings with fellow staff and students, clients and visitors
- Accept responsibility for their actions
- Accept and take due account of feedback, in whatever form it is given
- Demonstrate a caring attitude and high ethical standards towards animals
- Respect the College's physical environment and property
- Aim for excellence in educational endeavours

It follows that the College has high expectations both of the way in which its staff are supported, managed and developed, and the extent to which staff themselves assume active responsibility for their own career and personal development.

The College's obligation is to put in place effective tools through which managerial and personal responsibility for individual career, professional and personal development can be exercised. This Guide and Code is one of those tools, and the diagram below shows where it fits within the overall staff development framework at RVC.

Whether you are considering becoming a Mentor or a Mentee, I believe the content of this document will make a real difference to your development at the College. I commend it to you without reservation.

Stuart Reid
Principal

The Staff Development Framework at RVC

Part 1 - Mentoring in Context

The Purpose and Benefits of Mentoring

Mentoring is about sharing or passing on skills and knowledge already acquired. It is not about coaching or counselling, through which the person being coached finds answers for themselves through the support of the coach. The coach remains outside of the situation and does not offer up solutions etc. The experience the coach brings is questioning, listening, rapport building and facilitation, as opposed to context.

When Should Mentoring Begin?

Mentoring should not be entered into too early. Typically, it should start on completion of Induction,
i.e. three months after joining the College, when initial orientation is finished, and the basics of the job and how it relates to the objectives of the College are understood.

Mentoring and Early Career Researchers

Mentoring is appropriate to all groups of staff at any point in their career. However, it can be of particular relevance to Early Career Researchers, who are at a pivotal stage in their professional and personal development. The College's Code of Practice & Guide to the Management and Development of Research Staff sets out the framework within which these staff are managed.

A Voluntary and Flexible Development Tool

Mentoring differs from other, more structured development processes such as induction, probation and appraisal because it can never work effectively if it is compulsory. To work, it must be entered into willingly, managed individually, and be shaped by the needs and priorities of the parties involved, i.e. the Mentee, the Mentor and their respective managers.

The role therefore of the College within the scheme is not to use it as a means of performance management or assessment, but to facilitate the effectiveness of mentoring by providing appropriate support, co-ordination and training.

Similarly, in a diverse educational and employment community such as the RVC, the content, structure and delivery of mentoring activities will vary significantly according to the particular roles of the parties involved, as is illustrated by the diagram below.

How Mentoring fits within the Staff Development Framework

Induction/Probation/Appraisal
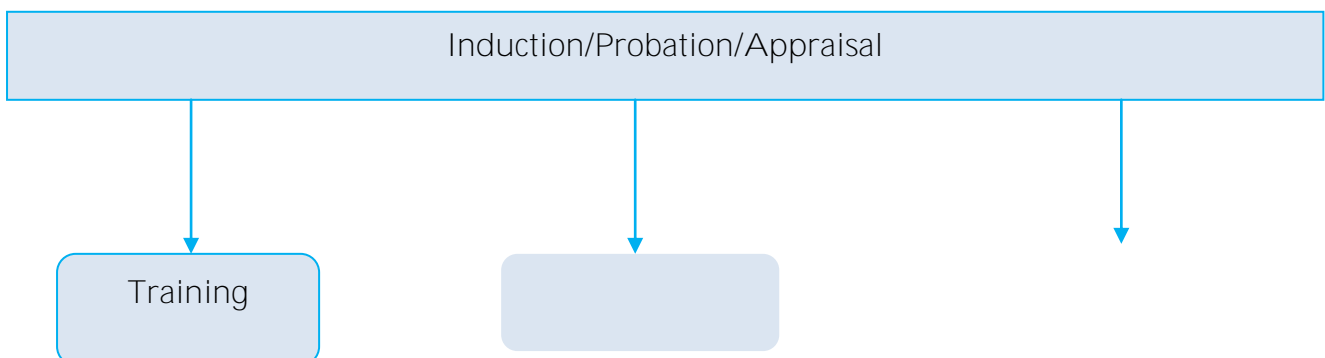
Training		

Support for The Mentoring Process

Responsibility for initiating, maintaining and developing individual Mentoring Agreements (see Part 4) lies with the members of staff concerned.

Responsibility for the support and co-ordination of mentoring activities lies with academic and service departments, working in collaboration with the Staff Development Team within Human Resources. This includes:-

- Keeping track of who has attended training associated with the Guide & Code
- Recruiting and developing Mentors and keeping the Directory of Mentors up to date
- Keeping a record of on-going mentoring relationships
- Gathering feedback from Mentor and Mentee at the end of the Mentoring Agreement
- Providing support to Mentors and Mentees during the process, e.g. advice on appropriate training solutions

Although not directly involved in the Mentoring process, the manager of the Mentee should be consulted before it begins about both the purpose of the mentoring, the time commitment involved, and the impact this might have on operational requirements.

Record Keeping

HR will maintain a central record of Mentors, Mentees, the areas individual pairings are working on, and the feedback received at the end of each Mentoring Agreement.

Matching Mentors and Mentees

Once mentoring has been identified as a suitable development opportunity the next step is to

Part 3   Becoming a Mentor or Mentee

Becoming a Mentor

Why become a Mentor?

Mentors often say they want "to give something back" — especially if they have had good experiences that they wish to pass on, in order to help a less experienced colleague progress ("if only I'd known then what I know now").

In addition, the skills needed to be a Mentor are transferable to a wide range of contexts which can support the Mentor's own career progression including management. The mentoring relationship enables you to:

- develop strengths (yours and theirs)
- work with people from different contexts and backgrounds
- practice offering positive and constructive feedback
- generate workable solutions together
- motivate, advise and support whilst helping someone to make their own decisions and take   responsibility for their own actions and development

The result is often increased job and personal satisfaction — the rewards of seeing someone you've helped progress and succeed.

It is not necessary for someone to have been employed by the College for a long time or be senior in order to become a Mentor. Peer Mentors who are at the same level as colleagues they are mentoring have different experiences that can be of value. Also, relatively recent experience of certain areas such as going through the probationary period for lecturers can be of value to newer staff members.

What makes a good Mentor?

- A desire to help others to succeed
- An ability to maintain confidentiality and trust
- Good questioning and listening skills
- An ability to give and receive feedback
- An ability to empathise
- Self awareness
- Being non judgemental
- A willingness to commit time

Training

Completion of the Mentor Training Scheme is a recommended part of becoming a Mentor. More details are available at http://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/HR/train/ index.cfm

The Scheme covers the following:-
- What is mentoring?
- What makes a good Mentor?
- The difference between mentoring, coaching and counselling
- The role of the Mentor and Mentee
- The RVC mentoring process
- Managing the mentoring relationship (including the Mentoring Agreement, ethics and confidentiality)
- Skills for effective mentoring
  - Questioning and listening
  - Giving and receiving feedback
  - Goal setting and action planning
- Planning and structuring the mentoring meeting –
- using GROW
- Keeping Mentees motivated
- Dealing with issues (stopping the mentoring process, breaches of ethics, if the Mentee needs
- additional/ other support)

As part of your ongoing development as a Mentor, it is important to continue to review your own effectiveness and continue to develop your mentoring skills where appropriate. This can be done thorough the following:-
- Getting feedback from Mentees
- Discussing issues with a third party (whilst respecting Mentee confidentiality)
- Attending additional training to build skills or refresher Mentor training
- Taking part in discussions/ review meetings with other Mentors

Checklist for Mentees

Prior to your first contact with your Mentor ask yourself the following questions:-

What would I like to discuss with my Mentor?

What are my main objectives?

Context

The Mentor will:

a. Understand and ensure that the mentoring relationship reflects the context within which the mentoring is taking place.

b. Ensure that the expectations of the Mentee are understood and that they themselves understand how those expectations are to be met.

c. Seek to create an environment in which the Mentee is focused on and has the opportunity for learning.

Boundary Management

The Mentor will:

a. At all times operate within the limits of their own competence, recognise where that competence has the potential to be exceeded and where necessary refer the Mentee either to a more experienced Mentor, or support the Mentee in seeking the help of another professional.

b. Be aware of the potential for conflicts of interest of an academic, professional, commercial, operational or emotional nature to arise through the mentoring relationship and deal with them quickly and effectively to ensure there is no detriment to the Mentee or the College.

Integrity

The Mentor will:

a. Maintain throughout the level of confidentiality which is appropriate and is agreed at the start of the relationship.

b. Disclose information only where explicitly agreed with the Mentee, unless the Mentor believes that there is convincing evidence of serious danger to the client or others if the information is withheld.

c. Act within applicable law and not encourage, assist or collude with others engage in conduct which is dishonest, unlawful, unprofessional or discriminatory.

Professionalism