

ACADEMIC MENTORING AT GENERAL SIR JOHN KOTELAWALA DEFENCE UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

Mentoring can be defined in many ways. In an academic setting mentoring often refers to relationship where a senior college offers guidance, support, encouragement, and informed feedback to a more junior colleague. Successful mentoring enables the mentee to develop a realistic assessment of her/his skills and to develop a strategy that will establish a career path within the context of the University's objective. A mentor is someone who helps you grow your skills, make better decisions, and gain new perspectives on your life and career. To mentees, mentoring is a learning process. General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University (KDU) also initiated the Academic Mentor – Mentee program at the Staff Development Centre (SDC)

In a successful mentoring relationship:

- There is a high degree of mutual trust - confidentiality is crucial
- The mentor helps another person become what they aspire to be
- The mentor helps another person realize his/her potential
- Gain insight into the needs of early career researchers
- Develop a strong and enjoyable connections with someone new
- Have a chance to reflect on their career
- Experience personal satisfaction in seeing the successes of early career researchers.

Mentoring engagement is an art

- Engagement is on a voluntary basis for both the Mentor and the Mentee
- The Mentoring relationship is confidential
- Mentoring is non-directive in its approach
- It is a relationship built upon trust and mutual respect
- The Mentor empowers the Mentee to take responsibility for their own learning and career development
- The relationship places no obligation on either party beyond its developmental intent
- It is distinct and separate from the Performance Management Development System (i.e not part of the appraisal system)
- Reverse-mentoring: junior staff mentoring senior staff
- Encourage cross-gender mentoring

Mentoring can help Mentees to:

- Address the issues and concerns of their daily working life and find solutions that work for them
- Improve their level of performance and satisfaction levels
- Understand key institutional and decision-making structures in the university
- Build relationships with colleagues and feel part of the community
- Advise on the integration of job, career and personal goals
- Suggest developmental opportunities
- Open doors

RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLE OF THE MENTOR

To ensure the full commitment of the mentor, the responsibility of the mentor will comprise the following but not be limited to:

- The mentor will assume responsibility for regularly discussing the mentee's development in their career and provide advice on possible avenues for further development
- The mentor takes a proactive position or attitude in the mentoring process
- The professional development of the mentee should be given the necessary attention to enable him/her to set realistic goals
- The mentor is expected to adopt a nurturing attitude to present the mentee to other members of the university community
- The mentor should take the necessary steps to address the grievances of the mentee
- The mentor offers constructive feedback in some positive ways to enable the mentee to bring out the potential he/she has for professional development
- The mentor should be able to make follow-ups to see whether the mentee is doing what is required of him/her
- The mentor should be able to unearth and develop the potential of the mentee for his/her professional advancement
- The mentor should be able to build rapport with the mentee to give him/her self confidence
- The mentor should promote the professional growth of the mentee through motivation, counselling and encouragement as well as create some opportunities for the mentee
- The mentor should share his/her experiences with the mentee in the process
- The mentor could give the mentee challenging tasks and lead him/her through the tasks
- The mentor offers advice about work/life balance issues.

Other responsibilities

- Hands on guidance, explaining how and why; creating opportunities to learn
- The challenger, making waves, challenging, simulating, questioning, probing
- The Role model, Unseen, largely unfelt
- Make yourself available
- Listening
- Supportive
- Talk about failure experience

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MENTEE

The mentee shares a significant part of the responsibility for making the mentoring relationship productive and rewarding. Mentee should initiate the relationship and then get the help from the mentor to reach the goals. In general, mentees should always try to be open and honest with their mentors and respect the trust that is shown, as it should be in any professional relationship. Within the mentoring relationship, the mentee's areas of responsibility are:

- Being aware that there is a mentoring process in the KDU and preparing his/her mind for it
- Keeping to agreements made with the mentor on the regularity of meetings and communication
- Preparing for and participating in meetings with mentor
- Being dedicated, willing, committed and hardworking in order to be mentored
- Being trusted by the mentor in the process
- Keeping the mentor informed of progress and any problems
- Asking for help or advice and being open in communication
- Willing to accept suggestions from the mentor
- Being appreciative of the efforts of the mentor without financial remunerations

The Mentee drives the Mentoring agenda

- Commitment
- Investment
- Schedule/Plan
- Talk about expectations with mentor; time and duration
- Send an invite for as a chat (coffee, tea)
- 30 minutes, once a month for 3-6 months
- Remind the mentor a day before the meeting
- Prepare a list of questions

Mentoring is not:

- For dealing with underperforming individuals
- Taking on the problems or work of the Mentee – a Mentor should not find themselves doing things outside the mentoring sessions for a mentee
- Promoting/sponsoring/protecting the mentee
- Intended to deal with personal issues
- Therapy

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