Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki - Nigeria

Mentoring Policy

Document Status:	**Draft**
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Approved by:	**Senate of EBSU on [date]**
Scheduled Review Date: [date]	

October 2018

1. Introduction

Mentoring is a relationship between two persons, outside the line of management, which is confidential in nature. It represents a confidential, non-reporting relationship that is a critical element in the array of University staff development methods. It enables new members of staff to become conversant with their role and the wider University, in order to become effective as quickly as possible. It is important for staff development experience, knowledge and skills, like developing their research profile through publications. It is also recommended for older members of staffs who are preparing for or have been given new roles within the University and focus is on supporting and developing the whole person. Ebonyi State University (EBSU) mentoring scheme provides a process where an established member of staff (the mentor) offers advice, guidance and encouragement to a new or younger member of staff (the mentee). This will make it possible for a new staff to be introduced to the University values, culture and working practices within a relationship of mutual trust and respect.

Traditionally, a 'Mentor' is a more experienced member of staff who seeks to pass their skills, expertise and knowledge of the workplace on to a (usually) less experienced member of staff, with a view to fostering their development. It is a safe, non-judgemental relationship that facilitates a wide range of learning, experimentation and development. "A mentor can be described as someone who acts as a friend and trusted counselor. Mentors have protégés rather than learners and will therefore aim to develop a special kind of relationship. They will be interested in improvements in their protégés performance, but over a longer time-scale (even a whole career if necessary) "

There are a variety of definitions of mentoring, however, the consensus is that it involves the following:

a) Mentoring is a collaborative engagement,
b) It is voluntary,
c) Centered around an agreed expectation(s),
d) Mutually valuable.

Mentoring has the potential to serve a variety of functions in the context of the University's strategic objectives. For example, among academic staff, mentoring is recognised as a core aspect of the culture of the University, where staff are encouraged to improve their own performance and the performance of others. The University will support staff to mentor their colleagues and, through a mentoring policy, establish principles, expectations and structures for mentoring relationships to occur for staff at all levels.

Emerging theory and practice about mentoring (ref) highlight several issues concerning mentoring programmes:

a) Three principles are generally critical to the success of any mentoring programmme:
    i) Institutional commitment;
    ii) Institutional recognition of staff who undertake the role of mentor; and
    iii) The necessity for mentoring strategies to be collaborative in nature, involving the participants in the development of a program drawn out of their knowledge and practice;
b) Formalized mentoring engenders a strong sense of collegiality and ownership by communities of practice; and
c) Mentoringprogrammes, which focus on assisting mentees to "know why, how and who" lead to enhanced career outcomes for these staff members.

2. Purpose of Mentoring

Through mentoring, the University seeks to facilitate excellence and innovation in teaching and learning, research and research training, and community engagement for all academic staff. A mentoring Policy is developed to provide a common framework, based upon best practice principles, to support the design of new, and the continuing development of existing, mentoring arrangements forEbonyi State University.

The mentoring process recognises:

a) the inextricable link between teaching and learning, and research and scholarship;
b) that staff members have multiple roles and need to be nurtured in all roles;
c) the importance of sharing ideas and encouraging innovation;

d) that staff members will have different needs from their mentor at different stages of their career and thus should be able to develop different mentoring relationships over time; and
e) that mentoring is particularly important for new members of staff to facilitate their transition into the academic life of Ebonyi State University or to develop an individual's career for administrative staff.

The mentoring process therefore provides:

a) opportunities to learn from someone with a greater or different understanding of the organisation;
b) the individual with an objective and alternative source of advice and information;
c) opportunities for the development of all staff through the mentoring relationship, either as mentor or mentee; and
d) enables both managers and mentees to understand the different roles within the mentoring relationship and how each should be undertaken.

3. Aims and Scope

The mentoring process is most important in the first year of a new member of staff's employment. For technical and administrative staff, it may not extend beyond six months. However, mentoring for academic staff will continue throughout the probationary period of two years, in the case of new lecturers, or for newly appointed senior staff a mentoring period of perhaps one year may be appropriate. Mentoring for research staff is likely to continue throughout theirprofessional life (or at least for the first three years, in the case of junior research staff). Staff may also request mentoring at key career transition points; for example, in planning for promotion, preparing for a change of role or returning from secondment or career break. Requests for mentoring for career transitions can be made through the Human Resource Unit of the university.

Based on experiences garnered in EBSU through the CIRCLE project with regards to institutional strengthening (e.g. mentoring), university guidelines for mentoring of academic staff, including those following the academic cadre, can be consulted at:
http://www.reading.ac.uk/internal/CSTD/professionaldevelopment/ATLS/cstd-mentors.aspx

Individuals can also wish to consult the useful guide to professional development in research that was developed by VITAE and pioneered at the University of Reading:
http://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers/428241/Vitae-Researcher-Development-Framework.html

The mentoring process offers positive and useful support to a new member of staff, and often has advantages for the mentor as well. There are guidelines aimed at equipping the different parties involved with the information necessary for them to conduct a positive mentoring relationship. The responsibility for making the mentoring process work is with the mentor and the new member of staff (mentee).

The aims of the Mentoring Process are:

a) to provide advice and encouragement on all aspects of a professional role
b) to help in identifying and planning personal development (including the APP)
c) to provide a 'sounding board' for the discussion of: the organisational culture and values of the University; personal performance issues
d) to provide constructive feedback in planning of personal research, teaching and learning and other roles
e) to provide access to networks or contacts.

The policy applies to:

a) Full-time and part-time staff who have a permanent or fixed term contract
b) All Academic staff will be appointed a mentor at the first year of appointment.
c) All senior non teaching staff who are new to the University will be appointed a mentor for their first year.
d) Older members of staff aspiring to or have a new role within the University.
e) Older members of staff who have agreed on the University developmental goals, for example improving their research profile.
f) Members of staff who request a mentor.

4. The Benefits of Mentoring

Benefits of mentoring have been identified for institutions, mentors and mentees.

For the institution the benefits include the possibility of greater staff productivity, improved communication between staff, greater collegiality among staff, and reduced staff turnover.

For the mentor, the benefits identified include the following:

a) the satisfaction of being able to transfer knowledge and skills accumulated through extensive professional practice;
b) the opportunity to re-examine one's own practices, attitudes and values;
c) refining the development of observation, listening and questioning skills;
d) the opportunity to discuss professional issues; and
e) professional interaction in teaching and learning, scholarly and/or research projects.

For the mentee, the identified benefits include:

a) receiving accumulated organisational wisdom;
b) access to new professional networks;
c) advice and support around specific professional situations;
d) new insights into professional practices and current institutional parameters;
e) socialisation into a new professional role;
f) guidance and support in meeting criteria set for probation;
g) improved promotion opportunities;
h) fine-tuning of knowledge, skills and understandings; and
i) enhanced opportunity to achieve professional potential.

5. The Mentoring Policy

The purpose of the mentoring policy is to position mentoring as a key activity within the overall approach to staff learning and development and to institutionalize it within the university. This policy defines mentoring and provides a framework for academic and non-academic staff mentoring across the University

a) The specific objectives of the policy are to:

i) Identify mentoring as a valuable and valued element of the staff development framework;
ii) Emphasize that mentoring is a relationship that is entered into and developed voluntarily;
iii) Ensure that mentoring, particularly in support of individual development and career advancement, is neither confused with nor substituted for supervisory responsibilities arising from the University's Academic Staff Performance Review and Planning Program;
iv) Establish that mentoring relationships, in whatever form, are governed by the University's Code of Conduct and existing policies on quality, equity and equal opportunity, inclusiveness and privacy;
v) Support and encourage the growth of more strategically managed mentoring activities within individual organisational units and across the University as a whole;
vi) Provide structured support to assist individual staff to define their own learning experience so that they can improve their performance and develop their capacity to contribute effectively to their discipline, position, career advancement and the University;
vii) Benefit the mentor by providing an opportunity to develop his/her leadership capacity when undertaking the role of a mentor; and
viii) Contribute to the enhancement of the University's performance, in accordance with its Strategic Plan, by embedding mentoring into a range of University processes such as:
    - induction (for all staff in new roles);
    - academic leadership development;
    - targeted leadership development programs;
    - formal performance management and reward; and
    - career development and succession planning.

b) Recognition of Mentoring as a Valued Element in Staff Development

It is an expectation of all staff that those with greater experience, as a normal part of their duties and responsibilities, freely provide appropriate support and guidance to less experienced colleagues on request and, particularly, in regard to the institutional knowledge required for the latter to perform their duties effectively.

Heads of organization, units and supervisors are encouraged to recognise specifically the value of mentoring skills by:

- planning for staff, who act or will act as mentors, to participate in appropriate training and receive adequate support as and when required;
- taking account of workload implications when planning the contributions of individuals as mentors or as mentoring program coordinators; and
- acknowledging significant individual contributions and good practice as a mentor as a component of service in performance review and reward for Academic Staff.

c) Relationship of Mentoring to Staff Appraisal and Performance Management

Executive Deans, National Heads of Schools and Directors of Institutes, and other academic supervisors have responsibility to organise tasks and workload for their staff, define roles and priorities, provide appraisal and a development plan, and address performance related issues in order to meet the University's objectives (Academic Staff Performance Review and Planning Program). Additionally, they have an important role as well as responsibility for nurturing the staff reporting to them.

Key characteristics distinguishing the role of a mentor from that of a supervisor are that:

- the mentor has no supervisory responsibility or authority over the mentee;
- mentors have no role in dealing with issues of non-compliance or under- performance;
- the mentoring relationship provides a confidential, non-judgemental, non-directive and supportive environment;
- the parties to a mentoring relationship are equal within, and share responsibility for, the relationship;
- mutual learning is an integral aspect of the mentoring relationship;
- the overall developmental needs of the mentee are the main focus within the mentoring relationship.

6) The Mentoring Relationship

In arranged mentoring relationships, the concept varies according to the context and purpose of establishing those relationships. Mentoring is commonly used as a method of transferring specific skills, knowledge and norms to staff as a component of induction, professional development and diversity management programs. In a staff development framework that emphasizes self-managed learning, best practice indicates the need for mentoring that encourages mutual learning within the relationship as well as the desire for development in support of organisational goals.

Ebonyi State University supports the view that mentoring is a confidential, non-reporting relationship that:

- maintains the efficiency of the organisational structures in place;
- enables developments in knowledge, work or thinking;
- involves a non-directive and supportive dialogue rather than an instructing one; and
- is additional to other forms of assistance.

Mentor's Role

Depending on the context and purpose of any mentoring program, some variability in the mentor's role might be expected. However, fundamental elements include:

a) providing guidance to the mentee on negotiating the agenda for discussions within the relationship;
b) acting as a "sounding board" and confidante;
c) listening and facilitating;
d) sharing expertise and experience; and

e) providing information on further professional contacts as appropriate.
f) It is expected that designated mentors will, represent and convey to mentees for whom they are responsible the mission, ethos, values and strategic aims of Ebonyi State University. This means encouraging and enabling:
    - active involvement in the intellectual life and pursuits of the University;
    - shared discourse and debate;
    - critical reflection and inquiry;
    - teaching of a style and standard that serves to fulfil the mission of the University and to instil in students a spirit of lifelong learning and inquiry;
    - active involvement in research and scholarship that serves to advance knowledge;
    - community engagement grounded in expertise in teaching and learning, and research and scholarship.

Mentee Role

The role of the mentee might also be expected to vary, depending on the context and purpose of the mentoring program but will, in principle, include:

a) taking responsibility for identifying and achieving his/her own development goals;
b) initiating meetings with the mentor, managing meeting dates and times, and negotiating the agenda for discussions within the relationship;
c) listening, clarifying, reflecting back and discussing; and
d) sharing expertise and experience.

7. Principles of Best Practice in the Mentoring Relationship

New and existing mentoring programs, whether formal or informal, should review their design against the following principles:

a) ensuring that information about the program is equally available to all staff in the organisational unit(s) covered by the program;
b) providing a clear statement of objectives for the program based on identified staff and organisational needs;
c) recruiting a program coordinator (e.g. National Head of School, Deputy Head of School, Deputy Dean, Associate Dean) who can deliver adequate resources and influence internal arrangements and strategies to ensure that the objectives are achievable;
d) making clear statements on the roles of and expectations for all parties;
e) encouraging voluntary participation by both mentors and mentees. This does not preclude prior identification of potential participants;
f) basing mentor selection on a list of skills that are consistent with the program's objectives;
g) giving mentees clear instructions on their responsibilities in the relationship and requiring them to prepare a statement of their development objectives;
h) providing the opportunity for any participant to request a change in mentoring partner or to withdraw from the program without recrimination;
i) making adequate training and other support available for all participants, including the coordinator of the mentoring program and the supervisors of mentees, where appropriate;
j) Organizing mentoring orientation or induction workshop after which both parties will sign.
k) The use of RDF as a mentoring tool.
l) designing ongoing evaluation of the program prior to implementation.

8. The Mentoring Process

The following provides a non-prescriptive framework to assist the mentor and mentee map out a process suitable to the unique circumstances of each mentoring relationship and to guide its development and successful conclusion:

a) Exploring the possibility of working together

i) Establishing other commitments and how this relationship could enhance or hinder them.
ii) Ascertaining whether the potential relationship links with the mentee's personal vision and core values.
iii) Expectations of both the mentor and mentee
iv) Time commitments and constraints

b) Building the relationship

i) Parameters of the relationship
ii) Building it in mutuality, trust and productivity

c) Negotiating the arrangement/agreement

i) Goals and objectives
ii) Logistics
iii) Confidentiality
iv) Measurement strategies for the process and outcomes
v) Process for reflection

d) Mentee/mentor development

i) Monitoring the learning process and outcomes
ii) Sharing resources and networks
iii) Determining levels of planning and spontaneity

e) Ending the formal relationship

i) Measurement of outcomes
ii) Appreciative feedback
iii) Future pathways and options

f) Identifying the Mentor

The role of a mentor is both rewarding and developmental. Therefore, all Professors, Associate Professors, senior lecturers (in some cases) and senior managers have a role in developing talent within the University. A suitable mentor can be identified in a number of ways:

i) Through the Head of Department, Dean or Director.
ii) By an individual identifying that this is a role they would like to take or someone they want to be their mentor
iii) Through consultation with leaders within the appropriate discipline, the Directorate of Research shall oversee this process.

g) Mentor's Commitment: Mentors commit to

i) Ensure regular meetings
ii) Flexible access with agreed boundaries
iii) Provide access to appropriate individuals
iv) Treat mentoring duties seriously
v) Respect confidentiality

h) Mentee's Commitment: Mentees commit to

i) Ensure regular meetings
ii) Reflect upon Knowledge, Skills, Behaviours
iii) Respect mentor's time
iv) Treat mentoring seriously
v) Agree on the regularity of the meeting
vi) Should keep minute of the meeting

i) **Training.** To become mentor in EBSU, one must complete the Mentoring training. Opportunities to develop mentoring skills further will be possible by attending the Special training Courses by the Directorate of Research, Innovation &Commercialisation (DRIC).

j) **Length.**Decisions on the length of the mentoring programme will be determined by individual needs.However, as a guideline, a scheme will normally last for a period of up to one year, and not less than six months.

k) **Confidentiality.**All meetings and discussions held between mentor and mentee, will be confidential to those individuals.

9. Key Issues

a) **Communication:** The new member of staff will need to be able to communicate with the mentor and not feel that they are a nuisance or a distraction. An agreement to have short regular meetings, perhaps fortnightly at first, will provide a good framework. At the first meeting it would be useful to agree some ground rules or basic expectations on both sides. It is important that the content of the meetings remains confidential to enable both parties to be open and develop a relationship based on trust.

b) **Induction Support:** There is a centrally provided one-day induction course to be held at least once each semester. This does not replace the need for an induction to the school/ department. Line managers should take responsibility for ensuring that a good induction to the department is provided (see SAGES guide to induction).
During the first month the mentor should meet with the new member of staff and the Human Resource Manager. The mentor will be made aware of details of the targets agreed for probationary staff in order to support them in achieving their individual targets.

c) **Difficult situations:** The role of a mentor is not the same as a line manager, and if the mentee is struggling in their role the mentor should not try to "manage" them. Rather, the mentor should continue to follow the approach described above, enabling the mentee to develop their own strategies to deal with their situation.

10. Policy Review

The University may make changes to this policy from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. In this regard, any staff member who wishes to make any comments about this policy may forward their suggestions to the Deputy Vice- Chancellor (Academic).

11. Further Assistance

Any staff member who requires assistance in understanding this policy should first consult his/her nominated supervisor who is responsible for the implementation and operation of these arrangements in the university. Should further advice be required staff should contact Director, Senior or Junior Staff Establishment in the University.

12. Mentoring Evaluation

Triggers for Policy Review (tick all that apply)	
Standard review is timetabled. 1) A gap has been identified. 2) Additional knowledge or information has become available to supplement the policy. 3) External factors 4) Policy is no longer relevant/current due to changes in external operating environment. 5) There are changes to laws, regulations, terminology and/or government policy. 6) Changes to funding environment, including requirements of funding bod(y)ies.	**Internal / organisational factors** 1) A stakeholder has identified a need, eg, by email, telephone etc. 2) A serious or critical incident has occurred, requiring an urgent review. 3) Need for consistency in service delivery across programs and organisations. 4) Separate, stand-alone policy is now warranted. 5) A near miss has occurred, requiring a review to prevent a serious/critical incident in the future.
Other (please specify).	

Reference

- University of Bedfordshire's mentoring
- School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Science (SAGES)
- SID/ New Staff / General Information August 2016
- Staff Learning and Development Office SOAS, University of London (2014)
- University of Aberystwyth
- Australian Catholic University (ACU) 2008. Mentoring of Academic Staff Policy
- VITAE RDF