Mentoring
Good Practice Guide

uk resource
centre for women
in science, engineering
& technology

Foreword

I am delighted to introduce this new edition of the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology's Mentoring Good Practice Guide.

I have experienced first hand, both as a mentor and as a champion of an in-house mentoring programme at The Simons Group, how mentoring can provide a professional development opportunity and a morale boost for talented women in a male-dominated environment.

The science, engineering and technology sectors continue to experience skills shortages that threaten UK competitiveness in global markets. Employers in these sectors need to develop and retain high quality individuals who can find creative business solutions and connect with a wide variety of stakeholders.

Mentoring is a powerful and flexible tool that helps organisations to attract, retain and develop skilled people, particularly women. A structured mentoring programme can help resolve a range of issues, building confidence and aspiration through access to appropriate role models, reducing feelings of isolation and helping to balance work and caring commitments. Mentoring helps to create motivated and well connected people, developing skills and knowledge of value to the mentor as well as to the mentee and to the organisation as a whole.

The UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology has helped a wide range of organisations to run mentoring programmes for women at various career stages, including women wishing to become members of public bodies and women wishing to return to SET careers after a break. This guide – now in its second edition – presents established good practice, enriched and illustrated by the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology's learning and experience.

This guide will give you a real understanding of why and how mentoring has such a positive impact. It also tells you what support is available, through the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology and others, to help you put mentoring programmes into practice within your organisation.
I recommend mentoring to you as a highly effective tool
that can make a real difference to your organisation.

Sandi Rhys Jones OBE
Vice-Chair, The UK Resource Centre for Women in SET Governing Body
Non-Executive Director, The Engineering and Technology Board

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What is mentoring?

There are numerous definitions of mentoring and many different ways of running a mentoring programme. Most descriptions of mentoring contain words such as 'support', 'help', 'learning', 'making transitions' and 'realising potential'. The process of mentoring involves these aspects:

- The role of the mentor is one of support to the mentee or learner.
- The mentee should be open to new ideas and eager to learn and develop.
- The mentor should listen and give advice and guidance, when it is appropriate.
- Mentoring focuses on developing capability, by working with the mentee's goals to help them realise their potential.
- The mentee is responsible for their learning and development and setting the direction and goals for the relationship.
- The flow of learning is two-way in a mentoring relationship and the mentor often gains as much as the mentee.
- A mentor is a 'professional friend'.

"Building a relationship with my mentor has increased my confidence to tackle job related issues, and has made me feel that I am not alone! It's also been great to meet someone I would not normally meet, share experiences and just have a good chat about issues. It's also been fun."
A mentee from the University of York mentoring programme

The business case for mentoring

An acute shortage of qualified people and the increasing demand for scientific and engineering skills is threatening the UK's productivity, competitiveness and level of innovation. The shortage is compounded by the high leakage rate of SET graduates – especially women – to other sectors where their skills are equally valued.

However, the skills shortage could be largely rectified by encouraging more women into SET professions and ensuring those already working in SET remain there.

A women-only mentoring programme can help to support and motivate women already in SET careers, those considering entering the SET professions, or those wanting to return to work in SET following a career break. It can help women to focus on their career, make decisions on progression, and to explore strategies for improving work life balance. It is also a useful form of Continuing Professional Development. An organisation can use mentoring as an aid to career and succession planning, including encouraging promotion within their current staff base. This reduces recruitment costs and motivates a workforce by showing that internal promotion is part of their employer's culture.

Issues for women in SET careers

Women in SET face different issues and barriers at different stages in their careers. These can be broadly summarised as:

Starting out – Balancing decisions about developing a personal life and career can be very difficult, particularly when facing issues such as sustaining a publication record or maintaining the Continuing Professional Development requirements of professional institutions. Generally in SET, there is a lack of part-time and flexible working opportunities and sometimes mobility is essential for career development. Coping with dual career relationships may also pose problems. This, coupled with gender based issues such as the pay gap and the tendency for women to feel they have to work harder than their male counterparts to prove themselves in SET organisations, can have a serious effect on confidence and motivation. In academia, this difficulty can be compounded by short-term contracts with permanent appointments often not made until candidates are in their late twenties or early thirties, just around the time when women may think about starting a family.

Mid career – Limited opportunities for women to gain sufficient strategic and operational management experience can be a hindrance in some SET industries. Returning to work after a career break, coping with child-care issues, having a skill or knowledge gap in their specialist area and lack of flexible working opportunities can all impact on this stage of a woman's career progress. A lack of women CEOs and Directors acting as positive role models compounds the problem.

The glass ceiling – The barrier to entry into higher management positions, often referred to as the 'glass ceiling', is caused by discrimination against women in the workplace, the inability of women to penetrate the 'old boy's network' and the tendency of executives to promote others like themselves.

"There were a number of talented women at the Simons Group and we were very keen to retain and develop them. However, as the company is relatively small and its upper echelons were male dominated, we were short of strong female role models. We decided to set up a cross sector, cross disciplinary mentoring programme, inviting senior women from our blue-chip customer base and supply chain to be mentors. This helped us not only to develop our high potential women, but also to improve stakeholder relations and understanding."

Sandi Rhys Jones
The Simons Group mentoring programme

Case study:
The British Pharmacological Society

A gender analysis of the membership of the British Pharmacological Society (BPS) by Professor Amrita Ahluwalia, Chair of the BPS Women in Pharmacology Committee, showed that membership was predominantly male, with women making up just 28 percent. Professor Ahluwalia found that while the number of student members was evenly split between men and women, there was a steady decline within female membership as women moved through their 20s, 30s and into their mid-40s. This contrasted with a steady increase in male membership over this age range, and pointed to a steady 'leakage' of women from the profession at mid-career stage.

With the support of the BPS Council, Professor Ahluwalia turned to the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology for help in setting up a mentoring scheme to support female members of the BPS, to help them to stay in pharmacology and to achieve their full potential. The mentoring scheme was designed to focus on women at an early career stage and the first programme ran in 2005. The scheme – which invites new mentees to join on an annual basis - has reached a total of 38 mentoring pairs, with 66 women involved in the programme to date. Although too early to show an impact on BPS membership statistics, feedback from the mentees is very positive.

Case study:
Peer Mentoring Circles

Peer Mentoring Circles were initially set up by the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology to support women wanting to return to their SET career after a break. The sessions last for around two to three hours and are facilitated by UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology regional co-ordinators.

They give the women an opportunity to focus on their current situation and to explore ways of moving forward. The beauty of these groups is that everyone can offer support of some kind: ideas, suggestions, contacts, networks, encouragement, motivation, or simply a willingness to listen.

Sessions can vary and some may be a structured discussion on a particular topic, include a visiting speaker, or a trip to visit a relevant company. Others are an open space where individuals take turns to share their thoughts on a particular issue.

The group members may change as some find employment and new returners join. Some women attend only once, and others attend a few times. For new returners, it is inspiring to hear from those who are progressing successfully, thus returners become role models to others starting out in their journey back to SET. Those back in work may continue to attend as they enjoy networking with other women in SET, especially if they are the only woman working in their company.

Models of mentoring

Our experience of running mentoring programmes at the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology has taught us that, in designing mentoring programmes, there is no 'one size fits all' solution. Mentoring programmes should be tailored to suit the needs of the mentees and mentors, the environment in which they operate and the resources available.

Mentoring programmes can be run using all female, or both male and female mentors. However, women in non-traditional areas, and in senior positions, often face different barriers and experience different career paths to their male counterparts. Women-only mentoring programmes can provide a safe place to discuss these issues in confidence, whilst also providing much-needed female role models.

Pal	A short term 'buddy' scheme for isolated women new to an organisation or learning environment. It is useful to help them find their way around their new workplace or college and settle into their new role.
Peer Mentoring	Both parties are of a similar career level and they either take it in turns to mentor each other, or both have similar objectives and help each other by sharing information and ideas.
Role Model Developmental Mentoring	A confidential, one on one mentoring relationship, based on the mentee's objectives, with regular communication between both parties. The mentor is generally more experienced than the mentee, and often in the same or a similar field.
Spot Mentoring	One or two brief communications with a mentor on a specific issue. Not a formal relationship and no agreed objectives to work towards.
Peer Mentoring Circles	A group of mentees at a similar career level, or with a shared objective, e.g. wishing to return after a career break, with a facilitator who runs the meeting. Mentees decide on the subjects discussed and support each other in working towards personal goals.
E-mentoring	Mentoring relationships run through an electronic platform or by email. Can be useful if mentor and mentee are geographically distant or cannot meet for other reasons (e.g. child protection).

"My first mentee now has a job, which she loves and to which she is very well suited. She is still in science, she is using her skills and knowledge and she is very happy. I know that I helped her to achieve this outcome, and it makes me happy too."
Professor Amrita Ahluwalia
British Pharmacological Society mentoring programme

Case study:
The University of York

Like many higher education institutions, the University of York sees less progression to academic careers amongst women SET researchers than their male counterparts, with women generally under-represented in senior academic posts.
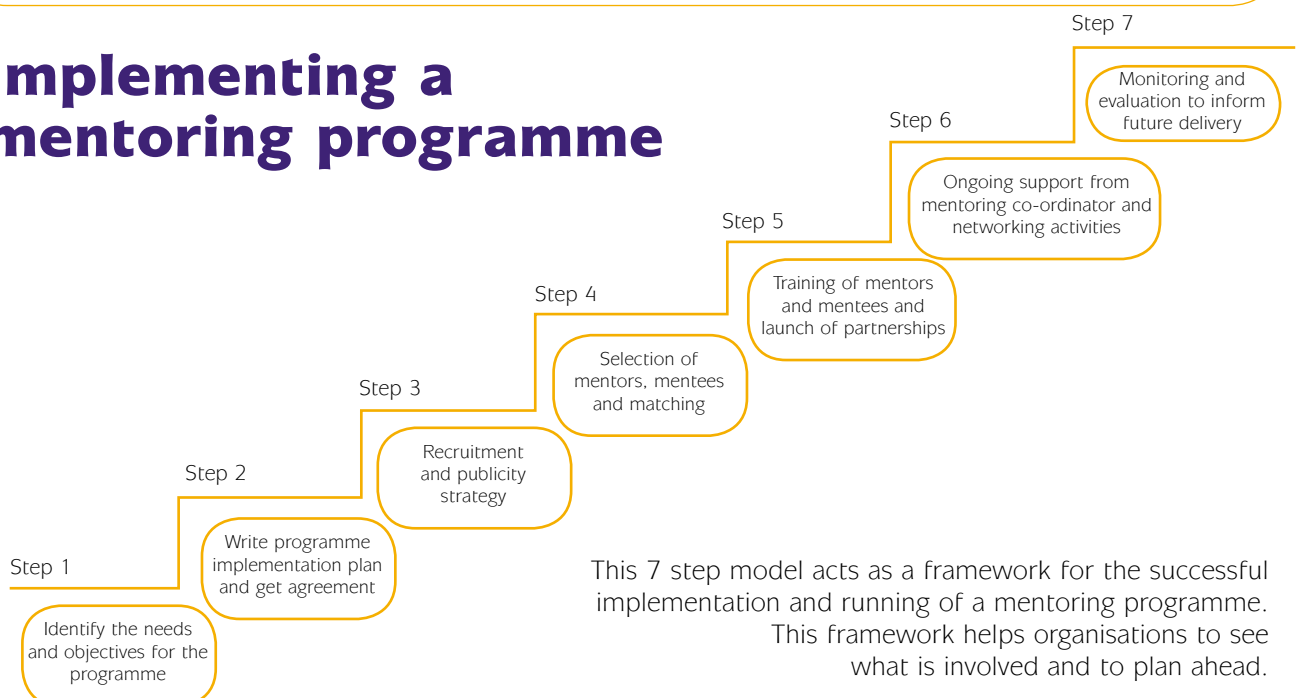
Project Manager in Professional and Organisational Development, Tracey Clarke, decided to set up a women-only mentoring scheme as an alternative to traditional training programmes, to help with professional development and enhance potential for career progression.

"Mentoring can be a very motivating experience for both partners, and can act as a catalyst to progressing your career. Encouragement from a mentor can generate new and different perspectives on a situation – almost like being offered permission to pursue your goals and achieve your ambitions," says Tracey

Working with the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology, Tracey learnt how to run a mentoring programme and how to recruit and train mentors and mentees, so she was able to organise future programmes for all staff. Twenty-five female academics took part in the one-year programme, creating 13 mentoring relationships in all (one mentor valiantly took on two mentees).

Feedback suggested that mentoring was a useful, practical alternative to attending training courses. Says one mentee: "The main thing mentoring offered me was the chance to focus on my own personal career needs, and it gave me the encouragement I needed to start applying for jobs that previously I wouldn't have considered."

Implementing a mentoring programme

Step 7
Monitoring and evaluation to inform future delivery

Step 6
Ongoing support from mentoring co-ordinator and networking activities

Step 5
Training of mentors and mentees and launch of partnerships

Step 4
Selection of mentors, mentees and matching

Step 3
Recruitment and publicity strategy

Step 2
Write programme implementation plan and get agreement

Step 1
Identify the needs and objectives for the programme

This 7 step model acts as a framework for the successful implementation and running of a mentoring programme. This framework helps organisations to see what is involved and to plan ahead.

Step 1 – Identify the need and objectives for the programme

Identify the need for the mentoring programme and outline specifically what you are trying to achieve, e.g. retention of women, their progression to higher levels, the recruitment of more women, attracting women back after maternity leave and helping them settle quickly back into their roles.

Clearly defining the aims and your target group will help you plan the programme, gain senior management support and also ease recruitment and evaluation at the end of the programme.

Step 2 – Programme implementation plan

A detailed plan which includes your objectives but also addresses target groups, timescales, budget, training needs etc. is a useful starting point. You can use this, or extracts from it to achieve stakeholder buy-in. Setting up and running any mentoring programme begins by gaining key stakeholder buy-in. Senior management support is vital. By showing their commitment, senior managers will influence others to accept and support the programme in the future. The UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology's Public Life Mentoring Programme (see page 11), had the full support of Janet Gaymer, the Commissioner for Public Appointments, and her assistance in communicating information to potential mentors was invaluable for recruitment purposes.

Step 3 – Recruitment and publicity

Don't underestimate the need to publicise your programme and actively recruit mentees and mentors by as many means as you can. Concentrate on recruiting mentees first and then recruit mentors to meet their needs. Ensuring that time commitment is made clear to both mentors and mentees at the outset, will set clear expectations for volunteers.

Most organisations will seek mentors from within their own membership, staff or alumni. However, where there is a shortage of suitable women mentors, looking to other organisations or professional bodies may provide a solution. The UKRC's GetSET Women online community provides a pool of SET women at all career stages and from all sectors from which we can recruit mentors. To join or search GetSET Women see www.getsetwomen.org

Step 4 – Selection and matching of mentors and mentees

Matching can range from being completely controlled by the mentoring co-ordinator, who takes all matching decisions centrally, to no involvement at all, where mentees select their own mentor.

"I was immensely flattered to be asked to be a mentor – so mentees shouldn't be afraid to ask. I am always happily surprised that intuitively people want to help. As a mentor, I gained as much if not more than my mentee did from the process."
Joanna Embling, Cushman & Wakefield
The Association of Women in Property mentoring programme

The matching process will depend on the structure and aims of the programme. Mentees are usually asked to give details of their own background and what they are looking for in a mentor. Matching can then be made on the basis of relevant shared experience, industry sector, scientific specialism, geographical location, family situation etc. A brief telephone interview with mentee and mentor can enable the co-ordinator to check necessary additional details to make the match.

Step 5 – Training of mentors and mentees and launch of partnership

Training both mentor and mentee will help both parties become aware of what to expect from a mentoring relationship, and the roles each can play. Research shows that where mentors and mentees are properly trained in these roles, mentoring relationships are three times more likely to be deemed successful. At the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology we train mentees and mentors together so that they will understand each other's roles as well as the purpose of the programme, and so that they can raise concerns and questions prior to the relationship commencing. By practising mentoring skills in a safe, interactive learning environment, both parties can develop confidence.

In a formal one-to-one mentoring programme, it is useful to cover certain topics.
We cover as a minimum:

- The programme aims and objectives
- What mentoring is, including definitions and benefits
- Roles in a mentoring relationship
- The process of mentoring
- Skills required including communication, listening, building rapport, and setting objectives
- Exercises should be practical and interactive giving participants an opportunity to practice in a safe environment
- Confidentiality and boundaries
- The mentoring contract i.e. the agreement between mentor and mentee
- What happens next – including arrangements for monitoring and evaluation

While face-to-face training is preferable, where attendance isn't possible or previous experience of mentoring means participants only require a refresh, the UKRC has developed an electronic training module, which can be completed online. The UKRC also provides 'train the trainer' workshops so that organisations can develop the knowledge and tools they need to run their own programmes independently.

Case study:
Mentoring for Public Life

Representation of women on the boards of the 58 science-related public bodies is still at just 26 percent, well below the Government's own target of 40 percent.

To boost the supply of women applying for public appointments, the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology set up a mentoring scheme specifically focused on public life, pairing SET-qualified women who were interested in public appointments with existing members of public boards, both men and women. Potential mentees were found through the UKRC's online resource GetSET Women and the scheme was advertised to existing board members through the Commissioner for Public Appointments and contacts in other Government departments. Twenty-two pairs were matched based on geography and professional interests. The scheme ran for the first time from January to July 2007, with most pairs having contact at least three times. Mentors were also asked to take their mentee to a board meeting so they could meet other members and see first hand how a board operates and the kind of issues it tackles.

The feedback from both mentees and mentors was overwhelmingly positive, with the majority of mentees reporting they felt more confident and more motivated to apply for board vacancies. Says Rachel Tobbell of the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology: *"By taking away some of the mystique which surrounds these bodies, the mentoring scheme has whetted a lot of women's appetites to get involved in public life at this level."*

Step 6 – Ongoing support from the mentoring co-ordinator

Ownership of the programme by a named person with the mentoring remit written into their job description, will help keep the programme on track. We calculate that running a nine month mentoring programme of 30 pairs, takes approximately 1 day a month.

By providing a central referral point for mentees and mentors who have questions or problems, the mentoring coordinator can ensure that any issues can be resolved in a timely manner.

At the UKRC we always include a "no-fault divorce clause" which enables mentors and mentees to step out of a relationship at any point if they feel it is not working or a good use of time. Either party can contact the mentoring coordinator to invoke the clause – though in reality this rarely happens. Actively monitoring mentoring activities ensures that participants are maintaining contact and are utilising the appropriate mentoring skills as well as adhering to the values of the mentoring programme. Comments can be recorded and used as part of the evaluation exercise at the end of the programme.

Step 7 – Monitoring and evaluation

Review and evaluation should be carried out throughout the programme, and should include outcomes. Evaluations can be carried out in several ways: dated notes during an interview or telephone conversation, focus groups or electronic surveys. Setting clear objectives and targets at the outset will help to evaluate the programme's effectiveness and the feedback collected can be used to inform future improvements.

The mentoring contract and progress record

On the following pages are two of the tools we use in our mentoring programmes. The first is the all important contract, or the agreement between mentee and mentor which sets the foundation of their relationship. This should be discussed and completed at an early stage. It is particularly useful to have some sort of contract within a professional developmental mentoring relationship, to outline what has been agreed including boundaries and confidentiality ground rules.

Mentoring Contract

We agree to:

- Respect the development aims of this Mentoring Programme.
- Provide feedback and evaluation as requested by the programme organisers.
- Review our progress regularly against our objectives/plan.
- Meet, speak or e-mail on a regular basis.
- If we cannot attend a scheduled meeting/ telephone conversation, we agree to notify our partner and reschedule.
- We agree that if for any reason either of us is not comfortable in our mentoring relationship, we can end the partnership after consulting with the Mentoring Co-ordinator.

Our plan for future communication is to:	
We will abide by the confidentiality rules we choose, and establish boundaries/ limits either party would like to impose. These are:	
We will agree on some objectives for the mentoring relationship. These are:	
Our contact information is as follows (remember to note when you are NOT available also):	
Mentor:	
Mentee:	

Mentor Signature:	Mentee Signature:
(Print name)	(Print name)
Date	Date

Mentoring progress record

The mentoring progress record is a useful place to note down what has happened in a meeting, telephone conversation, or a batch of emails. Apart from being a good way to remember what was discussed and what you have agreed to do, it is a useful review document to see how the mentee has progressed. It is also a useful reflection tool for both mentor and mentee as it allows them to think through how their interaction went, and what they might do differently next time.

Date dialogue took place and location (if face to face)	
Which topics were covered?	
How do these relate to the mentees objectives?	
What was concluded?	
What action was agreed (include any deadlines)?	By mentor?
	By mentee?
Any reflections on the mentoring dialogue (what went well/ not so well)	
Is there anything I should do differently next time?	
Date and location (if face to face) of next dialogue	
Items for Agenda	

MentorSET

Independent mentoring – MentorSET

Women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) can also find an independent mentor (i.e. outside their place of employment or study) through a UK-wide mentoring scheme called MentorSET.

MentorSET is a project of the Women's Engineering Society and sponsored by the UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology.

MentorSET is person-focused scheme which aims to support women wishing to return to work after a career break or wanting to achieve a better work life balance, as well as those hoping to progress their career. MentorSET was set up in 2002 and has now successfully supported hundreds of women. MentorSET runs introductory workshops to prepare women for the mentoring relationship and carefully matches mentors and mentees. The scheme is free to both mentors and mentees. Mentees must be UK residents, working in STEM or wanting to return to a STEM career.

Women can apply online to take part in the scheme at www.mentorset.org.uk or email info@mentorset.org.uk

"MentorSET matched me really well with my mentor and I couldn't be happier," says Dr Nicola Smith, Post-doctoral fellow in Biomedical Research working at the University of Glasgow. *"My first meeting with my mentor changed my entire post-doctoral experience. I was able to see the positives and negatives of my professional situation. I really felt like I was floundering before that meeting and went away with a new perspective and set of goals. Where once I was ready to quit and head back to Australia, I now can't imagine being anywhere else. I owe a lot of that change to my mentor."*

What the UK Resource Centre for Women in SET can offer

The UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology has the expertise and resources to help organisations, associations and other bodies to set up their own women-only mentoring programmes in SET. We can also discuss an organisation's current mentoring programme and give advice on how to make it more attractive and accessible to women.

We can assist by running pilot mentoring programmes for the organisation's female employees or members, and the organisation can designate staff members to help so that they too learn how to run a programme. We also offer a "train the trainers" package for in-house mentoring coordinators so that they will be able to undertake the whole process of setting up and running a mentoring programme, including delivering the mentoring training, for themselves.

Please contact the UKRC at info@ukrc4setwomen.org or ring 01274 436485 to find out more.

Other mentoring publications from the UKRC and its partners are listed below. All can be found at www.ukrc4setwomen.org including a list and links to useful resources and organisations offering help.

- Breaking the Barriers: Good Practice in Mentoring
- JIVE: How to Guide – Mentoring
- A Guide to Mentoring Female Academics – Equality by Degree Transnational Partnership

This guide is part of a series of publications produced by the UKRC that identify and describe good practice in recruiting and retaining women in science, engineering and technology. The guides complement other services and products available through the UKRC. They can be downloaded from the UKRC's website www.ukrc4setwomen.org.

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