THE LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

Mentoring guidance 2024-25

For Academic, Research, Policy, Education Career Track (ECT) staff who are on probation and LSE Fellows (post-doctoral)

1. Introduction

The School expects that all staff and particularly those in the early stages of their career will receive good advice from their Head of Department (HoD)/Research Centre Director (RCD)/Institute Director (ID) or other senior colleagues on progressing their careers. While staff are expected to be proactive in managing their own careers, the School has in place two approaches to structuring these conversations:

- a [Career Development Review (CDR)](#) scheme
- a [Mentoring scheme](#) (this applies to early career staff as explained below)

This guidance applies to the following staff groups, with additional notes for specific staff groups where applicable:

- Academic staff
- LSE Fellows (post-doctoral)
- Research staff
- Policy staff
- Education Career Track (ECT) staff who are on probation

2. The purpose of the mentoring scheme

The mentoring scheme is distinct from the CDR scheme. Mentors give informal advice as needed and provide a sounding board throughout the year, whereas formal CDR meetings take place annually for most staff and are normally conducted by the HoD/RCD/ID.

Both aim to give staff guidance on how to make the most effective use of their career within LSE both for their own development and to ensure their contribution to the School as a whole.

3. The process

Mentors are allocated by the HoD/RCD/ID. At the start of the academic year, HR will send all departments/centres/institutes a list of staff who should be allocated a mentor that session. The department/centre/institute will review the list and ensure that it is correct and provide HR with the name of the mentor for each member of staff. Mid-year,

HR will also send departments/centres a list of new starters who should be assigned a mentor.

New staff should be allocated a mentor no later than one month after their start date, and the HoD/RCD/ID should notify Human Resources that this has been done. The VCAC will receive a regular report on assigned mentors and follow up if a mentor has not been allocated.

Mentors for pre-Major Review academic staff are reported to the Promotions Committee at its first meeting of each session.

4. Who should have a mentor?

The following groups of staff, regardless of the length of contract, should be assigned a mentor by their HoD/RCD/ID. For research staff, this should be in discussion with the Principal Investigator (PI) for the project:

	Academic staff:	LSE Fellows:	Research staff:	Policy staff:	Education Career Track (ECT) staff that are on probation
Roles	Pre-Major Review academic staff	All post-Doctoral LSE Fellows	Research Officers Research Fellows Assistant Professorial Research Fellows	Policy Officers Policy Fellows Senior Policy Fellows	Assistant Professors (Education) Associate Professors (Education) Professors (Education)

Additional notes:
- If the employee is 0.2FTE or less, mentoring is optional. A discussion should be held with the employee about whether or not they would like to be allocated a mentor.
- Other staff not listed above, may request a mentor via the HoD/RCD/ID – there is no requirement to send this to HR
- Departments/centres/institutes may also wish to assign mentors for Band 5 Research Assistants, but are not required to send this information to HR.

5. Who should be a mentor?

The mentor will normally be a senior member of academic/research staff within the staff member's department/centre/institute or a related department/centre/institute (for example if they are closest to the mentee's research interests). Please note:
- The mentor cannot be the one holding the CDR meeting

- Staff on any form of leave should not normally be appointed as mentors.
- **ECT staff:** the mentor should not be the person undertaking Probationary Review Meetings (where this is different).
- **Research staff:** the PI should not be the mentor.

6. The mentoring relationship

In order that mentees are able to make the most of mentoring, the relationship should be a positive and trusting one. The HoD/RCD/ID should be mindful of this when allocating new mentors.. A mentee can request that they are allocated a different mentor by the HoD/RCD/ID, although for logistical reasons, this may not always be possible. Equally importantly for the mentoring relationship to work, mentees must not place unrealistic expectations on their mentor and must not over-burden them with demands.

The mentor will assume responsibility for regularly discussing the staff member's career and provide advice on their career development.

7. Frequency of meetings

All mentors are expected to arrange a first meeting with new colleagues allocated to them. In the first year after appointment, meetings should take place once per term, after which they can take place as and when needed, although not less than once annually. Given the nature of mentoring, it is expected that mentors and mentees will have regular informal meetings.

8. The role of the mentor

The role of the mentor is three-fold:

- to assist the mentee in developing an understanding of the expectations placed upon them within the department and the School;
- to provide a listening ear and informal guidance to the mentee, so that they can work out how to address any challenges they face at work;
- to act as an advocate for the mentee (e.g. if their workload allocation appears unreasonable, or if they face difficulties with other colleagues in the department).

9. Areas of discussion that may arise

To some extent, the mentor relationship has similarities to coaching. It is important that the relationship is professional and the mentor should feel able to offer criticism and advice which the mentee, whilst encouraged to listen carefully, is not obliged to take.

The matters which fall within the scope of mentoring will depend on the individual. While not intended to be prescriptive, such matters may include:

- Achieving an appropriate balance between the different elements of the person's role.
- Issues arising from writing, research, dealing with journals and publishers etc.
- Reading and commenting on draft papers/chapters and offering guidance on publication outlets (mentees must be aware that mentors can only do so for a small number of writings).
- Challenges from teaching
- Responding to challenging feedback from students, colleagues or reviewers.
- Addressing issues related to diversity of all kinds with students and colleagues.

- Wider contribution to the life of the School, collegiality and citizenship.
- Managing one's administrative load.
- Training and development needs.

Further areas of discussion for specific staff groups is provided below.

Academic staff:

- Research performance, with particular consideration of the individual's research trajectory, research achievement record, publication record and guidance on where to publish, contribution to the Research Excellence Framework, involvement in grant funding applications and engagement more broadly in the research community in the School, as well as in the discipline.
- Teaching contribution, teaching quality and teaching innovation (be that curricular or teaching process innovation), and feedback from teaching surveys.
- PhD supervision (note: pre-Major Review staff should not be expected to take on a primary supervisor role for research students, but should have the opportunity to develop their supervisory skills as a second supervisor).
- Research and teaching administrative arrangements and contributions.
- Wider contribution to the academic life of the School, collegiality and citizenship.
- Potential for contribution to the School's external activities (e.g. Enterprise LSE, Summer School, international institutional links).

Research staff:

The duties of a mentor include checking that the researcher has a well-framed programme on which progress is being made, and ensuring that their programme offers good scope for the development of their research interests and techniques, while not being so time consuming as to leave no opportunity for further study, research and writing. Further areas of discussion may include:

- Methodology of research and structure of programme
- Methods of addressing research problems and improving quality of outcomes
- Personal relationships with colleagues
- Administrative responsibilities and work-life balance
- Individual staff development needs
- How to publish successfully
- Where to go for further support, advice and information

In addition, mentors/mentees are strongly encouraged to discuss issues related to continuity of employment. Because most research staff posts depend on external funding, it is crucial to consider well in advance what steps can be taken to avoid an undesired termination of employment due to the end of funding. Mentors should be able to give constructive advice on managing this issue, e.g. about how to balance current work obligations in the School with the need to apply for additional research funding from external sources. Mentees who have concerns about continuity of employment issues are strongly encouraged to raise these with their mentors (as well as with their HoD/RCD/ID/PI), so that as much advice as possible can be available to the researcher.

Policy staff:

- Methodology of policy-oriented research and structure of work programme
- Methods of addressing policy-oriented research problems and improving quality of outcomes

- Personal relationships with colleagues
- Administrative responsibilities and work-life balance
- Individual staff development needs
- How to publish successfully
- Where to go for further support, advice and information

In addition, mentors/mentees are strongly encouraged to discuss issues related to continuity of employment during mentoring sessions. That is, because most policy fellow staff posts depend on external funding, it is crucial to consider well in advance what steps can be taken to avoid an undesired termination of employment due to the end of funding. Mentors should be able to give constructive advice on managing this issue, e.g. about how to balance current work obligations in the School with the need to apply for additional research funding from external sources. Mentees who have concerns about continuity of employment issues are strongly encouraged to raise these with their mentors (as well as with their HOD/RCD/ID/PI), so that as much advice as possible can be available to the staff member.

ECT staff:

- Teaching contribution, teaching quality and teaching innovation (be that curricular or teaching process innovation), and feedback from teaching surveys.
- Teaching administrative arrangements and contributions.
- Achieving an appropriate balance between the different elements of the role.
- Teaching quality and teaching innovation (be that curricular or teaching process innovation), and feedback from teaching surveys.
- Potential for contribution to the School's external activities (e.g. Enterprise LSE, Summer School, international institutional links).
- Administrative responsibilities and work-life balance

10. What the mentor is NOT responsible for

The mentor is very much a 'guide on the side'. It is not their role to line manage the mentee, and the mentor is not responsible for the mentee's career success within the School. In particular, mentors cannot make commitments to the mentee on behalf of the department/centre/institute regarding the mentee's likelihood of passing Interim or Major Review or the prospect of a successful promotion. This advice must come from the CDR meeting and review and promotion decisions are ultimately taken by the Promotions Committee. Equally, it is up to the mentee to decide what s/he does with any advice offered.

11. Further advice

Where necessary, the mentor should seek guidance/advice from others (e.g. if concerned about the mentee's health/well-being).

In some cases, it may be appropriate for the mentor to advise the mentee to discuss detailed matters with other colleagues in the department/centre/institute and/or to contact colleagues elsewhere in the School (e.g. Eden Centre, Research and Innovation, Human Resources or the Careers Service). Staff can also contact their area's allocated HR Partners should it be necessary (e.g. for guidance related to disability, flexible working, caring responsibilities), or their union (if they are a member, for example of the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU). There is also a Staff Counselling Service available at the School.

12. Mentoring skills

Effective mentoring is about building a supportive relationship based on listening, mutual respect and trust. It requires skill and sensitivity on both sides.

The mentor can build this relationship through:

- Establishing initial expectations on both sides.
- Being available at times agreed.
- Listening.
- Being open to answering questions.
- Drawing on experience and offering models – be it in research or teaching (e.g. encourage the new member of staff to come to observe you teach, see your materials, read your articles, share your reviewer feedback etc before asking to see theirs).
- Offering insight.
- Being willing to question and challenge the mentee to reflect on their work.
- Sharing networks/contacts.
- Being willing to give both positive encouragement and critical constructive feedback.
- Seeking/giving feedback on the mentoring relationship – and agreeing when this relationship comes to an end.

The mentee also needs to work at this relationship through:

- Indicating what you expect from the mentoring relationship.
- Being available at times agreed.
- Coming with questions/ideas/things to explore and discuss.
- Having ideas on objectives and ways forward.
- Listening.
- Being ready to adapt – both yourself and the ideas you gain from your mentor.
- Being willing to accept both positive encouragement and critical constructive feedback.
- Giving/seeking feedback on the mentoring relationship – and agreeing when this relationship comes to an end.

The mentor should feel able to offer criticism and advice which the mentee, whilst encouraged to listen carefully, is not obliged to take.

13. Further development for mentors

The School offers support for new and existing mentors, such as mentoring development sessions. Further information is available here. A helpful tips document for mentors and mentees is also available here.

14. The role of documentary materials in the mentoring relationship

There are no written requirements related to mentoring, or any necessity for the mentor or mentee to share documents. However, if both are agreeable and have time, there may be benefits from sharing:

- Research papers (including reviewer feedback and how this is handled)
- A brief email log of matters discussed.

15. Monitoring and implementation

The VCAC, in conjunction with the Pro-Director (Faculty Development) and Human Resources, is responsible for oversight and implementation of the mentoring scheme and for reporting on any issues to the relevant committees for example, the Promotions Committee, Research and Policy Staff Committee and Appointments Committee.

Review schedule

Review interval	Next review due by	Next review start
Annual	01/06/2025	01/05/2025

Version history

Version	Date	Approved by	Notes
1	01/09/2023	Appointments Committee	-

Contacts

Position	Name	Email	Notes
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Communications and Training

Will this document be publicised through Internal Communications?	**No**
Will training needs arise from this policy	**No**
If Yes, please give details -	