

University of the West of England Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme (WRMS)

Handbook



November 2019

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchstaffsupport/womenresearchersmentoring.aspx>

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Introduction

The [Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme \(WRMS\)](#) is a dynamic scheme that aims to promote equality and facilitate professional development for women researchers. Following the successful Pilot in 2012 the Scheme was endorsed by the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. The Scheme enables mentees to receive encouragement, support and advice from a more experienced colleague to help overcome obstacles to career progression, realise potential and fulfil career aspirations. We aim to cultivate a supportive university network through which women researchers can learn by example, receive encouragement, support and advice and access the necessary knowledge, skills and resources to advance their careers and achieve their potential.

The Scheme is open to women working in research and academic roles and aims to redress some of the gender imbalances at senior levels in HEIs and promote opportunities for career advancement.

The rationale behind the Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme is to put women researchers in contact with other more experienced researchers. A mentoring scheme of this kind is one method of providing support to female staff to develop and strengthen their research portfolio thereby promoting equal opportunities for researchers. In the longer term it is anticipated that such a scheme will help to achieve the strategic aim of increasing the number of women in University senior roles and enhancing the research careers of women.

Why mentoring for women?

Historically, women have had less access to mentoring relationships than men. This may be because those employees senior enough to take on the mentoring role have traditionally been men and therefore have been likely to choose younger men to mentor. In addition to this, women tend to face different sorts of professional challenges to men.

Furthermore, the statistical under-representation of women in many university schools and departments can lead to women employees feeling isolated in male-orientated work environments. Many women employees are excluded where there is a male-dominated culture and this can lead to personal problems and professional inhibitions. In particular women's confidence and ability can be undermined by working in such circumstances and this potentially puts them at a professional disadvantage and leaves some women employees unable to fulfil their potential.

The Greenfield Report recommends mentoring as a key tool for increasing the participation and progression of women working in male-dominated organisations. Mentoring is widely recognised as one of the most effective ways of enhancing the development of staff, helping to overcome obstacles to career progression and enabling them to achieve their goals. It is the fastest growing and most proven method of professional development in working environments today.¹

The Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme has been developed and rolled out in an attempt to address these inequalities and bring about positive change.

¹ Clutterbuck Associates

Why the introduction of a mentoring scheme is important?

The University employs slightly more women than men in Senior Lecturer roles. In academic roles at grade I there are more men than women, 52% compared to 48% women. In grade J roles in 2015 there were more men than women at grade J, 62% compared to 38% women. At a senior management level, the trend continues however there is an increased number of women than at grade J (46% women compared to 54%).

Although the proportion of women in grade I, J and senior level roles is still less than half the population at each grade, the number of women in these grades had increased over the previous two years.

In the REF 2014 the gender profile of those entered is also revealing. From the available data 41% of those entered were women and 59% were men. In most subject areas more men were entered than women.

The University's research strategy is currently under review and equality issues will be considered as part of this process. In recognition of development needs of our researchers the Vice Chancellor's Early Career Researchers Scheme also requires early career researchers to have a mentor.

The Human Resources Strategy has equality and diversity as one of its key strands and specifically it also highlights the imbalance of men and women in senior roles.

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Aims and objectives of the WRMS

One of the central aims of the WRMS is *to make a positive difference for both individuals and the institution.*

Based on recognition of mentoring as an important tool for promoting professional development, the Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme aims to help promote the professional development of women researchers at UWE. The Scheme is open to women working in research and academic roles at all grades.

WRMS sees mentoring as a powerful tool for personal development. By placing women in carefully matched, mutually beneficial mentoring partnerships, we hope to improve access to opportunities for women researchers and empower them to fulfil their career ambitions and create positive changes at UWE.

During the pilot year we offered a specified number of mentoring opportunities to women staff who were new to research as well as more experienced academic staff who wished to develop their careers. Experienced researchers were invited to take on mentoring roles and training was provided for mentors and mentees. The Scheme entailed a nominated woman researcher being matched to a mentor, who could be a woman or man. Another aim of these relationships is for both the mentee and the mentor to get a mutually beneficial

professional development opportunity. We hope that the WRMS will help create a culture where high aspirations and professional success and advancement for women working in UWE is 'the norm'.

What is mentoring?

One definition of a successful mentoring relationship is:

A helpful relationship, based on mutual trust and respect, which gives an individual the opportunity to overcome obstacles to career progression and to become proactive in maximising on learning and development opportunities.

The best mentoring relationships tend to develop between two individuals working in a similar field or who share similar experiences or personal circumstances.

WRMS favours a developmental mentoring approach. Developmental mentoring can be described as a more holistic approach than coaching. It encourages reflection, personal growth and insight as a means to achieving professional objectives.

Mentoring Relationship

WRMS works by assigning women staff an experienced mentor who may or may not be from the same discipline. Participation in the scheme is voluntary but may be seen as part of a broader staff development programme.

We feel strongly that a successful mentoring relationship needs to be given space to grow and develop and to reflect the individual needs of the mentee and mentor. Accordingly the WRMS works on a relatively flexible basis. Participants in the scheme will be able to negotiate with each other how the mentoring relationship will work.

We anticipate that most mentoring relationships would last for 12 months. However, if for any reason the mentoring partnership needs to end before the 12 months this can be accommodated. For more information, please see the section [Concluding the mentoring relationship](#) below.

Participants are free to arrange their own mentoring meetings in accordance with their individual schedules. Similarly, it is left to the individual pairs to agree on how many meetings take place and whether meetings take place face-to-face, via telephone or email, or make use of other technology such as video conferencing. We do, however, suggest that a minimum of four mentoring meetings takes place during the year. We believe that the optimum number of meetings would be six during this period and recommend that they are 1 – 2 hours long. *The Scheme also places the onus on the mentee to arrange the mentoring meetings.*

Whilst a certain degree of formality is necessary (for example to match pairs fairly, arrange the workshops and accurately measure outcomes) our feeling is that we must maintain a degree of informality and flexibility in order to:

- Allow relationships to develop organically and without undue supervision or intrusion
- Make the Scheme responsive and customisable to the needs of the participants

- Cultivate a relaxed, open and approachable culture that is receptive to changing circumstances

We hope that the Scheme will continue to develop and that some mentees might like to go on and become mentors to share their knowledge and expertise with other staff in the future.

Benefits of mentoring

It is our belief that the WRMS offers significant professional benefits to mentors, mentees and the institution and as such constitutes a unique opportunity to effect positive change for all involved parties.

Benefits for the mentee

There are a variety of reasons for a female employee wanting to work with a mentor. These reasons can include needing advice on:

- Leadership skills
- Assertiveness
- Time management
- Public speaking and presentations
- People management
- Balancing work and family life
- Returning to work after a career break
- Maximising networking opportunities
- Career progression
- Identifying learning and development needs
- Dealing with isolation in a male-dominated sector
- Developing a research portfolio

Mentoring offers on-the-job support, career advice and access to networks and organisational knowledge that can help employees advance their careers and improve their chances of promotion. Other benefits for mentees can include:

- Increased self-confidence, motivation and assertiveness
- Improved research, personal and career development skills
- Career enhancement and encouragement to apply for senior positions
- Critical self-appraisal
- Focused career-planning
- Enhanced networking opportunities
- Better relationships with other HEI staff
- Reduced feelings of isolation in male-dominated departments
- Access to experienced 'role models'
- Feeling of being valued and encouraged to reach their full potential in terms of research
- Encouragement to submit more bids for research grants
- Developing strategies for overcoming obstacles to career progression
- Opportunity to attend a mentoring workshop

It should also be noted that the WRMS operates on a 'mentee-led' basis and is primarily focused on research activity. This means that whilst a mentor can provide support, guidance and encouragement which, if followed, may assist career progression, the mentor cannot do the work on behalf of the mentee.

Benefits for the mentor

The mentoring relationship can also be a very valuable learning experience for the mentor. Benefits of the scheme for mentors can include:

- Helping develop the potential of others
- Improved relationships with colleagues
- Enhanced interpersonal and people management skills
- Personal satisfaction
- New perspectives
- Improved listening, coaching and support skills
- Better understanding of staff needs, particularly early career research staff, and issues affecting departments outside their home faculty (or university)
- Opportunity to attend a mentoring workshop

Benefits for the institution

Benefits for the University may be summarised as:

- Demonstrating the commitment of the University to improving opportunities for women staff to develop their research portfolios and careers
- Assisting the University to meet its obligations under the 'gender duty'
- Strengthening the University's research profile through the support of early career researchers and research staff
- Assisting staff to reach their full potential
- Assisting with staff retention
- Enhancing professional development opportunities for all staff
- Developing mentoring skills which could be called upon in the preparation of external bids for early career researchers
- Strengthening networks between UWE and its neighbours.

It is our belief that the WRMS offers significant professional benefits to mentors, mentees and the institution and as such constitutes a unique opportunity to effect positive change.

Who can be a mentor?

WRMS actively encourages diversity and equality of opportunity and recruits potential mentors from all departments across UWE. A mentor will be expected to have substantial professional experience. However, this does not mean that you necessarily have to be at the top of your profession to be a mentor or to hold a senior position. WRMS defines a 'mentor' as a suitably experienced person who is willing to help another, less experienced person by acting as a guide. If you feel you have valuable experience to share with other women employees and would be interested in taking a key role to positively develop the careers of others then we encourage you to apply.

Being a mentor does not have to require a substantial time commitment and all meetings are arranged independently between mentee and mentor and around individual schedules. The mentor will assist the mentee to achieve their own goals and work through career-related issues by being:

- Patient and encouraging
- An effective listener
- Committed to helping colleagues develop to their full potential
- Willing to share knowledge
- Able to offer feedback in a way that challenges the mentee and promotes growth

Applying to be a mentor

The recruitment of good mentors is absolutely integral to the success of the WRMS programme.

- Are you a good listener who is able to encourage and advise others?
- Are you interested in challenging and helping someone to reach further?
- Are you prepared to invest time and effort?
- Are you willing to share your personal knowledge and experiences?
- Can you keep matters confidential?
- Can you help another researcher achieve success?
- Are you committed to promoting equality for women researchers?

If you can answer yes to these questions then we believe that you would make an excellent mentor.

Male members of staff are welcome to apply to become mentors.

WRMS aims to pair mentees with mentors from across UWE and where possible from a different Faculty or Department. This is seen as a key advantage of the scheme, as mentors would not usually be a mentee's line manager or appraiser.

Applying to be a mentee

Participation in a mentoring scheme can be an enjoyable and highly effective way of developing your professional skills and of increasing your chances of fulfilling your potential as a researcher. Are you:

- Interested in advancing your career?
- Aiming to enhance your research profile?
- Able to take active responsibility for your own development?
- Open to receiving constructive criticism and feedback?
- Willing to accept challenges?
- Committed to working through employment issues?
- Able to set and achieve goals?
- Prepared to make changes?

If you can answer 'yes' to these questions then you will benefit from working with a mentor.

Completing the application form

We have designed the application form to be quick and easy to complete and in order to ensure the best possible mentoring pairing there are some key questions that we ask. Please try and answer all questions as honestly and in as much detail as possible: the more information we have about you, your research and your career the easier it is for us to make successful and mutually beneficial mentor/mentee pairings.

The reasons for employees applying for mentoring can be various but may include seeking support and advice on specific issues. These issues could include returning to work after illness, working in a male-dominated environment or balancing a successful career with family commitments. It is our aim to make highly compatible mentor/mentee pairings.

We do not ask for references for prospective mentees or mentors. However, it is a condition of applying to the WRMS to have the full support of the relevant Head of Department/Line Manager to partake in the scheme. Please ensure your Head of Department/Line Manager confirms their support and provide their name on the application form.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further queries about the application process. [Access to the online application forms for the next application cycle will be available from 3 December 2019 for both Mentors and Mentees.](#)

Mentor application form – please email Fiona.watt@uwe.ac.uk for access to the online system.

Mentee application form - please email Fiona.watt@uwe.ac.uk for access to the online system.

The matching process

When an application for mentoring is received the applicant's details are entered into the WRMS private database. The WRMS Co-ordinator and Matching Panel then review the application to determine whether a suitable mentor/mentee match can be made. In determining mentor/mentee pairings emphasis will be placed on the similarity of the mentor's expertise and experience with the stated career aspirations and key priorities for the mentee.

It is important that we gain as much information as possible on each applicant and their reasons for applying to the Scheme in order to enable us to make the most suitable mentor/mentee pairing. The WRMS team will strive to match everybody that applies, so we welcome as much detail as possible on the application form.

If a mentee wishes to change their mentor after matching has taken place, a secondary matching meeting would be arranged approximately 4 weeks after the initial one. Mentees would then be expected to meet with the proposed mentor for an initial meeting and if the relationship does not proceed, mentees would need to wait for the following year to be matched again. Any decisions regarding change of mentors would be made by the Matching Panel and requests processed via the WRMS Co-ordinator.

Preparing for participation in the WRMS

All mentors and mentees who apply and have the support of their Line manager/Head of Department will be invited to a specifically designed WRMS workshop event. The workshop will be an opportunity for participants to explore what mentoring might mean, ask questions about the scheme and to establish realistic expectations for the mentor/mentee relationship. Participants will also be encouraged to think about drawing up guidelines to promote a successful relationship and to consider what they expect from their first meeting, amongst other preparations. Mentees in particular can prepare for the mentoring relationship by identifying areas in which they would like support and considering what issues they would like to raise with their mentor at the first meeting.

Workshops

The half-day workshop run by the scheme is compulsory for all [mentees](#) and highly recommended for [mentors](#), whether or not they have been involved in the scheme in previous years. This workshop aims to help mentors enhance their mentoring practice and reflect on the value of their role. The workshop aims to introduce mentees to the scheme and outline expectations. In addition, this is a vital opportunity for all those participating in the scheme to network with each other, learn about the importance of women progressing in research roles and the support available, and share experiences and ideas. As part of your application you will be asked to identify which workshop you would like to attend. We look forward to seeing you there!

The workshop dates for 2020-21 are:

Tuesday 3 March 2020, 1.30pm-4.00pm and Thursday 12 March 2020, 10.00am-12.30pm.

You will be asked to select one preference on your application form.

Meeting your mentee/mentor

Once inductions are completed the onus will be on the [mentee to make contact with the mentor](#) and arrange an initial meeting. We anticipate that mentor/mentee pairings will meet once every six to eight weeks over a year. We would expect a minimum of four meetings to take place over the course of the mentoring relationship. It is recommended that these meetings are 1 – 2hrs long. However, arrangements for meetings are left to the discretion of the individual pair and more meetings may take place by agreement.

Similarly, mentoring meetings might take place through various means. We would expect the matched pair to meet in person on at least one occasion, but mentoring meetings might also take place via telephone, video-conferencing, Skype or email. Again it is left to the discretion of the mentor/mentee pair to establish how they would prefer to conduct mentoring meetings. The space and location of meetings should be considered, the feedback from the Pilot suggested that it is advisable to hold meetings away from the immediate work environment in order to protect the mentoring time. The university has a [room booking service](#) which will allow you to book rooms on all UWE campuses.

In response to the comments from the participants in the Pilot we developed a [meeting proforma](#) to help you structure your mentoring meetings. The proforma can be a useful

reminder of objectives you set at the beginning and a log of any actions agreed. This will be covered in more detail at the workshop.

Mentoring Agreement and confidentiality guidelines

Mentors and mentees will be able to develop their own agreement about how the mentoring relationship will develop and how confidentiality issues will be addressed, however there are general guiding principles that the mentors and mentees need to be mindful of. These will be covered in the workshop.

If there are any issues that arise during your mentoring relationship you are unsure about please contact the Scheme Co-ordinator. Some helpful information can also be found on the HR website, such as Dignity at Work and other policies.

Concluding the mentoring relationship

It is important to have an appropriate conclusion to the mentoring relationship and recognition of what has been achieved. It is an extremely important part of the programme as it allows both parties to review the journey and consolidate what has been learned.

It is expected that the mentoring relationship will end at the 12 month point with a final evaluation get together. However, it is recognised that mentoring relationships may finish earlier.

The Mentor and Mentee may at any time before the Scheme ends, for whatever reason, decide to terminate their participation in the Scheme. It is important to give written notice of such a decision to the Scheme Co-ordinator as soon as possible. No reason needs to be given but it would help the Co-ordinator to evaluate the effectiveness of the Scheme if reasons are outlined.

Administration, monitoring and evaluation

The WRMS is managed by a Scheme Co-ordinator in collaboration with a member of the HR Team. A small Steering Group oversees the success and development of the Scheme. A list of the Steering Group members is provided at the end of this booklet.

The Scheme Co-ordinator is also available to answer questions and provide information and will offer help to resolve any other issues. The Scheme Co-ordinator will remain in contact throughout the mentoring relationship to check on progress and to ask for feedback at set points during the scheme.

The purpose of this is to allow us to:

- a) Gauge how you think your mentoring relationship is progressing
- b) Assess if we need to make any changes to the project administration or logistics
- c) Generate some feedback on how the project has been received
- d) Receive critical feedback and suggestions for change and improvement

Approximately half-way through the year we will organise a get together for all the participants. This will be an informal session designed to enable the mentors and mentees to share their experience, discuss progress and be part of a wider network of mentors and mentees. An end point session will be organised to mark the end of the year and the cohort. In addition, there may be specific training workshops organised for WRMS mentors and mentees on subjects such as applying for funding, publication advice and career progression.

The Scheme will be monitored by the Scheme Co-ordinator and the Steering Group who may from time to time ask you for feedback. The Steering Group will provide annual reports to the UWE Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee, as well as updates to the Athena Swan Steering Group, as and when required.

Contact Information

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide some further information on the Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme. However, it is not exhaustive and the WRMS is constantly developing and expanding. If you have any further questions, queries, comments or suggestions for WRMS then please contact:

Fiona Watt
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Website:

<http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/research/researchstaffsupport/womenresearchersmentoring.aspx>

Steering Group and Matching Panel Composition



Laura Fogg Rogers
(Chair)
Senior Research Fellow
Science Communication Unit



Pam Fitzsimmons
(Deputy Chair)
Organisation and Learning
Development Manager



Associate Professor Jane Andrews
Associate Professor in
Education



Professor Sue Durbin
Professor in Human Resource
Management



**Professor Phillippa
Diedrichs**
Professor of Psychology



**Associate Professor
Gareth Edwards**
Associate Professor of
Leadership Development



**Associate Professor
Harriet Shortt**
Associate Professor in
Organisation Studies



Professor Carol Jarvis
Professor in Knowledge
Exchange



**Professor Jessica
Lamond**
Professor in Real Estate and
Climate Risk



**Professor Marie Mulvey-
Roberts**
Professor of English Literature



Professor Mandy Rose
Director of Digital Cultures
Research Centre



Fiona Watt
WRMS Scheme Co-ordinator

Membership and Terms of Reference

Membership: Laura Fogg Rogers (Chair), Jane Andrews, Phillippa Diedrichs, Sue Durbin, Gareth Edwards, Pam Fitzsimmons, Carol Jarvis, Jessica Lamond, Marie Mulvey Roberts, Mandy Rose, Harriet Shortt

Purpose

The Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme Steering Group and Matching Panel oversee the running of the Women Researchers Mentoring Scheme. This includes the selection of mentors and mentees from annual applications, and the matching process of mentees and mentors from applications and an existing bank of mentors.

Terms of reference

Membership is both for the Steering Group and the Matching Panel. There are two meetings of the Steering Group and one of the Matching Panel during each academic year. Maximum size of the group is 12 members. Potential new members shall be nominated by current members and voted in at a meeting of the Steering Group by the majority. In the case of a deadlock result, the Chair(s) shall have the casting vote. Attention should be paid to a balance of representation from all Faculties when changes to membership are made. Members must notify the Chair and the Scheme Co-ordinator six months in advance of their wish to step down. Quorum is one third of eligible members.

Key responsibilities of the two groups are detailed below.

1. Developing and agreeing the Scheme documentation and processes, including the matching criteria
2. Promoting the Scheme to relevant people across the University
3. Reviewing applications and matching mentees to mentors
4. Agreeing mechanisms for ill-matched pairs to exit and dealing with breakdown of a mentoring relationship
5. Developing and agreeing evaluation methodology
6. Monitoring and evaluating the success of the Scheme
7. Improving and developing the Scheme to meet future needs
8. Decisions on membership of the group, including nomination of new members.

The Steering Group reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee via an annual report from the Chair.

(Updated November 2019)

Useful links and resources

- Mentor Net - <http://www.mentornet.net/> - an e-mentoring scheme for students and post-docs
- <http://www.setwomenstats.org.uk> UK Resource Centre for Women: a useful page containing links to many other sources of mentoring information (not exclusively for women)
- [The Coaching and Mentoring Network](#)
- [The European Mentoring and Coaching Council](#) - promotes international good practice