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| Name of Policy | Mentoring of Academic Staff Policy | |
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| Description of Revision | | |
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Human Resources Directorate

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1. Introduction

Australian Catholic University, through its *Revised Strategic Plan 1999-2008*, *Learning and Teaching Plan 2006-2008* and *Research Management Plan*, aspires to quality learning and research outcomes in accord with the University's Mission and ethos. Consistent with that aspiration, this policy¹ defines mentoring and provides a framework for academic staff mentoring across the University.

Mentoring represents a confidential, non-reporting relationship that is a valued element in the array of University staff development methods. Responsibilities for performance management are distinguished from those of mentoring relationships.

While traditionally, mentoring has been understood as a more experienced person guiding and sponsoring a less experienced person, there are now a variety of definitions of mentoring. However, there is agreement that it involves the following elements. Mentoring is:

- a collaborative engagement,
- voluntary,
- centred around an agreed expectation(s),
- mutually valuable.

Many existing mentoring arrangements reflect good practice and mentoring has the potential to serve a variety of functions in the context of the University's strategic objectives. As part of the collegial activity of 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 this policy, establishes principles, expectations and structures for mentoring relationships to occur for staff at all levels.

Emerging theory and practice highlight several issues concerning mentoring programs as follows:

- three principles seem to be generally agreed as critical to the success of any proposed mentoring programs:
 - institutional commitment;
 - institutional recognition of staff who undertake the role of mentor; and
 - 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;
- formalised mentoring engenders a strong sense of collegiality and ownership by communities of practice;
- mentoring programs, which focus on assisting mentees to "know why, know how and know who" lead to enhanced career outcomes for these staff members.

A select bibliography on mentoring is provided at Attachment 1.

2. Purposes 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. The purpose of this policy is to provide a common framework, based upon best practice principles, to support the design of new, and the continuing development of existing, mentoring arrangements at Australian Catholic University.

¹ This Policy has been developed taking account of the relevant published policies from a number of Australian universities, including the following Charles Sturt University, Latrobe University, Monash University, University of Queensland, University of Sydney, University of Western Australia, as well as the material listed in the bibliography (Attachment 1).

The mentoring process recognises:

- the inextricable link between teaching and learning, and research and scholarship;
- that staff members have multiple roles and need to be nurtured in all roles;
- the importance of sharing ideas and encouraging innovation;
- 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
- that mentoring is particularly important for new members of staff to facilitate their transition into the academic life of Australian Catholic University.

3. The Benefits of Mentoring

Benefits of mentoring have been identified for institutions, mentors and mentees.² 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:

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

For the mentee, the identified benefits have been found to include:

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

4. Objectives of the Policy

The specific objectives of the policy are to:

- identify mentoring as a valuable and valued element of the staff development framework;
- emphasise that mentoring is a relationship that is entered into and developed voluntarily;
- 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;
- 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;
- support and encourage the growth of more strategically managed mentoring activities within individual organisational units and across the University as a whole;
- 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;
- benefit the mentor by providing an opportunity to develop his/her leadership capacity when undertaking the role of a mentor; and
- contribute to the enhancement of the University's performance, in accordance with its *Revised Strategic Plan 1999-2008*, by embedding mentoring into a range of University processes such as:

² A. Britnor Guest (2001) "Organisational Mentoring" *The Professional Women International Newsletter*. Spring.

- 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.

5. 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 organisational 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.

6. Relationship of Mentoring to Staff Appraisal and Performance Management

Faculty Deans, Heads of Schools and 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.

7. 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 emphasises 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.

Australian Catholic University supports a view of mentoring as 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.

Dependent upon the context and purpose of any mentoring program, some variability in the mentor role might be expected. However, fundamental elements include:

- providing guidance to the mentee on negotiating the agenda for discussions within the relationship;
- acting as a “sounding board” and confidante;
- listening and facilitating;
- sharing expertise and experience; and
- providing information on further professional contacts as appropriate.

It is expected that designated mentors will, *inter alia*, represent and convey to mentees for whom they are responsible the mission, ethos, values and strategic aims of Australian Catholic 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.

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:

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

8. 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:

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

9. Process of Mentoring³

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:

Exploring the possibility of working together

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

Building the relationship

- Parameters of the relationship
- Building it in mutuality, trust and productivity

Negotiating the arrangement/agreement

- Goals and objectives
- Logistics
- Confidentiality
- Measurement strategies for the process and outcomes
- Process for reflection

Mentee/mentor development

- Monitoring the learning process and outcomes
- Sharing resources and networks
- Determining levels of planning and spontaneity

Ending the formal relationship

- Measurement of outcomes
- Appreciative feedback
- Future pathways and options

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 Pro-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 work area. Should further advice be needed, the staff member should contact the Director, Learning and Teaching Centre.

³ This material has been adapted from the work of L. Phillips-Jones (see bibliography at Attachment 1 for the reference).

Attachment 1

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⁴ This select bibliography, with an accent on Australian references, was assembled primarily from the following:

- (i) a bibliography made publicly available by the library at Charles Sturt University and accessible at <http://www.csu.edu.au>;
- (ii) a web-based resources search using <http://www.scholar.google.com>;
- (iii) A. Devos (2005) *Mentoring, Women and the Construction of Academic Identities*. PhD Thesis, University of Technology Sydney.

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<http://www.growconnect.com.au/mentor.html> – an Australian commercial consultancy group specialising in developing mentoring programs.

www.unisa.edu.au/staffdev/resources/mentoring.doc – the University of South Australia Organisational Learning and Development Mentoring Resource Kit.

<http://www.itl.usyd.edu.au/community/mentors.htm> – University of Sydney Institute of Teaching and Learning, Mentoring in Academic Communities.

<http://www.mellish.com.au/TrainingDevtCourses/mentoring.htm> – an Australian commercial consultancy group.