



MENTORING CIRCLES

Supporting Research Staff
in the Medical Sciences

www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/mentoring-circles



Mentoring Circles support research staff across the Division by encouraging self-reflection, increasing networking opportunities, and providing access to senior researchers outside of mentees' home departments.

With one senior mentor and three or four mentees, Mentoring Circles are proving a great way of allowing researchers to meet others from outside their department and giving them the space to discuss issues outside of their immediate research project.



“Meeting people from other departments and hearing both new perspectives on my situation and similar concerns to mine makes me feel less alone.”

“Great to have ‘neutral’ feedback from people in a similar situation. Often it is surprisingly useful to simply describe a problem and (with advice) arrive at a series of possible actions.”

How much time will I have to commit?



Mentoring Circles should run initially for a 12 month period (or for at least four meetings) but the relationship may continue by mutual consent. Face to face meetings should be agreed upon and scheduled at the first meeting.

Sessions should be held at a mutually convenient location, which can be the mentor's office and should generally last for at least an hour. Individual meetings will be available at the discretion of the mentor; however, please note that the mentor is not obliged to offer this to their mentees.

Mentees in a circle are encouraged to meet more regularly and peer to peer mentoring can also take place between meetings via email to sustain the momentum of the meetings and support each other through any specific concerns.



“It was useful to have time away from work, and in a supportive environment, to reflect on personal and career goals.”

Resources



The following pages provide some prompts and tools to help guide your thinking or for you to use in the sessions.

P10: SMART Objectives

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P18: Support Services and Advice

P19: Societies and Networks

P20: Career and professional Development

Other resources and links can be found at

www.ox.ac.uk/supportforresearchers

[www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/research/resources for researchers](http://www.medsci.ox.ac.uk/research/resources_for_researchers)

SMART Objectives



The best way to make the most of mentoring is to make sure that you set yourself concrete goals, ideally at the end of each meeting. Ask yourself whether your actions are:

Specific – rather than ‘I want to improve my relationships with colleagues’, say ‘I want to improve my relationship with Prof Blogs by leaving our monthly meetings with a set of actions with which we are both happy’.

Measurable – rather than ‘I’ll publish more’, ‘I’ll publish two articles’

Achievable – is it possible? You might want to deliver five lectures to improve your teaching experience, but do there exist the opportunities to do so?

Realistic – it’s good to have aspirations, but if you’ve delayed for this long taking on extra management responsibilities are you sure you’ll be able to do so now? Perhaps there is something else stopping you.

Time-bound – Perhaps the most important one: give yourself a deadline, and ask your mentoring circle to keep you accountable!

SWOT Analysis



A SWOT analysis is a way to think about your strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats associated with them. It can provide a good starting point for discussion and tease out some actions you might consider taking. Text adapted from www.mindtools.com

Strengths

Consider your strengths individually and in relation to the people around you. If having a particular skill is a job requirement then it may be more of a necessity than a strength. Don't be modest – be as objective as you can.

- What do you do better than anyone else?
- What do other people (and your boss, in particular) see as your strengths? (If you don't know, perhaps you could ask them?)
- Which of your achievements are you most proud of?

Weaknesses

- What tasks do you usually avoid?
- What are your negative work habits (for example, are you disorganized, or are you poor at handling stress)?
- What skills do you need to develop?

SWOT Analysis



Opportunities

- Do you have any contacts who can help you, or offer good advice? How could you add to that?
- Is there a need or gap in the research that no one is filling?
- Are there any networking events, classes, or conferences that you could attend?
- Could you take on some any extra projects or responsibilities in your current role?

Threats

- What obstacles do you currently face at work?
- Is your job (or the demand for the things you do) changing?
- Could any of your weaknesses lead to threats?

Strengths

Weaknesses

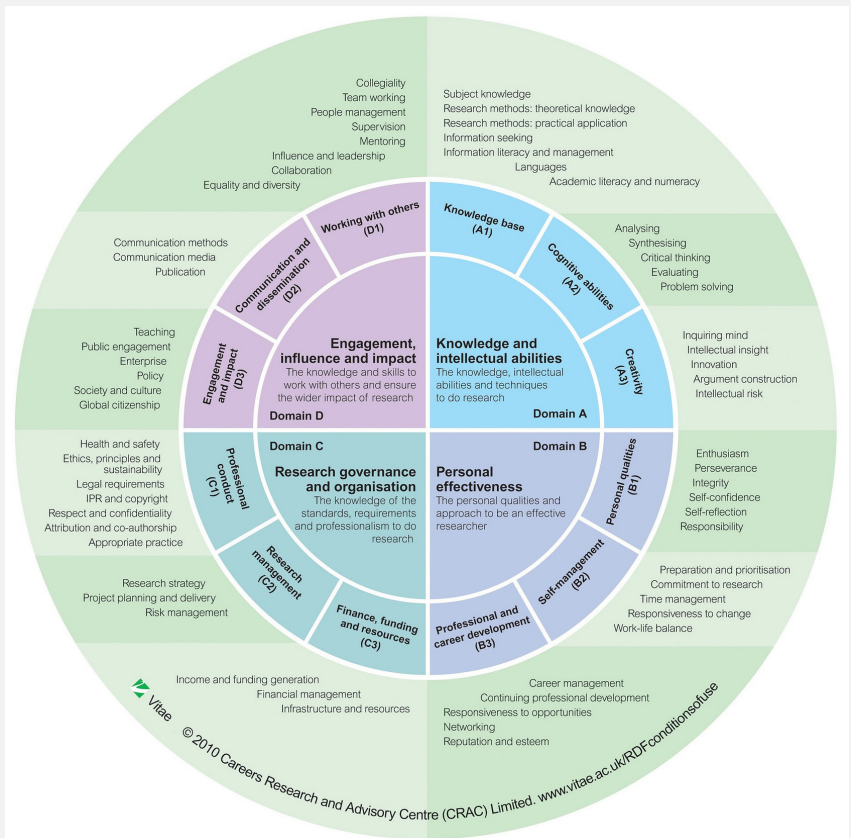
Opportunities

Threats

Researcher Development Framework



The descriptors and areas of the framework can help you to think about the various skills and experience that you will have as a researcher. What would you like to develop more, either because you want to be more confident or because you need it for your career development (or both)? Why haven't you done so yet?



Record of Discussion: Meeting 1



Area Identified:

Actions:

Support Needed:

Record of Discussion: Meeting 2



Progress since last meeting:

Area Identified:

Actions:

Support Needed:

Record of Discussion: Meeting 3



Progress since last meeting:

Area Identified:

Actions:

Support Needed:

Record of Discussion: Meeting 4



Progress since last meeting:

Area Identified:

Actions:

Support Needed:



