

Guidelines for the Mentor Programme

Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna

Background

Mentoring is “a professional relationship in which a more experienced person (a mentor) voluntarily shares knowledge, insights, and wisdom with a less-experienced person (a mentee) who wishes to benefit from that exchange” (National University of Singapore, n.d.). Mentoring involves motivating, encouraging and supporting mentees to reach their potential, and plays an important role in personal and professional development.

Mentoring is increasingly formalised in professional settings. In academic medical programmes, formal mentoring is associated with greater student satisfaction, self-esteem, self-confidence, improved performance and training outcomes (Frei et al., 2010; Ong et al., 2018).

The Mentor Programme at the Faculty of Medicine commenced in 2014 with the 36th Batch of medical students. This document outlines the structure of the revamped Mentor Programme, which will commence for the 44th Batch of medical students in 2022.

Objectives

The objectives of the Mentor Programme are to:

1. Improve student wellbeing;
2. Enhance personal and professional development;
3. Motivate students to be engaged in academic and social activities at the Faculty;
4. Sensitise students to the available opportunities and resources; and
5. Provide career counselling and guidance.

Mentor Programme Committee

The Mentor Programme will be placed under the purview of the Student Welfare and Wellbeing Committee (SWWC). A coordinator will be nominated by SWWC. The coordinator, in consultation with SWWC, will nominate the Mentor Programme Committee (MPC), and forward the list of nominees to the Faculty Board for approval. The MPC will be responsible for the implementation of the Mentor Programme and will work according to its terms of reference.

Mentors

Mentors will comprise faculty members (confirmed lecturers and above) and external members. The latter group may include consultants and Grade 1 medical officers working in Jaffna District, subject to approval of the Faculty Board.

Nomination and appointment of Mentors

As mentors will perform a dual role as mentors and Personal and Professional Development Stream (PPDS) supervisors, the MPC will nominate mentors in consultation with the PPDS Advisory Committee.

The Coordinator will contact prospective external mentors to assess their interest in participating in the programme. A list of willing external mentors will be forwarded to the Faculty Board for approval before the admission of each batch of medical students.

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Academic staff (confirmed lecturers and above) and the Board-approved list of external mentors will comprise the mentors for a given batch.

All mentors will be formally appointed by the Dean. The mentor and mentee guidelines and the Handbook for Mentors will be annexed with the appointment letter. These documents will clearly state the Faculty's expectations of a mentor and PPDS supervisor, and will include the Mentor's Pledge (Annexure 1).

The number of mentors will depend on the willingness of external mentors to participate in the programme. Ideally, a pool of about 100 mentors will be required for the successful implementation of the Mentor Programme. Recruitment will be an ongoing activity.

The MPC will consider involving student mentors once the Mentor Programme is established.

Mentor role

A mentor is expected to:

- Listen, encourage, and support;
- Guide, advise, and counsel;
- Promote and supervise personal and professional development;
- Identify students needing additional support and direct them to the required services/support;
- Empower mentees to achieve their potential;
- Motivate mentees to set and achieve career and life goals; and
- Serve as a role model

Mentor training

Mentors will be invited to participate in a workshop on mentoring.

Guidance for mentors

A handbook for mentors outlining the Faculty's expectations of their role as well as documentation, follow up and referral procedures, will be circulated among all mentors. The handbook will be reviewed and recommended by the Curriculum Development and Evaluation Committee (CDEC), and then forwarded to the Faculty Board and Senate for approval.

A code of conduct for mentors will be developed.

Assignment of mentees and initial contact

A mentee is a registered student of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna.

Students of the incoming batch will be assigned mentors as early as possible after they register at the University of Jaffna. The Dean's Office will send a letter informing students regarding the Mentor Programme, and connecting the students with their mentors. This communication will include the mentee guidelines and the Mentee's Pledge (Annexure 2).

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While mentors will be expected to initiate communication, mentees will need to proactively communicate with their mentors subsequently, as stated in the Mentee's Pledge. The mentor will serve in this capacity during the mentee's five-year period at the Faculty.

Mentor-mentee introduction and meetings

Mentors and mentees are expected to meet during the introductory period, and communicate at least once a term, or more frequently, if necessary.

A designated space will be made available for mentor-mentee meetings at the Faculty of Medicine. Mentors who do not have office space at the Faculty may request to use this space.

Documentation, follow up and referral

Documentation of meetings and follow up will be the responsibility of mentors; guidance will be provided in the Handbook.

Mentors should inform the Dean confidentially regarding students who need close follow up. Referral of students with problems of a serious nature should be in writing through the Dean. These confidential communications will be filed and maintained at the Dean's Office.

Mentors will be requested to complete an annual assessment of progress of each mentee.

Mentees will be requested to evaluate the Mentor Programme at the end of: the first term, first year, Phase 1, and Phase 2.

When mentor moves out of Jaffna

In the event that a mentor unexpectedly needs to leave Jaffna for a prolonged period (≥ 6 months) and cannot continue mentoring, they should inform the Coordinator in writing through the Dean. The Coordinator will assign the mentee, either temporarily or permanently, to another mentor.

Ending the mentor-mentee relationship

The mentor-mentee relationship may be terminated at any time on the request of the mentee, mentor, or, under exceptional circumstances, by the MPC. The written request should be forwarded to the Coordinator through the Dean. The Coordinator will attend to the task confidentially and assign a new mentor as soon as possible.

Mentor Programme evaluation

The Mentor Programme will be evaluated in the graduate exit survey that is conducted by the Medical Education Unit (MEU).

Submitted by the Mentor Programme Committee, Faculty of Medicine, University of Jaffna, to the Faculty Board for consideration.

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Annexure 1: Mentor's pledge

As a mentor, I will oversee the leadership, professional, career and personal development of my mentees. I will motivate, encourage and support my mentees to the best of my ability. In doing so, I will actively take on the following responsibilities:

- I will work with my mentees to set realistic goals to develop their leadership, professional, career, and personal competencies.
- I will supervise my mentees' personal and professional development.
- I will respect the confidentiality of the mentor-mentee relationship.
- I will actively listen and have an open mind.
- I will ask probing questions to encourage forward thinking.
- I will stimulate discussion, analysis, and creativity through our interactions.
- I will act as a sounding board rather than attempt to provide solutions.
- I will provide objective and impartial guidance.
- I will provide feedback, advice and suggestions, when requested.
- I will empower my mentees to deal with mistakes and setbacks.
- I will respect the aspirations of my mentees, even if they differ from my own.
- I will work with my mentees to help them build self-confidence and motivation.
- I will help my mentees to expand their networks.
- I will meet my mentees at least *once a term*.
- I will maintain a professional relationship with my mentees *at all times*.

(Adapted from the Mentoring Handbook of the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore)

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Annexure 2: Mentee's pledge

As a mentee, I am dedicated to learning, developing and growing. In doing so, I will actively undertake the following obligations:

- I will assess my leadership, professional, career, and personal development needs and set mutually agreeable goals with my mentor.
- I will reflect on what, where, when and how to achieve my goals.
- I will embrace new challenges with a positive attitude and open mind.
- I will accept feedback from my mentor and reflect on the suggestions made.
- I will openly and honestly communicate with my mentor.
- I will share answers/solutions to any issues or barriers that may become present during the mentoring relationship.
- I will initiate and maintain contact and arrange meetings when necessary.
- I will respect my mentor's time.
- I will communicate with my mentor at least *once a term*.
- I will maintain a professional relationship with my mentor *at all times*.

(Adapted from the Mentoring Handbook of the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, National University of Singapore)