Being a Successful Academic Mentee

Institution: NWU | Optentia — North-West University

Campus: Vanderbijlpark Campus

Type of Offering: Short Course

Duration: 8 weeks (Hybrid: Contact & Online)

Language: English

Recognition: Certificate of Successful Completion, issued by North-West University

Cover Description

Academic life can be challenging, demanding, and at times overwhelming — especially in the early stages of your career. This short course prepares early-career and establishing academics to enter a mentorship relationship with clarity, confidence, and purpose, so they can get the most out of one of the most valuable developmental opportunities available to them.

Purpose of the Course

This short course is designed to prepare potential academic mentees for a meaningful and productive mentorship relationship. Early-career and establishing academics are increasingly seeking guidance in navigating the demands of academic life, and many seek out mentors with the relevant experience, exposure, or achievements to guide them.

The course is designed to:

- Familiarise potential academic mentees with the concept of mentorship, how to approach a mentorship relationship, and how to gain maximum benefit from it.
- Give participants the opportunity to critically think about, identify, and articulate why they are pursuing a career in academia, what their career values and aspirations are, and how they can achieve their goals while maintaining their well-being.
- Help participants clarify their expectations of the mentorship relationship and develop strategies for tracking its effectiveness and progress.
- Equip participants to engage as active, reflective, and purposeful mentees — not passive recipients of guidance.

By the end of the course, participants will have completed test-your-knowledge quizzes and developed an evaluated portfolio they can use as a practical foundation in their mentorship relationship. The programme ultimately provides early-career and establishing academics with the readiness they need to enter a mentorship relationship and gain the most from the journey.

Who Should Attend

This short course is aimed at early-career and establishing academics who are preparing to enter, or are currently engaged in, a mentoring relationship. It is particularly suited to academics who are new

to the higher education environment, transitioning into more senior academic roles, or seeking structured support to navigate the demands of academic life more effectively.

It is also appropriate for academics who want to make the most of an existing mentoring relationship by developing a clearer understanding of their own role, responsibilities, and growth areas as a mentee.

Admission Requirements

Minimum Qualification: It is recommended that participants hold at least the minimum qualifications required for an academic position — most likely at least an Honours degree.

Learning Assumed to Be in Place: Completion of the NWU orientation programme, as well as a basic understanding of and interest in academic work.

Skills You Will Develop

Through this short course, participants will develop the following key competencies:

- Self-Awareness and Professional Identity — understanding your values, career motivations, and what drives you as an academic.
- Understanding the Academic Environment — navigating the structures, demands, and expectations of higher education institutions.
- Mentee Effectiveness — knowing how to engage purposefully and productively within a mentoring relationship.
- Capability and Well-being Management — applying a capabilities model to manage demands, resources, and personal functioning.
- Intentional Change and Growth — developing and applying a personal model of change to manage the transitions inherent in academic and professional development.

Course Structure

The short course is structured across four modules, delivered over 8 weeks in a hybrid format combining contact sessions and online learning.

Module 1: The Academic Work Environment

Introduces participants to the higher education landscape and the contextual factors that shape academics' experiences in HEIs. Participants develop an integrated understanding of the demands, structures, and expectations of academic work — including teaching and learning, research, community engagement, and institutional navigation. This foundational module helps participants understand the environment in which their mentoring relationship will take place and equips them to engage with it more effectively.

Module 2: Capabilities and Functioning of Academics in Higher Education

Explores a capabilities model that considers demands, resources, and conversion factors affecting the agency, achievements, health, and well-being of academics. Participants critically examine a model that links contextual variables, conversion factors, capabilities, and functioning, thereby

developing a deeper understanding of their own professional identity, strengths, and well-being need4s. This module provides participants with the self-knowledge required to engage meaningfully in a mentoring relationship.

Module 3: Being a Mentee — Preparing for a Mentorship Relationship

Guides participants through the responsibilities, expectations, and practical requirements of being a mentee in a formal academic mentorship relationship. Participants explore the concept of mentorship, how to approach and engage in a mentoring relationship, and how to maximise the benefit of the experience. They also reflect on their career values and aspirations, clarify their expectations of the mentoring relationship, and develop strategies for tracking its effectiveness and progress.

Module 4: Navigating Change — Towards a Personal Model of Intentional Growth

Equips participants with a personal model of intentional change to help them manage the professional and personal growth that typically arises during a mentoring relationship. Participants develop and apply their own model of change as an academic mentee — learning to navigate transitions, manage uncertainty, and grow with clarity, confidence, and purpose. This module ensures that participants leave the course not only ready for mentorship but ready for the growth that comes with it.

Assessment

Formative Assessment: Multiple-choice tests completed throughout the course to reinforce learning and monitor understanding.

Summative Assessment: A mentorship portfolio to be completed one month after completion of the programme. The portfolio will be evaluated against specified criteria by three independent evaluators.

Certification: A Certificate of Successful Completion is awarded by North-West University upon satisfactory completion of all requirements.

Contact Details

Subject Matter Expert and Course Leader

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