SHORT COURSE: BUILDING YOUR PATH TO PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Institution: NWU | OPTENTIA — North-West University

Campus: Vanderbijlpark Campus

Type of Offering: Short Course

Duration: 40 hours over 8 weeks (Hybrid: Contact & Online)

Language: English

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

Cover Description:

This short course is designed to assist support staff before, during, and after a mentorship relationship, providing essential insights and tools to make the most of a mentoring opportunity..

ABOUT THIS SHORT COURSE

Support staff play an essential role in the functioning and success of higher education institutions. They contribute significantly to creating and maintaining an environment that enables teaching, learning, research, and community engagement. However, the demands of support roles can often be complex, fast-paced, and stressful — particularly for those new to the sector or transitioning into more advanced responsibilities.

Mentoring programmes have shown great value in helping support staff navigate their roles more effectively. These programmes offer guidance in developing professional skills, building confidence, improving performance, and understanding the institutional context in which they work.

This short course is designed to assist support staff before, during, and after a mentorship relationship. It provides essential insights and practical tools to help participants make the most of a mentoring opportunity. The course offers an introduction to the higher education environment and a better understanding of the capabilities and contributions of professional and administrative staff in such settings.

Mentees will be guided through the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of a mentee within a mentorship relationship, helping them prepare for a meaningful and empowering journey. Finally, the course introduces mentees to a personal model of intentional change, equipping them to manage the professional and personal growth that typically occurs during a mentoring process — navigating change with clarity, confidence, and purpose.

PURPOSE OF THE COURSE

This course is aimed at preparing potential support staff mentees for a meaningful and productive mentorship relationship. Support staff in higher education — particularly those in the early stages of

their careers or transitioning into new roles — are increasingly seeking guidance to navigate the complexities of their work environments. Many seek mentoring relationships with experienced colleagues who can offer practical insights, professional guidance, and encouragement.

The general outcomes of the course include:

- Familiarising potential support staff mentees with the concept of mentorship, how to engage in a mentorship relationship, and how to derive maximum value from the experience.
- Encouraging participants to reflect critically on their current roles, professional identity, and long-term career aspirations within the higher education context.
- Helping participants explore their values, goals, and what success means to them, while learning strategies to maintain their well-being in a dynamic work environment.
- Guiding participants in clarifying their expectations of the mentorship relationship and developing practical ways to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness and progress.

Participants will be required to demonstrate their understanding through interactive quizzes and the submission of a structured portfolio, which they can use as a foundation throughout the mentorship journey.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND

This short course is aimed at professional and support staff at higher education institutions — particularly those who are in the early stages of their careers or transitioning into new roles. It is suitable for anyone preparing to enter a mentorship relationship who wants to gain the most value from the experience and invest meaningfully in their own professional growth and development.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Minimum Qualification: National Senior Certificate (NQF Level 4)

Work Experience:NNo specific prior experience required.

SKILLS YOU WILL DEVELOP

Participants will develop the following key skills:

- Self-Awareness and Reflection — Understanding personal strengths, values, and career goals.
- Effective Communication — Engaging in constructive conversations and articulating development needs.
- Critical Thinking — Analysing challenges and opportunities in the workplace with clarity and insight.

- Goal Setting and Planning — Defining clear, achievable objectives for career and personal growth.
- Relationship Building — Developing and maintaining supportive, professional mentorship relationships.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The short course is structured across four modules:

Module 1: The Higher Education Work Environment

Introduces participants to the higher education landscape and the contextual factors that shape the experience of professional and support staff. Participants develop an understanding of the institutional environment, the roles and contributions of support staff, and the broader forces that influence their work. This foundational module prepares participants to engage meaningfully with the mentorship relationship and their own professional context.

Module 2: Capabilities and Functioning of Professional and Support Staff

Explores a capabilities model that considers demands, resources, and conversion factors affecting the agency, achievements, health, and well-being of support staff. Participants critically examine a model that links contextual variables, conversion factors, capabilities, and functioning — deepening their self-understanding and their ability to articulate their development needs within the mentorship relationship.

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

Guides participants through the expectations, roles, and responsibilities of a mentee in a formal mentorship relationship. Topics include understanding what mentorship is and how it works, how to engage effectively as a mentee, how to reflect on personal professional identity, career aspirations, values, and goals, and how to clarify and communicate expectations to the mentor. Participants also develop strategies for monitoring and evaluating the progress and effectiveness of the mentorship relationship.

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

Introduces participants to a personal model of intentional change, equipping them to manage the professional and personal growth that typically occurs during a mentoring process. Participants develop a personalised model of change applicable to their own mentorship journey and learn strategies to navigate transitions — including new roles, shifting responsibilities, and evolving career goals — with clarity, confidence, and purpose.

ASSESSMENT

Formative Assessment: Short-answer questions and assignments completed throughout the course, including interactive quizzes, to reinforce learning and monitor progress.

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

Pass Requirement: 50% — Sub-minimum of 45% for re-examination.

Certification:

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

CONTACT DETAILS

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