SHORT COURSE: MENTORING FOR UNIVERSITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Institution: NWU | OPTENTIA — North-West University

Campus: Vanderbijlpark Campus

Type of Offering: Short Course

Duration: 40 hours (Hybrid: Contact & Online)

Language: English

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

About This Short Course

No short courses were found that specifically prepare support staff mentors in higher education institutions within developing country contexts. While some individuals may naturally possess mentoring qualities, effective and impactful mentorship does not happen by chance — mentoring is a skill that requires intentional development.

This short course is designed to support staff mentors in understanding and embracing their roles more confidently and competently. Through training, support staff mentors will gain clarity on what it means to be a mentor: someone who listens actively, supports growth, encourages reflection, and facilitates development. Crucially, mentors will learn to avoid over-assuming responsibility for their mentees' development and instead focus on empowering mentees to take ownership of their growth journey.

This course makes the concept of mentorship concrete by offering practical tools, shared language, and structured guidance. By providing all mentors — whether experienced or new — with equal access to foundational training, the course helps to level the playing field and foster consistency and fairness across mentoring relationships.

Skilled support staff mentors play a key role in helping mentees adjust to the institution, navigate complex administrative systems, and grow professionally. Effective mentors serve as role models — demonstrating strong interpersonal skills, institutional knowledge, and professionalism. They are often well-networked and sensitive to the diverse needs of mentees, helping promote inclusive and respectful workplace environments.

This course aims to prepare support staff mentors to engage in transformative mentoring relationships that contribute to the growth, well-being, and professional success of their mentees — and, in turn, to a more collaborative and thriving institutional culture.

Purpose of the Course

The purposes of this mentorship course are as follows:

- To develop the knowledge, skills, and capabilities of support staff mentors so they can effectively assist mentees in understanding the higher education support environment and what is expected of them.
- To enable mentors to create a work environment that fosters capability development and supports the optimal functioning of their mentees.
- To deepen understanding of the content, processes, and dynamics of effective mentorship relationships.
- To equip mentors with tools to develop their own change facilitation model, enabling them to support mentees in navigating transitions and challenges in their professional journeys.
- To enable mentors to apply their knowledge and skills to conduct mentorship conversations that promote growth, resilience, and confidence — conversations that lead to better outcomes.

Formal training provides participants with a clear understanding of the mentoring relationship, including how to manage expectations, build trust, and engage in productive and respectful communication.

Who Should Attend

*This short course is primarily aimed at experienced professional and support staff at higher education institutions who are committed to professional development and who may have completed a foundational development programme for mentors. It is designed to strengthen their capacity to guide others, contribute to a culture of learning and development, and build supportive, inclusive institutional communities.

Admission Requirements

Minimum Qualification: National Senior Certificate (NQF Level 4)

Work Experience: At least four years of experience as a professional or support staff member at a higher education institution.

Skills You Will Develop

Participants will develop the following key skills:

- Active Listening — Engaging with empathy and understanding to support mentee development.
- Constructive Feedback — Providing clear, respectful, and growth-oriented guidance.
- Mentorship Planning — Structuring effective and goal-focused mentoring relationships.
- Emotional Intelligence — Navigating interpersonal dynamics with awareness and sensitivity.
- Facilitation of Change — Supporting mentees through professional transitions and development.

Course Structure

The short course is structured across five modules:

Module 1: Understanding 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 and evaluate a model explaining the contexts and effects on support staff in HEIs.

Module 2: Capabilities and Functioning of Professional and Support Staff

Explores a model of capabilities that considers demands, resources, and conversion factors to understand and promote the agency, achievements, health, and well-being of support staff. Participants critically explain how contextual variables, conversion factors, capabilities, and functioning are linked.

Module 3: Support Staff Mentoring — The Essentials

Provides foundational knowledge and practical skills for effective mentorship. Participants learn a model of interpersonal competence, how to plan and structure mentorship sessions, and how to conduct mentorship conversations that are supportive, goal-focused, and growth-oriented.

Module 4: Mentorship Conversations — Building Trust and Growth

Focuses on the dynamics of effective mentoring conversations. Topics include applying a model of change management to mentoring, conversations that inspire, mentoring with compassion, building personal vision, cultivating resonant mentoring relationships, and creating a culture of mentorship within the institution.

Module 5: Guiding Change — Towards a Model of Supportive Development

Addresses the range of transitions commonly experienced by support staff in HEIs. Participants learn how to support mentees in planning further studies, managing career development, navigating institutional structures, achieving work/life balance, developing professional communication and key competencies, and building professional networks.

Assessment

Formative Assessment: Short-answer questions and assignments completed throughout the course to reinforce learning and track progress.

Summative Assessment: A 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.

Contact Details

Subject Matter Expert

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