

# Mentoring Policy for the Master of Nutrition and Dietetics (MNutr) programme



University of  
Nottingham  
UK | CHINA | MALAYSIA

## Introduction

“Mentoring has been defined as supporting and encouraging people to manage their own learning in order that they may maximise their potential, develop their skills, improve their performance and become the person they want to be.”  
(Parsloe, 1995)

Mentoring should be a positive supportive non-judgemental relationship, which is usually driven by the mentee and in which the mentee is empowered to take responsibility for their own development. The role of the mentor is to act as a guide, supporter and sounding board. Part of this role is to help build the student’s self-confidence, initiative and resilience during their placement. The aim is to create a confidential partnership between two people, based on understanding and trust.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### The Mentor should:

- Be available for the full placement
- Be not directly involved in training the student, i.e. regular supervision, feedback and assessment
- Have an awareness of the support services available for students, both locally and at the UoN
- Be non-judgemental and able to listen with an open mind
- Have good pastoral skills, e.g. approachable, empathetic, respectful, supportive, encouraging, motivating and tactful
- Encourage discussion about specific issues, e.g. personal health and well-being, challenging situations, relationship between the student and practice educators, and feedback
- Enable students to reflect on different perspectives and potential solutions to challenges
- Be committed to supporting the student
- Attend the University of Nottingham (UoN) Mentor training session if they are new to mentoring UoN students or they have had a break from student mentoring for 3 years or more

### The Student should:

- Agree to meet with the mentor
- Be respectful and professional towards the mentor including being punctual for meetings
- Be open to developing a relationship with the mentor
- Be willing to share information, thoughts, experiences and concerns honestly and openly
- Reflect and discuss different perspectives and potential solutions with their mentor, and then be prepared to actively work towards resolving the situation

## **Conduct of Meetings**

The mentor and student should meet at the start of the placement and maintain regular contact (approx. every 3 weeks) throughout the placement, e.g.:

- a minimum of 4 meetings within a 12 week placement, or
- a minimum of 2 meetings during a 8 week placement

Dates should be planned in advance and additional meetings arranged if required. Meetings should be non-optional, booked in advance and in a location that is private without interruptions.

Meetings should last for approximately 30 minutes, up to a maximum of 1 hour.

## **Confidentiality**

All meetings are confidential and no information should be shared without the student's permission. If, however, the mentor is concerned about the student's health or well-being, or the student discloses something that the mentor believes may be detrimental to the student, a member of staff, a service user or a member of the public, the mentor has a duty of care to inform others.

The mentor should discuss the nature of the concern with the student and that the mentor has an obligation to breach confidentiality. This includes an explanation of the action that will be taken, who will be involved and the timescales. At a minimum, the concerns should be discussed with the student training lead (and the placement tutor, if appropriate).

Note-keeping of discussions is not recommended. However, if you choose to keep mentoring records, these will be subject to your local information governance policies and procedures. It is good practice to copy the student in to relevant mentor-related email correspondence.

## **Mental Health**

Being on placement can be stressful for students. A student's mental health may be affected by their physical health, family, relationships, bereavement and/or financial pressures, as well as concerns relating to performance on placement. It is important that students are encouraged to maintain good mental health and well-being, e.g. enough rest and sleep, healthy eating practices, regular exercise, socialising, etc.

If the student or the mentor notices that the student is becoming increasingly anxious or stressed, students should be encouraged to seek early support and advice through existing networks or the UoN (see Useful Resources below). If the mentor has serious concerns about the student's mental health and well-being, then the mentor has a duty of care to inform others (refer to Confidentiality section).

## **Shared Placements**

In some cases a student will complete a placement which is shared between different departments/organisations. Ideally, students should keep the same mentor throughout their placement. However, where this is not possible (for geographical reasons), students should be allocated a mentor for each part of a

shared placement. To ease transition for the student and begin to develop relationships early on, the mentor for the latter part of the shared placement should make contact the student at the start of their B or C placement.

Local arrangements should be made about the appropriate methods of communication between mentors. Unless concerns about the student have been raised, it is not expected that mentors share information about the student. It is good practice to discuss 'hand-over' arrangements with the student to find out their preferences for continuity of mentor support.

### **Useful Contacts:**

- UoN Practice Education webpages:  
<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/dietetic-practice-education/index.aspx>
- Charlotte Line – Student Welfare Officer, School of Biosciences:  
[charlotte.line@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:charlotte.line@nottingham.ac.uk)
- UoN Mental Health and Wellbeing advice and support:  
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/currentstudents/healthy/mental-health/bodymind.aspx>
- UoN Counselling Service:  
<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/counselling/student-counselling/student-counselling.aspx>
- UoN Student Services (incl. academic and disability support, and financial services):  
<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/student-services/support/supportforyourstudies/academic-support/index.aspx>

### **References:**

Parsloe, E. (1995) *Coaching, Mentoring and Assessing: A Practical Guide to Developing Competence* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition): London, Kogan Page.