Why?

- Disorientation among MSc, PhD students and junior faculty staff,

- Line management does not provide the type of guidance needed,

- Sitting between chairs,

- #MeToo, competition, bullying at work and burnouts increase → pre-emptive, counteracting, raising awareness,

- Increasing job satisfaction and inspiring content and peacefulness,

- Passing on experience and skills,

- "Pay back" for the good oneself has received from others.
Mentorship?

Relationship: More *experienced* or more *knowledgeable* person helps to guide a less experienced or less knowledgeable person. A *learning* and *partnership* development between someone with vast experience and someone who wants to learn. Mentorship experience and relationship structure affect the amount of *psychosocial* support, *career guidance*, *role modelling* and *communication* that occurs in the mentoring relationships in which mentees and mentors *engage*.

Wikipedia

Precise definition is elusive ...

Academic Mentoring?

Academic Mentoring provides sequential, *guided discussion* and *fosters mentee reflection* about individual *educational* and *career path* issues. Research shows that guided discussions of issues that impact mentees’ *sense of control* over their *academic outcomes* enhance overall work success.

Otis College of Art and Design

The goal is to promote *academic* and *personal development* among new or recently appointed academic staff by *connecting* them with others who can advise, coach, guide.

Supporting academics as they move from *novice* to *competence*.

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What Mentoring Is Not ...

- Coaching or any other in-house training,
- A compulsory, formalised programme,
- A parallel line-management system undermining authority,
- An option for evading uncomfortable decisions and tasks,
- An alternative to supervisory committees, medarbetarsamtaler,
- A trade union approach,
- A channel for making complaints.

What Is Mentoring Then?

Independent facilitator taking a professional interest in developing another person’s career and well-being without personal agenda: Sharing guidance, experience and expertise.
Role of a Mentor

▶ Help set short-term and long-term goals,
▶ Act as guide to help build skills and expand vision,
▶ Help navigate inner workings of the University,
▶ Open doors of opportunity,
▶ Direct to resources,
▶ Facilitate networking,
▶ Provide feedback on teaching and research.

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Mentor-Mentee Partnership

Mentee selects mentor or is matched with a mentor based on best fit,
Mentee calls for meetings (“mentees must take ownership of the process”),
Mentor guarantees strictest confidence at the discretion of both parties, professionalism and integrity,
Mentor inspires ethical behaviour, role models and peaceful solutions of mutual benefit,
Mentoring is separate from other SLU processes, e.g. probation, promotion, medarbetarsamtal.
Mentoring Focus

Whatever the focus, the mentee decides. Options include:

- Time management and career development,
- Develop intra- and interdisciplinary networks at SLU and internationally,
- Devising scientific ideas and research visions,
- Publications pipeline, targeting external funding, teaching & research portfolio,
- Balancing/prioritising academic tasks, editorial experience,
- Research trends and frontiers, team-building & interpersonal skills,
- Job applications and conflict management.

Place and Time

- Book a pleasant meeting room with a transparent door or walls,
- Place a table between mentor and mentee,
- Offer off-campus meetings in difficult situations, e.g. a café,
- Aim for a time when both are not too tired,
- In difficult situations invite an independent witness,
- No mobile phones, emails etc. Listen!
How Did it Go So Far?

- Learning by doing,
- Formerly part of a research school, now independent,
- 10 mentees since 2017,
- MSc, PhD, researchers,
- Mixed nationalities,
- Mixed gender,
- Positive stories,
- Raising awareness among senior SLU staff.

What Were the Meetings about?

- Majority: Career development,
- Two cases of conflict management,
- Several meetings about the meaning of science and research,
- One case about the general question, academic career or working outside university,
- One case on proposal writing.
Forms and Formalities?

- This may defeat the purpose (relaxing atmosphere, safe space, confidentiality),
- The mentee's call,
- An academic mentor committee can prepare forms but voluntary use.

Example from a UK research mentoring programme (around 2005):

- Current position in terms of research outputs and indicators of esteem for next RAE,
- Reflect on your research aspirations, potential. Any world class output?
- Outputs, indicators in the pipeline? Priorities.
- Targets for next 12 months. Reflection on these, threats, assistance? Comments on mentoring meeting.

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Process of Mentoring Programme

Partnerships are not necessarily from same faculty; emeritus staff may help out.

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Conclusions and Suggestions

- No doubt this is important,
- Education Department takes lead supported by central SLU,
- Important, but low-intensity process based on volunteers,
- Induction courses offered by Education Department; offered also as DL option,
- I am happy to help out with the design and implementation.