**Ethical Guidelines for Mentoring pairs**

The mentoring relationship, acting either as a mentor or a mentee, may present you with a number of issues or dilemmas. Often, there are no easy or obvious solutions and there may be no clear-cut sense of 'right' or 'wrong'.

The aim of these simple guidelines is to highlight a set of behaviours which might impact upon the mentoring relationship or, indeed, when using mentoring/coaching techniques in other situations.

**Responsibility**

The onus is on both mentor and the mentee to be aware that their behaviour has the potential to negatively affect the mentoring relationship.

Confidentiality of the identity of the person being mentored

Confidentiality involves preserving the name of those being mentored unless they have given active assent to disclosing them.

**Confidentiality of the mentoring conversation**

Both the mentor and the mentee have great responsibility to maintain and respect the confidentiality of all the information imparted during the mentoring relationship as they may hear sensitive and personal information. This applies to both within and outside the University of Southampton unless specifically authorised by either the mentor or the mentee. However, if such information is dangerous or illegal, an appropriate approach for the mentor is to encourage the mentee to take appropriate action themselves. There is no obligation under current UK law for a mentor to disclose such matters.

**Boundary management & roles**

Those working in a mentoring relationship may develop friendships over time. It is important to have a clear mentoring relationship and not allow personal bias to influence professional actions. Stay mindful of maintaining confidentiality, objectivity and equal partnership.

**Competence**

Mentors need to be conscious of their own levels of mentoring competence and experience and to never overstate them. An appropriate approach for mentors to foster this consciousness might be to engage in reflective practice using a journal or similar approach.

When the mentoring conversation appears to stray away from mentoring (forward-looking, solution focused) towards counselling (typically talk is firmly rooted in problems in the past), an appropriate approach might be to suggest that further conversation of that particular topic might be better with those competent to assist (eg University of Southampton Counselling Services).

**Contracting**

Examples of clear contracting should include clarity over length and frequency of sessions; agreement on whether it is permissible or not to make email/telephone/text contact concerning mentoring issues between mentoring sessions; responsibility for finding a suitable location for the mentoring session etc

**Dealing with self-distractions**

Mentors need to recognise that bias, preconceived ideas, initial impressions, opinions and stereotypes can all influence the ability to pay full attention and be present and focused on those being mentored. If it is not possible to achieve this level of self-management, an appropriate approach might be for the mentor to either absent themselves temporarily or suggest that the mentee work with someone else. If mentors feel they need to ‘advise’ to give value to the mentee, they may need to step back to examine the relationship with those being mentored and their own understanding of mentoring.

Disclaimer: These guidelines are made available for your reference only as to the type of dilemmas and/or issues you may come across whilst engaging in a mentoring relationship. It does not constitute legal advice.