

## Mentoring

# The University of Law Mentoring Scheme

## What is Mentoring – for Mentors

### What is Mentoring?

'A one to one non-judgmental relationship in which an individual mentor voluntarily gives his/her time to support and encourage another. This relationship is typically developed at a time of transition in the mentee's life...'

### The Objectives

The University is aware that in order to be successful in securing a career in law it is essential that students have an insight into what it is like to be in legal practice, know how to build networks and gain experience, and have a measure of self-confidence.

The mentoring scheme is usually oversubscribed so the Careers Service takes into account a number of factors when students apply. These include the availability of a suitable mentor, lack of previous legal work experience and the student's commitment to the scheme as demonstrated in the application form or at interview. In addition, we may take into account other factors which are, or are perceived to be, barriers to obtaining a training contract or pupillage, including ethnicity, age, disability and academic attainment.

Our mentoring scheme aims to address the issue of limited experience of the legal profession by providing these students with an on-going individual contact whose views, knowledge and practical experience they can benefit from.

### What is Required of Mentors?

All we require of mentors is that they agree to offer a minimum of four contacts with their mentee, at which discussions on areas of practice, the realities of work as a lawyer and wider career management issues might take place. We ask that one of these contacts be a face to face meeting, but the others could be via email, telephone, etc.

If mentors are able to offer more than the minimum commitment and include a short period of work shadowing then the benefits to students increase even further. However, this is at the discretion of the Mentor, and should not be expected by the student.

## What mentees have said about the Mentoring Schem ...

'Speaking to someone within the profession gave me a realistic and grounded insight into the requirements of a trainee solicitor. Contact with a mentor gave me confidence to keep going at times when I felt everything was stacked against me'

'My mentor was able to advise me on a variety of things such as preparing for job interviews and writing letters. She has been very encouraging and open in her advice which has given me a clear idea of the different firms out there and what they are looking for. As a result, I feel more clued up and confident about joining the legal profession'

'Having a mentor gave me a great confidence boost.'

'I found the time spent with my mentor enlightening. I want to become a mentor myself!'

'Mentoring has provided me with an invaluable insight into the day-to-day life of a solicitor.'

'I've certainly appreciated the chance to talk to someone who has been through the whole process.'

## Some questions answered...

### **Who can volunteer to be a mentor on the University of Law's scheme?**

Anyone from second-year trainee solicitors to senior solicitors in private, public or in-house practice. We also have practising barristers mentoring students.

### **Will I need to attend meetings at the University of Law with my mentee and/or Careers Service staff?**

At most centres mentors will be invited to attend the mentoring scheme's launch to meet their mentee, but thereafter any meetings that are arranged would take place at the mentor's preferred location (usually their place of work). If mentors are unable to attend this launch evening, then a meeting should be organised between the mentor and student independently.

### **How much paperwork is involved?**

Very little, mentors are invited to complete a simple details form which enables the Careers Service to match them with a suitable student at the beginning of the scheme and an evaluation questionnaire at its conclusion.

### **How are students matched with mentors?**

When students apply to join the scheme, they are asked to state three areas of legal practice that interest them. Wherever possible we take account of these preferences when matching mentors with students.

### **Are any other factors taken into account?**

We would support a mentor's request for a specific match according to students' backgrounds or experiences, if the mentor feels that he/she can be especially helpful in particular areas. However, we cannot guarantee to provide the particular matches requested by mentors.

### **How big a time commitment is this?**

The mentors themselves will largely govern this. We ask that mentors agree to a minimum of four contacts during the course of the scheme, only one of which needs to be a face to face meeting. Email, telephone or letter correspondence could make up the remaining commitment. However, some mentors are able to offer more than the minimum requirement, and meet their students more often, perhaps arranging for them to visit their office for a day or for a short period of work experience.

### **My firm/organisation does not offer training contracts. Is there any point our joining the scheme?**

Yes, indeed. Participating students are made aware when they apply to join the scheme it does not aim to help them secure a training contract/pupillage with their mentor's employer. While this does sometimes happen, we do not recruit mentors with this aim in mind.

### **Do I need to know much about Careers Guidance in order to participate?**

No. Students will find your willingness to listen, and your own experiences and opinions very valuable. Throughout the mentoring scheme, they will have access to experienced Careers Consultants at the University of Law, to whom you can always refer them if you are unsure of anything.

### **What do the students really gain from the scheme?**

- An awareness of life in practice to enhance their theoretical knowledge
- Self-confidence to ask for advice and engage professional people in conversations
- An awareness of the skills and qualities required to succeed in their preferred areas of practice
- Advice on their training contract/pupillage applications based on their mentor's experience as an applicant or as a recruiter
- Self-confidence gained through the encouragement of a legal practitioner

### **What do mentors gain from the scheme?**

- The satisfaction gained from supporting and encouraging individual students through the application process, using their own experiences
- Positive University-wide publicity for their employer

### **If I am interested in becoming a mentor, what should I do now?**

Please contact the centre that is located nearest to you.

Birmingham

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