



Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

School of Management
Yr Ysgol Reolaeth

School of Management Mentoring Scheme, Swansea University: Careers Team Employability Mentoring Scheme

Executive Summary:

Within the careers team we have set up an employability mentoring scheme which matches final year students with employers within relevant industries. The scheme has been running over the past 2 years and its role is to help students with the transition from student to working professional whilst also enhancing the employability prospects of students who take part.

What are your goals?

The incentive for the creation of this scheme is to allow students to start building their own network and provide them with an outlet to speak to people who are currently working in an environment or industry that is aspirational to them. Allowing students to get a full perspective, as opposed to solely relying on people within their direct environment, a mentor could provide feedback and views on:

- What career path to follow?
- Should they stay in the job for longer than 2 years?
- What extra qualifications would be useful to complete?
- How did they build their network?
- What skills and attributes do certain industries and employers regard more highly than others?
- How should they deal with a difficult boss or colleague?

Who was involved?

During the history of the scheme we have matched students with employers ranging from Swansea City Council, PwC, Office for National Statistics, EY, Admiral, HSBC, Credit Safe, S and E Electric, Santander and a number of entrepreneurs. Currently we have 20 students who are matched with different employers on a one to one basis.

Policies, procedures and processes used:

The scheme runs for 6 months from October to March and each mentor meets with his or her mentee on a monthly basis for a minimum of two hours. Meetings can be via email, skype, or face to face. Each student applies to the scheme by filling out an application form and stating why they wish to be matched with a mentor and what benefits or skills the scheme will give them. Currently our focus is on final year students but we also take referrals from pastoral tutors. The mentors are found either through school networking events or via colleague's recommendations. Generally, we tend to find that most organisations support their staff in taking part in the mentoring scheme and it usually forms part of the mentor's CPD.

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Through the scheme, the mentor also offers up to a week's voluntary work experience, which takes place during the University's employability week in January. This is an excellent opportunity for the student to really experience their mentor's organisation and get a feel for that industry.

All the matching is completed by hand, by the careers team and is achieved by viewing the students' application forms, and from meetings with mentors and mentees. This allows the scheme coordinator to gauge who they think is best suited as a match. As a smaller scheme, this matching approach is manageable. However, I have looked at purchasing matching software but currently nothing suitable has been found. Feedback and evaluation is gathered halfway through the mentoring scheme and at the end, allowing mentors and mentees are to offer views and opinions.

Successes and lessons learnt:

The mentoring project has been a success and many students have found their mentor to be useful. Some students have quoted:

"...from the meetings and that were held I already gained a great amount of insight and advice that I can use in my future"

"My mentor gave me useful tips when I told her that I have been applying to placements. She gave me some interview tips and online test tips, which was very helpful"

"The skills that I believe of most significant was how to interact in a manner that comes as professional, as most students will have little exposure to this before gaining a graduate job"

The main benefits from the scheme are the ability for the student to network with the mentors building their own network and the chance to visit the employer in the work place.

Training mentors is invaluable as it gives them the confidence to take the mentoring forward. Following on from mentor feedback during the first run of the scheme, it was felt that the mentors needed more support on how to get the most from the time spent with their mentees. We have since also included a session on asking powerful questions and listening techniques.

Future proofing:

As the scheme continues to grow we have considered how we would develop and in what direction. Our current intention is to keep the original scheme to a bespoke number of mentees; this is more manageable and keeps the integrity of the scheme intact, giving it more credence and coveted by all. Alongside this we are looking to offer the mentors the opportunity to complete a CMI Award in Coaching and Mentoring allowing us to give some back to the mentors ensuring longevity and retention of mentors.

Compiled by Emma Evans – Careers team – School of Management, Swansea University.

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