

## University College London, Kings College London and Queen Mary University of London

B-MEntor is a cross-institutional mentoring scheme to support BME early career researchers and is run by 3 London based universities: University College London (UCL), Kings College London and Queen Mary University of London. The programme is coordinated and administered by UCL, although the 3 universities are viewed as equal partners and decisions are made collectively.

All partner universities recognised that BME staff are underrepresented in academic and research roles in higher education, and particularly at senior levels.

The scheme is currently entering its third year. In the first year, there were 17 pairs, and in the second and third years there were 20 mentoring pairs across the three institutions.

### **Process:**

B-MEntor was launched in 2012 and is co-funded by the partner institutions. Each partner university has a broad range of departments, and it was felt that networking across institutions would benefit both the mentors and mentees.

Institutional coordinators are responsible for recruiting mentors and mentees within their institution. Staff who wish to participate are asked to complete a form setting out the goals they hope to achieve from participation. Mentors also set out their experience and explain why they want to join the scheme.

Several Institutional and Professional development aims and objectives were agreed:

#### Institutional aim

- To enhance the organisational and learning culture across the five institutions.

#### Institutional objectives

- To signal commitment to BME staff across the three institutions.
- To encourage networking across the three institutions.
- To raise the profile of mentoring as a tool for professional development across the three institutions.

#### Professional development aim

- To ensure staff from BME backgrounds are supported to reach their full potential.

#### Professional development objectives

- To help advance the careers of BME staff through developing the confidence, motivation, experience and skills required to apply for (and ultimately gain) promotion.
- To make a positive difference to BME staff with sustainable outcomes.

- To encourage BME staff to take on leadership and decision-making roles.
- To encourage BME staff to take opportunities for formal and informal professional development.
- To reduce any feelings of isolation for staff who do not work in a diverse area.

An early decision concerned whether mentors would need to be from a BME background and it was decided that this should not be a requirement. The team thought that both practically and politically there was no good reason why they would have to be from a BME background. However, they would need to be sympathetic to the issue.

To ensure the programme is efficient and fit for purpose the partner institutions provide training for mentors and mentees - this covers mentoring styles as well as diversity, inclusion and race equality.

In the first year, a full evaluation of was undertaken, and a lighter touch version each year after that

**Impact:**

The results from the first report indicated that all but one mentor was 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with the mentoring experience. On average mentees met with their mentors on 5 occasions over the year with 100% of mentees describing the amount of mentoring contact time over the year as 'about right'. All mentors agreed that they had developed their knowledge and skills as a mentor. All mentors and mentees said that they would recommend the B-MEntor programme to colleagues

**Lessons learnt and next steps:**

Following feedback from mentees, additional training events are being organised in 2014/15 including political astuteness, grant applications and challenges for international staff working in British universities. These training events will also provide opportunities for networking with peers from across the 3 universities.

A recommendation from the first annual report was that the partner institutions should discuss whether the success of B-MEntor would be increased through consolidation in smaller partnership groups or through further expansion into more universities. It was agreed that smaller partnership groups worked better than larger as it was difficult to manage communications between all institutes. It was also difficult for mentors and mentees to agree to meet in some instances where partnerships were based less centrally.

The 3 partners are going to discuss with other universities how they might set up a second B-MEntor 'regional hub'. A B-MEntor roadshow is due to take place in Manchester in 2015 so that other institutions can hear more about the scheme.

We plan to extend B-MEntor to Professional staff in the fourth year in 2015.

**Links:**

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/race/BMEntor.php>