

Mentoring: Early Career Academics

Professor Alan Hayes
University of Bath
Department of Computer Science
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Two types of academic:

- Teaching and Research (3 year probationary period)
- Teaching and Scholarship (1 year probation period)

Different Career Tracks for different roles.

Compulsory mentorship during probationary period.

HEA fellowship achieved upon successful completion of probation.

Voluntary engagement in the mentorship scheme post probation.

Definition

A mentor is a colleague with more experience, who uses their knowledge and connections to help someone navigate their way into a new role and organisation as they seek to establish their career and fulfil the University's requirements for probation.

Role of mentors during academic probation

The mentor acts as a regular, readily-accessible source of guidance, advice and support to enable to probationer to:

- Plan and develop their academic practice, whether that is establishing or accelerating their research, delivering taught programmes, tutoring and supervising students, or any other relevant and necessary part of the academic role
- Learn how to access and use the University's systems and resources for supporting academic work, complementing the induction processes and departmental support systems that are available to all staff.
- Play a role in the life of the University
- Understand and work towards the formal requirements of probation, including the specific objectives agreed by the Head of Department.

What is the profile of a good mentor ?

- Be more experienced academics who have a broad knowledge of how the Department and University operate, and the challenges faced by newly appointed lecturers
- Have the specific skills and expertise that are relevant to the development needs of the probationer (for example, in research or teaching, or in adapting to the UK system), or know how to access it.
- Be committed to supporting their less experienced colleagues, and focused on the needs of their mentees
- Not be anyone who manages or assesses the performance of the probationer (e.g. Head of Department / Division)
- In some cases it may be helpful to have more than one mentor, perhaps one for teaching and one for research. One of these should be nominated as 'lead' mentor.

What about nationally, outside of the University of Bath ?



Computer Science Early Career Support Network – instigated 2021/22

Prof Alan Hayes University of Bath

Professor James Davenport University of Bath

Professor Alastair Irons Sunderland University

Professor Tom Crick Swansea University

Dr Tom Prickett Northumbria University

Issues Raised March 2021 (23 delegates)

Early Careerists' Challenges identified

- I am from industry with no Ph.D. yet
- Mixed ability teaching BTEC and A level students.
- First programming Language – what should it be?
- Blended learning, keeping students interested through on-line teaching.

Support

- How can we encourage Departments to keep up to date?
- How can you get the Department to part with any money?
- What's the model for collaborative funding across Universities? Who pays for it?

How can we help?

- Best practice for teaching coding
- Overview of available teaching routes + research routes to Prof
- Examples / good practices
- Make support and advice available
- Establish a buddy/mentorship scheme

- Buy-in from the sector
- Keeping the momentum
- Resource and funding – can't be on top of the day-job
- Teaching and Scholarship early careerist wanted support in research in addition to teaching
- Our Policy of mentors and mentees being in different Institutions.
- Identification and matching of mentors and mentees with particular research areas (Andy Gordon – UKCRC, Microsoft Research and now Chief Science Officer at Cogna)
- Mentees move on e.g. into industry

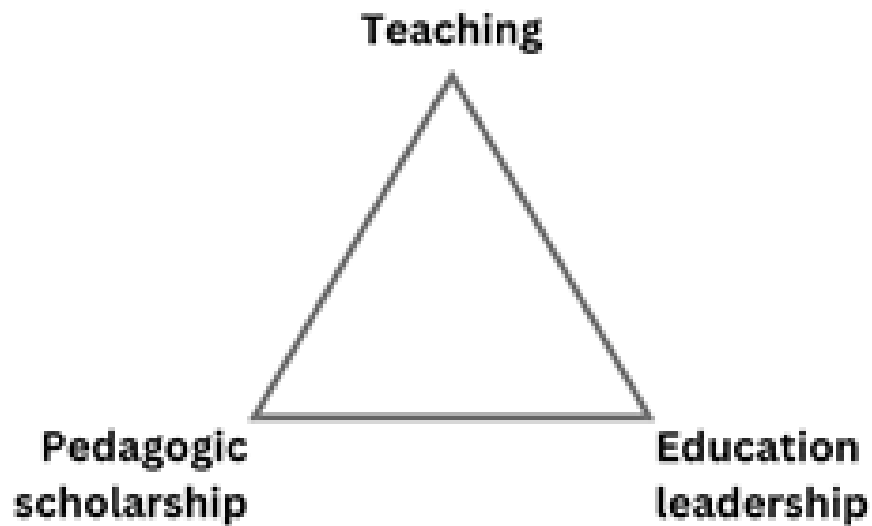
Becoming an education-focused professor

10 top tips published in the Times Higher Education Supplement (accessed 15th April 2024)

<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/third-way-academic-becoming-educationfocused-professor>

1) The Teaching Triangle

1) Reflect upon the education triangle



2) Strive for Excellence and Inspire others



- Those of us who are on a teaching pathway have a responsibility to inspire everyone to teach better.
- While research activity may appear to carry greater kudos and reward, let's not get deflected from our goal of improving the education experience of students and fellow staff.
- Take time to look at the educators you admire from all areas.
- Identify what they do that is excellent. How might you emulate them?

3) Get a Mentor



- Become familiar with the promotion criteria and ensure your promotion application ticks all the boxes with evidence, especially of the impact of your work.
- Try to identify a mentor. They can be internal or external and can really help you see things from a different perspective, offering focus and clarity.
- Also, don't wait for 100 per cent perfection or to be 100 per cent ready. Perfect doesn't exist; striving for a perfect application can hold you back (don't take 40 years).

4) Be open to opportunities



- Taking part in relevant committees and initiatives takes time, but these can give you access to a wide range of new networks and projects. As a member of such groups, chances to join conferences and events may follow. These activities can lead you to unanticipated opportunities around the themes you are passionate about.
- Sometimes things appear serendipitous. But, in reality, opportunities appear because you were in the room.

5) If something doesn't exist Pilot it



Most universities are cautious and risk averse. However, you can pilot things.

It's a way to make a difference with a simple and small-scale approach. You can overcome the risks in a contained situation, with limited budget and start valuable conversations.

Usually the attitude of "let's pilot this" is regarded as a positive and helpful intervention. If it goes well, then you can run with it and be the first mover.

If successful – tell people about it (e.g. publish)

6) Network



Building your network is essential.

Develop your profile with one aspect of education and then seek to influence others and identify potential collaborators.

If you are leading on education in your institution, being able to benchmark against other universities is necessary.

Who do I know?

Who Knows me?

7) Take on a Leadership Role



It's very difficult to know beforehand whether a role is going to be directly helpful to your career or not.

However, even those roles that turn out to be a bit of a blind alley can be helpful in terms of building experience, demonstrating your proactive attitude and flexibility.

Understanding how leadership works can help expose you to new people in your organisations.

Note: think about opportunities at the Faculty or University levels.

8) Constantly Develop



Try to constantly develop yourself.

Consider joining **Professors in Preparation** network (#ProfsInPrep) or CPHC's **Professor in 10 years** initiative (Prof Rob Aspin).

look into gaining your Senior if not Principal Fellowship through Advance HE

look at gaining a National Teaching Fellowship (NTF) or a Collaborative Award for Teaching Excellence (CATE) through AdvanceHE.

Note: if you are not successful at the first attempt you will get an action plan to build upon. Don't let an initial rejection put you off.

9) Curate a plaudits file and update your CV regularly



Retaining positive personal feedback is critical, especially as it's likely to get lost among mountains of emails. It's important that we don't lose sight of the valuable work we undertake that may go undocumented, unformalized or otherwise unrecognised. Evidence is everything.

Use a CV format as a means of recording, in some detail, your professional activity. Update it regularly. Make links between actions and outcomes, complete with evidence. Build a narrative. It's not about sharing this detail with the world, but about ensuring that when you come to distil your CV, build promotion applications, complete HEA applications and the like, you have everything to hand.

Try to stay positive.

Remember some colleagues are naturally cynical about change.

Recognize that criticisms are not personal to you.

10) In summary



- 1) Remember all 3 points of the Education Triangle
- 2) Strive for excellence and inspire others
- 3) Find a mentor and know the 'rules of the game'
- 4) Be open to new opportunities
- 5) Pilot your innovations
- 6) Build your network
- 7) Take on Leadership Roles
- 8) Constantly Develop
- 9) Curate plaudits and update your CV
- 10) Be positive

