

St George's, University of London: coaching to value all staff

One of the three enablers in St George's University of London's (SGUL) strategic plan is '**Valuing our Staff**' and one of the aims flowing from this is to "Expand and promote the coaching and mentoring programme within a talent management framework to support the development of academic and administrative divisions to harness the talents of all staff".

St George's coaching programme has been running since June 2008. Initially the programme was offered to individuals identified by heads of department as "rising stars". Subsequently this criteria was broadened to include any member of staff identifying coaching as a means of personal and professional development. In addition, coaching is offered to all members of staff who are promoted during the annual promotion round.

Coaching is provided by external coaches, all of whom hold a coaching qualification, with access to coaching supervision. Some have previous experience of working in higher education and/or a healthcare setting.

The overall aim of coaching at SGUL is to offer staff an alternative form of focused development, enabling them to discuss and resolve work related challenges. As an alternative to running workshops which attract very few participants, resulting in them being cancelled at the last minute, we believe coaching provides good value for money. It enables us to provide individually tailored development which can be delivered in a timely manner. It is hoped that through engagement in coaching, participants will feel supported and empowered to carry out their job, eventually leading to improved morale and increased productivity.

The coaching programme offers individuals up to six one to one sessions with an external coach. A seventh session is offered approximately six months after the final session. This allows individuals to reflect on their coaching journey. The whole process is confidential to the coach and coachee. Coachees are asked to complete a coaching agreement form at the start of the process where they identify their personal objectives for coaching. This is held by the Staff Development Manager and is used for audit and evaluation.

Following their first coaching session the coachee is contacted to ensure they are happy with their coach and wish to continue with the programme. Final feedback is sought from both coaches and coachees at the end of their six coaching sessions. They are both emailed an evaluation form which collects qualitative and quantitative data.

"A legitimate opportunity to explore "me"! A chance to review my natural inclinations in situations and reassess my behaviour according to outcome desired."

"I'm now more relaxed taking on a mixture of responsibilities."

"It has improved my confidence and self-awareness."

"It was space to explore my changing roles starting as a PI at St George's from being a post doc elsewhere."

"Developed awareness of self-limiting/sabotaging behaviours (and reasons underpinning these behaviours). Consequent reduction in these behaviours has already increased personal effectiveness."

“My coach made me focus more on myself and my needs and how that would improve my efficiency and management style.”

“More able to prioritise on weekly/monthly basis different work roles. Also had major impact on work/life balance and given impetus to make changes to life outside work.”

“It provided help with career planning and how to be proactive about pursuing particular options.”

“(Coaching has helped) me to work on the development of my working relationship with my boss and to think about new ways to develop my role and to improve the effectiveness of my role. This included a movement into line management responsibility that I would not have thought of suggesting before; I believe that this has been good for me and the staff involved, and for the department in general!”

“The support received during coaching gave me the confidence to apply for (and get) a significant promotion at a larger institute.”

For further information:

Contact: Margaret Bentley, Staff Development Manager, St George's, University of London
Email: mbentley@sgul.ac.uk