The Role of a Buddy/Mentor for New Starters

Human Resources
1. Aim of the Buddy Scheme

Having a “buddy” at work can make a huge difference to the speed at which new recruits manage to settle into the role, the department and the organisation. Just knowing there is someone there to listen who is genuinely interested in helping them can make new staff members feel supported. At MMU, we recommend allocating an induction buddy for any new starter to your team.

2. Who makes a good buddy?

A good buddy is someone who is prepared to be:

- A contact
- A friendly face
- An informal source of information on the team and department
- Someone who knows how things work across the organisation and is prepared to share that experience

Personal attributes of a good buddy include:

- The ability to listen
- Openness and commitment to being a buddy – it can be a learning experience for both parties
- Good time management and self management skills
- Relevant knowledge and experience to be able to provide the right level of support
- An honest and considerate approach to giving feedback and asking challenging questions including the ability to give constructive feedback
- Ability to identify learning opportunities
- Ability to use questions to encourage new starters to think for themselves
- A willingness to learn

Roles and responsibilities of a buddy

As a buddy you are not line managing that individual but are there in the role of supportive colleague and friendly face. Your role as a buddy will be varied depending on the individual you are working with but could involve some or all of the following:

- Helping your new colleague to navigate their way around the department and the site - this could include short tours
- Showing them how to do aspects of their role
- Answering questions – often more than once. Buddies need to be patient as new starters take in a lot of information, often in a short time, and may need to re-ask questions in the future as events occur
- Provide information, signpost information and provide informal support
- Introducing them to other colleagues who are important to their role
- Helping them to understand the formal and informal culture and structures at MMU
- Encourage them to ask questions if unsure about any aspects of their role
- Arrange to go for coffee or lunch sometime so they can enjoy the social side of working and feel part of the team.

A buddy is not:

- An advisor or counsellor
- A new best friend
- A confidante
3. Guidelines for approaching the first meeting

If you have not done this role before it can seem daunting and this is matched by the new starter feeling a bit overwhelmed possibly by a new role and new environment. The following will help establish your relationship and decide on how you are both going to make use of the buddy scheme.

- Arrange an informal meeting, over coffee is a nice touch but not necessary.
- Outline your role, experience and why you are their buddy
- Find out about their professional background and experience and identify their understanding of the "buddy" relationship and how it will work
- Clarify expectations they can have from you
- Arrange a good time to take them around to understand the layout of the campus and whilst doing this introduce them to key people relevant to their role.
- Arrange to show them around the office and explain basics like how the phone and photocopier work, where things are stored, where to get stationary, key documents and policies and anything else that will make it easier for them to settle into the role
- Explain any office events such as book club, shared birthday collections etc and make sure they are added to informal contact lists
- Get to know a bit about them as an individual outside of work but not too many questions!
- Make sure they know they can ask you anything in regards to work and you will be happy to help — it is important to stress this as often new members of the team are reluctant to ask as they don’t want to get off on a bad foot with their new colleagues.

4. Further support

If you have any questions or would like to discuss how to approach this within your area/department, please contact:

Alison Laithwaite
Organisation Development and Training Officer
Extension 6410.