Overview

The Leadership Foundation’s Aurora programme aims to enable a wide range of women in academic, research and professional roles to think of themselves as future leaders and to develop leadership skills and strategies. It is a programme run in partnership with Universities based on workshop events, mentoring and self-directed learning. As part of the Aurora programme, participants will have the benefit of a mentor from Birkbeck. The notes below are guidance for Birkbeck’s Aurora mentors and participants (mentees), which are informed by the Leadership Foundation’s requirements and general guidance. These notes are supplemented by training for both mentors and participants (mentees).

Learning and Organisational Development (L & OD) have developed a Professional and Support (P & S) mentoring scheme which is being reviewed and will be considered by Human Resources Strategy and Policy Committee in October 2014. The Aurora scheme has been informed by the key elements of the P & S mentoring scheme and has also been informed by the Athena SWAN mentoring scheme.

More information about Aurora can be found here: http://www.bbk.ac.uk/lod/mandev/aurora/aurora-women-into-leadership-roles/

Leadership Foundation guidance about Aurora mentoring

The Leadership Foundation (LF) confirm that each participant will require a mentor for support and to provide guidance within her institution. Mentors can be female, or male, and must have the endorsement of their Aurora champion.

The LF advise that Aurora mentors will:

- Be considered successful in their careers
- Be knowledgeable and experienced in their organisation and understand its culture
- Have sufficient general HE experience to be able to offer advice and support
- Be a good listener
- Have a genuine interest in helping women to develop their careers and particularly support their mentee
- Have sufficient time available to work with the mentee
- Have a supportive or “coaching style” of communication

And, in addition, Aurora mentors at Birkbeck will:

- Be prepared to share experience and pass on skills/knowledge to the participant (mentee)
- Commit to mentoring a participant (mentee) for 12 months

A definition of mentoring

Mentoring is defined, under this scheme, as a professional partnership in which an experienced person (the mentor) assists another (the mentee) in developing specific skills
and knowledge that will enhance the less-experienced person’s professional, personal and career growth.

Mentoring should be viewed as a relationship rather than as a management activity. It should be a safe non-judgmental relationship that facilitates a wide range of learning, experimentation and development.

**Aims**

The purpose of the Aurora mentoring scheme is to complement the other elements of the Aurora programme (e.g. learning events). The mentoring will help participants achieve their aims in respect of the programme, particularly understanding and developing leadership/influencing capabilities and to explore career opportunities to reach senior leadership positions. Some of the key benefits Aurora mentoring can bring to a participant are:

- Improved self-awareness and confidence
- Advice on career development, particularly in relation to progression towards senior leadership positions in HE (Higher Education)
- Space to reflect on career options and choices, particularly in respect of senior leadership in HE
- Increased personal networking opportunities and improved networks
- Support and advice about balancing work and personal commitments
- Increased knowledge and understanding of the HE sector and Birkbeck College, particularly at a strategic and/or organisational level
- An opportunity to reflect on their personal development on the Aurora programme, including the learning from the modules and self-directed study

**Roles and responsibilities: Aurora participant (Mentee), Mentor and line manager**

**Participant (Mentee)**

The success of a mentoring partnership will depend significantly on the attitude and commitment of the individual being mentored, they will need to have a clear idea of what they want to achieve from the mentoring partnership. The responsibility for making things happen and putting plans into action primarily lies with the mentee.

Once the mentoring partnership is under way, it is the responsibility of the mentee to update their line manager of progress from the mentoring and wider Aurora programme. The mentee should be encouraged to be open with their line manager about the mentoring, however, the decision about what information to share, if any, will lie with the mentee.

**Mentor**

The mentor role is critical to ensuring the success of the mentoring partnership. Staff who take on the role of mentor assume responsibility for guiding, advising and helping to facilitate the development of the mentee. In addition they will need to support the mentee in trying out new ideas, help them learn from their experiences and challenge their assumptions.
The mentoring partnership should provide a non-threatening environment in which the mentee feels able and willing to express their concerns and anxieties, as well as discussing their ideas and aspirations.

**The line manager**

The line manager needs to approve an individual’s application for Aurora and thereby participation in Aurora mentoring, as appropriate.

The line manager is responsible for managing the mentee and will agree their work objectives and personal development plans to develop within their role. The mentor should not set the mentee specific tasks or projects; this is the responsibility of the line manager.

**Mentoring applications, matching of Aurora participants and mentors**

The process for inviting new Aurora mentors will be agreed each year by the Aurora Champion, in consultation with the steering group, as appropriate.

Each year, Aurora participants will be matched with suitable mentors, who volunteer to participate in the scheme. Participants should complete the Mentee Application Form identifying their areas for development and support and send it to the Learning and Development Administrator by the deadline set by L & OD.

Potential mentors should complete the Mentor Application Form identifying their areas of expertise, relevant personal skills/experience and why they would like to become a mentor. The Aurora champion will review and endorse mentoring applications.

The mentor and participant will be matched based on the information supplied on the application forms. Skills and experience offered by the mentor will be registered and when the mentee registers, they will be matched based on the specific areas the participant is seeking support in, and the skills and experience they are looking for in a mentor.

The matching process will be undertaken by the Aurora Champion (Susan Jackson) or her representative, a representative from L & OD, the Equalities Manager and a manager from outside the Aurora steering group.

After the matching process has taken place, L & OD will contact both parties to talk through the match and confirm suitability, it will then be up to the participant (mentee) to contact the mentor to make arrangements for the first meeting; it is at this stage that a mentoring agreement between the mentor and mentee will be made. The first meeting will be used as an introduction where both parties will get to know each other and look to establish and agree the mentoring agreement.

Further details about the mentoring agreement will be covered in the training.

**Training**

Both mentor and participant will attend Birbeck training to help them understand their responsibilities, the process of mentoring, appropriate skills and receive further information
about Aurora and the Aurora mentoring scheme. Both mentor and participant will need to attend Birkbeck training before meeting.

**Mentoring meetings**

The frequency of meetings and method of contact can be discussed at the initial meeting and reviewed as appropriate. As a guide, it is recommended that 1 or 2 hours, 4-6 times a year would indicate sufficient frequency of meeting to enable the mentee to make progress.

**Duration and closing the mentoring partnership**

It is recommended that the Aurora mentoring partnership should last no more than 12 months. One of the goals of mentoring is to build confidence and self-reliance of the mentee and therefore it may not be in the interest of the mentee to continue the mentoring relationship beyond this period. Ending the formal mentoring relationship does not mean that contact cannot be maintained, if that is desirable to both parties, but this should be on an informal basis.

**Handling difficulties in the mentoring relationship**

Each mentoring partnership should be open and honest about how the partnership is progressing and any difficulties should be raised with each other. If the relationship does not appear to be working then the parties should first talk to each other, and if appropriate, seek guidance from L & OD. If the mentor and participant are not able to establish an effective mentoring relationship, L & OD should be contacted to request a change.

L & OD will seek a new mentor for the participant.

**Confidentiality**

The content of mentoring conversations is confidential and the mentor should not feedback to the line manager of the mentee, or anyone else, unless there is a legal obligation to do so (e.g. risk of health to mentee).

Equally, to maintain trust and facilitate a productive mentoring relationship, the mentee should be discrete about the information they share with others about the mentoring partnership. This may form part of the mentoring agreement.

Any documentation on the mentoring partnership held by the mentor and mentee must be confidential and no content of the mentoring partnership meetings should be shared with the line manager, unless agreed by both the mentor and mentee.

**Evaluation and review**

Feedback about the mentoring will be sought by L & OD from mentees and mentors at the end of the year and in line with the evaluation of the wider Aurora project.