



Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme Best practice case studies

Introduction and overview

The Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme was launched in 2017 as part of the University of Nottingham's activities to develop an inclusive culture. It signalled a personal commitment from Vice-Chancellor Professor Shearer West CBE to support senior leaders with protected characteristics more fully.

An annual programme open to senior leaders across all job roles in the university, it combines personal 1:1 mentoring meetings with the Vice-Chancellor; shadowing a minimum of two senior university meetings – one of these being a University Executive Board meeting; Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) assessments; and connecting together as a mentee group.

Now in its third year, 26 individuals have been mentored personally by the Vice-Chancellor. 57 unsuccessful applicants have also been matched to alternative Executive Board and other senior leader mentors, demonstrating the university's continued commitment to supporting and developing the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) agenda through personal connections.

This case study provides an insight into the experiences of one of the VC's mentees, their reasons for applying for the programme, and what they gained from the experience.

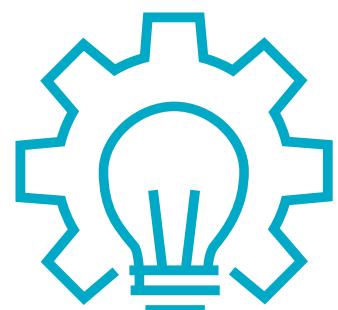
For further information about the University of Nottingham's Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme, contact Carol Steed, Leadership and Management Director.
carol.steed@nottingham.ac.uk



Professor Raheela Khan,
School of Medicine,
University of Nottingham.

Q. Why did you apply for the Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Programme?

A. The launch of the inaugural scheme coincided with my twentieth year at the university. I felt ready for a senior leadership role. The programme was directed at those from underrepresented groups; in my time at the university, I had rarely seen diversity of senior leaders and thought this was an opportunity to feedback to a new VC my thoughts on university culture and to explore the barriers preventing inclusive leadership for women of colour like me. As I had never been a mentee but had mentored others, I thought I could only benefit from participating.



Q. Are there specific challenges you believe you faced that you thought this programme could help you overcome or deal with more effectively?

A. Certain processes and ways of working had not extended me sufficiently. There was also the issue of making oneself visible and willing to take on new roles within a large organisation. Having 1:1 meetings with the VC and opportunities to ask her questions provided insight into different routes to leadership.

Q. What has been the biggest impact for you that you have gained from your engagement with the programme?

A. Opportunities to observe strategy development, planning and the fine-tuning that informs executive decision-making. Appreciating the wider context of the university's ambitions, operations and reputation by seeing it from close quarters. It was also insightful to hear about the VC's approach to being a leader and the values she promotes.

Q. Has engaging with this had any impact on your career, and if so, how?

A. Not directly. However, I valued the experience consequently becoming more proactive in university initiatives. This led to me being appointed Chair of the Sphere programme and more recently, as a nominated representative of the Global Engagement Committee. The experience further cemented my commitment to inclusion in order to address underrepresentation of minorities within senior leadership across the university.

Q. Are there any specific elements of learning that you have found useful, and have you been able to apply these into your workplace/working practices?

A. Importance of transparency and trust. For example, the VC sharing her diary provided insight into the varied aspects of her role both within and outside the university. Open discussions and reflecting on these with the VC made the whole experience much more authentic and meaningful.

Q. What advice would you give to others who might be considering getting involved in a mentoring programme?

A. I approached the programme with no real expectations apart from engaging fully with it and learning about myself through the sessions provided by the Leadership and Management Academy. This worked for me but there was also scope to choose which areas within the university mentees may be drawn to in order to consider opportunities more suited to their interests.

Q. Are there any other insights or thoughts that you wish to share?

A. Building relationships with other mentees and recognising that success takes many forms.

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