



Faculty of Humanities

- OPTENTIA RESEARCH UNIT -



Launch

Support Staff Mentoring Short Courses

Aim of Event

Programme

Background

Date: 27 October 2025 (14:00-16:00)

Venue: North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus – details will follow.
The event will also be live-streamed on YouTube – details will follow.

RSVP: To attend please [click here](#).

- Aim of the Event -

The Optentia Research Unit at North-West University proudly presents the launch of two Online Short Courses designed to strengthen mentoring capacity and professional growth among university support staff. The Short Course in Mentoring for University Support Services focuses on developing

capable mentors who value mentorship, feel enabled to support others, and demonstrate efficacy in practice. Complementing this, the Short Course for Building Your Path to Professional Development empowers mentees to identify their values, enhance their sense of enablement, and build confidence in their career journeys.

Both courses use a learner-centred and self-directed learning approach, integrating interactive content through Rise, Glide, and eFundi. Participants engage in reflective and practical learning supported by expert guidance and a collaborative ecosystem. Together, these initiatives aim to build a sustainable culture of mentorship and professional capability across the university community.

- Programme -

14:00 - Welcoming address

G.P. van Rhee de van Oudtshoorn, event facilitator

14:05 - Mentorship that Matters: Growing People, Strengthening Universities

Prof. Linda du Plessis, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning,
North-West University

14:20 - From Support to Growth: Rethinking Professional Roles in Higher Education

Andiswa Msi, Director: Academic Solutions (AS), North-West University

14:30 Small Conversations, Big Impact: Everyday Moments that Shape Mentorship

Prof Lebo Gafane-Matemané, Associate Professor, Community
Engagement Champion, Chair of the International Society of Hypertension
Mentoring and Training Committee

14:40 - Growing Our People: Mentoring as a Cornerstone of a Thriving Workplace

Helen Lekalakala, Director: Talent Management and Organisational
Development, North-West University

14:50 - Short Course: Mentoring for University Support Services

Prof. Ian Rothmann, Director: Optentia Research Unit,
North-West University

15:10 - Short Course:

Building Your Path to Professional Development

Dr Neil Barnard, Senior Lecturer, School of Industrial Psychology and
Human Resource Management, North-West University

15:30 - Mentorship Q&A

G.P. van Rhee van Oudtshoorn

15:50 - Closing Thoughts

Prof. Mirna Nel, Deputy-Dean, Research and Innovation,
Faculty of Humanities, North-West University

- Background -

Mentoring in higher education institutions (HEIs) plays a vital role in enhancing the sustainable employability and development of professional and support staff while contributing to institutional goals. Providing career guidance, psychosocial support, and opportunities for reflective learning to less experienced colleagues lies at the heart of mentoring. Today, professional and support staff face increasing complexity in their roles—balancing service delivery, student support, administrative efficiency, and institutional transformation. These challenges can affect their capabilities, well-being, and sense of purpose at work. A meaningful and trusting mentoring relationship helps individuals navigate these pressures and supports their ongoing growth within the institution.

Mentoring, however, can go in two directions. When done well, it creates a virtuous circle—mentees feel valued, develop new skills, contribute more effectively, and experience a sense of belonging and flourishing. When done poorly, it can lead to marginalisation, stagnation, and disengagement. The positive effects of effective mentoring extend far beyond individual benefit. Institutions gain from stronger engagement, improved service quality, healthier workplace relationships, and greater staff retention. Mentoring fosters a culture of care, learning, and professionalism that strengthens the entire university community.

Before entering a mentoring relationship, participants need to understand the programme's purpose, roles, expectations, and good practices. Without clear guidance and preparation, mentors and mentees may feel uncertain or unsupported, which can limit the programme's impact. Orientation and training are, therefore, key to ensuring that mentoring relationships thrive and contribute to personal and institutional success.