



Effective career & development conversations:

A guide for individuals and line managers

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Section 1: Introduction and purpose

Holding an effective career and development conversation: a guide for individuals and managers

As part of the Hallam Deal, we want to ensure that we provide support and opportunity for everyone at the University to develop their skills and experience and to build their careers here. Creating opportunities for careers and development benefits both individuals and the University. By supporting you to build the right skills and experience, we create an organisation that is agile, capable and able to respond to the ever-changing external environment.

Careers and development remain individuals' responsibility to consider and take action to achieve. However, line managers have a significant role to play in enabling and supporting individuals to consider and take steps to achieve their career and development needs and aspirations for both their current and future roles.

Our first step is to introduce a career and development discussion as part of [Performance and Development Review](#) (PDR). The purpose of this guide is to support all individuals and managers to prepare for and hold effective career and development conversations.

Who is this guide for and when to use it?

This guide is aimed at everyone in the University at all levels and provides guidance for both individuals and managers to prepare for and hold effective career and development conversations as part of the PDR, whether that is focused on their long term career or their short term development needs in their current post.

You can use this guide at any time: it is most useful to consider it before a PDR or mid-year discussion and again afterwards while preparing your development plan. You can also use it before any 1:1 with your line manager (or direct report) or meeting with a mentor, coach or other learning group or before reviewing your development and career progress, aspirations or plans.

It provides questions to think about, examples and tips, as well as signposting more tools and support on particular aspects. It does not cover discussions on performance and objectives: [separate guidance](#) is available on those important elements of the PDR.

Section 1: Introduction and purpose

What tools and support are available through the University?

Some of the tools to support you in preparing and holding a career and development conversation include:

- The [Professional Services Capability Framework](#)
- [The Leadership Ambitions Grid for any leaders or managers](#)
- [Career and development plan template](#)
- [The PDR toolkit](#)
- [Learning Log template](#)
- [E-learning courses in Career planning](#)
- [Mentoring pool, where you can seek a mentor](#)
- [Job Shadowing guidance](#)
- Internal [Coaching hub](#)

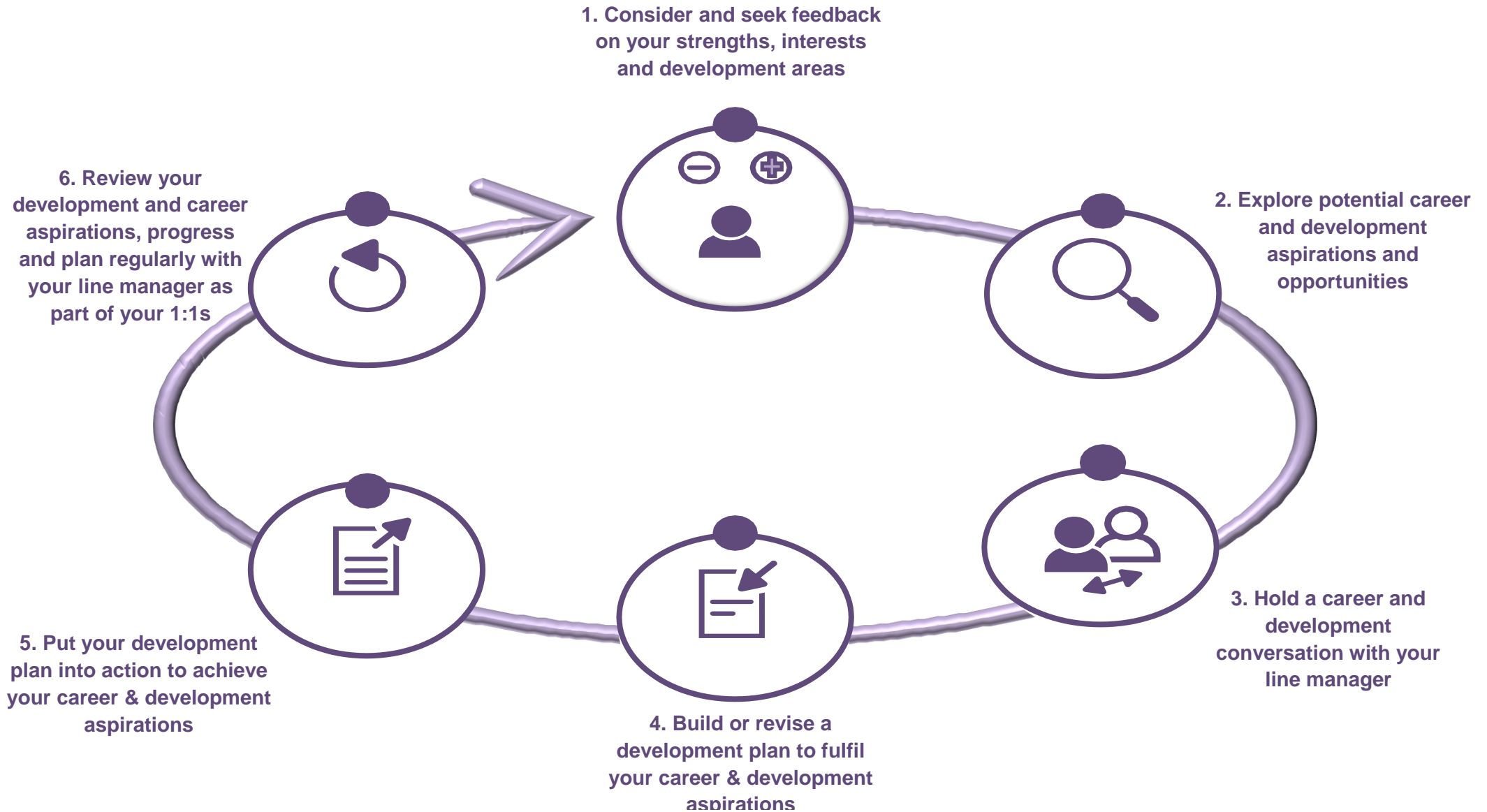
We are also working on career pathways which will be launched over the next year for both academic and professional services staff.

Who can support me with my career and development?

Each of these individuals/groups will have a different role in supporting you:

- Line manager
- Mentor
- A coach from within or outside the University
- Trusted peers
- Subject matter expert/Senior Professional in the area you want to develop skills or a career.
- External, HE or regional networks.
- Stakeholders who can provide useful feedback on your strengths and areas for development.
- Communities of Practice or action learning sets. You could set up your own to support, coach or hold each other to account on meeting your career and development objectives.

Section 2: How to have a good career and development conversation



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Preparation:

- In advance of your career and development conversation, it is helpful to spend some time considering your strengths, interests and areas for development and exploring your career aspirations so that you make the most of your conversation with your manager. The questions and prompts in this section will help you.
- To manage your career and development proactively, you do not need a long term career plan. You do need to be clear on what immediate development needs or long term aspirations you have, however, so that you have a direction to guide choices and to identify opportunities when they arise. This may be long term career progression for some; for others it may be developing capabilities in role.

Actions to help individuals to prepare:

- Discuss your thoughts and options with a mentor or trusted peer
- Seek feedback from your stakeholders or peers on your strengths and development areas.
- Use this [online strengths assessment tool](#) to help you consider your strengths.
- Assess yourself against the [professional services capability framework](#) and identify any skills you would like to build. [A careers framework for academic staff will be launched shortly].
- Undertake [this e-learning](#) on taking charge of your career.
- Talk to staff from business areas you might be interested in moving to about their roles, skills and challenges.

Questions for individuals to consider

- If you could choose any job, what would that look like? Why?
- Where would you like to be in your career in a year, and longer term? Which skills would you need to improve to achieve your career goal?
- Which parts of your role do you enjoy most?
- What are your core strengths? Consider your professional, interpersonal, strategic or technical strengths. How could you build on them?
- What projects or business areas interest you or use your strengths? How can you find out more?
- What skills, knowledge or experience would you like to improve?
- If you want to be in the same role in 12 months, how will you have learned and developed?
- How would your development and new skills support business delivery?

Actions to help line managers to prepare:

- Prepare some open questions to ask in advance - see left. Some additional suggestions are [here as part of this e-learning](#)
- Encourage the individual to seek peer and stakeholder feedback on their strengths and development areas in advance of the conversation.
- Book on a face to face course on [constructive conversations](#) or to [refresh your coaching skills](#) (or [via e-learning](#))
- Consider your own view on the individual's strengths. What would enable them to use more of those strengths for greater impact? When have you seen them fully engaged at work? What skills were they using? What opportunities do you see in the future for them? What is the business prepared to do to support them to develop their skills or career?
- Familiarise yourself with the content of the [professional services capability framework](#), and learning options (see pages 10-11)
- Review the [PDR toolkit](#)
- Create an atmosphere of trust, openness and support through your body language, the way you introduce the meeting, and ask and respond to questions. See further tips and hints for managers (see pages 8 -9)
- Consider how you to manage individuals' expectations about the level of support the University can give them. Who can you test your approach with in advance?

Section 2: How to have a good career and development conversation

Holding the career and development conversation

- The career and development conversation will start with many of the broad questions outlined above about strengths and career aspirations. It should then move on to more detailed and focussed questions set out below.
- You don't need to have agreed firm development objectives and a plan by the end of the conversation but you should agree next steps which will lead towards the creation and implementation of that plan. You may need to follow up the conversation in subsequent 1:1s to share progress against your aspirations.

Example questions you may want to discuss

As well as the questions you considered as preparation, you may wish to discuss some of the following questions:

- What career options have you considered which would best use your strengths?
- If you have a career aspiration, how could you get there?
- What are your first steps towards achieving your career and development aspirations?
- What areas do you need to explore or consider in order to create a development plan?
- Are your long term career and short term development objectives aligned?
- How do you like to learn (see pages 10-11)? How could you reflect this in your development plan?
- What progress have you made in the last 12 months? How have you already developed your skills or experience?
- Who could help you? What support, networks or contacts could your manager provide you with?
- What will happen next, who will do it and when?
- How will you follow up this conversation?

Tips for line managers in holding a constructive conversation:

- [Listen actively](#). The majority of the Career and Development conversation will be the individual talking. Your role is to listen, understand and offer support...some tips [here](#).
- Manage expectations at the start of the conversation about the extent to which you and the University will be able to support the individual. Focus on what *can* be done rather than on restrictions.
- Create a safe and supportive space for the individual to share their views and aspirations - see further tips for managers on pages 8-9.
- Help them to examine their ideas about themselves, their careers and possible future directions by asking open questions.
- Pick up on ideas which fit with business needs and share information about possible opportunities in the business.
- Offer *ideas* on next steps if asked: e.g. what to do or who to talk to but don't stray in to telling the individual what to do.
- Leave enough time at the end of the conversation to summarise and confirm actions and next steps.
- Remember to follow up quickly on any actions from the meeting. Don't agree to something you can't deliver on.

Section 2: How to have a good career and development conversation

Building, implementing a plan to achieve your career and development aspirations

The responsibility for creating, implementing, and reviewing the development plan is yours: your line manager is there to provide support and advice and to signpost opportunities.

Questions for individuals to consider when planning

- What opportunities and activities would best support the achievement of your career and development objectives? Consider the examples and links on pages 10-11.
- Is your development plan realistic? Does it challenge you?
- How do you learn best? How is this included in your plan?
- How will you make personal development an everyday activity?
- How will you ensure your development/action plan is not compromised when you are busy?
- How do you get the support you need to implement the plan? Are you satisfied with your progress?
- Do you need any further support in creating or implementing your plan? Who can support you in setting and achieving your career and development aspirations?
- Consider how you can build a development discussion into your regular 1:1s with your manager
- Are your development actions SMART?
- When and how will you review progress?

Key points for line managers to help to create a realistic and challenging personal development/action plan

- Follow up with individuals after the career conversation as part of your regular 1:1s to see if they are progressing or need further support. Has the individual clearly identified development opportunities, both within and beyond their current role and accountabilities, to help them achieve their career and development aspirations?
- Who do you know that the employee may be able to network with for assistance or an additional perspective? Can you support them in building a network, identifying resources, opportunities?
- How can you support the individual to hold themselves to account and make progress against their development plan?
- If needed, support the individual by recommending specific actions they might do to get started.
- Ensure you build in enough time and space for the individual to focus on their development in their role.
- Encourage the individual to get direction and advice from other sources if they need it at any point (e.g. mentor, peers or business area experts).
- Continue to identify relevant opportunities to help learning through experience.

Section 2: How to have a good career and development conversation

Tips for line managers: Building trust and creating a supportive environment

- Share your proposed approach to the conversation with the individual. Agree if they want any element to be confidential.
- Put the other person at their ease by offering positive support and build trust through an open, honest and considerate approach.
- Use a moderate, calm and confident tone of voice and open body posture. Focus on the individual, pay attention and show an interest
- Show and say you are interested in the person first and foremost. Think about the business overall, not just your part of it.
- Show that you are listening through your posture, small verbal comments, facial expressions
- Reflect back what you think they are saying, identify key themes and feed them back (*'what I think I'm hearing is...' 'sounds like you are saying...' 'Is this what you mean?'*)
- Defer judgement - allow the speaker to finish each point before asking questions, don't interrupt with counter arguments challenges or questions.
- Provide advice respectfully: don't tell people what to do. Instead, generate as many insights and ideas as possible. Build on insights from the employee first and share your own insights in such a way as they can be rejected.
- Look positively on how you can accommodate or support the development.

Section 2: How to have a good career and development conversation

General tips for line managers

- See the individual as in the driving seat of their career and development and yourself as someone who can help them to manage this better.
- Career and development discussions which occur naturally in day-to-day work can be helpful. If you are giving important feedback, however, take time to do it properly.
- Take time to prepare.
- Make development part of your team atmosphere by encouraging team members to help each other and share information in team meetings and build it in to their day to day activity.
- Flex job boundaries and the closeness of your supervision as the individual develops and grows in confidence.
- Seek out development opportunities for your team in the form of projects, working groups etc. which meet the needs of your team
- Don't judge others' aspirations and be aware of any unconscious bias about people.
- Recognise that different people will have different aspirations and different support needs.

What not to do as a line manager...

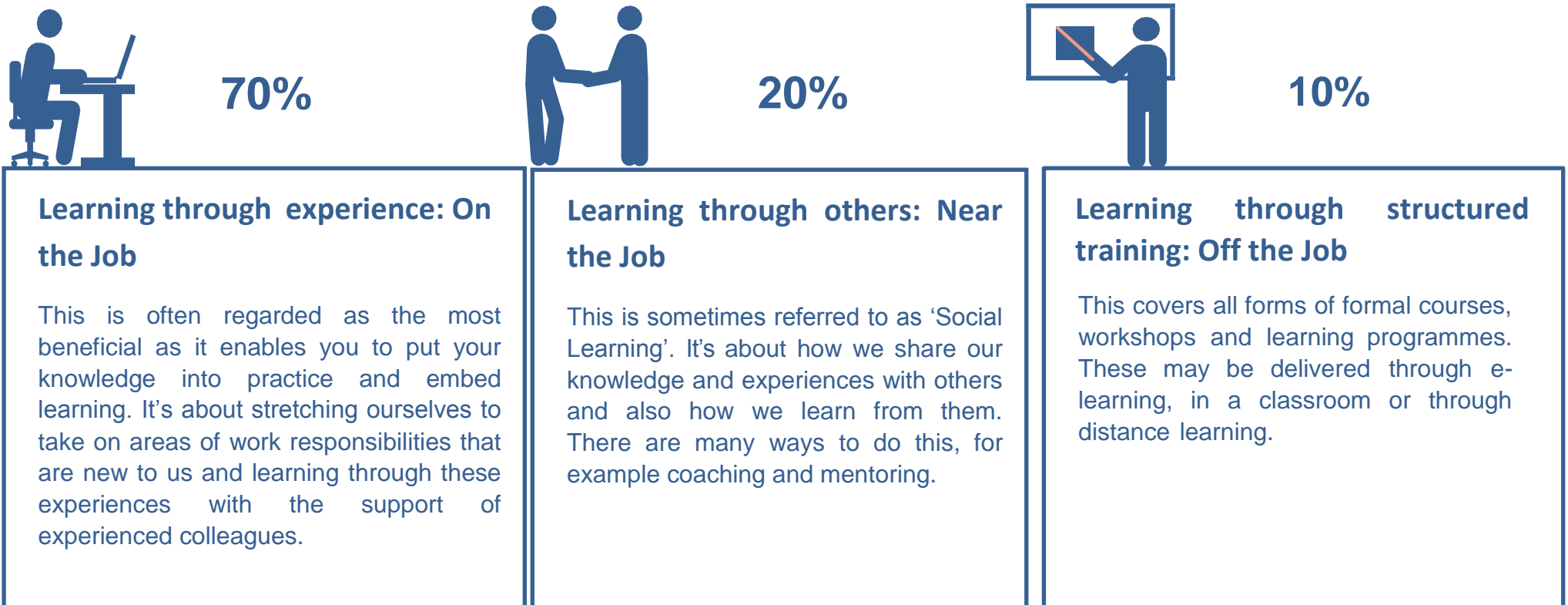
- Try to keep someone in a job you know they have outgrown.
- Jump in with a career or development suggestion or project without asking open questions first.
- Appear uninterested in the person asking for advice or fail to show empathy with their situation.
- Blame work objectives, targets or busyness for not developing your staff.
- Misunderstand the issue by failing to listen, check with the individual or by making assumptions about what they want.
- Give unconstructive feedback about people's career or development aspirations.
- Lose touch with how your staff are progressing with their development objectives
- See development only in terms of sending staff on courses.
- Give someone a project or development on which they need support and leave them without support.
- Let short-term business priorities constrain or bias your long term advice.
- Disadvantage part time staff or overlook them for opportunities.

Section 3: Approach to learning and development

Opportunities and options for learning and development: the 70/20/10 learning approach

The 70/20/10 learning approach is a widely used learning and development model* which captures three types of learning: experiential, social and formal. An overview of the three types of learning is shown below and you can find examples of each type of learning on the next page. The "70/20/10" ratios are an indication of the proportion of learning time someone might spend on each type of learning to get the most from their development.

Lombardo, Michael M; Eichinger, Robert W (1996). The Career Architect Development Planner (1st ed.). Minneapolis: Lominger



Section 3: Approach to learning and development



70% learning
through experience



20% learning
through others



10% learning through
structured training

Examples

- **Secondments** or **lateral moves** to acquire skills and knowledge you wouldn't get from working in your team.
- **Projects or participating on a working group** within or outside your usual working area. These can give individuals the opportunity to develop new skills or work with other business areas
- **Job shadowing** - within and external to the University and HE sector to learn about a different role, particular aspects of a role or work area and what it involves, or externally to see best practice
- **Being a mentor** or sharing your own skills
- Volunteering outside the University, for example **as a School Governor**
- **On the job training:** learning through new tasks and activities, normally with support of an experienced colleague.

Examples

- Joining or setting up external or cross institution **communities of practice or subject matter networks** to enable learning through the experience of others
- **Coaching**: A structured intervention, usually within a defined period, helping individuals solve problems, achieve specific goals, and unlock their potential.
- **Being mentored**: Similar to coaching, but takes a longer-term approach to facilitating personal and career development.
- **Conferences** can be great places to build networks and understand how other people approach challenges you face

Examples

- **Workshops or other face to face courses**: these may be external or internal to the University. For example **Hallam Leaders** or Aspiring Managers.
- **Conferences** provide updates and discussions of new areas of practice.
- **Webinars and E-learning**: Many topics can now be studied online from your desk, which offers convenience. **Lynda** offers many e-courses across a number of topics.
- **Continuing Education**: this might include undertaking a Degree, Masters or NVQ (e.g. through **Headstart** or as an Apprenticeship).
- **Qualifications**: Can consolidate or evidence existing skills and knowledge and build new skills.
- **Reading books/articles** on relevant topics to stay up to date on the latest thinking.