

Coaching and Mentoring Strategy (2030)

HR People and Organisational Development

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1. Introduction and Purpose

People are at the heart of the University of Huddersfield's success. As the higher education sector continues to evolve, the ability to learn, adapt and develop has never been more important. Coaching and mentoring provide powerful ways of supporting individual growth, strengthening leadership capability, enhancing career development and building organisational resilience. This strategy sets out our ambition to create a culture where coaching conversations are part of everyday working life, and where coaching and mentoring are recognised as key contributors to individual, team and organisational development.

1.1. University Strategy (2030) Alignment

The strategy is a key enabler of the University's 2030 strategy, with a primary focus on the Global Talent strand, as well as the 2030 People and Organisational Development Strategy. While it supports a range of strategic priorities, it most directly aligns with the following aim and key performance indicators (KPIs):

- Aim: Value, support, and empower every staff member to develop and contribute to our collective success.
- KPI 1: Achieve top 25% in benchmarked staff surveys for engagement, development, inclusivity, well-being, and recognition.
- KPI 2: Support all staff to participate in professional development activities annually.

To see the full 2030 University Strategy, please click here.

1.2. Scope

This strategy applies to all University staff across academic, professional and technical services, including colleagues employed on full-time, part-time, permanent and temporary contracts.

2. Why Coaching and Mentoring Matter

Coaching and mentoring support individuals, teams and the wider University in different but complementary ways. They help colleagues to:

- Develop confidence and self-awareness.
- Improve performance and effectiveness.
- Navigate change and uncertainty.
- Build leadership and management capability.
- Explore career opportunities and progression.
- Share knowledge and experience.
- Support wellbeing and mental strength.
- Encourage continuous learning and reflection.

3. Our Principles

Our approach to coaching and mentoring will be guided by the following principles.

- **Inclusive and Accessible:** Coaching and mentoring opportunities will be accessible to colleagues from all staff groups and backgrounds, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to learn and develop.
- **Development Focused:** Coaching and mentoring will support personal growth, professional development and career progression.
- **People Centred:** Every coaching and mentoring relationship will be based on trust, respect, confidentiality and mutual commitment.
- **Embedded in Everyday Practice:** Coaching and mentoring should not be viewed as standalone interventions but as integral components of how we lead, manage and work.
- **High Quality and Ethical:** We will maintain professional standards, appropriate governance and clear expectations for all the people involved in coaching and mentoring.
- **Evidence Informed:** Our approach will be informed by feedback, evaluation and organisational insight to ensure continued effectiveness and improvement.

4. Understanding Coaching and Mentoring

To maximise impact and ensure consistency, we will maintain a clear understanding of the purpose and application of both coaching and mentoring across the University. This includes:

- Clear definitions and explanations of what coaching and mentoring are and are not.
- Guidance on available coaching and mentoring opportunities.
- Support in identifying the most appropriate intervention.

Mentoring: Mentoring is a developmental relationship in which an experienced colleague supports another individual by sharing knowledge, experience and insight. Mentoring typically takes a broader and longer-term perspective, supporting professional growth, career development and personal effectiveness.

Coaching: Coaching is a developmental process that helps individuals explore challenges, identify solutions and achieve goals through structured reflection and purposeful questioning. Coaching enables individuals to build self-awareness, confidence and capability by identifying their own actions and approaches.

Coaching as a Management and Leadership Approach: A coaching approach can be used by managers and leaders to support learning and performance improvement. It involves using effective questioning, active listening and reflective conversations to help colleagues develop solutions, build confidence and take ownership. We encourage the use of coaching approaches at all levels across the University, not solely within formal management roles.

4.1. Key Differences Between Coaching and Mentoring

While coaching and mentoring are distinct development approaches, they share a common purpose of supporting individual growth and performance. The table below outlines the key differences between each relationship.

Table 1:

Mentoring	Coaching
Typically, an ongoing relationship that may continue over an extended period.	Usually a shorter-term relationship, often with a defined timeframe.
Often more informal, with meetings arranged as needed to provide guidance and support.	Generally, more structured, with agreed objectives and regular scheduled sessions.
Takes a broader, long-term view of the individual's personal and professional development.	Focuses on specific goals, challenges, behaviours, or development needs.
Mentors typically share their knowledge, experience, and insights, often drawing on their own career journey.	Coaches facilitate self-reflection and learning through questioning and challenge, rather than providing direct advice.
Usually supports career development, personal growth, and future progression.	Primarily focused on improving performance, capability, or effectiveness in a current role or situation.
The mentee largely drives the agenda, with the mentor providing guidance and encouragement.	The agenda is centered on achieving specific, agreed outcomes and measurable goals.
Emphasis is on broader professional development and building confidence, networks, and career understanding.	Emphasis is on developing skills, behaviours, or solutions to identified challenges.
The mentor is often more experienced in the relevant field, profession, or organisation.	The coach does not need direct experience of the coachee's role or area of expertise.

This distinction is intended as a guide only. In practice, some coaching and mentoring relationships may share characteristics of both approaches depending on individual needs and objectives.

5. Strategic Objectives

5.1. Objective 1: Build a Coaching Culture

Why It Matters

Creating a coaching culture helps move development from being an occasional activity to becoming part of everyday working life. When leaders, managers and colleagues use coaching approaches, they are more likely to listen effectively, ask meaningful questions, encourage reflection and support others to find their own solutions. This builds confidence, accountability and ownership, while creating an environment where people feel trusted, empowered and supported to perform at their best. In a complex and fast-changing higher education environment, a coaching culture also strengthens adaptability, resilience, collaboration and continuous improvement.

Our Focus

We will:

- Increase awareness, understanding and engagement with coaching (mentoring) opportunities across the University.
- Develop coaching skills and capabilities across leaders, managers and colleagues, while encouraging coaching conversations as a natural part of everyday leadership, development and performance discussions.
- Communicate coaching (and mentoring) opportunities clearly and consistently through a range of accessible channels.
- Work closely with Schools, Professional Services and leadership teams to identify needs and encourage participation.
- Integrate coaching (and mentoring) within wider learning, leadership, talent and organisational development initiatives.
- Encourage referrals and signposting through People and Organisational Development and key networks.
- Share success stories, case studies and participant experiences to increase awareness and demonstrate impact.
- Recognise and celebrate the contributions of coaches, mentors and participants.

Success Will Look Like

Success will be evident when coaching (and mentoring) is recognised as a normal and valued part of how people work, lead and develop across the University. Leaders and managers will routinely use coaching, while colleagues will feel empowered to take ownership of their learning, growth and career development. Development conversations will be more meaningful, reflective and future-focused, leading to increased engagement, confidence and accountability. Awareness and participation in coaching (and mentoring) will continue to grow, supported by strong communication and visible success stories. Over time, coaching and mentoring will become embedded within the University's ways of working, contributing to stronger leadership, enhanced collaboration, continuous improvement and improved organisational performance.

5.2. Objective 2: Expand Coaching and Mentoring Opportunities

Why It Matters

Coaches and mentors support individuals at key career stages, whether they are developing new skills, navigating change, preparing for future roles or overcoming challenges. Expanding access to coaching and mentoring helps ensure that opportunities are available to a wider range of colleagues, strengthening organisational capability and creating a culture of learning and knowledge sharing.

Our Focus

We will:

- Provide coaching and mentoring opportunities for staff at different career stages and with different developmental needs.
- Promote equitable access to coaching and mentoring opportunities and support colleagues from underrepresented groups.
- Support high-quality coaching and mentoring relationships.
- Explore coaching and mentoring opportunities that support our research priorities.

Success Will Look Like

Success will be reflected in growing participation and demand for coaching and mentoring opportunities across the University. Colleagues will report that these experiences have increased their confidence, capability and effectiveness, while helping them progress in their careers and achieve their goals. Stronger networks, greater collaboration and increased knowledge sharing will contribute to a more connected and supportive University community.

5.3. Objective 3: Strengthen Management and Leadership Capability Through Coaching and Mentoring

Why It Matters

The quality of management and leadership has a significant impact on employee experience, organisational culture, psychological safety and institutional performance. Coaching and mentoring provide managers and leaders with a valuable opportunity to develop greater self-awareness, confidence and effectiveness while strengthening the skills and behaviours needed to lead inclusively. In addition, by adopting a coaching approach with their staff and colleagues, managers and leaders can better support, develop and empower others, creating a culture of trust, learning and accountability across the University.

Our Focus

We will:

- Support new and aspiring managers and leaders through coaching and mentoring support.
- Use coaching and mentoring to support successful transitions into new leadership and management roles.
- Provide coaching and mentoring to help managers and leaders navigate the challenges of leading people, teams and services.
- Offer access to executive coaching where appropriate.
- Enable leaders and managers to adopt a coaching style that empowers colleagues and encourages accountability, ownership and development.

Success Will Look Like

Success will be seen through more confident, capable and effective managers and leaders at all levels of the University. Managers and leaders will demonstrate stronger coaching capabilities, build higher-performing teams and create positive working environments where people feel supported and valued. The University will benefit from a stronger leadership pipeline, increased readiness for future leadership roles and improved capacity to respond effectively to change and emerging challenges.

5.4. Objective 4: Support the PDPR Process, Talent and Career Development

Why It Matters

Attracting, developing and retaining talented colleagues is essential to the University's long-term success. By supporting effective Personal Development and Performance Reviews (PDPRs), talent management and career development, and promoting coaching and mentoring opportunities, the University can strengthen engagement, retention and career progression. Encouraging managers to adopt a coaching approach within PDPR and day-to-day conversations also helps colleagues realise their potential, build capability and develop the skills, behaviours and leadership needed for future success.

Our Focus

We will:

- Embed coaching-based conversations throughout PDPRs, Talent and Career Conversations, career development discussions and succession planning activities.
- Integrate coaching and mentoring opportunities with talent management, succession planning and career development processes, using insights and outcomes from Talent and Career Conversations.
- Provide targeted coaching and mentoring to support emerging talent, high-performing colleagues and those preparing for future career opportunities.
- Offer career coaching to help colleagues explore career pathways, identify development priorities and plan their future growth and progression.

Build managers' confidence and capability to use a coaching approach that supports performance, development and meaningful career conversations.

Success Will Look Like

Success will be reflected in more colleagues feeling supported to develop and achieve their career aspirations within the University. Internal career progression and mobility will increase, succession pipelines will be strengthened, and talent will be better prepared for future opportunities. The University will benefit from improved retention of talented colleagues, reduced skills gaps and a more sustainable workforce equipped to meet future challenges and opportunities.

5.5. Objective 5: Develop a Sustainable Coaching and Mentoring Network

Why It Matters

For coaching and mentoring to deliver long-term value, the University needs a sustainable and diverse network of skilled coaches and mentors who can support colleagues across the institution. Investing in internal capability reduces reliance on external coaches and mentors and improves accessibility to coaching and mentoring. A strong network also promotes consistency, quality and professional standards, while creating opportunities for peer learning, collaboration and continuous improvement.

Our Focus

We will:

- Assess the capacity and capability of our existing coaching and mentoring community to ensure provision aligns with current and anticipated demand.
- Plan for periods of increased demand, such as organisational change and major strategic initiatives.
- Continue to strengthen internal coaching capacity through accredited coaching development programmes and provide appropriate development opportunities, guidance and resources for mentors.
- Provide ongoing professional development, coaching supervision and peer support to maintain quality and continue developing the skills of our coaches and mentors.
- Establish clear expectations, standards and governance arrangements for participation in the University's coaching and mentoring network.
- Promote ethical, inclusive and effective practice in line with recognised professional standards and guidelines.
- Encourage networking, peer learning and the sharing of good practice across the coaching and mentoring community.
- Provide practical guidance, toolkits, resources and support materials for participants, coaches, mentors and managers.
- Develop partnerships with other higher education institutions, professional networks and external organisations to broaden coaching and mentoring opportunities and facilitate reciprocal coaching and mentoring arrangements.
- Use feedback, insight, evaluation and quality assurance processes to continuously improve the quality, effectiveness and impact of coaching and mentoring provision.
- Regularly review the effectiveness, diversity and sustainability of the coaching and mentoring network to ensure it continues to meet organisational needs.

Success Will Look Like

Success will be evident through a thriving, diverse and well-supported coaching and mentoring community that is trusted across the University. Colleagues at all career stages will have access to high-quality coaching and mentoring

support, delivered through a network of skilled practitioners operating to consistent standards. Internal capability will continue to grow, while maintaining quality and accessibility. Strong partnerships, active professional development and effective governance will ensure coaching and mentoring remain sustainable, impactful and aligned to the University's strategic priorities.

6. Delivery Model

Our coaching and mentoring offer provides a range of flexible and accessible development opportunities that support learning, performance, career development and leadership growth. Different approaches are available to meet varying individual, team and University needs.



6.1. Informal Coaching

Development-focused conversations that take place as part of everyday management, leadership and collaboration between colleagues. Informal coaching helps colleagues reflect, solve problems, build confidence and take ownership through regular, meaningful dialogue.

6.2. Professional Workplace Coaching

Professional coaching delivered by trained internal coaches from across the University and, where appropriate, partner organisations. Internal coaching provides confidential, impartial support to help colleagues enhance their effectiveness, navigate challenges, develop new skills and achieve their personal and professional goals.
Internal coaches bring valuable insight into the University's culture, values and operating environment, enabling them to provide relevant and contextually informed support. To maintain a sustainable and high-quality coaching offer, the University will continue to invest in the recruitment, development and ongoing support of its coaching community. Colleagues who join the University's coaching network will be expected to actively contribute to the coaching community through 1:1 coaching, engage in professional development and coaching supervision.

6.3. Executive Coaching

Executive coaching is a specialist form of coaching designed to support senior leaders in strengthening leadership effectiveness, strategic thinking and decision-making. Given the importance of independence, objectivity and confidentiality at senior levels, executive coaching will normally be provided by external coaches. The University will maintain robust selection and quality assurance arrangements to ensure all external coaches meet recognised professional standards and possess the experience, expertise and sector understanding required to support senior leaders effectively. NB: Executive coaching is not centrally funded and will need to be funded through individual School, Professional Service or University budgets. The sourcing and procurement of executive coaching will be coordinated by the People and Organisational Development (P&OD) team to ensure quality, consistency and value for money.

6.4. Mentoring

Developmental relationships that draw on the knowledge, experience and insights of mentors to support personal and professional growth. Mentoring helps colleagues broaden perspectives, build networks, increase confidence and explore career opportunities and aspirations. Mentoring may be delivered through formal matching arrangements or informal relationships.

6.5. Team Coaching

Facilitated coaching approaches that support teams with collective learning, collaboration and performance. These interventions help teams strengthen relationships, improve communication, address shared challenges and work more effectively towards common goals.

6.6. External Coaching and Mentoring Partnerships

Coaching and mentoring opportunities delivered through partnerships with external organisations, including other higher education institutions. These partnerships provide access to wider perspectives, specialist expertise and additional development opportunities. Through partnership working, we will:

- Explore reciprocal coaching and mentoring arrangements that provide colleagues with access to free external coaches and mentors while making best use of internal expertise.
- Share expertise, insight and good practice.
- Provide shared development opportunities for coaches and mentors.

Through these partnerships, we will broaden opportunities for colleagues, enhance the quality and range of our coaching and mentoring provision and strengthen collaboration.

6.7. Professional Standards and Ethics

To ensure coaching and mentoring are delivered consistently, ethically and to a high standard, the University will adopt recognised professional frameworks, standards and best practice. This will help build confidence in our provision, protect participants and ensure positive and effective developmental experiences.

We will:

- Adopt recognised coaching and mentoring competencies and professional standards.
- Promote adherence to recognised coaching codes of ethics.
- Support continuing professional development for coaches and mentors.
- Encourage reflective practice, supervision and ongoing quality assurance.
- Maintain clear governance, processes and expectations for all coaching and mentoring activity.
- Regularly review the quality, effectiveness and impact of coaching and mentoring provision.

For all formal coaching and mentoring relationships, an agreed coaching or mentoring contract will be used to clarify objectives, roles, responsibilities and expectations. Coaching activities will be guided by recognised professional bodies, such as the European Mentoring and Coaching Council (EMCC) and the International Coaching Federation (ICF), ensuring confidentiality, professionalism and ethical practice are maintained throughout.

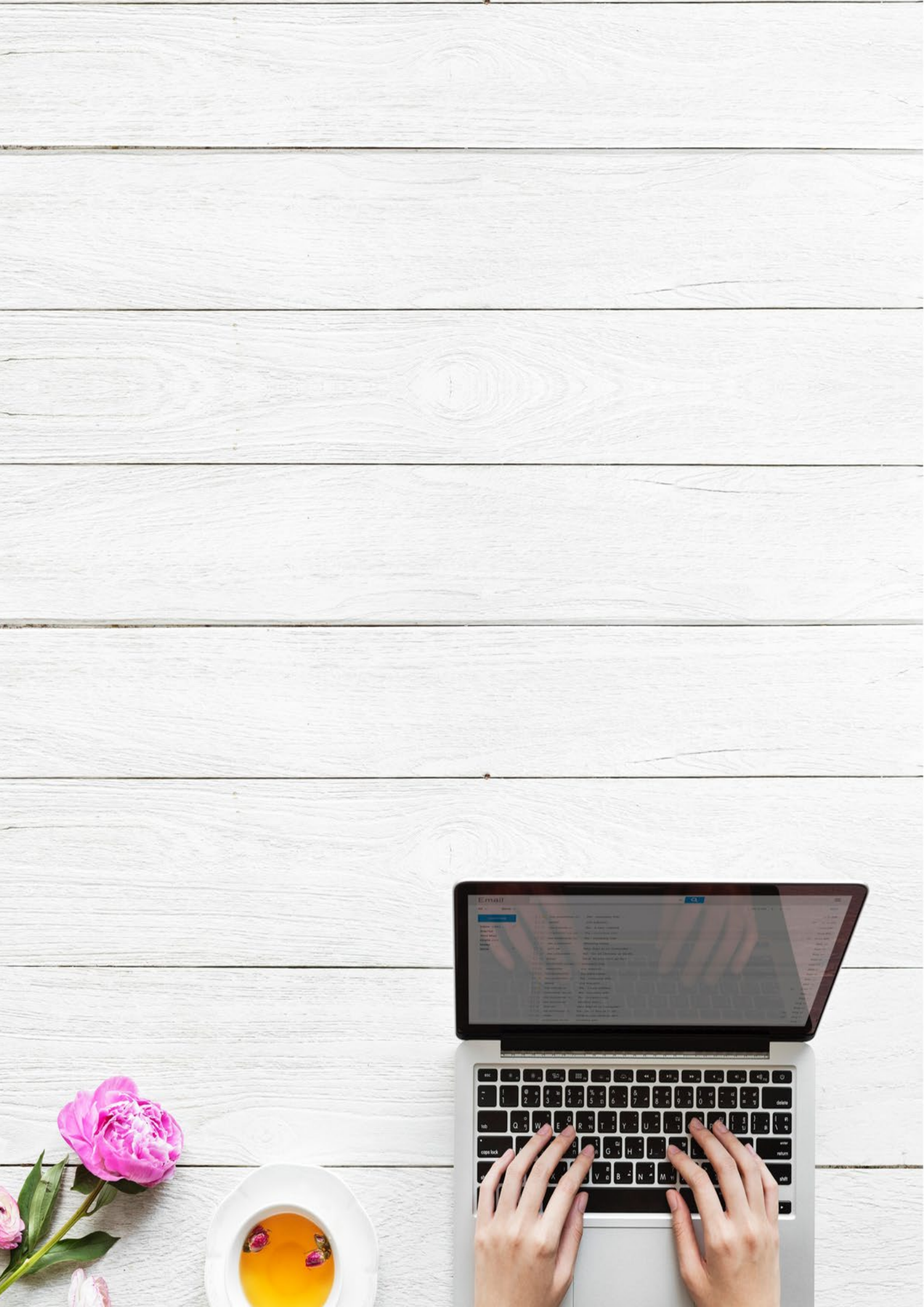
7. Measures (How we track progress)

We will evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy through a range of measures.

- Collection and analysis of feedback following 1:1 C&M relationships, to assess quality, relevance, and impact.
- Uptake of (1:1) C&M services, analysed by schools, services, with a focus on balanced participation across the University.
- Staff participation with C&M-related CPD, analysed by schools, services, and departments, to highlight trends, identify gaps, and inform targeted support.
- Ongoing evaluation of the quality, relevance, and impact of C&M-related CPD, with a focus on relevance, effectiveness, and impact on performance.
- Alignment with either the EMCC or ICF frameworks, reinforcing ethical practice and high standards.
- Active internal coaches participating in regular professional supervision and ongoing CPD.
- Qualitative insights gathered through case studies, interviews, and focus groups.

8. Governance, Accountability and Reporting

This strategy is delivered within and governed by the overarching People and Organisational Development Strategy (please see section 6,7 and 8), ensuring alignment with institutional priorities and workforce objectives. Clear accountability is shared across the University, with VCEG providing strategic oversight, Schools and Services responsible for local implementation, managers supporting development through effective people management practices, and colleagues taking ownership of their growth and career development. Progress, impact, and outcomes will be monitored through regular reporting, workforce insights and P&OD dashboards, enabling evidence-based decision-making, transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement at both local and institutional levels.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