



The role of a Buddy

Edinburgh Napier University

1. Aim of a Buddy

Having a “buddy” at work can make a huge difference to the enjoyment and speed at which new recruits manage to settle into the role, the department and the organisation. Just knowing there is someone there to listen who is genuinely interested in helping them, can make new staff members feel supported and more engaged at work. We recommend allocating an induction buddy for any new starter in your organisation.

2. What is the role of a buddy?

The role of the buddy is to provide informal support and guidance to a new colleague, which may include, but not necessarily be restricted to:

- Being a friendly face in the first few weeks of a new job
- Being able and willing to answer the range of (sometime repeated) day to day questions, that may not necessarily be about that individual’s job role, such as “who was that?” “Who do I speak to about my car parking permit?” or “how to I find out about IT and Moodle training?”
- Helping the new colleague understand any general local working practices and activities.
- Showing the new colleague around the wider campus, have a coffee or lunch
- Being available to provide information and guidance in a friendly, supportive, confidential and non-judgmental manner.

3. What makes a good buddy?

A good buddy is someone who is prepared to be:

- A contact
- A friendly face
- An informal source of information on the team and department
- Someone who knows how things work across the university and is prepared to share that experience

Personal attributes of a good buddy include:

- The ability to listen
- Openness and commitment to being a buddy – it can be a learning experience for both parties
- Good time management and self-management skills
- Relevant knowledge and experience to be able to provide the right level of support
- An honest and considerate approach to giving feedback and asking challenging questions including the:
 - ability to give constructive feedback
 - ability to identify learning opportunities
 - ability to use questions to encourage new starters to think for themselves

4. Roles and responsibilities of a buddy

As a buddy you are not line managing the new individual but instead as a support colleague and to answer questions. Your role as a buddy will be varied depending on the individual you are working with but could involve some or all of the following:

- Helping your new colleague to navigate their way around the department and the site - this could include short tours
- Showing them how to do aspects of their role
- Answering questions – often more than once. Buddies need to be patient as new starters take in a lot of information, often in a short time, and may need to re-ask questions in the future as events occur
- Provide information, signpost information and provide informal support
- Introducing them to other colleagues who are important to their role
- Helping them to understand the formal and informal culture and structures at the University
- Encourage them to ask questions if unsure about any aspects of their role
- Arrange to go for coffee or lunch sometime so they can enjoy the social side of working and feel part of the team.

A buddy is not:

- Responsible for planning the new starter's induction or answering questions about contracts of employment
- Responsible for setting performance expectations and monitoring them
- Responsible for arranging training for the new starter
- An advisor or counsellor
- A new best friend
- A confidante

5. Who can be a buddy?

Anyone who is experienced within the university whatever their role, and preferably a member from within the same team. The individual should be enthusiastic and engaging, and should also be trusted to be supportive to the new member of staff. The buddy should not be the new starter's line manager. Buddying is a completely voluntary role and nobody should feel under pressure to take it on, the key characteristics of a buddy might include:

- **Friendly and approachable:** It is important that our new colleagues feel welcome. We all know there is too much information when first starting a role, so repeated questions should be welcomed
- **Good communicator:** Encouraging questions and providing information you know will be relevant, ensuring new colleagues are 'in the loop' within your School or department
- **Motivated:** As a buddy you should have a positive outlook on your own role and those of our colleagues.

6. Tips for Buddies:

The role is an informal and friendly one, so please:

- Don't worry about being perceived as the expert. Focus on being welcoming and friendly
- Be patient, some people may ask the same questions more than once!
- Be positive, new colleagues will be nervous and anxious about their new role, help them to find their way around the university and meet people in a positive way.

7. Thinking about a few practical considerations

The proposed buddy should be consulted about becoming a buddy, including outlining their responsibilities within the role, before they are confirmed as a buddy to the new starter. It is also important that the buddy's line manager is consulted and agrees to the buddying arrangement. Only then, should the new colleague be introduced to their buddy (this would be on the first day of employment)

8. Guidelines for approaching the first meeting

If you have not been a buddy before it can seem daunting and this is matched by the new starter feeling a bit overwhelmed possibly by a new role and new environment. The following may help as guidance for you, which will ultimately help you build a relationship faster with your buddy and decide on how you are both going to make use of your time.

- Arrange an informal meeting, over coffee is a suggestion
- Outline your role, experience and why you are their buddy
- Find out about their professional background and experience and identify their understanding of the "buddy" relationship and how it will work
- Clarify any expectations they have of you
- Arrange a good time to take them around to understand the layout of the campus Arrange to show them around the office and explain basics like how the phone and photocopier work, where things are stored, where to get stationary, key documents and policies and anything else that will make it easier for them to settle into the role
- Discuss and agree who it would be helpful to introduce them to e.g. key people relevant to their role
- Explain any office events such as clubs, networks, coffee kitty's, shared birthday collections etc and make sure they are added to informal contact lists or social chat groups
- Get to know a bit about them as an individual outside of work if appropriate
- Make sure they know they can ask you anything in regards to work and you will be happy to help – it is important to stress this as often new members of the team are reluctant to ask as they don't want to get off on a bad foot with their new colleagues

Further support

If you have any questions or would like to discuss how to approach this within your area/department, please contact Learning and Development