



UNIVERSITY OF BOTSWANA

Designing successful research careers: a (pilot) institutional mentoring programme for early career researchers at the University of Botswana

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Challenges for researchers



- Researchers are now being asked to do more with less:
 - Contracts and grants are required for promotions, but funding opportunities are decreasing, and funding bodies are tightening the criteria and expectations.
 - Student numbers in classrooms are increasing as Universities face national responsibility to increase access, without a reciprocal increase in academic staff numbers.
 - There is also more expected committee work both within and outside the academy.
 - Increasingly little time or money to focus on research



Reality




- Research still remains (the) major requirement for promotion
- How can you do more with less?
- How can research offices develop the next generation of researchers?




Presentation objective



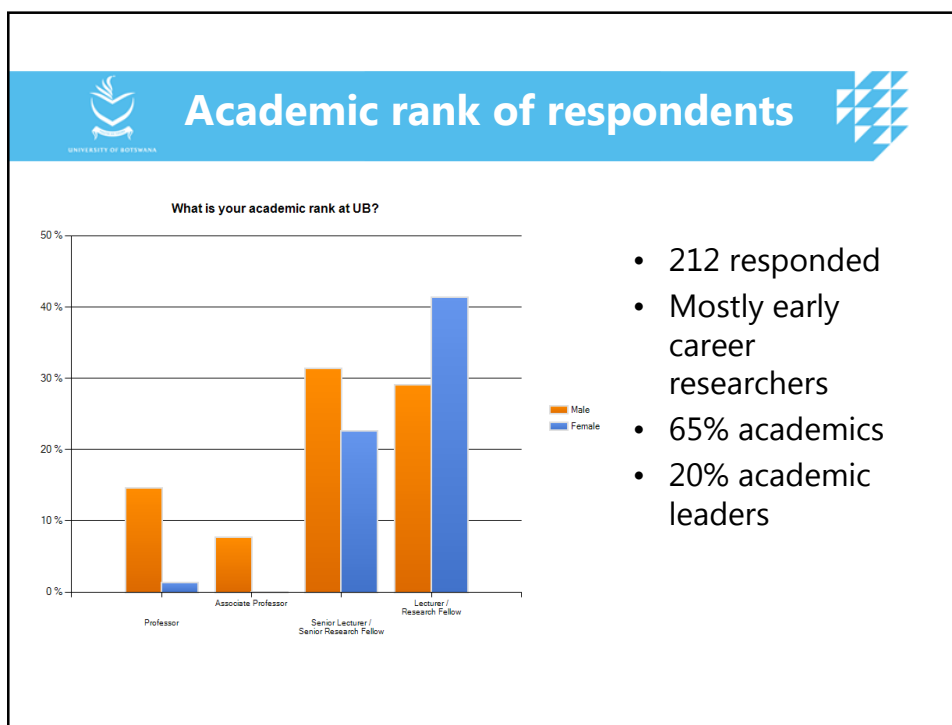
- Evaluate the role of formal mentoring on developing researchers
 - Academics understanding of mentoring
 - Characteristics of a mentor and mentee
 - Pilot-test a research mentoring programme
- Provide recommendations for UB

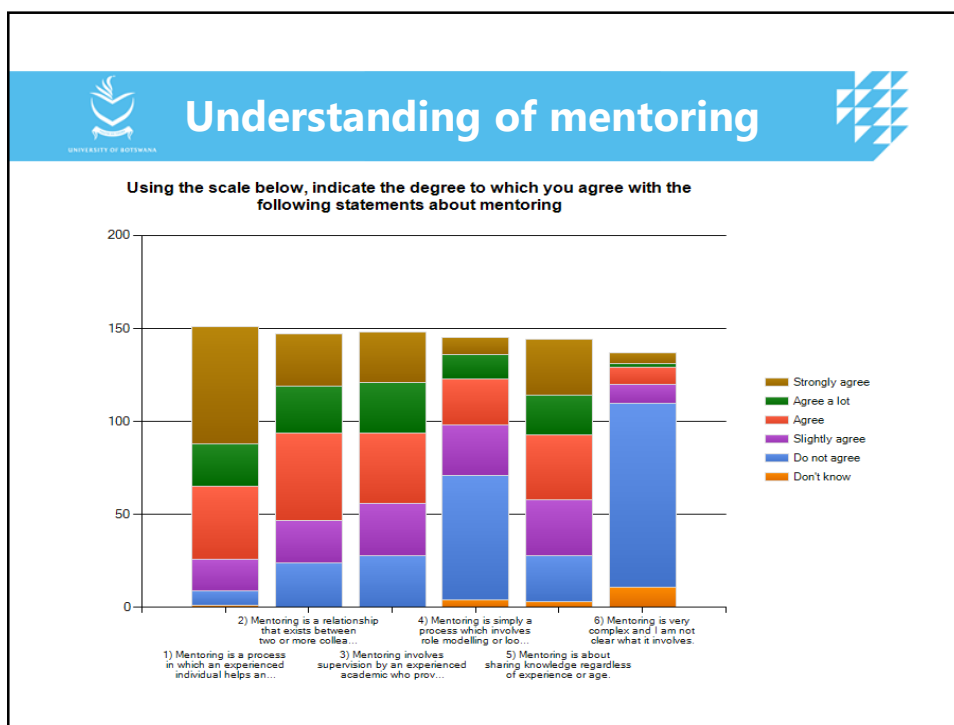
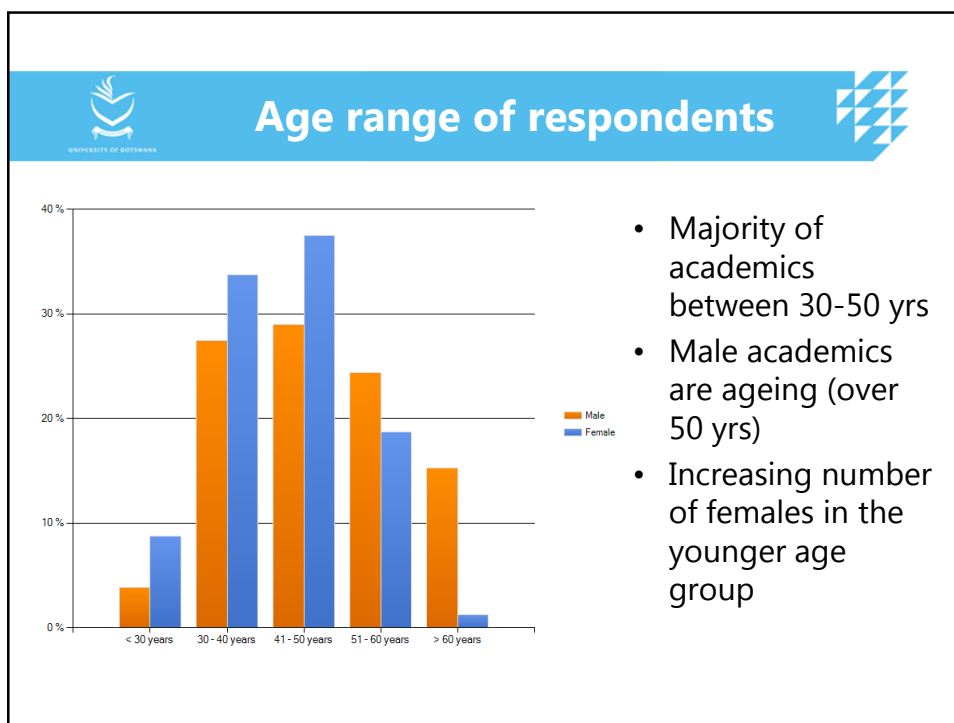


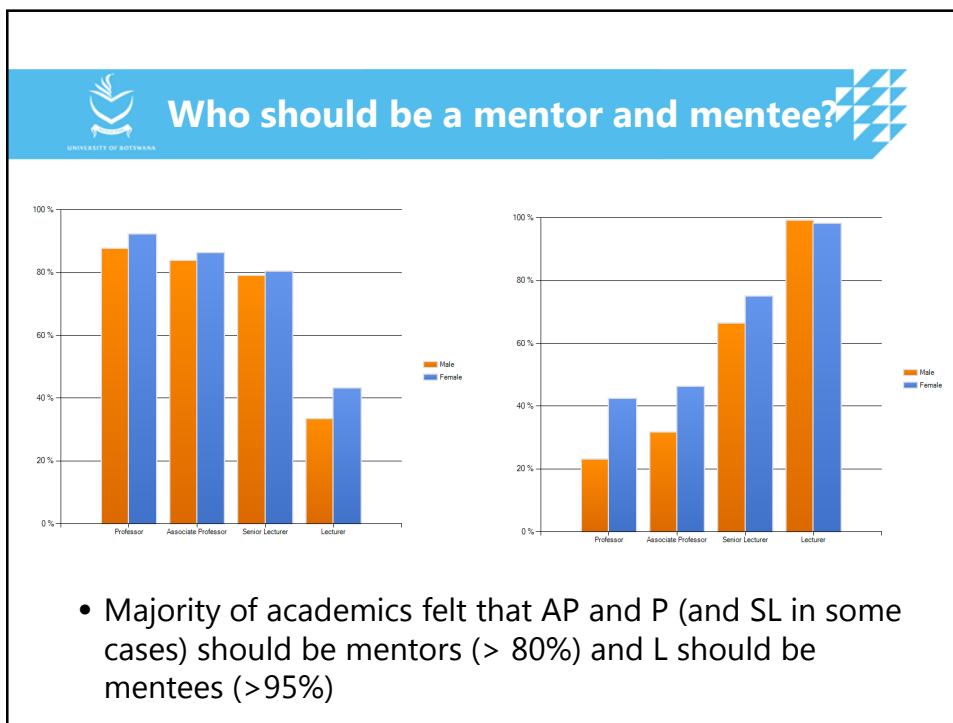
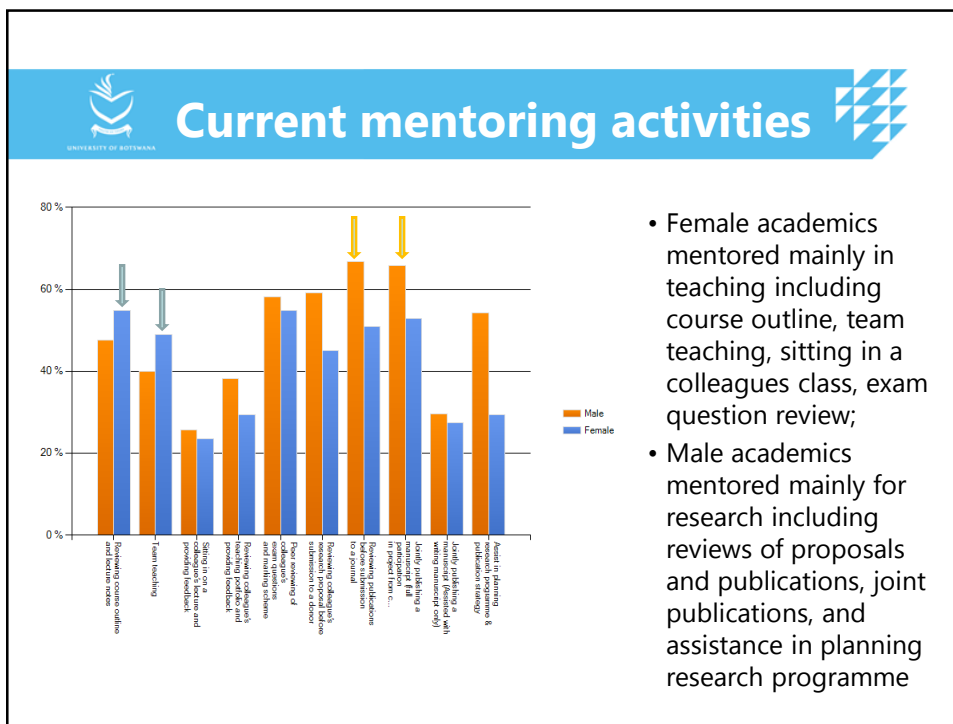
Methods

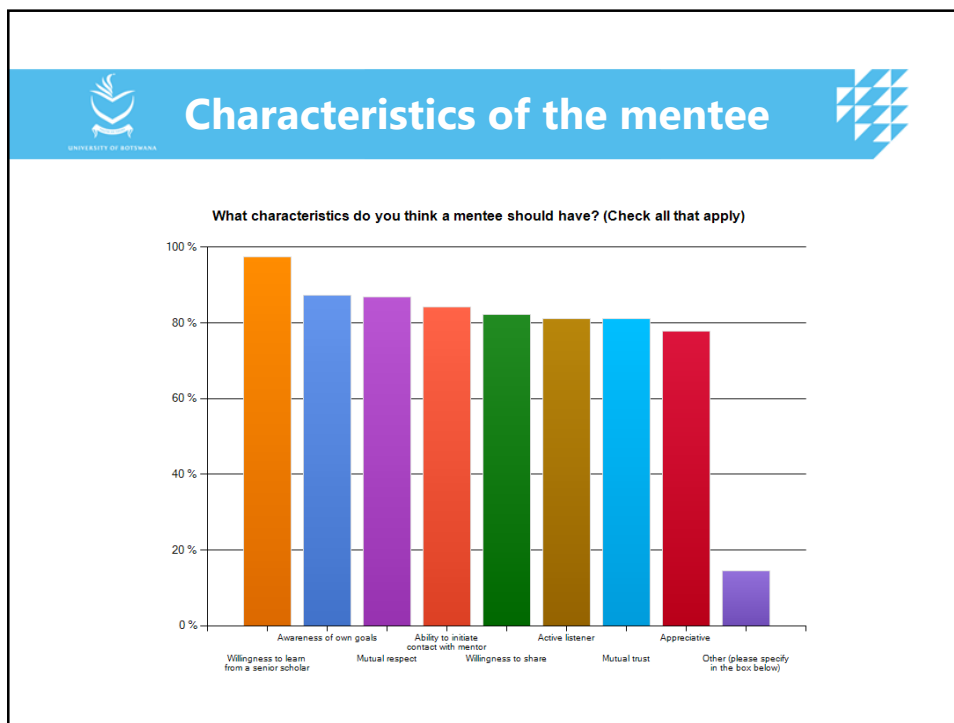
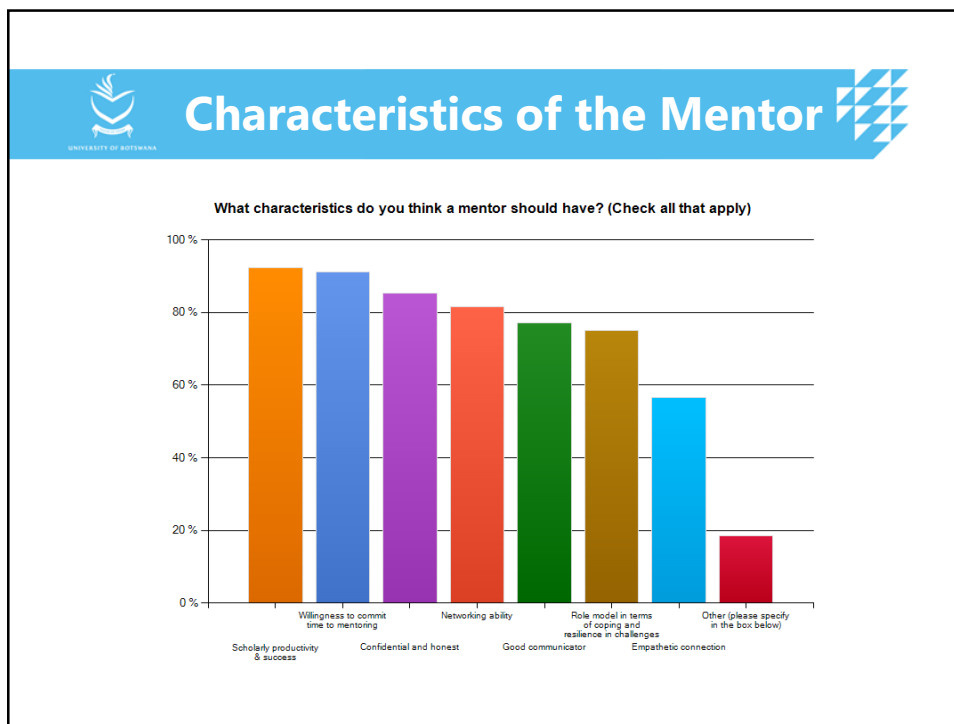


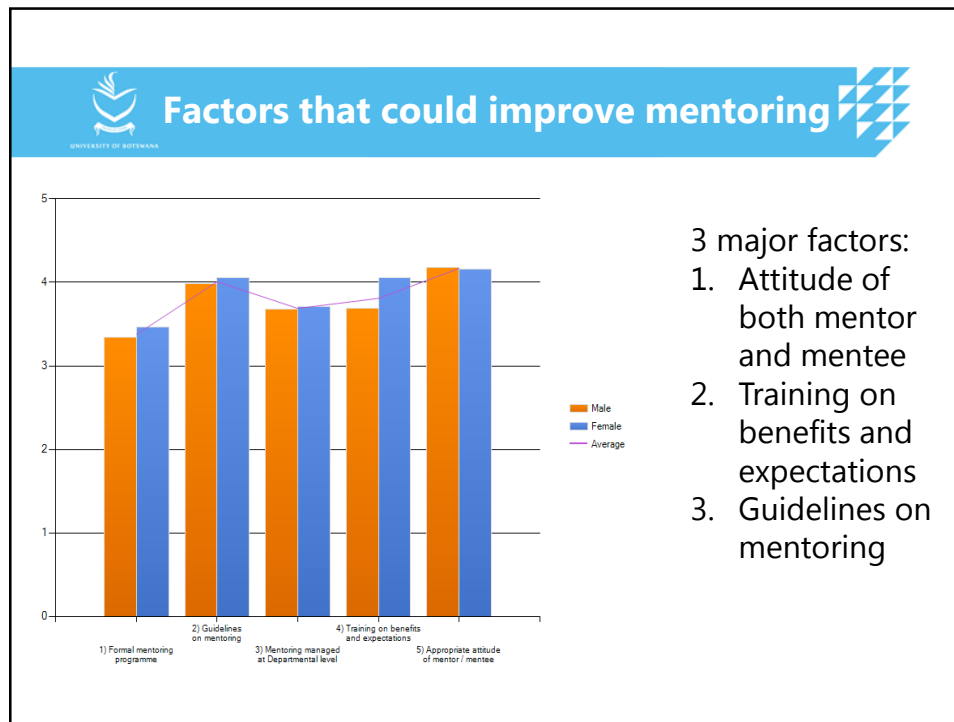
- Online survey (www.surveymonkey.com) was used to assess the mentoring practices at UB from May – October 2009
 - Modified mentoring questionnaire that was developed by Haynes et al (2009) about mentoring of Law Academics
 - Questionnaire sent to the email addresses of all 848 academic staff members employed at UB
- Pilot an early career research mentoring programme to 10-15 early career researchers over 1 semester
 - Develop their research plan
 - Draft or submit a grant proposal internally / externally
 - Draft or submit a manuscript












 **Pilot research mentoring programme** 

- 15 early- or mid-career female academics, at least one from each Faculty
 - 12 Lecturers, 3 Senior Lecturers
- Emphasis on research mentoring (excluding discipline specific methodology training)
- 11 training workshops offered
- Workshops offered by senior staff in the research office, professors at UB and a professor from a major research university in the US
- One-on-one sessions to review grant applications, manuscripts etc





Pilot research mentoring programme

- 11 workshops from Jan – Apr 2010
 - Research Project Planning
 - Developing the individual research plan
 - Getting promoted I – Juggling multiple roles to achieve career success
 - Grant writing
 - Science Communication
 - Presenting at meetings
 - Identifying External Funding Opportunities
 - Manuscript preparation – What do Editors look for?
 - Negotiating international collaborations
 - Getting Promoted II – Putting the package together
 - Responsible Authorship

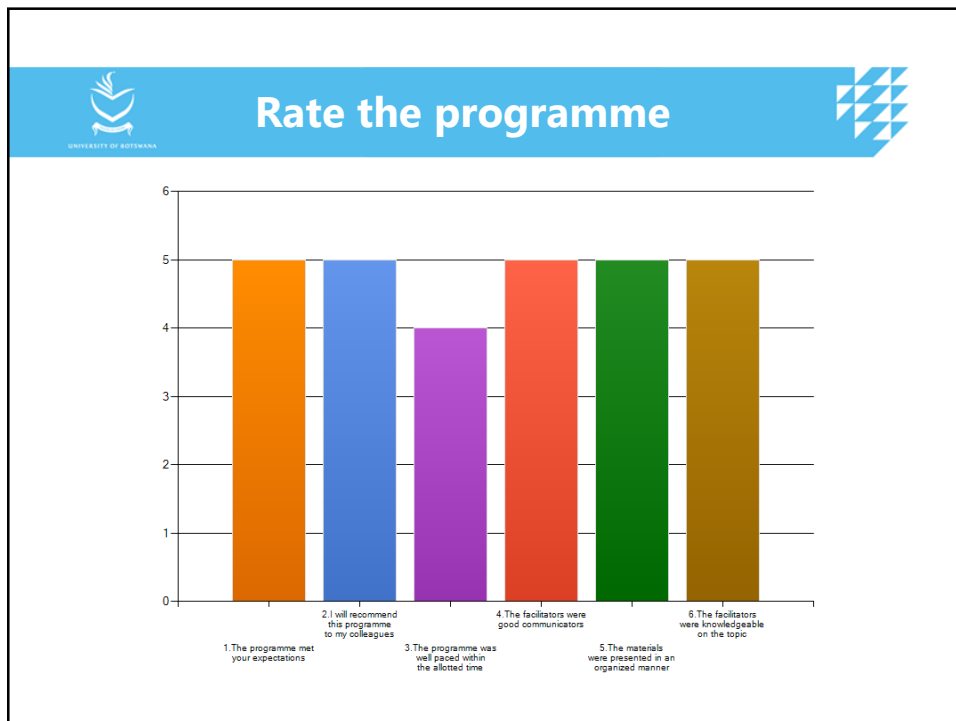


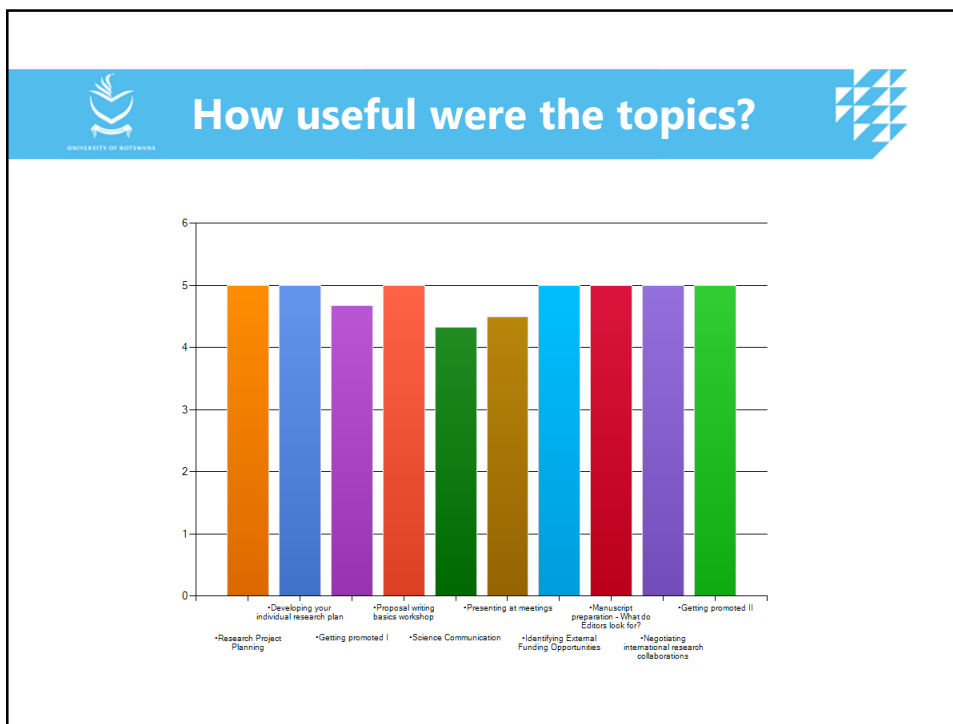
Observations

- Attendance 100% until nearer to end of semester, decreased to about 60%
- Group was energized, particularly with topics on getting promoted
 - Interpreting policy documents, sometimes it needs hand-holding
- Group wants to continue working together


Feedback


- Excellent programme
- Facilitators organized and strong communicators
- Programme should be continued particularly for early career researchers
- Need more support on establishing and sustaining international research collaborations and publishing







Tangible outputs



By end of programme


- > 75% mentees had drafted their research plan
- Almost 40% had drafted or submitted a manuscript
 - Most indicated a plan to submit a manuscript
- Almost 25% had drafted or submitted a grant proposal
 - Most indicated a plan to submit a proposal



Specific feedback




- “For the first time in my academic career I have drawn a research plan and have started writing a proposal as per the plan”
- “I feel that the research mentoring programme is a very good developmental tool. Participants need to be given a reasonable work load in their departments so that they will be more committed”
- “We need to keep this group - Meet once in a while nurture it for growth”
- **“I am working on submitting a manuscript by end of April after useful feedback on ways of improving the paper before submission”**




Recommendations


(Mentees and Research Team)



- Develop an institutional formal mentorship programme that would complement the informal mentorship taking place at UB
- Mentees should be primarily early- and mid-career level researchers
- Mentors should be AP or FP with a strong academic record
- Managed at Departmental level (discipline based) and research office – mentoring committee
- Provide training to mentors and mentees on expectations and benefits



THANKS!



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