

ARMS 2024 CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Theme: Professional Research Management as an embedded practice

Title: Development of a mentoring program for early career researcher support

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Abstract:

Early Career Researchers within the College of Health, Medicine and Wellbeing identified that there was a lack of career mentoring programs available to support them. Whilst the University of Newcastle holds academic peer mentoring programs, there was no specific program targeting the transition from PhD to academic researcher. Based on existing programs, a College mentoring program was developed that was designed to support final year PhD students and early career researchers. Academics at level B and C were invited to join the program as mentors. The purpose of the program was to provide peer support early in the academic journey, and to also build mentoring skills in early to mid-career academics. Expressions of Interest (EOI) were invited for mentors and mentees. Mentors and mentees were matched manually based on data collected as part of the EOI. The mentoring program consisted of a group workshop, and mid-point check in, separately for mentors and mentees, as well as four individual 1.5 hour meetings between mentor and mentee. Data was collected at the start and end of the program to evaluate the impact of the program. The initial pilot program was undertaken in 2023, with 16 academic mentors, and 20 mentees participating. A peer mentoring program was useful for both mentors and mentees. Future programs should focus on clear alignment between mentee goals and mentor skills, resources and strategies to build the mentoring relationship, and clear expectations of the mentoring relationship and program.