



Using a buddy as part of induction

A buddy is one way people leaders may choose to support new team members through the induction process. Buddies are widely used across sectors as one tool to promote connection during induction. In a large scale pilot at Microsoft, new starters with buddies were 23% more satisfied with their overall onboarding experience than those without buddies¹.

Existing staff have the opportunity to support as a *buddy* for new starters. A buddy plays an important role in welcoming the new starter, helping them as they adjust to their new work environment and offering a place for the 'silly' questions that they may not feel comfortable asking elsewhere.

What is a buddy?

A buddy is an existing staff member who will partner with a new starter during their first three months at the University to offer guidance, support, and encouragement.

Having a buddy can help new starters navigate the initial confusion and uncertainty that often accompanies starting a new role.

Role of a buddy:

A buddy is a supportive colleague and friendly face. The buddy role is informal and will vary depending on the needs of the new starter, but it might involve some or all the following:

- meet informally with a new hire three times in the first three months
- be available to answer general questions on an ad hoc basis
- encourage them to ask questions
- provide information and informal support
- introduce them to relevant colleagues
- signposting to relevant resources or navigating various aspects of the organisation
- help them to understand formal and informal cultures within the organisation

A buddy is not expected to be:

- A replacement of the important relationship between a new starter and their people leader
- A mentor
- A coach
- A counsellor

¹ <https://hbr.org/2019/06/every-new-employee-needs-an-onboarding-buddy>

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How does it work?

1. People Leaders/Induction Coordinators identify and approach an existing staff member as a potential buddy (see example template email below)
2. Once an existing staff member has agreed to be a buddy, the People Leader/Induction Coordinator will provide brief details of the new starter (name, role and commencement date) (see example template below)
3. The People Leader/Induction Coordinator will advise the new starter of the details of their selected buddy and provide the “Making the most of your buddy” document.
4. The People Leader/Induction Coordinator will provide an email introduction, and potentially arrange an initial catch up in the first week as part of creating the induction agenda for new starters
5. Within the first three months, it will be then up to the *buddy* to reach out to the new starter for another informal catch up to check in on how they are settling in.

Selecting a buddy:

A buddy is usually someone who is:

- Not in the immediate team, but familiar with the area / local context of the new starter
- Knowledgeable about the university
- At a similar classification level to the new starter
- Friendly, supportive and willing to take time to help out

Example structure for a buddy:

Ideally, there should be an informal three month relationship starting on the new starter’s first few days.

It is up to each buddy and new starter to decide on the frequency, length, and method of interaction, as well as the topics covered in each meeting. What’s important is that the arrangement is clearly defined and works for both the new starter and the buddy.

The following is an example of how the structure might work:

Week 1 (ideally day 1 or 2):

- arrange to meet for half an hour - hour
- learn about each other’s backgrounds, experience and interests
- respond to any immediate questions
- agree on frequency, length and method of future communication

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Month 1:

- meet informally for half an hour – hour
- provide new starter with information as it arises, including things like signposting to relevant webpages or information
- be available for chats (agree upfront whether preference is teams, email or phone)

Month 2 and 3:

- meet informally for half an hour
- provide new starter with information as it arises
- be available for chats or questions (agree upfront whether preference is teams, email or phone)

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Example request to an existing staff member

Dear [XXX],

We will have a new colleague joining our team as [POSITION] on [date] and were hoping you might consider being a 'buddy' to them through their onboarding process. [Anything relevant about the new colleague or role]

A buddy is someone, usually a peer, who is recognized as knowledgeable and supportive, who can help a new colleague to feel welcome to the university. [Anything relevant about the buddy as to why you are approaching them].

Typically, a buddy is an informal relationship during a new colleagues first 3 months. A buddy usually meets with a new colleague at least 3 times in the first 3 months (with the first meeting being during their first couple of days) and is available to answer general questions on an ad hoc basis. The buddy may offer advice and guidance regarding the day-to-day aspects of working at the university, offer encouragement, or direct to knowledge resources. There is some additional information about the being a buddy in the attached.

Let me know if you are available to be a buddy to [new colleagues name]. If you'd like to discuss further don't hesitate to reach out.

Kind regards,

XXXX

Example email introduction

Dear [new colleagues name],

As part of your onboarding process I'm pleased to introduce you to your buddy, [buddy's name].

[Include brief information about the buddy such as their role, how long they've been in the organisation, or anything else that might be relevant].

[Your first catch up with [buddys name] is scheduled in your onboarding agenda for [day/time]] OR [You can set up a time to chat with XX over the next couple of days], and I'll leave it to the two of you to arrange subsequent catch-ups over the coming months. A little bit more information about the buddy program can be found here [link or attach info about buddy program].

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