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## Features of Legal Regulation of the Mentoring Institution in Higher Education Institutions (Case Study of the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia)

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### Abstract

*Introduction:* the article is devoted to the study of the mentoring institution in the higher education system in its regulatory and law enforcement aspects, analyzes legal foundations of mentoring in higher education institutions, taking into account provisions of the Concept for Mentoring Development in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030. The concepts of “mentor”, “teacher”, and “direct supervisor” are defined and distinguished, and the principles of mentoring are analyzed. Key forms and types of mentoring activities used in the higher education system are highlighted. Using the example of the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service, the article defines a system of mentoring types used in higher education institutions: scientific mentoring, academic mentoring, young teacher school, student research society, study club at the department, and study group curator. The article highlights the value of the mentoring institution for both the mentor and the mentee. *Purpose:* based on the conducted theoretical and empirical research, to prove the necessity to adopt a special local regulatory act at the level of a higher education institution that defines the forms and types of mentoring as a socio-pedagogical technology for supporting personal and professional development of students and formation of traditional Russian spiritual and moral values. *Methods:* generalization, analysis, including comparative analysis, systematization, and forecasting. *Conclusions:* the article defines the system of legal acts that regulate key forms and types of mentoring in the higher education system, reveals their specific features, and identifies specific features of local acts on mentoring that establish the technologies and methods used, depending on the way and period of interaction. The article also identifies the need for a unified act on mentoring at the university level, which defines the content, principles, forms, and types of mentoring, as well as a system of material and non-material incentives.

**Key words:** mentoring, mentor, mentoring development concept, mentee, educational organization, higher education, local regulatory act.

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### *Introduction*

In modern conditions, the institution of mentoring is applied in various fields of human activity: business, IT, social sphere, education, healthcare, and social engineering. In the higher education system, mentoring is used to transfer knowledge and experience, develop skills, and stimulate motivation, support and feedback. Mentoring as a socio-pedagogical technology first appeared in the USA [1, p. 143], in the 1900s, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America was created, uniting volunteer mentors for children in difficult life situations [2, p. 148].

In the USSR, the institution of mentoring became widespread during the industrialization of the 1920–1930s and in the 1960–1980s mentoring grew into a mass movement in the system of vocational education and industrial training. It was during this period that the scientific foundations of mentoring as a socio-pedagogical technology were laid, which was greatly facilitated by the works of academician S. Ya. Batyshev [3, p. 377].

In the XXI century, Russia is experiencing a revival of the institution of mentoring, which is acquiring institutional characteristics. The fact of its very existence, value and significance is recognized in various organizations and institutions, which is reflected in official documents. At the present stage, the institution of mentoring is actively being revived in the work of educational organizations of various levels, covering educational and social aspects of support for both students and young teachers.

Nowadays, the legal framework for the institution of mentoring in the Russian Federation is being formed. The starting point is the adoption of the decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 401 of June 27, 2022, according to which 2023 was declared “Year of the teacher and mentor”.

On December 27, 2023, the meeting of the State Council was held, where the President of the Russian Federation instructed the Government of the Russian Federation to develop a concept for the development of mentoring in order to enhance the role and prestige of the teacher and mentor.

The Concept for Mentoring Development in the Russian Federation for the Period up to 2030 was approved by the decree of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 1264-r

of May 25, 2025 (hereinafter referred to as the Mentoring Development Concept). It defined the concept of mentoring as a socio-pedagogical technology to support a personal and professional development of a person and to form traditional Russian spiritual and moral values.

To popularize and develop the institution of mentoring, to demonstrate the importance of mentoring activities at the state level, the decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 197 of April 1, 2025 established Mentor’s Day on March 2. The memorable date was timed to coincide with the birthday of Konstantin D. Ushinskii, the founder of scientific pedagogy in Russia, on March 2, 1823. An award “For Mentoring” for personal merits for at least five years was established by decree of the President of the Russian Federation No. 94 of March 2, 2018. The institution of mentoring in the system of higher departmental education in Russia has a long history. Currently its forms, types and methods are being transformed due to the increasing demands for training highly qualified specialists for the penal system of the Russian Federation. The Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service is a departmental university, therefore, the institution of mentoring is applied in accordance with the decree of Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 535 of July 17, 2024.

### *Key provisions*

In the higher education system, the institution of mentoring has different forms and types, but before proceeding to the consideration of concepts of “mentor” and “mentee” in a university, we will determine crucial differences in the substantive component of activities of a mentor, teacher and direct supervisor:

1. The teacher is mainly focused on achieving educational goals (transfer of knowledge, educational material) and helping students (cadets) to assimilate relevant information and form competencies provided for by the Federal State Educational Standard for Higher Education.

2. The interaction between the teacher and students is usually more formal and structured. The teacher follows the work program and the thematic plan.

The differences in activities of the mentor and the direct supervisor are the following:

1. The mentor is focused on achieving certain goals and tasks in the organization or team and coordinating the work of subordinates.

2. The interaction between the supervisor and subordinates is often related to the management and execution of tasks. The supervisor makes decisions and gives instructions.

Mentor-mentee interaction is characterized as such:

1. The mentor is focused on the development of the mentee's personality or professional growth, his/her goal is to help the mentee learn new skills, develop him/herself and achieve goals.

2. The interaction between mentor and mentee is often more individual and flexible, based on trust and the exchange of experience.

It is worth mentioning that in real life, these roles often overlap, and one person can serve as a teacher, mentor or supervisor in different contexts. Effective learning and development usually require all these roles to work together to varying degrees. Mentoring in the higher education system is the most important condition in the professional orientation of students [10, p. 56].

Mentoring is a multidimensional social phenomenon that can be considered as a process, tool, and technology in the higher education system.

Mentoring is always a two-way process leading to personal growth of the mentor and the mentee. The Mentoring Development Concept fixes its forms:

1. Individual ("mentor – mentee"), where the mentor sets goals for the mentee's personal and social development and provides feedback on his/her activities.

2. Team ("mentor – team of mentee", "team of mentors – mentee", "team of mentors – team of mentees"). A group format involves the mentor working with several mentees united by a common goal, as a rule, for the implementation of project activities. The mentor interacts with an already established team; he/she should have skills in group and individual mentoring.

Let us consider a system of local regulatory legal acts regulating key types of mentoring and their features in the higher education system developed in the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia:

1. Scientific mentoring – the management of practice (introductory, industrial, pre-graduate, research), term papers, final qualifying works (bachelor's and master's theses) can be attributed to a formal type, since this activity is strictly regulated by legal acts and its result is part of the intermediate or final certification of the student.

The Regulations on final qualifying works for bachelor's degree programs, specialty programs, and master's degree programs, approved by the order of the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 122 of March 23, 2022 (as amended of September 27, 2023, No. 523), fix conditions for mentor-mentee interaction:

- to prepare the final qualifying work, a student interacts with a scientific supervisor responsible for the quality of the work;

- the scientific supervisor performs the following functions: developing an individual assignment for completing the work and presenting it to the head of the department; conducting consultations on the methodology of writing the work and its content; monitoring the progress of the work schedule; submitting a review;

- the student should regularly attend consultations of the supervisor; submit the material to him/her in accordance with the schedule; coordinate the content and progress of the planned stages; eliminate the shortcomings indicated by the supervisor.

We back the point of view of L.B. Ershtein that scientific leadership is characterized by goal setting, planning, organization and conduct of research, its assessment, control [5, pp. 12–13]. But despite all the external formalization of mentoring in the form of scientific guidance of final qualifying papers, as a rule, this activity generates deeper academic cooperation, where the supervisor disseminates knowledge, experience, and values.

Scientific mentoring is considered in different ways: by the way of interaction, it is individual; in terms of formalization – formal; by the period of interaction – long-term; by the way of implementation – mixed (both personally and remotely via e-mail, messengers and social networks); by the direction of interaction – vertical; by type of activity – educational, scientific, and project.

2. Academic mentoring of research activities is regulated by the order of the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 413 of August 11, 2025 "On approval of local regulations governing the research activities of students and approval of the composition of the Council of the student research society". This type of mentoring has a less formalized character. It facilitates the achievement of research goals. It ensures the transfer of knowledge, competencies, implicit experience, worldview, cultural and social norms, which is crucial in the era of digital technology development.

It should be noted that academic mentoring also has a reversible character (mentees become mentors for teachers in those areas where they have great competencies) and the mentor acquires such values as:

- self-realization in a new role;
- rethinking the actual experience through someone else's picture of the world;
- professional growth, acquisition of new management skills and techniques;
- the opportunity to find fresh ideas and approaches.

Academic mentoring is implemented in both individual and team activities, the latter is often used in the preparation of research projects that require the participation of a team of three people, the use of a variety of research methods and ensuring strict adherence to scientific ethics [6, p. 480].

Academic mentoring can be individual or group by the method of interaction; informal by formalization; long-term (sometimes short-term) by the period of interaction; mixed (personally-contact and remote via e-mail, messengers and social networks) by the method of implementation; horizontal and reversible by the direction of interaction; educational, scientific, design, and professional by type of activity.

3. A student research society of the educational organization and a study club the department is a socio-pedagogical technology in the field of mentoring.

Activities of student research societies at the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia are regulated by the charter approved by the order of the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No.

413 of August 11, 2025 [7]. In general, within the framework of activities of the student research society and its Council, a peer-to-peer partnership form of mentoring is used, where senior students transfer their experience to junior students in order to involve the latter in active research in all its forms and manifestations. Since being on the same level as other students, it is easier for cadet mentors to provide the necessary assistance, since they most likely faced a similar problem earlier and overcame it [8, p. 82].

To develop scientific potential, each member of the student research society draws up and coordinates with his/her supervisor an individual research plan, the implementation of which involves mentoring, where the mentoring process can be described through four main types of activities that are implemented simultaneously and sequentially:

- diagnostic activities help identify the mentee's level of search and research activity; desire for independent knowledge; tendency to long-term independent mental efforts; preference for productive ways of cognition; manifestation of leadership qualities; sociability; ability to logically competently build thoughts, navigate in the fields of various sciences [9, p. 47];
- professional training activities are aimed at forming competencies and transferring experience;
- educational activities are focused on forming socially and professionally significant personal qualities in the mentee;
- organizational and psychological activities are expressed in adaptation and support.

At the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia, study clubs are voluntary cathedral associations of students interested in or engaged in research activities, as well as teachers leading these activities. The Regulations are approved by the order of the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 413 of August 11, 2025. In the educational organization in the 2024/2025 academic year, there were 16 study clubs, with 6 at the Law Faculty [10].

Research work contributes to expanding theoretical horizons and scientific erudition of future graduates, mastering methods for solving scientific problems in a particular branch

of science, applying theoretical knowledge in practical work, developing creative thinking and skills in conducting scientific discussions, and gaining experience in social and organizational work [11, p. 36]. Scientific guidance within the study club is provided by teachers of the department, taking into account scientific interests and qualifications. This activity is usually rather informal and pursues an individual approach. Therefore, relevant personal and professional qualities are necessary for the mentor to work in such activities.

Mentoring within the framework of a student research society can be individual or group by the method of interaction; informal by formalization; long-term by the period of interaction; mixed (personally-contact and remote) by the method of implementation; horizontal and mutual by the direction of interaction; and adaptive, scientific, and project by types of activities.

4. The young teacher school operates on a permanent basis at the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia in accordance with the Regulations approved by the order of the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 385 of August 24, 2022.

This type of mentoring performs the function of assisting young teachers with less than three years of work experience.

The main purposes of the school are as such:

1) familiarization with the specifics of the educational process in an higher education organization, key areas of activity of the teacher;

2) analysis of young teachers' difficulties in their professional activities, analysis of the level of readiness for teaching;

3) familiarizing teachers without basic pedagogical education with the basics of teaching methods;

4) development of teachers' skills in methodological activities, working with accounting and planning documentation.

Classes at the school are conducted using a variety of traditional and innovative forms and methods of working with students in accordance with their skill level (lectures, seminars, open classes, master classes, consultations, etc.). Heads of the faculties, teaching staff, employees of the educational department and

other departments of the institute are involved in conducting classes.

The young teacher school is a team form of goal-setting mentoring aimed at fulfilling such tasks as:

- mastering new knowledge, skills and abilities;

- improvement and development of professionally significant personal qualities;

- formation of an individual style of pedagogical activity, taking into account the specifics of the subjects taught in the system of higher departmental education;

- assistance in the formation and development of motivation of young specialists.

Thus, the school of a young teacher meets "new requirements for the quality of training of a modern specialist – ensuring his/her competitiveness in the labor market, professional and social mobility" [12, p. 63].

The young teacher school as a type of mentoring activity can be individual or group by the method of interaction; formal by formalization; short-term by the period of interaction; personally-contact and remote by the method of implementation; horizontal and mutual by the direction of interaction; adaptive and educational by types of activities.

5. Curators of study groups carry out their activities on the basis of the Work Procedure approved by the order of the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia No. 428 of August 25, 2025, according to which it is established that the appointment of curators from among the teaching staff is one of the important forms of educational work and social activities. As A.A. Kozlova correctly notes, the curator's work is carried out both in a group and individual form [13, p. 299].

The tasks of the curator of the study group include:

- 1) assistance to cadets in the successful assimilation of the educational program;

- 2) maintaining a high level of service and executive discipline of personnel;

- 3) assistance in the formation of a cohesive, organized and disciplined team;

- 4) participation in spiritual, moral, civic, patriotic, aesthetic and physical education;

- 5) participation in the formation of leadership qualities among the cadets of the study group;

The appointment of curators is made by order of the institute for the entire period of study, the main form of work is a curatorial hour – a general meeting of the group – at least once a month.

The role of a supervisor is especially important in the first year of study, since the beginning of studies is a great stress for a first-year student, especially in a departmental university. The former applicant is still poorly aware of his/her chosen vocation, he/she is sometimes tormented by doubts, therefore there is a need for communication and clarification of the chosen field of study and future professional trajectory [14, p. 401.], the curator of the study group becomes such a guide for the student.

The comprehensive mentoring system in the higher education system that has developed over the years meets all the requests and questions of both students and faculty, resulting in increased satisfaction with the university and the level of participation in university-wide, interregional and all-Russian student events and projects, which, of course, contributes to the development of civic engagement of students and cadets.

Curators of study groups can be individual, group and team by the method of interaction; informal by formalization; long-term by the period of interaction; mixed (both personally-contact and remote) by the method of implementation; horizontal by the direction of interaction; adaptive, educational, and patriotic by types of activity.

Currently, an Action plan has been developed to implement the Mentoring Development Concept, where the annual All-Russian mentoring contest occupies a key place [15] aimed at:

- identifying the best mentoring practices and forming their base;
- dissemination of effective mentoring practices.

In accordance with the Regulations on the mentoring contest, best practices are identified in four categories:

- 1) mentoring in production;

- 2) mentoring in the field of education, upbringing and youth policy;

- 3) mentoring in the social sphere and community activities;

- 4) mentoring in the service.

In all categories, with the exception of the first, successful mentoring practices applied in departmental educational institutions of higher education can be presented.

#### *Conclusions.*

Mentoring as a socio-pedagogical technology in various forms has been implemented for a long time at the Vologda Institute of Law and Economics, acting as an important stage in the exchange of knowledge, social experience, as well as other support received by students in educational, research and professional activities. But at the present stage, it acquires a new content, taking into account the challenges our country faces, there is a need to improve legal regulation in this area, since the mentoring model is actively supported in Russia. In recent years, a methodology (target model) of mentoring students has been developed for organizations engaged in educational activities under general education, additional general education and secondary vocational education programs [16], while the need for mentoring in universities is fully indicated by practice and the tasks that higher education faces in terms of training a modern specialist with all necessary competencies.

We believe that there is also a need for a legal definition of the concepts of “scientific mentoring” and “academic mentoring”, as well as the establishment of appropriate incentive and support measures for persons engaged in such types of mentoring at the federal level. Considering that local rulemaking at the university meets the goals and objectives of the institution of mentoring to a greater extent than legal regulation [17, p. 11], it is necessary to adopt a single local act on mentoring in a specific educational organization, which explicitly defines the existing forms and types, as well as provides for measures of material and non-material incentives for mentors and mentees.

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