## 

HANDBOOK FOR STUDENT MENTORS







### **CONTENTS**

1. Acknowledgements	3
2. Overview and Mentoring Goals	3
3. Mentor Training	7
What is mentoring?	
Communication	13
Facilitating a group	20
Learning approaches	24
Reflective practice	
Peer learning	28
Awareness of diversity	30
4. Mentor Planner	33
Mentoring schedule	33
Weekly breakdown of sessions	34
5. Appendix	60
Services for students	60
References	61

### 1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This handbook has been created as part of a joint initiative between the Transition In, Transition Out (TiTo) Research Project and the RMIT Study and Learning Centre (SLC) Student Mentor Training Project. Many people have been involved in its production. The TiTo Research team, consisting of Andrea Chester, Sophia Xenos, Lorelle Burton and Karen Elgar, have all contributed to the development of this particular mentoring model. However, many of the mentoring resources contained within this handbook are the result of extensive work at the RMIT SLC. In particular, Paula Keogh, Alison Brown and Karen Dellar have contributed extensively to the design of the materials used in the mentor training.

Thanks are also due to those members of Student Mentor Training Project consultative team who have advised on the contents and layout of this handbook: Tom Coverdale, Anna Havir, Elizabeth McAspurn, Elizabeth McKenzie and Cate O'Dwyer.

Support for this resource has been provided by the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government Office for Learning and Teaching.

### **Creative Commons notice for documents**



With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and where otherwise noted, all material presented in this document is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/).

The details of the relevant licence conditions are available on the Creative Commons website (accessible using the links provided) as is the full legal code for the CC BY 3.0 AU licence (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/au/legalcode).

All photos © istockphoto.com

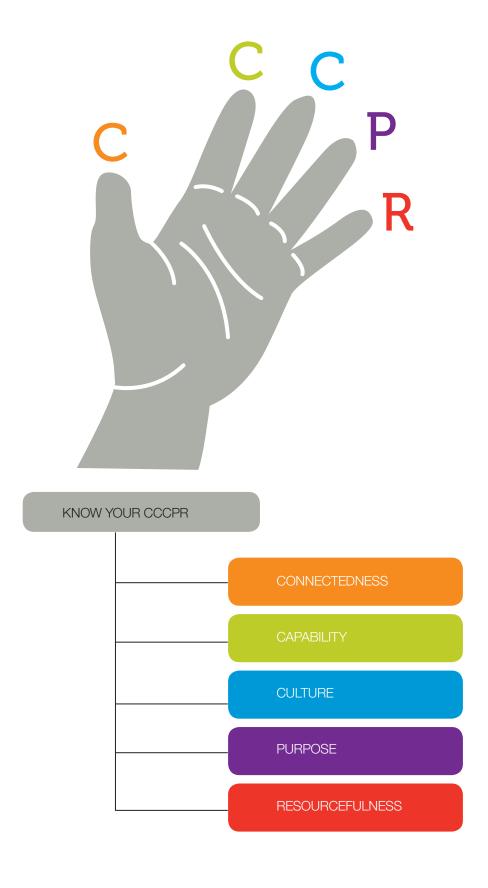
### 2. OVERVIEW

Welcome to the TiTo (Transition In, Transition Out) Peer Mentoring Program. We look forward to having you be a part of the team and hope that you find the semester rewarding. Your key role over this time is to assist the first year students with their transition to university. Please do not feel as though you need to be an expert on all things psychological or academic – this is the role of the lecturers and tutors for the course. What you will be responsible for is relating your experiences of university (the 'know-how' of where to go and who to talk to, as well as advice for developing good study habits and negotiating the tasks of first year psychology). We would also like you to view yourself as a source of social support that can encourage and motivate the students throughout the semester.

During the semester we recommend that you make use of the resources available to support your work as a peer mentor. This handbook will provide you with the necessary information and skills to be a peer mentor, including a schedule for each session you conduct with your students. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with this document and talk through your tasks with other peer mentors. You may also like to contact the following people if you have queries or would like to discuss any aspect of your role:

We wish you the best of luck for the semester and hope that you enjoy the experience!

### TITO MENTORING GOALS



### THE CCCPR MODEL

According to Alf Lizzio (2006), effective transitions to and from university incorporate:



### **CONNECTEDNESS**

- » Quality relationships with peers
- » Quality relationships with staff members
- » Affiliation with the Discipline/School
- » Affiliation with the University



### **CAPABILITY**

- » Clear understanding of the student role
- » Clear understanding of tasks and coursework
- » Mastery of basic academic skills
- » Commitment to contributing to the learning community



### **CULTURE**

- » Appreciation of the core values of the University
- » Appreciation of ethical principles (e.g. academic integrity)
- » Understanding of 'how things are done'
- » Value critical thinking and inquiry



### **PURPOSE**

- » Sense of vocation
- » Ability to set personal goals
- » Engagement with discipline of study



### **RESOURCEFULNESS**

- » Ability to navigate university systems to access necessary information
- » Willingness to seek assistance
- » Ability to balance work, life and study roles

How will you use CCCPR to assist your mentees?					



### WHAT IS MENTORING?



There are many definitions of mentoring. One common definition is:

### "A person who is more experienced in a particular context helping a less experienced person achieve their goals."

Mentoring has been adopted in public and private organisations and business, and has been explored in developmental psychology, management and education. Mentoring is usually focussed on professional development and achievement in a particular area. It also generally refers to helping relationships that are both reciprocal and personal.

In an educational context, the work of the student mentor has been defined in the following way:

The mentor acts as a facilitator and a catalyst for learning. The mentee is responsible for their own learning. The mentor is responsible for supporting, facilitating and learning with the learner (Kehoe, 2007, p.37).

### Benefits of Mentoring

### 

Consider for a moment why you decided to take on mentoring. Below are some commonly cited benefits of mentoring. Which ones apply to you?

Consolidate your knowledge in psychology
Gain new perspectives

- ☐ Gain additional recognition and respect
- ☐ Challenge yourself to achieve something
- ☐ Develop leadership and interpersonal skills
- ☐ Put something back into the RMIT community
- ☐ Gain a sense of satisfaction
- ☐ Gain an advantage in fourth year applications

### Other benefits: RMIT research

At RMIT, research on peer mentoring programs has been conducted by Andrea Chester and Sophia Xenos, lecturers in Psychology in the School of Health Sciences, for the past five years.

Our current project aims to evaluate a new peer mentoring program, based on Lizzio's (2006) Five Senses model for university success. This builds on earlier work involving the Psychology Peer Assisted Tutorial Support (PPATS) program (2008; 2009; 2010).

Results from the PPATS studies suggest that this student mentoring program had the following impact on first year students:

- » enhanced academic and social transition
- » improved critical skills and pass rates
- » improved grades and retention
- » improved academic self-efficacy
- » students reported lower levels of depression, anxiety, and stress in comparison to controls.
- » students reported higher levels of self-esteem and improved problem solving ability following participation in PPATS.

Improved grades. Increased self-esteem.

Other benefits identified by first year students included increased motivation, improved study techniques and confidence as academic learners, increased social engagement, and enhanced motivation to attend classes and engage in learning.

A range of benefits was also noted for mentors, including:

- » consolidation of academic skills
- » improvement in leadership competencies
- » a heightened sense of purpose and responsibility
- » lowered anxiety and stress
- » increased academic selfefficacy and self-esteem following participation in PPATS.

Mentors also benefit. Consolidate academic skills.

### Who are your mentees?

Your mentees are students enrolled in the first year psychology course at RMIT University. They may be first year students in their first semester of university; conversely, you may mentor some students who have experienced university to some degree. Some students may be completing this course as part of a Graduate Diploma or as a single course enrolment. It is important to gauge the level of experience your mentees have in a university environment so you can tailor your approach accordingly.

### REMEMBERING YOUR FIRST YEAR Write or draw your recollections of your first semester at university. Keeping in mind your own experiences, and those of fellow students, what areas of university life do you think first year students would most like help with? Reflect on your experience of studying the subject you are now mentoring in. What caused you problems? What resources did you use? What resources do you wish you had used? Jot down some ideas for assisting first year students in this subject.

### The mentoring role

According to Clutterbuck (1985), an effective mentor can be described as someone who:



### MANAGES THE RELATIONSHIP

- » Maintains a steady presence
- » Has high level self-management skills
- » Is assertive, clear about boundaries and management skills
- » Has excellent interpersonal skills



### **NURTURES**

- » Motivates others
- » Is a good role model
- » Able to provide clear and objective feedback
- » Finds and focuses on the positive



### **NURTURES**

- » Fosters independence and personal responsibility
- » Is able to maintain work-life balance
- » Acknowledges need to maintain health
- » Respects higher goals, values and spiritual needs



### TEACHES

- » Understands the mentee's learning needs
- » Offers opportunities for learning
- » Provides or directs to resources
- » Accepts and responds to different learning styles



### OFFERS MUTUAL RESPECT

- » Accepts differences in values, interests
- » Avoids judgement
- » Maintains a relationship of equality



### RESPOND TO THE MENTEE'S NEEDS

- » Does not seek to impose advice on the basis of own needs
- » Acts as a resource base

### Keeping in touch with each other **Notes** As well as keeping in touch with your mentees it can be a good idea to keep in touch with the other mentors in this course so you can share ideas, brainstorm problems and help each other find solutions. You can communicate in the following ways: » Create a basic email or phone list so that you can talk or send each other information. » Hold regular feedback and debriefing meetings to talk about how things are going. These might have a social component too. » Use the discussion boards on the Blackboard site for this course so you can relate your experiences, ask each other questions and respond. » Use Facebook as a networking and communication site. Sometimes one person might take the role of managing or co-ordinating meetings or web postings or this role could be rotated. If you can build your own networks and have fun with each other while you mentor everyone's a winner! Summary Your work as a student mentor has a considerable impact on your mentees, yourself and on the RMIT community. The benefits are well-documented and include improvements in grades and in self-confidence for the mentees, and consolidation of learning and leadership skills for the mentors. The most significant aspect of your work is that of supporting and encouraging your mentees in the challenging context of their first year at university. It's also useful to keep in mind strategies for supporting your own group of mentors, such as keeping in touch through the internet. Student mentoring demands skills in a range of areas, most importantly, in interpersonal relations and communication. This is the focus of the next section.

### COMMUNICATION



### Improving your communication

Good communication is the key to your work as a mentor. Although we communicate daily, our skills in this area can always be improved. The challenge is one of becoming aware of what assists the process of mutual understanding and information exchange, and what hinders it.

As a mentor you will be involved in facilitating learning—your own and that of the mentees. Learning happens in situations where people feel confident that their ideas, thoughts, questions and concerns will be received and responded to in an attentive and non-judgemental way. You can cultivate such situations by using the following strategies and techniques:

- » Active listening
- » Appropriate body language
- » Reflecting feelings and paraphrasing
- » Questioning
- » Giving feedback
- » Diversity awareness—communicating across cultures

### Active listening

Successful communication depends on a person's ability to listen to the other person and respond appropriately. It is an active process which doesn't happen automatically; it entails conscious use of skills that, in time, become unconscious practice. These core skills are fundamental to any effective relationship – at work, study or in your personal life.

### 

Look at the good and poor listening strategies. Complete any missing sections.

POOR LISTENING	GOOD (ACTIVE) LISTENING
Thinking of what you want to say while the speaker is speaking	
Interrupting	
Asking too many questions	
Asking factual questions with single word answers	
	Asking clarifying questions
Responding to what you think the mentee asked	
	Paraphrasing
	Back-channelling (oh, aha, umm)
HELPFUL BODY LANGUAGE. (EXAMPLES):	UNHELPFUL BODY LANGUAGE. (EXAMPLES):

### Body language

Effective attending is often described in terms of five behaviours outlined by Gerard Egan (1986) in the acronym SOLER. Research has suggested that speakers feel more trusting of listeners who use these attending behaviours.

S

### SQUARE:

This means facing the speaker square on, with your shoulders parallel to those of the speaker. In groups, turn your body (this may be quite a subtle movement) so that you're facing the person speaking.

O

### OPEN:

This involves an open posture, particularly with your arms. It is suggested that speakers offer less trust to listeners who have their arms crossed.

L

### LEARN:

When sitting, listeners who lean slightly forward engender a greater sense of intimacy than listeners who lean back in their chairs. You may have noticed this in your own experience. In some cultural groups the gender of the people who are communicating influences what is appropriate.

E

### EYE:

Eye contact is an important part of attending. People are less likely to communicate freely if we avoid eye contact with them. In fact, people will usually stop talking if the listener withdraws eye contact. However, intense eye contact can also make communication difficult for the speaker. Here we need to engage in soft eye contact – regular, gentle eye contact that doesn't avoid direct gaze or stare too intensely. It is important to be aware of cultural practices with eye contact.

R

### RFI AX.

Finally, speakers are more likely to feel comfortable with listeners who are calm and relaxed. This means refraining from fidgeting, foot-tapping, wringing hands, cracking knuckles, breathing rapidly, and so on. Being relaxed is a state of mind that is shown in the body. However, concentrating on the body can aid relaxation. We all have our own ways of imposing a relaxed state on our bodies and for most of us this will involve gentle, deep, and regular breathing, relaxed muscles, and a still posture.

\*(The description of SOLER has been adapted from Sophie Read-Hamilton, Counselling Training Workbook, IRC, Tanzania, 2002.)

### Reflecting feelings and paraphrasing

Reflecting the feelings of the speaker is a highly effective way of letting them know you have heard what they are saying. It can be done in words and body language. If the person says "It's just getting too difficult", you can reflect their feelings by saying something like 'Yes it is hard going at times...'

Another effective way to establish communication and rapport is to reflect the speaker's content back to them in your own words. This is called a paraphrase and it sends out a strong message that you are listening.

### **P** EXAMPLES:

'So you're saying that....' 'I think that you are suggesting that....'

A paraphrase asks for clarification and ensures that you have interpreted the speaker's message correctly. It sometimes helps the speaker to hear what they are saying in a different way: they may gain a new idea or insight from hearing the paraphrase.

### Questioning\*

Well-placed questions are valuable communication tools. Questions stimulate students to do the thinking Question and talking. They encourage interaction and direct the course of the discussion. Most importantly, astute questions can assist students to think through the answer to their own question themselves, or come to see applications and contexts for an idea they might have.

In your work as a mentor, consciously develop your questioning skills by noting the response of mentees to your questions. Note their body language. You will be able to tell a lot about your mentees response by paying attention to their facial expression and the way they move their body. Sometimes questions can be felt to be intrusive, or abrupt, or pretentious if couched in highly conceptual or abstract language. By noting the responses to your questions, you will develop the ability to use questions creatively —to open up discussion, facilitate learning and invite participation.

### Clarifying questions

These are used when you are unclear about a person's statements or questions. You ask for meaning or more information. Clarify by rephrasing what you think is the statement or the question, and then ask for elaboration.

### **P** EXAMPLES:

What do you mean by...? Could you explain that in a little more detail? Could you go over that again for me? Anything else you would like to add to that? Can you be more specific?



### **Probing questions**

Your task as a mentor is to help students genuinely interact with the material by clarifying it for themselves, thinking critically about it, putting it in their own words and relating it to other knowledge and concepts. Probing questions support you in this role. They assist the student to arrive at a new and deeper level of understanding through their own thought processes.

### **₽** EXAMPLES:

How do you relate this to....? That's a really interesting idea. What makes you think that? If that's the case here, what would apply in the case of ...? What would be the implications of this for...?



### Questions to develop critical awareness

It can be really helpful for a student to be asked to reflect on their point of view or a claim they are making. Questions can be asked which encourage the student to develop a critical awareness not only of what they are thinking but also how their thinking is dependent on certain assumptions or evidence.

### **₽** EXAMPLES:

What do you think you might be assuming here? Could you give an example of that? What evidence might support that claim? How could we investigate the truth of that? Are you sure?

How might someone argue against that point?

### Reframing questions

Questions which focus on relationships can help students to see a concept or an idea from another perspective. Such questions reframe the idea by providing a new or different context for it.

### **₽** EXAMPLES:

How is that related to...?

How does that tie into?

How does that compare with...?

If that's true, what would happen if...?

\*(The above material on questioning has been adapted from Miller, V, Oldfield, E & Murtagh, Y 2006, Peer Assisted Study Sessions: leader development handbook, The University of Queensland, Brisbane.)

### Open and closed questions

Closed questions reduce the response options. For example, to the question 'Did you enjoy the lecture?' a speaker can simply answer 'yes' or 'no'. This means that there is no depth of information. It confirms or refutes a simple fact. Closed questions can be useful for simple clarification but do not encourage elaboration.

Open questions encourage the speaker to give more specific, precise and revealing information and show you are really interested in their ideas and responses to the material. For example: 'Tell me about the lecture.'

### 

Change the following closed questions into open questions. They need not be exact matches to the closed questions, but simply more effective openings to conversations.

CLOSED QUESTIONS	OPEN QUESTIONS
Where do you come from?	
How long has this problem been going on?	
Are you sure this is what you want to do?	
Did you have any problems finding the address?	
Will you be going back to [your country] over summer?	
What are you studying?	
Do you like pizza?	

### Giving feedback

In your role as mentor, you will find yourself in situations where it is necessary to provide feedback to your mentees. The tutor will provide written feedback and mark your mentees' work; however, you may be asked to comment on a mentee's work, their contribution to a discussion, or their behaviour. This needs to be done in a way that is sensitive as well as effective.

Providing feedback is not a matter of simply telling the mentee what you think. It is important to frame your feedback so that it acknowledges the positive achievement in whatever you are providing feedback on. Then you can provide an objective evaluation and a structure for improvement. It is also more effective if this can be done in a collaborative and collegial manner rather than from a position of power.

When giving feedback on a student's work, it is often helpful to first point out something that was done well and then to draw attention to what you suggest be done differently.

### **₱** FOR EXAMPLE:

'You have a lot of really interesting and relevant information here. The problem is with the organisation of the material. It needs to be clear to the reader how this information relates to your argument. Let's look at how you might do that.'

Feedback is also a way of learning more about ourselves and the effect our behaviour has on others. Constructive feedback increases self-awareness, offers options and encourages development, so it is important to learn to both give it and receive it.

However, constructive feedback does not simply mean giving positive feedback. Negative feedback, given skilfully, can be very important and useful. One mentor who was facilitating a group discussion had problems with two students who were talking and playing noughts and crosses in the session. In a situation like this you can name the behaviour that is causing the problem, say what its impact is on you, and ask for a response from the person involved.

### FOR EXAMPLE:

single moderator that

is feedback. The simplest

prescription for improving

education must be 'dollops

of feedback."

(Hattie, 1992, p.9)

'I notice you're texting. I'm finding this quite distracting. Is there something I can do here to involve you in the work we're doing?'

### Effective feedback strategies

Some tips for providing useful feedback to your mentees include:

»Acknowledge positive attributes as well as those that require further work. Often students are unaware of what they have performed well because the feedback they receive is focused solely on areas for improvement. enhances achievement

- » Be specific and provide examples. Stating 'your argument isn't clear' is not as useful as saying 'I don't think your point comes across strongly in this paragraph. I like what you did in the earlier paragraph by summarizing your key arguments in a final sentence. I think if you do the same in this paragraph your contention will become stronger'.
- Show an understanding of the student in providing feedback. For example, if you know they are anxious about or have put a lot of work into a certain aspect of a task, make sure you acknowledge this as part of the feedback you provide.
- Ensure that the feedback you provide has been understood by the mentee. It is very easy for miscommunication to occur in feedback, which can lead to greater problems for the student. A way to ensure that the mentee understands your feedback is to ask them to write down a 'tips sheet' based on your suggestions. You can also ask your mentees to explain how to rectify the issue or to deal with a similar task in future.
- » Be open to receiving feedback from your mentees. You should regularly check that they feel they are receiving useful feedback from you and work through issues where your feedback has not been effective. Asking your mentees what would be helpful for them in receiving feedback can also be very useful. Some students do not absorb verbal feedback well and therefore need time (and a prompt) to write down feedback they receive. Others may need to 'do something with' the feedback to ensure they have understood it, such as apply it to a scenario or see it demonstrated in an example. Be mindful that what may work for you in receiving feedback may not be as useful to your mentees.

	Notes
Think of a project, assignment, task or job that you have done recently. This may or may not be related to your study. If possible, choose one that has gone well in some way(s), but you feel could have been better. Put yourself in the shoes of your teacher or supervisor.	
Write down your own feedback as if you were the supervisor/teacher. Be honest about what needs improvement (but at the same time don't beat yourself up). Remember the principles of what good feedback should entail.	
Feedback:	
Summary	
In your work as a mentor, there will be occasions when you will need to consciously utilize techniques and strategies to make your communication more effective.	
These strategies become automatic with practice.  Active listening, appropriate body language, reflecting and paraphrasing, giving constructive feedback, and questioning all contribute to building rapport with your	
mentees and ensuring that your work is productive.  Awareness of the implications of diversity among the people you are working with is also a highly significant aspect of successful communication.	
aspect of successful communication.	

### **FACILITATING A GROUP**



### The small study group

One of the roles you may have as a mentor is to facilitate a small study group. This will draw on your communication skills and require some awareness of how to guide a group through a learning situation to achieve particular learning outcomes.

Research shows that peer learning is effective precisely because it happens interactively amongst peers. As students, both you and your mentees are facing a similar predicament. There is not the usual distance and formality that can characterise the teacher-student context. This allows for a more direct understanding of the challenges facing your mentees and for open and easy communication.

The model for the study group you will be facilitating is that drawn from theories of collaborative and cooperative learning. These models highlight the interactive, participatory nature of the learning experience. As the facilitator of the group, you will be responsible for encouraging everyone in the group to participate, and for guiding the group so that it generally stays 'on task' for the duration of the session.

'The highlight of the training was splitting up into small groups and talking about interesting things.'

STUDENT MENTOR

### Stages of group development

Educational psychologist Bruce Tuckman (1965, 1975) has described five distinct stages that most groups go through when they come together and begin to work as a team:

- 1. Forming introductions, initial stage
- 2. Storming unsettled
- 3. Norming getting down to business
- 4. Performing on task
- 5. Adjourning reflection

Awareness of these stages can assist you to recognise the process you are engaged in with your group. These stages are not fixed and rigid. What generally happens is that the group moves through them or reverts back to earlier states according to the task at hand. The objective is to reach the 'performing' stage but all stages are important in the process. It is useful to recognise that it is necessary to work through the other stages before the work of 'performing' can happen. Some groups don't make this phase.

### Stage 1: Forming

When the group first gets together, members usually want to be accepted by others and avoid conflict or controversy. This is a good time for icebreaker activities to get to know each other. Group members may also focus on routines such as team organisation (who does what etc). At the same time, impressions are being formed and information gathered about other members and about the task and how to approach it.

### Stage 2: Storming

As the group starts to move into the task, personalities emerge. Minor confrontations may arise and be dealt with quickly; others will be suppressed and possibly build up. Some members will enjoy getting into the 'real issues', others want everything to remain in the comfort of Stage 1. Some want to have structural clarity and rules, others want things to remain open-ended.

### Stage 3: Norming

Ways of working are established and the scope of the task and individual roles becomes clear and agreed. Having dealt with some conflict, people understand each other better and can appreciate each others' skills and experience. Individuals listen and appreciate each other and are prepared to change pre-conceived ideas.

### Stage 4: Performing

Not all groups reach this stage which is characterised by interdependence and flexibility. Everyone knows and trusts each other, roles and responsibilities can change in an almost seamless way. Group identity, loyalty and morale are high. Members are equally task-oriented and people oriented. No energy is wasted and everyone is involved in getting the task done.

### Stage 5: Adjourning

This is a time to reflect on what was learned in the session. Students can be given the opportunity to talk about the one idea or concept that was most significant for them. A review of the work covered helps retention, and an awareness of what was learned in the session consolidates that learning. It's also a time to plan for the next session and remind people of the tasks and topics that the group will be working on next time you all meet.

### The first session

### Introductions\*

» Make sure you come prepared: know the topic, have your list of resources and any other relevant notes and handouts. Refer questions back to the group

- Welcome everyone to the group and introduce yourself. You could briefly talk about your own experience of psychology and your experience of being a first year student. You could also emphasise that you are a student yourself, not an expert, and you're here to facilitate the group learning experience, to act as a guide, and to point them in the direction of useful resources.
- » Have an icebreaker prepared so that students can get acquainted. (For a good list of ice breakers, see page 38)
- Place names on display: ask students to write their name on a piece of paper and fold it in front of them for everyone to see. This will be helpful for you and for the other students in learning each others' names. It is particularly useful for visual learners.
- » Be relaxed and friendly, make everyone feel welcome, and maintain this feeling throughout the session.

### The session

First, provide an overview of what you are going to be working on during the session.

- » Ask students if they have any questions they would like addressed or problems with the material the group will be covering. Once the group discussion is underway, these questions and problems can be put to the group as a whole to work on; don't jump in yourself and try to answer them. Encourage students to participate by letting them know that their contributions are welcome.
- Make good use of questions. Use open questions and clarifying questions to get students talking but don't target individual students.
- » Allow for silences, particularly after you've asked a question. Often people need time to reflect on the question and articulate an answer.
- » Avoid taking on the responsibility for providing answers – you're here to assist students to discover how to find the answers for themselves.

What was particularly significant in the session?

Relax!

- » Don't interrupt students when they're talking.
- » Be aware of the time during the session. You need to achieve a balance between being receptive to students' discussion within the group, and generally keeping on task so that you get the topics of the day covered.

### Adjourning

- » Leave enough time at the end of the session to review what you've done.
- » Ask the students to summarise the main points that emerged in the discussion and give their views on what was particularly interesting or significant to them personally.
- » Give out information relating to next week's session – the area to be covered, guidance on what to study, references to check etc.
- Thank everyone for coming, give students time to have some brief interaction as they leave the room and return furniture to where it was.

\*(Adapted from Miller, V, Oldfield, E & Murtagh, Y 2006, Peer Assisted Study Sessions: leader development handbook, The University of Queensland, Brisbane.)

### Some useful icebreakers

### Getting to know you:

Introduce yourself to a person in the group you don't know. Ask them for three interesting facts about themselves (e.g. course, hobbies, favourite place in the world). Exchange information, then introduce each other to the main group.

### Memory icebreaker:

Start as in the 'Getting to know you' icebreaker but when each person introduces themselves, they have to give themselves an adjective starting with the same letter as their name, e.g. Daring Danielle. After everyone has been introduced to the group, the first person gives his or her name: Daring Danielle. The second person gives the first person's name and then his own name: Daring Danielle, Blue-eyed Bob. The third person starts at the beginning, reciting each person before her and adding her own: Daring Danielle, Blue-eyed Bob, Zesty Zelda. Continue until each person in the whole group can recite the names.

### Three words:

Give your students a minute or two to choose three words they would use to describe themselves. Go around the room, ask participants to introduce themselves and share the three words that best describe them. Allow questions for fun. This can be used as an energizer to begin a session and help people to remember each others' names. (Alternatively, you can also ask students to name an animal they think represents them symbolically, or something from the vegetable kingdom, or a colour.)

### Group dynamics

In any group, there will always be different personalities with both strengths and weaknesses that impact on the group dynamics.

### ★ STRATEGIES: CHALLENGING SITUATIONS

### The quiet student:

At the end of a session, you could ask the quiet student how they're finding the work in a friendly, open way to encourage them to let you know if they are having problems with the work. Otherwise, simply generally encourage participation and eventually the quiet student may join in.

### The disruptive student:

It is sometimes helpful to ask this student if they have a problem with the work the group is engaged with, and, explaining the impact their behaviour is having on you, name the behaviour.

For example, you could say 'I'm feeling disturbed by your conversations and I'm finding it difficult to hear what others are saying. Would you like to share your ideas with the group?'

If you have a problem in your group and you can't think of a way to manage it, talk to your mentor partner or your champion about it and get their advice.

### The dominant student:

When there is a particular student who is dominating the group, you could acknowledge the value of their ideas and request a contribution from the other members of the group. For example, you could say 'Thanks for your contribution, John, it's an interesting point of view. Would someone else in the group like to share their ideas about that?'

The most effective general strategy for difficult situations is to focus on encouraging participation and collaboration through use of questions, sharing your own experiences, and creating a friendly, interactive environment. Sometimes there are situations you can't do anything about directly other than use strategies that encourage participation in the group. Often, eventually, the quiet student may venture an opinion or an idea and difficult behaviours are moderated. Remember, the students are responsible for their own learning; you are responsible for facilitating that learning.

### ★ STRATEGIES: ENCOURAGING PARTICIPATION

### Use students' names.

This will encourage the group's cohesiveness and help people feel they belong. See the section on icebreakers for a way of helping you remember names.

Use students' names

Encourage students to share their thoughts and ideas. Ask open questions, invite people to express a point of view. Break the

express a point of view. Break the issue down into stages or sections. For example, you could ask 'What is the first step to be dealt with here?' or 'What are the stages we need to consider in dealing with this problem?'

Break the issue down into stages or sections. For example, you could ask 'What is the first step to be dealt with here?' or 'What are the stages we need to consider in dealing with this problem?'

Break down tasks

Encourage students' questions.

Ask if there are any questions and give students time to answer.

Always show respect for students' questions and if you don't know the answer, say you don't know and/or say you'll find out the answer and get back to them (make sure you do!). It's always good to turn questions over to the group as a whole to discuss. If they don't seem to have answers, you could perhaps set the question for the group to investigate for next week's session.

Avoid interrupting students. The freedom to express a point of view or ask a question and be heard is an important factor in establishing a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere for group members.

Share your own experience of learning the concept or topic under discussion. For example, if students seem to be having difficulties with understanding,

Share the problems you had with the material

you could tell them your own problems with the material when you first encountered it.

Often the point at which learning really begins to happen is when you don't need to facilitate the group at all – students are working on the task at hand, discussing the topic and exchanging ideas. Encourage members

of the group to talk to each other rather than direct all their contributions to you. It's a good idea to step back and allow the group space to exchange ideas among themselves and develop perspectives on the problem under discussion.

Encourage students to talk to each other rather than direct all their contributions to you

### Summary

At some point in your education you have probably (hopefully!) experienced a dynamic group discussion where the ideas were flowing and everyone in the group was engaged in solving the problem at hand or exploring a concept or idea. It's always exciting and stimulating when it happens, and learning is most effective at these times. You come away from the group energised and with greater commitment to your study.

But learning also takes place in the silences and in the times when nothing seems to be happening. So while you aim at having an involving and lively group discussion, bear in mind that it won't always eventuate. And when it does, it might just be in fits and starts. Nevertheless, it's good to have an image of what you're aiming at so that when discussion starts to happen, you can step aside and let the ideas flow. Remember, silence is not always bad: sometimes students need time to think!

Notes	

### LEARNING APPROACHES



### The ASSIST model (Tait & Entwhistle, 1996)

Learning approaches are considered characteristic ways in which students behave in relation to study and academic tasks. Learning approaches differ to learning styles, which reflect the preferences a student may have for study (such as being a visual, auditory or kinaesthetic learner). While it can be very useful for a student to reflect on their learning style, typically there are no particular advantages to having a describe the behaviours that particular learning style preference (i.e. visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learners can all learn equally well with the same self-awareness and engagement in study routine). Learning approaches, however, are not considered equal. Tait and Entwhistle (1996) described three key learning approaches: deep approach, strategic approach and surface apathetic approach.

### Deep Approach

The deep approach to learning is characterized by behaviours that attempt to engage with and embed study content in a comprehensive manner. Learners that use a deep approach tend to seek meaning in study content, relate ideas to one another, critically examine evidence and take a personal interest in study content.

### Strategic Approach

Strategic learners are concerned with maximizing performance and effective study schedules. They have good study organization, time management, and alertness to assessment demands.

Learners who use a strategic approach tend to routinely monitor the effectiveness of their study and be motivated by a need for achievement.

### Surface Apathetic Approach

Students who use a surface apathetic approach often find it difficult to articulate the purpose of their study, engaging in unrelated memorising of content and focusing on the minimal effort required to pass a course. Surface apathetic learners are often marked by a fear of failure and are overly concerned with their ability to manage the demands of their workload.

Students who engage in surface apathetic strategies for learning typically have lower academic progress than their deep learning and strategic learning counterparts. Highly successful students often combine deep and strategic learning approaches to apply effective study strategies to an increased engagement in learning content. There are several benefits for students in identifying their learning approache. First, completing a measure of learning approaches, such as the ASSIST, encourages students to reflect on their engagement with learning. This increased self-awareness can prompt more mindfulness and improvement in study behaviour. Ascertaining learning approaches also allows students who may be at risk for poor academic progress to be

## their learning approach. First, completing a measure of learning approaches, such as the ASSIST, encourages students to reflect on their engagement with learning. This increased self-awareness can prompt more mindfulness and improvement in study behaviour. Ascertaining learning approaches also allows students who may be at risk for poor academic progress to be identified early in the semester, rather than at the end of semester or after crucial assessment opportunities have passed. Finally, as learning approaches reflect behaviours rather than preferences, students have the opportunity to change their learning behaviour. Understanding the behaviours that encapsulate deep and strategic learning allows students to incorporate these as part of their study routine.

### Summary

Learning approaches refer to the behaviours that characterize how a student engages in study. Tait and Entwhistle (1996) describe three main learning approaches: deep, strategic and surface apathetic. Deep strategic learning is often associated with student success, while students who use the surface apathetic approach tend to struggle most academically. Encouraging your mentees to engage in deep strategic learning and modelling these behaviours during your sessions will assist them in transitioning successfully into university study.


Motes

### REFLECTIVE PRACTICE



Reflective practice involves learning from experience. It is seen as an essential part of professional development, and is used in business, across the professions, and in the arts. According to Newman (1999), there are a number of different ways of describing reflective practice. Some of these are:

- » Thoughtfulness about action
- » Recognising the discrepancy between what is and what should be.
- » Reflection as reconstructing experience, the end of which is the identification of a new possibility for action.

### Reflective journal writing

Reflective practice usually involves the keeping of a journal in which thoughts about particular learning contexts are recorded. Such journals may be private or online.

A student may write on particular aspects of their learning: significant classes they have attended, intellectual and emotional responses to the material they are working with, the effectiveness of their learning and study skills, or other topics related to their learning experience.

The focus of such a journal, for students, is knowledge of oneself as a learner. However, teachers, health professionals, business people and artists also use reflective journals as a means of coming to understand their methods of working. In the process they develop ways to improve their practice.

Reflective practice is a creative approach to professional development and a particularly important part of psychological training.

You will find the journal a valuable way to develop your skills as mentors. It is particularly useful to write up a session. For example, you could reflect on the following:

- » What worked well in the session?
- » What was the overall mood?
- Where did you spend most of your time? Where did the students need the most attention?
- » Who talked more—you or the students?
- » Based on this session, what plans do you have for future sessions?

### The D-I-E-P formula

When writing a reflective journal entry, it is useful to follow the formula D-I-E-P:

- » Describe what happened
- » Interpret the events—explain the meaning the events have for you
- » Evaluate what was observed—the positives and negatives
- » Plan how this information will be useful to you what change does it lead to

### 

- » Think about your experiences so far as a mentor.
- » Describe events / experiences. Interpret them. Evaluate them. Plan how you might use this experience as a stepping stone for a 'new possibility for action'.
- » Make this writing the start of your mentor journal.

### Summary

Whether you simply use the time on your tram journey home to reflect on your work as a mentor, or you write regularly in a journal, you'll find that reflective practice one of the most rewarding ways of learning from the work you are engaged in. It helps you to see new possibilities for action and will be a useful record of your experiences in this course.

Reflective practice involves learning from your experience. It is a thoughtful, critical, evaluative activity aimed at self knowledge and the improving of one's ways of working.

Notes	

### PEER LEARNING



### Learning as a social act

Student mentor programs (also called peer tutoring programs) are a growing trend in tertiary institutions. This growth has taken place within the broad context of the education reform theories of the seventies, and the mounting evidence of their value across a range of parameters and models.

Models of student mentoring within academic-focussed courses are generally aligned with theories that give emphasis to learning as a social act, such as theories of collaborative learning and constructivist theories of knowledge acquisition.

Collaborative and Constructivist Theories

Kenneth Bruffee (1999) has worked intensively in the area of collaborative learning. He argues for the importance of human interaction and conversation in the learning process. Peer tutoring and student mentoring is also informed by the constructivist theories of knowledge

developed by Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. They focus on the way knowledge is constructed through internalisation, a process that occurs in dialogue and conversation through reflection, listening, questioning, and articulating ideas.

Most modern educational theorists accept the importance of students constructing their own learning, by challenging their pre-existing beliefs and assumptions, rather than passively receiving knowledge that is transmitted from above.

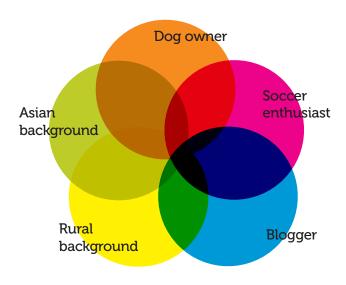
Whether facilitating a small group or working one-to-one, your work as a student mentor relies on the collaborative nature of the engagement. You are working with your peers and this element of the relationship is highly significant to the effectiveness of the learning that takes place.

Whether facilitating a small group or working one-to-one, your work as a student mentor relies on the collaborative nature of the engagement. You are working with your peers and this element of the relationship is highly significant to the effectiveness of the learning that takes place.

The non-hierarchical model	Notes
It is important in peer learning that we are aware of practices which undermine collaborative interaction.  Collaboration doesn't happen	
automatically, but must be planned for. According to Bruffee (1999), one thing that compromises peer learning is	
taking on practices that "imply or reinforce the authority structure of traditional classroom education" (p.96).  He sees the aim of peer tutoring or student mentoring	
as being to mobilise "interdependence and peer influence for educational ends" (p.96). In other words, student mentors are not surrogate teachers; their main purpose is to guide and support, empower and encourage, within an interactive peer learning context.	
Student mentor programs are one of a number of	
collaborative learning models. In the student mentor model, the primary focus of students' action and attention is one another.	
'The student mentor aims to encourage the students within a group to relate to each other, to support conversation	
and interaction amongst the group, to create a small 'learning community'."	
Summary	
Peer learning is supported by a range of theoretical approaches to learning, the most well-known of which are constructivism and Bruffee's theory of collaborative	
learning. These theories are based on the view that the most effective learning happens in contexts where people are working collaboratively, where there is constructive	
interaction, and where there is the opportunity to articulate ideas, ask questions, and listen to other perspectives.	
The model that supports such practices is one in which students are seen as active participants in their own	
learning, and which is non-hierarchical. Student mentors who facilitate small groups or those who provide one-to-one support are involved in practices which have a firm	
pedagogical foundation and are evidence based.	

### **AWARENESS OF DIVERSITY**





### Definition of culture

The most common usage of the word 'culture' relates it to ethnicity and nationality: to the languages we speak, traditions we follow and religious beliefs we adhere to. However, culture can refer to more generalised contexts; for example, it is often defined as referring to the set of shared attitudes, values, beliefs, goals and practices that characterise an institution, organization or group.

This concept of culture is being utilised when we talk about a particular culture existing within an organisation, or we acknowledge the existence of sub-cultures within the wider community.

The concept of culture is complex as cultures are rarely homogenous. Within cultures there exist groups or sub-cultures which have their own specific set of values, beliefs and attitudes. There can be a football culture or an organisational culture as well as different social groupings within cultures based on such differentiating indicators as age or gender. So the term 'culture' has to be elastic to account for the multiple identities people assume in their lives.

### Cross-cultural competence

The task in developing cross cultural competence is to become aware of the cultural differences that may exist between yourself and the other person while simultaneously becoming aware of similarities in social group identities. For example, two people may belong to different cultures but are both students studying the same course, or are both women, or members of an environmental group, or men with children, or young people with disabilities, or mature aged students. The ethnic / nationality differences are mitigated by the areas in which they share values, attitudes, and beliefs according to their affiliation to a particular social group.

Young students from a number of different cultures may feel they have more in common with each other than they have with people of an older age group of the same culture. In communication, it is important to be aware of areas of shared perspectives as well as to respect the differences of nationality or ethnicity.

### 

Matveev and Nelson (2004) designed the following model for judging Cross Cultural effectiveness of managers. Give yourself a mark out of 10 for each feature.

Interpersonal skills	Cultural uncertainty	Cultural empathy	
Ability to acknowledge differences in communication and interaction styles	Ability to deal with cultural uncertainty	Ability to see and understand the world from others' cultural perspectives.	
Ability to deal with misunderstandings.	Ability to display patience	Exhibiting a spirit of inquiry about other cultures, values, beliefs and communication patterns.	
Awareness of your own cultural conditioning	Openness to cultural differences	Ability to accept different ways of doing things	
Knowledge of other countries, cultures and languages of team members.	Willingness to accept change and risk	Non-judgemental stance towards the ways things are done in other cultures	
Total:	Total:	Total:	

### Summary

Mentors can improve their cross-cultural competence by developing their interpersonal skills, their ability to tolerate cultural uncertainty, and their capacity for cultural empathy. Mentors value and respect other cultures when they show a keen interest in their mentee's country of origin and display a desire to learn about it. It is important to be aware of cultural differences and respectful of them, while simultaneously focussing on areas of shared meaning and values.

Awareness of diversity also involves being conscious of the fact that a diverse range of social groups exist within cultures. It is important to be aware of, and sensitive to, the particular experiences of such groups, for example mature age students, people with disabilities, rural students, and so on.

Communication is enhanced by the discovery of shared areas of interest. The obvious one is that you are all students studying the same course but there are sure to be others. These can be emphasized to establish a positive mentoring relationship, one that is enlarged and enriched by the differences between you, and held firm by the interests and experiences you share.

Notes		



### Mentoring Schedule

Week	Date	Tutorial Notes/Due Dates	Peer Mentoring Notes
1	Feb 28	No tutorial	No peer mentoring
2	Mar 6	Tutorials commence	No peer mentoring
3	Mar 13		Session 1 Introductions Overview of peer mentoring Learning Reflection 1 assistance
4	Mar 20	Learning Reflection 1 due	Session 2 Re-introductions Preparing for exams/tests Thinking Skills 1 assistance
5	Mar 27		Session 3 Checking in: Test 1 preparedness Thinking Skills 1 assistance
6	Apr 3	Test 1 completed in class Learning Reflection 1 returned	No peer mentoring
	Apr 10	Mid-semester break	
7	Apr 17	Thinking Skills 1 due	Session 4 Mid-semester checkup Thinking Skills 2 assistance
8	Apr 24		Session 5 Thinking Skills 2 assistance
9	May 1		Session 6 Thinking Skills 2 assistance
10	May 8		Session 7 Thinking Skills 2 assistance Transitioning skills
11	May 15	Thinking Skills 2 due	Session 8 Learning Reflection 2 assistance End-of-semester reflection
12	May 22	Review Learning Reflection 2 due	No peer tutoring

Please note: In any week where you work through the session outline and find yourself with time to spare, you are welcome to help your students in general university matters. You may decide to show them where relevant texts are in the Library, or even show them where the best coffee is on campus! Taking the time to check and assist their understanding of general matters, even if they seem trivial, can be incredibly helpful for students during this transition to university life.

### SESSION 1: INTRODUCTIONS AND LEARNING REFLECTION 1

### Session Outline

- 1. Introductions/ Ice breakers (15 minutes)
- 2. Discussion of expectations (10 minutes)
- 3. Questions regarding Learning Reflection 1 (20 minutes).

The first class will predominately consist of introductions, icebreakers, and questions surrounding the first Foundations of Psychology assessment, Learning Reflection 1. Introductions are important in the first class because most of the students will not know each other or you. The aim of introductions and icebreakers are to help facilitate communication and make students feel more comfortable. It would be a good idea to think about how you would like to introduce yourself and what you would like to say. Hearing about your experiences as a student and seeing how you have made it to third year could be a good way to ease some of the students' anxiety. Here are some different icebreakers that you could potentially use.

### **POTENTIAL ICE BREAKERS**

### 1. Name Game.

In your group get into a small circle. One person starts off by saying their name and an adjective that goes begins with the first letter of their name. For example, Beautiful Belinda. The next person in the group then says the first person's name and adjective before stating their own. This goes around the whole group until the last person says everybody's name and their own.

### 2. Expectations Game.

All group members anonymously write down on a piece of paper what they are hoping to get out of peer mentoring and put them in a hat. Each person then picks out a piece of paper, introduces themselves, and reads out the person's expectation.

### 3. Descriptions Game.

Each group member introduces himself or herself and comes up with three things that best describe them.

### **EXPECTATIONS**

It is also important in this class that both the students and peer mentors get a chance to discuss their expectations regarding peer mentoring. It would be a good idea to think about how you might like to discuss with the students the idea of peer mentoring. Remember that most students would not have any experience with peer mentors before and may be confused about how the peer mentoring system is going to work. You will also need to discuss appropriate ways to seek help between tutorials. You might encourage your students to swap email addresses so they can keep in touch with each other.

Be clear about if/how students may contact you outside of the tutorial. You are not responsible for providing answers for coursework, proofreading drafts, or other teaching duties. However, you may like to provide your student email address if your students have a query about what was discussed during the session or for students to let you know when they will be absent. Students may also have a lot of questions regarding course content. Don't worry if you can't answer some of the questions of the students. Your job is to help students help themselves: where can they find the answers to their questions? What tips/resources would you recommend from your own experience? The tutor will always be there to assist with any questions or problems that you do not feel comfortable responding to.

### **LEARNING REFLECTION 1**

Students have their first piece of assessment due next week (Week 4). The assignment is a learning reflection. This task has similar elements to your first journal entry (such as completing the ASSIST and answering reflection questions) but there are several key differences. Please read through the task sheet for the first year learning reflection carefully to avoid confusion.

First year students need to complete the ASSIST online, read through their personalized feedback and then answer the following questions:

- 1. In your own words explain what learning approaches are.
- 2. Describe your learning approach.
- 3. How accurate do you think the ASSIST was in describing your learning approach? To answer this question use examples from your own experience to illustrate how you have approached learning situations in the past.
- 4. Given your learning approach, set three goals for your study in this course this semester to capitalize on your strengths and/or extend skills that are underutilized. The best goals are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable/ attainable, realistic, timely) goals. Make sure each of your three goals is SMART.

Your role is to help guide students with how they are going to complete the task and to help students break the assignment up into achievable parts. This models important behaviour that will be useful throughout their academic careers and will help them manage their time.

### Step 1

Make sure you have a good understanding of the assessment and what it is asking the students to do. Reviewing the course guide so that you understand the guidelines for submission of work is also essential (these may be different to what you are used to). If you are unsure about anything feel free to ask the tutor.

## Step 2 Help the students as a group plan out the tasks that need to be achieved. For example, students need to be clear about where to access the online questionnaire, as well as information about learning approaches and SMART goals. Constructing a 'To do' list with due dates attached to each task can be helpful in managing the assessment. Step 3 Discuss any issues or problems that the students may be having with the assessment. Remember that your job is not to give the students the answers but to help guide them and help them obtain their own answers. The best way to do this is through support and direction. If you have time left over in any session, please take the opportunity to check how your students are adjusting to

university. They may want to talk more generally about the course – the upcoming in-class test, note-taking, keeping up with the readings etc. In addition, they may need some time to talk about how they are getting on at university generally, e.g., how they are balancing work and study, juggling a social life, managing living arrangements, etc. Sharing your own experiences as a later year student can be useful. The social support component of peer tutoring is a very important part of your role, so please do make

time for some of this sharing each session.

# **Notes**

# Session 1 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes
	Get to know each other; establish a comfortable environment	Introductions		
	Clarify mentor and mentee roles; make expectations clear for semester	Explaining the mentoring process		
	Assist students in the planning of their first assessment	Learning Reflection 1	Learning Reflection 1 task sheet	

REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS	
☐ Learning Reflection 1 due next week	
☐ Bring Thinking Skills 1 task sheet to next week's tutorial	

# Session 1 Reflection

Impressions
Challenges presented & strategies to resolve them
Things to follow up before next class
☐ Send a welcome email to the members of your group, reiterating your excitement about the semester and availability to assist with any questions they may have.
☐ Familiarise yourself with the first Thinking Skills assignment

# **SESSION 2:** REINTRODUCTIONS, **TEST PREPARATION AND** THINKING SKILLS 1

## Session Outline

- 1. Reintroductions (10 minutes)
- 2. Preparing for tests (15 minutes)
- 3. Questions regarding Thinking Skills 1 (20 minutes).

## **RE-INTRODUCTIONS**

It would be good to spend the first ten minutes of the second session re-introducing yourselves. You may want to choose an icebreaker from the previous session that you didn't use to help to re-introduce everyone.

During this time, you should confirm that students have your email address and answer any questions they may have about the peer mentoring program. It would also be useful to check how the students found completing and submitting the first assignment, Learning Reflection 1. Be encouraging about their progress and reinforce any good work strategies/insights they may have into the process.

#### PREPARING FOR TESTS

In Week 6, students will complete an in-class multiple choice test on material from Weeks 1-5 (including research methods content). As a group, have students brainstorm methods for effective test preparation. Each student should leave the session with a plan for reviewing the material.

Feel free to share your own tips and experiences where helpful. One word of warning however: while it can be comforting to some students to realize they are not alone in feeling apprehensive about tests, be careful not to encourage students to over-indulge in relating horror stories about previous experiences! Focus on proactive ways of dealing with test anxiety (e.g. positive visualization, relaxation techniques, seeking assistance from the Study and Learning Centre or from RMIT Counselling etc.) and apply some of what you know about effective learning (e.g. state-dependent learning strategies, active learning strategies etc.) to the situation.

#### THINKING SKILLS 1

Students will be submitting their second assessment, Thinking Skills 1, following the mid-semester break. This is a larger piece of work compared to their Learning Reflection and will require more planning. In particular, the assessment will require students to demonstrate a number of skills relevant to psychology, including identification of inherent biases and assumptions, scepticism, tolerance of ambiguity and uncertainty, avoidance of oversimplification, use of logical inferences and examination of evidence before drawing conclusions

Students will need to read Chapters 1 and 2 of Smith (2001) and select one of the articles available on the BESC1126 Blackboard as their topic. Following this, students will need to attend a library training session and use these skills to locate two journal articles relevant to their topic, before answering the following questions:

- 1. What are some of your preconceptions about this topic?
- 2. Using the guidelines for critical thinking in Smith (2001) critically evaluate the extent to which the story you selected is an example of "good psychology".
- 3. You must attach full copies of all articles to your submission. Describe the main findings of each study.
- 4. Outline any general conclusions you can draw and support them with evidence.
- 5. Describe one other context or domain in which it would be useful to apply the same approach to critical thinking that you demonstrated in this assignment.

## Step 1

Make sure you have a good understanding of the assessment and what it is asking the students to do. Reviewing the course guide so that you understand the guidelines for submission of work is also essential. If you are unsure about anything feel free to ask the tutor.

Help the students as a group plan out the tasks that need to be achieved. For example, students need to know where to go to find the Smith (2001) chapters and to book into the library training session. Careful planning of this assessment, including time management, will be crucial given the number of small tasks contained within the assignment. Help students aim for an early completion date to allow for effective proofreading and self-assessment of their work. By next week, all students should have read Smith (2001) and selected one of the article options from the BESC1126 Blackboard.

## Step 3

Discuss any issues or problems that the students may be having with the assessment. Remember that your job is not to give the students the answers but to help guide them and help them obtain their own answers.

If you have time left over in any session, please take the opportunity to check how your students are adjusting to university and assist them with any matters that arise.

Notes	

# Session 2 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes

NIDEBO	EOB ST	J IDENITO

Next week is the final mentoring session before Thinking Skills 1 is due - students need to start on this assignment
and bring any questions to class

# Session 2 Reflection

npressions
nallenges presented & strategies to resolve them
nings to follow up before next class

# SESSION 3: TEST PREPARATION AND THINKING SKILLS 1 TROUBLESHOOTING

**Notes** 

## Session Outline

- 1. Test preparation troubleshooting (15 minutes)
- 2. Thinking Skills 1 troubleshooting (30 minutes).

## TEST PREPARATION

Last week your group developed a plan to assist them in preparing for Test 1. This week you should check in with how students are proceeding with their plans. Some questions you might like to ask include:

- » Have you stuck to your preparation schedule so far?
- » Have you encountered any difficulties in your preparation? How might you resolve these?
- » Do you think any modifications are necessary to your plan? Have you had any new ideas to assist you with preparing for the test?

Test 1 will be held during the tutorial next week so make sure students are comfortable with the requirements of this assessment before moving on to the next task.

## THINKING SKILLS 1

As students should have made a start on this assessment last week, there should be many questions to work through this class. Keep your focus on helping students help themselves: providing direct answers to their questions does not provide them with independent study skills and also has the potential for misleading students (i.e. your interpretation of the 'correct' answer may differ to the tutor who marks the work).

You should also spend some time reviewing the assessment rubric (marking criteria) for this task and discussing student understanding of this document. Always defer to the tutor for questions regarding allocation of marks.

•	 	

# Session 3 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes

## REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS

is mid-semester break, so the next mentoring session will occur on April 17.	ving weel
_	
☐ Thinking Skills 1 assignment is also due April 17.	

# Session 3 Reflection

Impressions
Challenges presented & strategies to resolve them
Things to follow up before next class

# SESSION 4: MID-SEMESTER EVALUATION, USING FEEDBACK AND THINKING SKILLS 2

## Session Outline

- 1. Mid-Semester Evaluation (35 minutes)
- 2. Thinking Skills 2 Introduction (10 minutes)

## **MID-SEMESTER EVALUATION**

We are now half way through the semester. This is a good point to pause and check how your students are going. Since the last mentoring session your students had their first in-class test, examining the first half of the semester. They received feedback on their marks immediately after the test. You can spend some time with them checking how they think they are going and what plans they want to put in place for the second half of the semester. Also take some time to check how they are coping with study. Now they have several weeks experience, what are they finding more difficult? What is going well?

As part of this evaluation, time should be spent checking how students progressed with the first Thinking Skills assignment and determining whether their study strategies are working. Use the following questions to guide your discussion:

- 1. On a scale of 1 ('not at all well') to 5 ('used extensively'), how well did students use the following resources to complete their assessment?
- » Set reading
- » Fellow students
- » Peer mentor
- » Tutor
- » Foundations of Psychology Blackboard
- » Additional research (e.g. Google Scholar, texts etc.)
- 2. If students had questions about or problems completing the assignment, how did they resolve these?
- 3. What worked well for students in completing this assignment? Is there anything they would change?
- 4. From this experience, what are some suggestions for completing assignments effectively in the future?

Once students have answered these questions, you might like to supplement the strategies they identify for completing assignments in the future with your own suggestions. These may include:

- » Using class time to 'sound out' ideas with staff and/or classmates
- » Soliciting feedback on ideas/excerpts on scholarly web boards or forums
- Thoroughly clarifying understandings of the task with staff prior to submission
- » Utilizing resources at the University, such as the Study and Learning Centre, that provide proofreading of assessments and skill-building courses
- » Using peer-assessment with classmates (taking care not to invite plagiarism)

## THINKING SKILLS 2

The aim of this assignment is to consolidate the critical thinking skills students developed during the first Thinking Skills Assignment. In small groups, students will either apply these skills to the topic of classical conditioning in advertising (Option 1) or the topic of bibliotherapy (Option 2).

Introduce students to these task sheets, including the different questions/marking criteria for each. Encourage them to consider which topic holds the most interest for the group. Groups should aim to come to class next week having determined whether they will be completing Option 1 or Option 2 for this assessment of marks.

Notes			

# Session 4 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes

REMIN	DFRS	FOR S	STLI	DENTS

 $\hfill\square$  Bring Thinking Skills 2 topic and notes to the tutorial next week

# Session 4 Reflection

mpressions
Challenges presented & strategies to resolve them
Things to follow up before next class

# SESSION 5: THINKING SKILLS 2

## **Session Outline**

1. Thinking Skills 2 (45 minutes)

## THINKING SKILLS 2

Following class last week, students should come ready today to work on their Thinking Skills 2 assignment. As this is a group task and students will require face-to-face time with their group members, the whole session today and next week is allocated for them to work on this assessment.

Begin by creating a mind map together of qualities essential to good group work (e.g. frequent communication, clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, ensuring all members are heard and understood etc.). Ask the group how they might deal with problems that group work can incur (e.g. differences of opinion, social loafing etc.) and to document these strategies in their workbook. Group members should consider their final plan a shared contract for how to proceed with the Thinking Skills 2 assignment.

Following this, students should form a list of responsibilities for each member for the coming weeks, including deadlines for the completion of each task. The main priority for each group is to finalize their research plan before class next week.

-	

**Notes** 

# Session 5 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes

 $\hfill\square$  Bring Thinking Skills 2 research plan to the tutorial next week

# Session 5 Reflection

Impressions
Challenges presented & strategies to resolve them
Things to follow up before next class

# SESSION 6: THINKING SKILLS 2 (CONT.)

## **Session Outline**

1. Thinking Skills 2 (45 minutes)

## THINKING SKILLS 2

Following class last week, students should come ready today to present their research plan for the Thinking Skills 2 assignment. Tutors will come around to each group during this session to discuss and (assuming the details are sound) approve the research plans so that groups can begin collecting data. During this time, help facilitate discussion and planning in the group for the next stage of the assignment.

Encourage students to collect their data and draft their responses to the Thinking Skills 2 questions before class next week. This will allow you to make the most effective use of class time next week (the final mentoring session before the assignment is due). If time permits, students can leave class early to commence data collection.


Notes

# Session 6 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes

NIDEBO	EOB ST	J IDENITO

 $\hfill \square$  Bring Thinking Skills 2 draft to the tutorial next week

# Session 6 Reflection

Impressions
Challenges presented & strategies to resolve them
Things to follow up before next class

# SESSION 7: THINKING SKILLS 2 (CONT.)

## Session Outline

- 1. Thinking Skills 2 (35 minutes)
- 2. Transition planning (10 minutes)

#### **THINKING SKILLS 2**

Students should come to class today with a draft of the Thinking Skills 2 assignment. This will allow students to practice guided self-assessment of their work prior to submission. Using the marking rubric, have each member of the group 'mark' the assignment, including comments and numerical grades. Once they have completed their individual assessment of the work, encourage them to share their perspective with the group. Together, the group should devise a plan to rectify the aspects of the assignment that require further work, including allocation of tasks to each team member.

Time should also be given to reviewing feedback from the first Thinking Skills assignment and incorporating these suggestions in the second Thinking Skills piece. The Thinking Skills 1 assessments submitted in Week 7 will be returned in this session. Help students to process the feedback by assisting them to construct a feedback response checklist. These checklists are 'action plans' of issues to be mindful of when completing academic tasks. They provide a quick and handy reference for future assessments in order to prevent similar mistakes from occurring again. The feedback response checklist from each student should then be compared against the Thinking Skills 2 draft to ensure that all staff suggestions have been applied to this piece of work.

A sample feedback response checklist is shown below:

## FEEDBACK RESPONSE CHECKLIST

Ш	Make sure contention (key argument) is also stated in
	first paragraph
	Use more linking sentences between paragraphs to

improve flow

Make sure all claims are supported by evidence

Avoid introducing new material in the conclusion paragraph

## TRANSITION PLANNING

Next week marks the final mentoring session with your students. As such, students should start to prepare themselves for transitioning to a more independent mode of study, utilizing skills they have developed this semester. As a group, create a mind map exploring some of the benefits gained from peer mentoring throughout the course. You should try to encourage students to reflect on how their Connectedness, Capability, Culture, Purpose and Resourcefulness (the CCCPR model) have been impacted during your sessions.


# Session 7 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes

☐ Thinking Skills 2 due next week

# Session 7 Reflection

npressions
challenges presented & strategies to resolve them
hings to follow up before next class

# **SESSION 8: LEARNING REFLECTION 2 AND END-OF-SEMESTER** TROUBLESHOOTING

## Session Outline

- 1. Learning Reflection 2 troubleshooting (15 minutes)
- 2. End-of-semester troubleshooting (15 minutes)
- 3. Celebrations (15 minutes)

## **LEARNING REFLECTION 2**

Students have their final take-home assessment due next week. The assignment is a follow-up learning reflection. This task has similar elements to your final journal entry (such as completing the ASSIST a second time and answering reflection questions) but there are several key differences. Please read through the task sheet for Learning Reflection 2 carefully to avoid confusion.

First year students need to complete the ASSIST again online, read through their personalized feedback and then answer the following questions:

- 1. Reflect on the learning approach revealed by the ASSIST at the start of semester compared to the end of the semester. Is your learning approach similar or different? What might contribute to this? You should use examples to support your reasoning.
- 2. At the beginning of the semester, you set three goals for your study in this course to capitalize on your strengths and/or extend skills that were underutilized. How well did you achieve each of these goals? What helped or hindered you in this?
- 3. How can you apply what you have learnt this semester in future learning endeavours?

Provide time for students to ask questions about this assignment, remembering that they should now be utilizing independent study skills and adjusting to working without the guidance of a peer mentor (Principles of Psychology next semester will not have peer mentors working with students).

Remind students that they must attach a copy of their first Learning Reflection assignment and a copy of their second ASSIST feedback sheet to their submission next week.

#### END OF SEMESTER TROUBLESHOOTING

Following the submission of Learning Reflection 2, students will be focusing on their final multiple choice test for the course (taken during the exam period). Time should be spent ensuring students have clear study plans in place and are comfortable with what is expected for this assessment.

You may also like to have your students thinking about their plans beyond this semester. They may have questions about what to expect next semester in Principles of Psychology, or even in second or third year. Feel free to chat about what students may expect in these later courses or about university life in general.

## **CELEBRATION**

This is the last session that you will be spending with your students, so please take some time to finish up. You might like to let your students know what impact the peer mentoring has had on you and give them a chance to express their appreciation.

You will probably be curious to know how you students get on with their final assessments and you might like to negotiate a way they can let you know their marks if they wish.

If you have time available, you may like to join other peer mentors in concluding the session in a more relaxed setting, such as the University café or a coffee bar.

Notes		
-	 	

# Session 8 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes

☐ Learning Reflection 2 due next week

# Session 8 Reflection

Impressions
Challenges presented & strategies to resolve them
Things to follow up before next class
Email your students to thank them for their involvement in the tutorials. It would also be nice to wish them the best of luck for the submission of Learning Reflection 2 and their upcoming test so that they know you are thinking of them

# 5. APPENDIX

## Where to go? Services for students

As a mentor you won't be able to solve all of your mentee's problems. Even if you could, it's not your responsibility to help them in areas which are outside the work you do in your program or outside other mentor roles you are taking on.

But you might find it useful to suggest or refer students to any of the many support services offered at RMIT. Most of these services are grouped together under the term 'Student Services'.

Here are some examples of things a mentee might ask you that could be referred.

Where could you refer students who have the following questions?

- » How can I improve my English writing skills?
- » I'd like to join a sports team?
- » Are there any prayer groups on campus?
- » I need to get a doctor's certificate.
- » Is there anyone who can check my CV?
- "> I'm feeling very depressed and unmotivated. What can I do?

## Career development and learning

Career Development and Employment Disability Liaison Unit (DLU) Education Abroad Orientation RMIT LEAD Study and Learning Centre (SLC)

## Get involved

Orientation
RMIT LEAD
RMIT Union (Arts, Sport and Recreation)
Student Union (Activities, Advocacy and Representation,
Clubs and Collectives)

## Health and wellbeing

Chaplaincy and Spiritual Centre Counseling Health Service Student Accident Insurance

## Support

Childcare
Financial Advice
Housing Advisory Service
International Student Information and Support (ISIS)
Ngarara Willim Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander Students
Scholarships

This list of services comes from the RMIT website under 'Current students' http://www.rmit.edu.au/students (click on services for students) but is also available in the student diary.

Most other administrative issues can be dealt with at The Hub on each campus. Academic issues should be referred to course co-ordinators.

## References

Bruffee, K 1999, Collaborative learning: higher education, interdependence and the authority of knowledge, second edition, Johns Hopkins University Press, London.

Chapman, A 2009, 'Howard Gardner multiple intelligences', *Businessballs*, viewed 5 October 2009, http://www/businessballs.com/howardgardnermultipleintelligences.htm.

Chester, A, Carmichael, R, Ryan, R, Saunders, P & Xenos, S 2008, 'Psychology Peer Assisted Tutorial Support (PPATS): using peer assisted learning to enhance transition, engagement and acquisition of foundational academic skills in large first year classes', *Learning and Teaching Investment Fund Final Report*, RMIT University, viewed 17 August 2009,. http://mams.rmit.edu.au/3xek8bbjgo151.pdf.

Chimaera Consulting Ltd 2001, 'Famous models: stages of group development', viewed 15 September 2009, http://www.chimaeraconsulting.com/tuckman.htm.

Clutterbuck, D 1985, *Everyone needs a mentor*, Institute of Personnel Management, Bugbrooke, UK.

Egan, G 1986, *The skilled helper: a systematic approach to effective helping*, Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., California.

Hattie, J 1992, 'Measuring the effects of schooling', *Australian Journal of Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp 5-13, viewed ERIC (CSA) database, 2 October 2009.

Holah, M 2009, Social IdentityTheory, Psychexchange, viewed 7 September 2009 http://www.psychexchange.co.uk/glossary/social-identity-theory-421/

Kehoe, D 2007, Developing your people: coaching and training, McGraw Hill, Australia.

Marr, B & Morgan, B 2005, 'Enhancing teaching: integrating language, literacy and numeracy into VET programs', RMIT University – a Reframing the Future project.

Matveev, A. V., & Nelson, P. E 2004, 'Cross-cultural communication competence and multicultural team performance: perceptions of American and Russian managers', *International Journal of Cross Cultural Management*, 4(2), 253-270.

Miller, V, Oldfield, E & Murtagh, Y 2006, *Peer Assisted Study Sessions: leader development handbook*, The University of Queensland, Brisbane.

Newman, S 1999, *Philosophy and teacher education: a reinterpretation of Donald A. Schön's epistemology of reflective practice*, Ashgate, Sydney.

Read-Hamilton, S 2002, Counselling training workbook, IRC, Tanzania, cited in 'Identifying trauma/ stress reactions', viewed 23 October 2009, http://www.rhrc.org/resources/gbv/comm\_manual/day2.pdf

Trevino, W, Lone Star College – Kingwood, SI Leaders Manual, viewed 23 September 2009, http://www.kingwoodsi.com/manual.

www.rmit.edu.au