

TRANSITION OUT:

HANDBOOK FOR STUDENT MENTORS



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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.

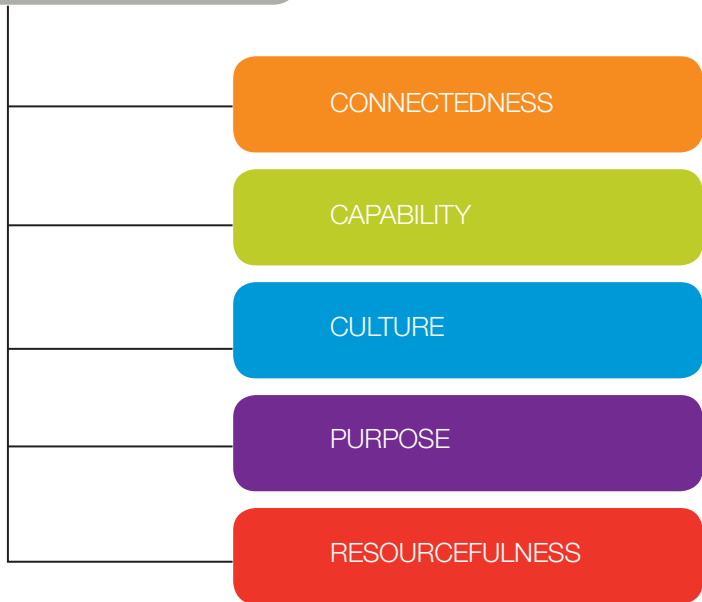
During the semester we recommend that you make use of the resources available to support your work as a peer mentor. This handbook will provide you with the necessary information and skills to be a peer mentor, including a schedule for each session you conduct with your students. We suggest that you 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



KNOW YOUR CCCPR



THE CCCPR MODEL

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

C

CONNECTEDNESS

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

C

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

C

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

P

PURPOSE

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

R

RESOURCEFULNESS

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

A large, solid orange circle is centered on the page. Inside the circle, the text "3. MENTOR TRAINING" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font, stacked in two lines.

3. MENTOR TRAINING

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

ACTIVITY:

WHY DO 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 self-efficacy 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.

 **ACTIVITY:**
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:

M

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

E

NURTURES

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

N

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

T

TEACHES

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

O

OFFERS MUTUAL RESPECT

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

R

RESPOND TO THE MENTEE'S NEEDS

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

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.

 **ACTIVITY:**
FIND THE OPPOSITE – GOOD AND BAD LISTENING SKILLS

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

RELAX:

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.

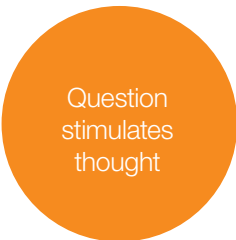
EXAMPLES:

‘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 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.

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.)*

ACTIVITY:

OPEN THE DOOR TO CONVERSATION

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?	

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.'

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.

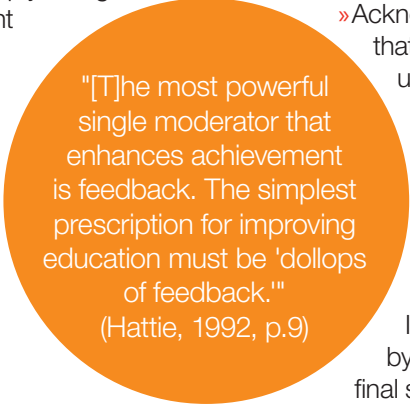
However, constructive feedback does not simply mean giving positive feedback. Negative feedback, given skilfully, can be very important and useful. One mentor who was facilitating a group discussion had problems with two students who were talking and playing noughts and crosses in the session. In a situation 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:

'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:



"[T]he most powerful single moderator that enhances achievement is feedback. The simplest prescription for improving education must be 'dollops of feedback.'"
(Hattie, 1992, p.9)

- » 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.
- » 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.

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.
- » 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.

Refer questions back to the group

Relax!

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?

- » 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.

LEARNING APPROACHES



The ASSIST model (Tait & Entwistle, 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 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 Entwistle (1996) described three key learning approaches: deep approach, strategic approach and surface apathetic approach.

Learning approaches describe the behaviours that characterize how a student engages in study

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.

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

ACTIVITY:

REFLECT ON YOUR MENTOR EXPERIENCE

- » 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.

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.

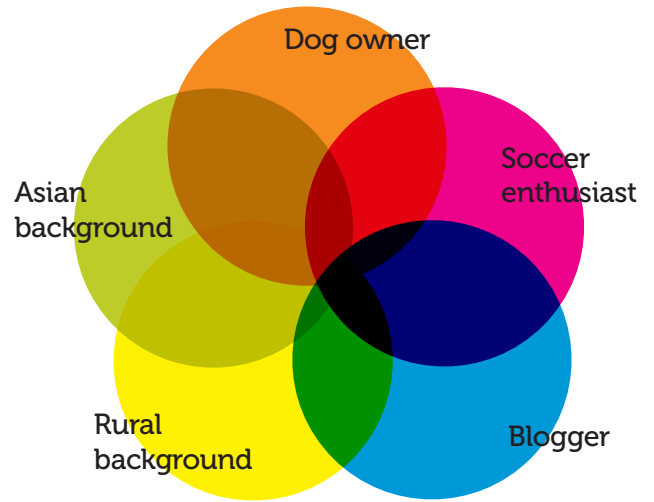
Most modern educational theorists accept the importance of students constructing their own learning, by challenging their pre-existing beliefs and assumptions, rather than passively receiving knowledge that is transmitted from above.

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.

“Collaborative learning demonstrably helps students learn better —more thoroughly, more deeply, more efficiently— than learning alone” (Bruffee, 1999).

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.

ACTIVITY:
CROSS CULTURAL EFFECTIVENESS

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.



4. MENTOR PLANNING

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.

Session 1 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>	Get to know each other; establish a comfortable environment	Introductions		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Clarify mentor and mentee roles; make expectations clear for semester	Explaining the mentoring process		
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.

Step 2

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
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				

REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS

- 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

Impressions

Challenges presented & strategies to resolve them

Things to follow up before next class

Session 3 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				

REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS

- Due to the completion of Test 1 during the tutorial next week, there will be no mentoring sessions. The following week is mid-semester break, so the next mentoring session will occur on April 17.
- 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 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				

REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS

- Bring Thinking Skills 2 topic and notes to the tutorial next week

Session 4 Reflection

Impressions

Challenges presented & strategies to resolve them

Things to follow up before next class

Session 5 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				

REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS

- 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 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				

REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS

- 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 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				

REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS

- Thinking Skills 2 due next week

Session 7 Reflection

Impressions

Challenges presented & strategies to resolve them

Things to follow up before next class

Session 8 Class Plan

Check	Objective	Task	Material	Notes
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				
<input type="checkbox"/>				

REMINDERS FOR STUDENTS

- 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

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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.

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