A Mentoring special

You might appreciate that every edition of the PCET Partners newsletter is focused on mentoring and therefore all are 'specials', but this edition has a particular focus on Mentor Standards and our own mentor project.

Following our latest Secondary and PCET Departmental meeting we would like to focus on supporting our partners in signposting and acknowledging their work in the field of mentoring.

In addition to the support we already offer, such as briefing sessions, joint observations, online materials and our online training package, we are also considering additional ways in which you are able to evidence your contribution to the course and in turn your own organisation.

In this edition we would like to signpost the Mentor Standards and begin to discuss how recognition of your work and professional development might be illustrated.

Any contribution you may wish to make to this discussion would be incredibly useful. Please see the end of this newsletter for contact details.

Mentor Standards 2016

While the standards were produced for school-based initial teacher training we are aware of the crossover that occurs across a range of placements. In addition to this the role of mentor across all of our partner organisations are very similar regardless of setting. The Mentor Standards offer us, at BCU, the opportunity to support you in continuing your own professional development and in turn to continuously improve the experience of our own trainee teachers.

The Mentor Standards aim to focus upon the following key areas of:

- foster greater consistency in the practice of mentors by identifying the effective characteristics of mentoring;
- raise the profile of mentoring and provide a framework for the professional development of current and aspiring mentors;
- contribute towards the building of a culture of coaching and mentoring.

In line with these aims the Teaching Schools Council identified standards in four separate but related areas:

- personal qualities;
- teaching;
- professionalism;
- self-development and working in partnership.

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The Mentor Standards

The Council identified their definition of the role which fits very closely to our own expectations across the Department.

"A mentor is a suitably-experienced teacher who has formal responsibility to work collaboratively within the ITT partnership to help ensure the trainee receives the highest-quality training". (TSC, 2016, p.7)

Again, while we offer a range of support and training opportunities for our partners we are focused upon the continued development of these opportunities, with a view of further developing the quality signposted in the above definition.

In the next few sections the four standards are discussed further using examples directly from the report to aid discussion.

Standard 1 - Personal qualities

Establish trusting relationships, modelling high standards of practice, and understand how to support a trainee through initial teacher training

The mentor should:

- be approachable, make time for the trainee, and prioritise meetings and discussions with them;
- use a range of effective interpersonal skills to respond to the needs of the trainee;
- offer support with integrity, honesty and respect;
- use appropriate challenge to encourage the trainee to reflect on their practice; and
- support the improvement of a trainee's teaching by modelling exemplary practice in planning, teaching and assessment.

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Standard 2 – **Teaching**

Support trainees to develop their teaching practice in order to set high expectations of all pupils and to meet their needs

The mentor should:

- support the trainee in
  - forming good relationships with pupils, and in developing effective behaviour and classroom management strategies;
  - developing effective approaches to planning, teaching and assessment;
  - marking and assessment of pupil work through moderation or double marking;
  - accessing expert subject and pedagogical knowledge;
- give constructive, clear and timely feedback on lesson observations;
- broker opportunities to observe best practice;
- resolve in-school issues on the trainee's behalf where they lack the confidence or experience to do so themselves;
- enable and encourage the trainee to evaluate and improve their teaching; and
- enable the trainee to access, utilise and interpret robust educational research to inform their teaching.

We are aware that there are some amazing examples of all of these elements across the partnership, and where development is required it would be useful to know how best this knowledge and skill base might be celebrated and shared.

Standard 3 – **Professionalism**

Set high expectations and induct the trainee to understand their role and responsibilities as a teacher

The mentor should:

- encourage the trainee to participate in the life of the school and understand its role within the wider community;
- support the trainee in developing the highest standards of professional and personal conduct;
- support the trainee in promoting equality and diversity;
- ensure the trainee understands and complies with relevant legislation, including that related to the safeguarding of children;
- support the trainee to develop skills to manage time effectively.

Again, opportunities to illustrate evidence in this particular standard are constant across the partnership with examples of trainees participating in institutional meetings, public information events, parent's evenings and placement specific training throughout the year, with some institutions able to provide development opportunities through their own NQT programmes.

Once more, discussion on how we might promote, evidence and share these practices, for others to learn from, would be useful across the partnership community.

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Standard 4 – Self-development and working in partnership

Continue to develop their own professional knowledge, skills and understanding and invest time in developing a good working relationship within relevant ITT partnerships.

The mentor should:

- ensure consistency by working with other mentors and partners to moderate judgements; and
- continue to develop their own mentoring practice and subject and pedagogical expertise by accessing appropriate professional development and engaging with robust research.

It is in this specific area that we (BCU) wish to develop even further over the forthcoming years. While we have always indicated opportunities for further professional development through our own suite of CPD packages, it is intended that all mentors will eventually be able to claim award-bearing credits for carrying out their role as mentor to a PCET trainee. While more details will be available shortly, in essence we are offering opportunity to achieve a level 7 qualification, partially through your role as mentor.

Further opportunities are always being considered, and if you have suggestions as to how we might develop CPD even further or better, your input would be welcomed.

As a self-assessment task, you might find the following principles of mentoring (CUREE) useful to consider from your own perspective.

Key principle	How do I achieve/measure this?
A learning conversation	
A thoughtful relationship	
A learning agreement	
Combining support from fellow professionals and specialists	
Growing self direction	
Setting challenging and personal goals	
Understanding why different approaches work	
Acknowledging the benefits to the mentors and coaches	
Experimenting and observing	
Using resources effectively	

Target Setting for Progression

As our students progress across the course, it is pertinent at this time to refocus attention on the continued use of **target setting** to ensure that our trainees who require further guidance to develop their skills are **continuously challenged**, while those trainees already attaining high quality grades and feedback are **stretched even further**.

We recognise, from a range of sources, including Ofsted, our own trainees and experienced mentors within the partnership, that **effective target setting** is an essential feature of **effective development**.

The examples we have selected below offer a clear development from directed targets set by a mentor, and progress identified following the trainees next observation.

Obj1: Identify the role and intentions for your supporting adults within your lesson planning. (PS6)

One TA was moved at the start of the lesson so you were unable to follow the lesson plan in terms of adult support but you showed clear direction to the remaining adult throughout the lesson who was used effectively.

Consider stretch and challenge opportunities for all learners and groups of learners. (PS5)

You differentiated by outcome for the main activities and provided targeted differentiation for some lower ability students. Planning takes into account the variety of needs and abilities of the students within the group.

Wording of learning objectives – ensure they are focused on learning. (PS18)

Learning objectives were clearly organised and differentiated to the expected learning outcomes for each level of ability within the group.

Ensure that task instructions are clear for all learners by considering different ways of presenting and delivering instructions. TAs will also then be able to focus on enhancing learning rather than reiterating instructions. (PS5, PS14)

Most instructions were clearly delivered, some activities would have benefited from written instructions displayed to support more visual learners and to prompt the less able.

Notice how the mentor has linked each target to one or more of the ETF Professional Standards and reported back with information on improvements within the following session.

This allows the trainee to link their development with specific standards, and offers positive feedback to promote confidence and encouragement to continue following guidance given by their mentor.

This illustrates an effective mentor/trainee relationship, where the experienced teacher guides through effective target setting and the trainee responds successfully in following the advice given.

Please ensure these targets are **consistently challenging**, while also **offering support** in achieving the goal set.

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Co-Construction of a framework for mentor support

Following our successful bid to carry out research in to further supporting our mentors across the partnership we have managed to hold a series of events at Gloucestershire College with further workshops planned at BCU (City South Campus) and SCCB (Bournville College Campus).

The next event will be held on **Monday 26th March**, and information relating to participation in the project has already been sent out. **A number of people have already signed up for the event, but we would like as many representatives from the partnership to attend in order to gain as much information as possible.**

The project aims to focus on the development of a framework or toolkit that assists mentors who support in-service and pre-service trainee teachers in post-compulsory settings.

As we mentioned earlier in this newsletter the development of our supporting mentors is of great importance to us and, in line with all four of the Mentor Standards 2016, this research is hoped to develop that support to current and future mentors.

The PCET course is supported by key documentation and training provided by the University PCET team (including the online mentor training signposted within this newsletter), however as we experience a constant flow of mentors due to the nature of subject demand within the course it is often noted that experience can differ across the partnership and therefore a clearly established conceptualisation of the meaning of the role is vital in allowing mentors to aid the transition of individuals between novice and experienced tutor.

The project sets out to **co-construct** a framework or toolkit of support designed by mentors, for mentors using the pre-existing ETF standards as its basis along with the extensive existing literature discussing the role of the mentor in professional settings, with a keen focus on the Mentor Standards 2016.

Existing partnership mentors are invited to discuss and reflect on their role and experiences, including key issues and training needs with the end goal of designing a 'toolkit' that mentors will be able to refer to in support of their relationship with trainee teachers and their own professional development.

Where possible please do support this project in order that we might better support you and in turn our own trainees and ultimately your own students.

Contact stuart.mitchell@bcua.ac.uk to register your interest in the project. We hope to see at our next event – **Monday 26th March**

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Birmingham City University Partnerships Initial Mentor Training

As ever, we continue to promote our online training package for new, existing and prospective Mentors.

This support is presented as an online learning package for you to access at your own convenience, with each section containing support materials and activities designed to help you understand or consolidate what it is to be a Mentor. Moreover, this package is free to use.

The training may be described as 'entry level' and will take around one hour to complete (in short stages if you wish), including a test at the end. Once completed (with a score of 75% or above) a certificate is released to acknowledge your completion of the training package.

The course itself is about the dispositions, attitudes and skills required of mentors. It will encourage you to reflect on what it is to be a mentor in a general sense, what knowledge, skills and attitudes mentors need and how your context relates to that.

To access the online training package click on the link below, or type the address in to your browser:

http://goo.gl/T473TI

Once you have registered with the website you can use the enrolment key below to access the training package: BCU_Mentor_14

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Welcome to the **Initial Mentor Training** Page

for teachers and trainers acting as mentors within

Birmingham City University Partnerships

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Instructions: Read and work through each section carefully, one at a time. Use to make sure only the section you are working on is open. There are certain act must be completed in order to unlock your certificate.

Open all   Close all

One - Introduction

We hope this training will encourage you not only to work with mentees and share your knowledge and experience with the next generation, but also help you think about your own professional development. Alternatively, scan the QR code to the right for immediate access.

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Course activity

In recent weeks we have seen visits from OCR, offering expert guidance on the ever-evolving landscape of post-14 education, with special reference to T-level qualifications.

Many of our trainees will be experiencing an alternative placement this week as they visit different settings across the partnership.

Finally, trainees took part in a series of poster presentation sessions last week, in order to display, discuss and analyse their own use and development of inclusive resources. This was the culmination of the Analysis of Inclusive Learning Practice & Design module and allowed trainees to share their experiences and resources in a conference style event.

The feedback received from trainees was incredibly positive and often revolved around the number of high quality resources that were presented, especially those that could be adapted across a range of subject areas.

Contribute to the Partnership

We are focused on developing a support network for our partner organisations and if you wish to contribute to this process by writing a short article or by offering ideas for best practice in meeting the needs of your trainee, then please contact the PCET Partnerships team via Stuart Mitchell (stuart.mitchell@bcu.ac.uk).

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PCET Partners is produced by the PCET Partnerships team at Birmingham City University.

Please send any feedback, suggestions or contributions to:
stuart.mitchell@bcu.ac.uk