

Professional Experience Mentors

A Guide to the Role and Expectations

The Professional Experience Mentor is the representative liaising between the University of Tasmania's School of Education, the placement site, and the Pre-service Teacher. Professional Experience Mentors play a critical role in fostering positive relationships between all stakeholders, as well as in monitoring Pre-service Teacher progress and wellbeing.

As an experienced educator and representative of the University's School of Education, the Mentor has an understanding of the assessment criteria used to assess Pre-service Teachers' performance in each placement so that they can support the supervising teacher with interpreting the assessment criteria within the specific teaching context. Similarly, the Mentor draws on their knowledge and skills to help the pre-service teacher understand what is required of them by the Supervising Teacher in order to complete the placement successfully.

General Responsibilities

- Establish and maintain contact (generally via email) with allocated Pre-service Teachers and Supervising Teachers during the placement period.
- Complete site visits when required by circumstances or by the Pre-service Teachers' course requirements.
- Seek the support of the Academic Director of Professional Experience or from the Professional Experience Office for advice, especially where the Pre-service Teacher is potentially at risk of failure.
- Work with the Pre-service Teacher and relevant staff to complete the necessary documentation associated with progress of the placement, such as the Interim Report and, if necessary, the ['Cautionary Advice Notice'](#) form and Action Plan, as well as the Final Assessment Report.

See 'Roles and Responsibilities' here: <https://www.utas.edu.au/education/professional-experience/support-for-supervisors>

Communication, Monitoring, and Support from Professional Experience Mentors

Documentation guidelines and communication templates are provided for all required key Mentor activities and touchpoints with Pre-service Teachers and School sites. Upon receiving a Mentor Allocation, a Mentor resource package will be provided.

Initial contact with the Pre-service Teacher via email occurs as soon as possible once the mentor's allocation has been confirmed by the Professional Experience Office, ideally a week or more before the placement begins. The initial email will include a summary of the Mentor's offer of support, a request for any additional information about the placement (e.g. Supervising Teacher contact information when provided by the school), and the Mentor's contact information (e.g. phone number).

Initial contact with the Supervising Teacher(s) and placement coordinator helps establish a line of communication for support regarding the Pre-service Teacher's progress between the placement site and the University. This initial email occurs as soon as the Mentor has the relevant contact information, ideally in the week prior to the placement or before.

Further correspondence may occur during the placement between the Mentor, Pre-service Teacher, and Supervising Teacher(s) as outlined in the Key Mentor Activities document. Although physical or virtual visits by Mentors are not expected for all placements, Pre-service Teachers and Supervising Teachers are encouraged to contact the Mentor to request these or other options for additional support at any stage of any placement.

During the scheduled placement, Mentors should monitor their University email at least once every working day. Pre-service Teachers and placement staff can expect an email reply from Mentors within 24 hours. As placements are important, high-stakes learning experiences for Pre-service Teachers, Mentors are encouraged to express a professional and caring interest in the Pre-service Teacher's well-being as well as Pre-service Teachers' teaching practice and progress. Concerns about Pre-service Teacher well-being or progress should be communicated to the Academic Director of Professional Experience as soon as possible.

Mentors have access to the University's Learning Management System, 'MyLO.' Through the MyLO site for Education Professional Experience, Mentors can access reports uploaded by students. Mentors draw on comments in the Pre-service Teachers Interim Report to inform their correspondence and offer support. Mentors are expected to read and mark as assessed the interim report in MyLO. Although other staff members (Professional Experience Leaders) formalise the final results of the placement via MyLO, Mentors are welcome to access reports, which indicate the progress and achievements of the Pre-service Teacher on placement.

In the final week of the placement, Mentors contact the Pre-service Teachers and Supervising Teachers. The purpose of this (final) email is to offer advice on the remaining aspects of the placement (e.g. assessment report) as well as to thank the Supervising Teacher and other relevant staff at the placement site on behalf of the University.

Mentoring for students on penultimate placements

The School of Education recognises that, over the course of their professional experience placements, the Pre-service Teacher make an important transition from being primarily a 'learner' (mostly observing, supporting individuals and small groups, with occasional whole class teaching) to being primarily an 'educator' (taking consistent and significant responsibility for planning, teaching, and assessment of student learning). Often the major shift in this professional identity occurs during the penultimate placement. With this in mind, additional support and monitoring of penultimate placements are offered to the Pre-service Teacher and Supervising Teacher(s) by the Professional Experience Mentor in the form of a physical or virtual visit or meeting.

When visiting a placement site, Mentors are encouraged to notify the placement coordinator and/or Principal/Centre Manager. Mentors schedule the visit at a time that is mutually suitable for themselves, the Pre-service Teacher, and the Supervising Teacher(s), remembering that the visit is an offer of support on behalf of the University, rather than a requirement for the Pre-service Teacher or site. In placements consisting of one consistent block, the visit is typically most beneficial when undertaken during the middle of the placement; where familiarity with the site is established and there remains time for further opportunity and growth. In a placement split across two phases, visits would typically be scheduled for the early weeks of the second (longer) teaching phase. The [Communication Form](#) is used to provide a record of the visit, with a copy sent to the student, supervising teacher(s), and the Professional Experience Office. See [Mentor Visits \(PDF 287.4 KB\)](#) for more information.

Representing the University of Tasmania

As University of Tasmania representatives, Professional Experience Mentors use their University email address, with relevant contact information as part of an email signature, in all correspondence with students and placement sites.

Mentors are encouraged to keep the Professional Experience Office updated with any changes to their contact information or availability. As experienced educators and highly valued staff members, Mentors' insights and feedback on the placement program are welcomed and can be sent to the Professional Experience Office and/or the Academic Director of Professional Experience.

For contact information, see the website here: <https://www.utas.edu.au/education/professional-experience/contact-us>