Professional Experience

University Mentor Handbook

Professional Experience Team

School of Education

Federation University Australia

Email sea.professionalexperience@federation.edu.au

Office Locations

Campus	Building	Room
Mt Helen	T	204a
Berwick	901	131, Level 1

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What is a University Mentor?

Professional Experience Mentors at Federation University Australia (FedUni) support students to enhance their teaching and learning by facilitating the connections between the knowledge and related skills **Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs)** learn in academic classes to enable them to apply to classroom practice.

University Mentors (UM) act as the conduit between PSTs, FedUni and the **Mentor Teacher (MT)** in the education setting in which the placement is being undertaken. A key role of the UMs is to assist the PST to identify their professional learning needs and set their learning goals. The UMs also share their knowledge of effective teaching practice, so that PSTs can develop necessary skills, confidence and competence in a supported program. UMs facilitate PST understandings of the complexities of teaching and learning.

The UM fulfils a crucial role as the link between the University, PST and the school/centre. Close co-operation between the University and the education setting is essential if Professional Experience is to be of maximum benefit to all concerned. UMs need to be aware of the particular strengths of each school/centre as well as having mentoring skills to support PSTs to access the learning available. UMs are also expected to play a crucial role in the early recognition of a PST needing additional support or being considered 'at risk' of failing a professional placement.

Roles and Responsibilities of a University Mentor

The University Mentor is responsible for:

- ☐ supporting the PST in accessing appropriate support in all aspects of the professional experience (including professional and personal issues where this impacts on learning)

- ☐ demonstrating appropriate communication skills (ie active listening, sharing of ideas) that will encourage the building and maintenance of professional relationships

- ☐ discussing the progress of PST with the Mentor Teacher if required

- ☐ visiting PSTs while on placement; if distance is greater than 100 kilometres, a 'virtual' meeting (eg Skype) is expected to be conducted

- ☐ maintaining written documentation of visits and meetings regarding the PST in the format appropriate for InPlace

- ☐ contacting the FedUni Academic Coordinator, Professional Experience if concerned about the progress of an assigned PST

- ☐ supporting a PST identified as at risk of not being able to successfully complete the professional placement through the StAR Procedure (see Professional Experience - Placement Support)

- ☐ checking the PST has uploaded their completed Professional Experience Forms A (this form needs to be signed by the MT and scanned prior to uploading), B and C to InPlace

- ☐ discussing goals and reflections from the Professional Experience PST Learning Log (Form B) with the PST

- ☐ contributing to planning and delivery of pre placement sessions to groups of PSTs appropriate to learning needs within Program/Course

- ☐ attending meetings and functions related to Pre-Service teaching throughout the year

- ☐ planning workload to ensure PST contact is equitable and fits within negotiated timeframe

- ☐ facilitating an environment that works toward successful outcomes for FedUni and PST through appropriate communication, including conflict resolution, when appropriate

Overview of Placement Meetings with PSTs

Communicating with PSTs

- **Text/email** each PST to introduce yourself
- **Request** a return reply detailing preferred PST email and confirmation that all contact details are accurate (follow up phone call if no reply)
- **Inform** PST of dates and times for upcoming **compulsory** meetings
- **Check** with PST regularly to gain feedback about their progress and challenges in the school/centre, where group meetings are not possible

Communicating with Schools / Centres

- **Email** each School Professional Experience Co-ordinator to introduce yourself and request that they forward your contact details to each Mentor Teacher
- **Request** a return email from each Mentor Teacher with their preferred contact details
- **Forward** and overview of structure of mentoring to advise of process, including point of contact for potential StAR PSTs

Organisation of visits / meetings

- **Divide** schools into 3 or 4 groups for visits and meetings, based on the location of schools/centres
- **Include** 5 - 10 PSTs, where possible, in group meetings
- **Contact** one of the schools within each grouping to organize a convenient space and time for your group meeting
- **Email** each PST and school/centre a letter outlining visit dates and times
- **Aim** to schedule meetings to cause minimal disruption to the schools/centres

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Notes

- **Select** a variety of school/centre sites for meetings to maintain networks and communication with as many different schools as possible
- **Arrange meetings to occur in blocks** within the school day (eg 9:00-10:30 or 11:00-12:00) - note that meetings may be arranged after school time, if most suitable, or off school site (eg coffee shop) if that is the only option
- **Arrange individual meetings with PSTs** in circumstances that require this.

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So you have your list of PSTs – what to do now?

Initial meeting prior to placement commencing

- **Contact** each cohort of PSTs in your list and make a meeting time and place for each group in the week leading up to the placement commencing. It is advised that if you have Virtual PSTs you meet with them face-to-face at Fed Uni prior to their placement
- **Check** that all PSTs have a copy of the Assessment Report (Form A) and PST Learning Log (From B) to bring to this meeting
- **Review** the handbook with PSTs and clarify all assessement and learning tasks, including the PST Learning Log and, where required, the Reflective Self-Evaluation Report (From C)
- **Review** the Student Legal Responsibilities and Procedures document outlining professional expectations of PSTs in schools/centres, including the STaR process
- **Provide** your contact details to the PST
- **Confirm** the PST's contact details
- **Outline** your PST meeting schedule and the purpose of these meetings

During placement meetings

- **Deepen** PSTs learning by facilitating discussion around their professional practice to date
- **Meet** PSTs, where possible, in small groups at a central location to enrich and share experiences
- **Request** each PST to share their personal learning goals and their progress to date
- **Encourage** dialogue between PSTs about their individual learning experiences and teaching opportunities
- **Invite** open discussion around any issues or concerns PSTs may have and workshop ideas to address these with a group
- **Identify** with PSTs their goals for the remainder of the placement and ensure they record these goals in their Learning Logs

Final placement meeting

- **Ensure** PSTs have completed all assessment requirements
- **Provide** timelines for uploading Assessment Reports to InPlace
- **Request** each PST to share at least **one** learning experience they had during placement either positive or negative, and the reasons for categorising it as such
- **Assist** PSTs to complete their goals for next placement (if appropriate)
- **Ensure** all PSTs are aware that their completed Assessment Report (Form A), Learning Log (Form B) and Reflective Self-Evaluation Report (form C) is to be uploaded to InPlace within one week
- **Celebrate** the experience!

Discussion point ideas for Placement Meetings

Initial meeting prior to placement commencing

- How are you feeling about this upcoming placement? *Share with the group.*
- Reflect on your last placement (if appropriate)
- What were/are your teaching goals for this upcoming placement? *Check these are recorded in Learning Log booklet*
- Are you organised for your placement ie. childcare, transport, work commitments etc?). *Remind PST of the handout re personal organization (on Fed Uni Online)*
- Have you contacted your school mentors and organised, start times, dress codes, expectations of school meetings etc? *Discuss how the PST may familiarise themselves with the classroom* (take note of timetable and daily routines, specialist lessons, students with special needs, physical layout of classroom, learning areas within room and within school, student engagement policy
- Share contact Fed Uni Mentor details and remind about upcoming meetings

During placement meeting

- Share critical incidents which may have occurred (*how has your practice changed as a result of these incidents?)*
- Discuss individual PST goals and check progress
- Discuss actual lessons/planning or learning activities conductedShare feedback from Mentor Teacher (*Is it happening and how? Is the method used for providing feedback working for you?)*
- View assessment recorded from classroom lessons (*from self, peer or mentor*) and discuss any opportunities for reflecting where modifications occurred during the lesson
- Discuss interactions with other staff and school community
- Investigate the action-reflection model by discussing modifications to planning following evaluation and feedback
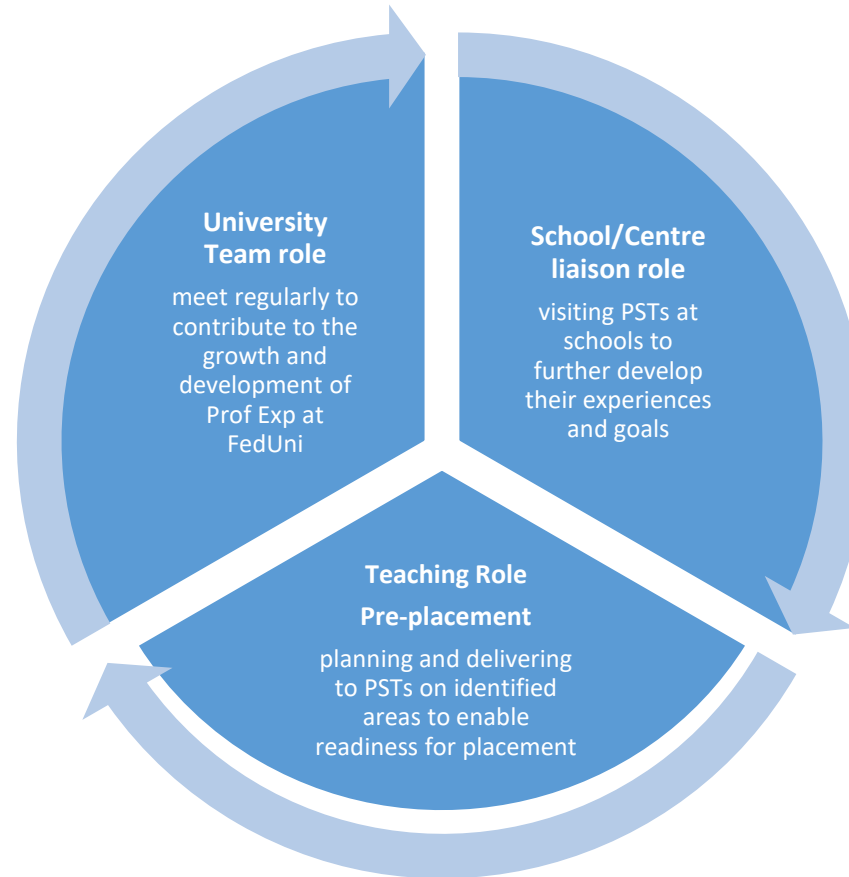
Final placement meeting

- Freewrite - Silent writing for 5 minutes about 3 highlights of placement. Use this as a basis for each PST to share their experiences *uninterupted*, so that all PSTs have the opportunity to speak about their experiences
- Discuss critical incidents from Freewrite
- Share next placement goals and discuss where/how to from here. Check that goals are achievable (eg SMART)
- Remind PSTS to upload the Assessment and Learning Log to InPlace asap

- Celebrate the experience!

Multiple roles of University Mentors

FedUni University Mentor (UM) Professional Experience Development Team

UMs meet regularly with whole team (UMs and Professional Experience Academic Coordinator) to discuss
- direction
- progress
- professional experience issues

University Team role
meet regularly to contribute to the growth and development of Prof Exp at FedUni

School/Centre liaison role
visiting PSTs at schools to further develop their experiences and goals

Teaching Role
Pre-placement
planning and delivering to PSTs on identified areas to enable readiness for placement

School/Centre Liaison

University Mentors visit schools/centres within a 100km radius of home base.

Initial visit - aim to re/introduce self and establish direction for year with School/Centre Professional Experience Program Coordinator

Make ongoing visits once PSTs are on placement in school/centre

If further than 100 km radius from home base, arrange Skype visit with the school.

Pre Placement Role
designing, delivering, evaluating sessions

Each PST Education cohort has timetabled blocks of time leading up to professional experience placement.
University Mentors design, deliver and evaluate sessions, relevant to the stage of learning within the Program of study, including sessions based on FedUni expectations for placement.

Induction Process

This Information Booklet provides an induction for University Mentors. Queries regarding the roles and responsibilities outlined can be directed to the Academic Coordinator, Professional Experience.

University Mentor Meetings

Regular meetings will be essential to developing and maintaining both a collegiate system of mentoring as well as a consistent and reflective approach towards the mentoring of PSTs.

While specific meetings will be organized by the Academic Co-ordinator, Professional Experience or the Deputy Dean – Professional Experience, UMs will also be encouraged to attend other meetings involving the School of Education.

Thus, there will be a requirement for some co-ordination of work days by Mentors at the beginning of each year.

Working hours for University Mentors employed on a sessional basis

UMs employed on a sessional basis are paid for a set number of hours per year. This will be made explicit at the start of each year.

Most UMs are employed as 0.2eft (approximately 340 hours pa) This time will be annualized, meaning that UMs keep a record of their own hours and work when there is a need, as opposed to working a set number of hours per week. This allows for flexibility and efficient use of time.

Work will be conducted in accordance with the Professional Experience Timetable and Scheduled Pre Placement sessions. Hence, planning of workloads may involve, for example, a UM working 2 hours one week and 8 hours the following.

Fortnightly payment for sessional UMs will be made according to FedUni Pay Dates for all staff for the duration of the Sessional Contract each UM has signed and submitted to FedUni Human Resources.

UMs are advised to retain a record of hours worked as this record may be required for audit purposes.

Travel to visit PSTs will be performed, during work hours using a FedUni vehicle. If UMs choose to use their own vehicle, they may keep a log and claim against their personal tax. Only those Mentors at a distance will be given permission to claim km travelled through the University.

Travel to visit PSTs -- process

While undertaking FedUni business, UMs are expected to use University vehicles to travel to schools/ centres.

Note that UMs, who work and reside in the Geelong/Melbourne regions and cannot access FedUni Pool cars, may be compensated in their employment contracts for the cost of their travel. Authorization is required for this – please contact the Deputy Dean, School of Education.

University pool vehicle booking

FedUni operates an online booking system for staff who need to hire a pool vehicle. For all information required to hire a pool vehicle, go to University pool vehicles

Note that to book a vehicle, you must first request access to the online booking system. Once you have a Smartfleet user account your username and password will be forwarded to you.

This is necessary for insurance purposes and to ensure we can identify the driver of a pool car if necessary in the case of traffic offences, parking issues, speeding tickets, licensing etc.

You request for access by clicking on the *Request for Access to Online Booking System* which takes you to an online form you need to complete. Once submitted you will be notified of your username and password. **Remember** that you must not share your password with anyone else. This username and password is also required to access pool vehicle keys from a locked box that is accessible 24/7 in the location from which you are collecting the pool vehicle.

Once you are a Registered User and have been provided with your Username and Password you will be able to Book FedUni vehicles for visits to schools/centres.

Summary of Car Booking Process: see flow charts (p.13)

Booking a University Pool Vehicle

UM advised of schools/dates for mentoring from Professional Experience office --- work load planned accordingly

- At least a week prior: Log onto the FedUni Vehicle Booking System (Staff tab - FEDUni Home page) to create booking.

- You will receive an automated response advising car booking request has been received but this is NOT confirmation.

- Approval email subsequently received

- Collect the vehicle from the designated pick up spot (Mt Helen, SMB Churchill, Berwick)

- Use the key collection/drop box outside Central Stores to collect and return keys. Enter your user name and password, open the key box and collect key.

- Car is to be refuelled before return (fuel card in car). Deposit the key back into the key box using the same access details as when collecting.

- If returning the vehicle when the Central Store is closed – the gate key is attached to each key ring for access to outside gate

Process if no University Pool Vehicle is available

UM advised of schools/dates for mentoring from Professional Experience office - work load planned accordingly

- If you are advised that a FedUni vehicle is unavailable, a rental car may be provided. FedUni has a preferred supplier arrangement with HERTZ and AVIS Rentals.

- Contact Facilities Services

  Ballarat and Wimmera
  Ph: (03) 5327 9150 or
  (03) 5327 9520

  Gippsland
  Ph: (03) 5122 6688

  Berwick
  Ph: (03) 5122 6086

- Advise destination, pick up and return times.

- You will be given the contact number of the Rental Car organization and FedUni code and you can make booking.

- Collect rental car.

Record Keeping - Handover of information from each semester

UMs form an important part of the support structure surrounding the Pre-Service Teacher. During visits and meetings, the UM will gather information (both incidentally and formally) that will assist in building a picture of growth as a professional during the overall period in the Education Programs at the Federation University. These are for the UM's own records and referral.

At the end of each placement, the UM is to enter visit details on InPlace.

When a PST is identified as a Student at Risk (StAR), the UM becomes involved in a StAR Procedure for that PST.

- The UM is required to email a scanned copy of the completed and signed StAR Learning Support Program when this has been developed in consultation with the MT and PST to sea.professionalexperience@federation.edu.au for uploading to the PST's InPlace record.
- On completion of the Support Program, the UM is required to email a scanned copy of the completed and signed related StAR Learning Support Program Assessment Report to sea.professionalexperience@federation.edu.au for uploading to the PST's InPlace record.

This information will ensure the PST may be supported in subsequent placements.

Links

FedUni School of Education Professional Experience website:
https://federation.edu.au/schools/school-of-education/professional-experience

Professional Experience MOODLE shell:
http://moodle.federation.edu.au/course/view.php?id=35353