



# Guide to Mentoring

PGCE-24I : Postgraduate Certificate in Education

This document is also available in Welsh. Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn y Gymraeg.

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# Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to be a mentor on the alternative route into teaching.

As a mentor you are part of a professional team that links university, Regional Consortia and school and you will have a vital role in contributing to the development of the student teacher that you are responsible for. We know that school-based mentors will have very varied experiences and responsibilities. You will draw on such experiences alongside your professional knowledge and understanding to support the development of student teachers. The process of being a mentor, will also contribute to your own professional development.

In 2018, Estyn – the education and training inspectorate for Wales – identified that mentors have a role in developing student teachers' skills in relation to critical thinking, reflection, evaluation and professional learning. All of these skills relate directly to the revised professional standards for teaching and leadership that students will have to meet and hence your contribution will support student teachers to 'strive for sustained excellent practice' at the start of their career-long professional learning journey (Welsh Government, 2018, p. 5) as well as directly informing the development of your own professional learning journey. The issues raised, and the approaches outlined in this guide and the associated resources will help support mentors to utilise effective teacher education pedagogy.

It is assumed that you are a strong practitioner, a developing professional, open to further skills' enhancement, and probably actively preparing for the next career stage and role. As a mentor you will also be working with other colleagues and so be contributing to their professional growth and hence the school development overall. A glossary of terms is provided within **Appendix 1.**

## **Our vision for ITE**

The course has been developed The Open University in collaboration with teachers, schools, Regional Consortia, and the Welsh Government.

Our vision of effective teacher education is based on the following principles:

- Students co-construct their professional knowledge in two ways that offer the most effective learning when they intertwine.
- reflective and connected study of the online materials and professional practice in school where they can both explore the theoretical ideas applied to practice and apply practice to the study of theoretical ideas.
- interaction between the student and the professional staff supporting them, their mentor and other staff in schools, their curriculum tutor, fellow students, and a practice tutor; and through their ongoing interaction with pupils. Each member of this supporting community offers a different perspective that draws on different forms of evidence and understandings.

The student-teacher's learning is a complex and individual process which is nurtured by the community in which they are working, including the online community. In the process of working with student teachers, the community itself will also learn and develop.

The work of the student and their mentor is centred on the planning and teaching of lessons with a close consideration of learning from the perspective of the pupils. In our programme, this is also supported and reinforced by the study materials, mentors, other staff in school, practice tutors and curriculum tutors. Students' professional learning and development should be nurtured to ensure successful development throughout the course, for example: the teaching of single lessons should be slowly built up to in PGCE1 and being autonomous should only be attempted when the student is ready at PGCE3. Resilience and self-efficacy are built through supported, successful experience.

The 'knowledge base' for teaching is built through practice, underpinned by a knowledge of relevant theory, and reflective exploration of knowledge-in-practice and knowledge-of-practice with mentors and other staff who support the student. The student will become part of 'communities of practice' within their placement schools, and without the school formed by the professionals supporting their development and by the student cohort. These communities will sustain the student's professional learning enabling them to link theory and practice, deepen their own understandings and

develop their professional practice. Collaboration and reflection are key components of the community of practice which must form around the student.

Teachers' subject knowledge influences the way in which they teach, and teachers who know more about an Area of Learning and Experience (AoLE) are likely to be more adventurous in their pedagogic strategies and, consequently, more effective. Mentors and curriculum tutors each play a role in extending the student's subject knowledge throughout the course. Targets set on the student's Individual learning plan are reviewed regularly (at the end of each module) and students will be directed to resources to support their subject knowledge development as appropriate. Primary students' subject knowledge will be audited in the languages, literacy and communication and mathematics and numeracy AoLEs.

Pedagogy is recognised as a major component in the five areas of professional standards for teaching and leadership. Teaching entails knowing about and understanding ways of representing and formulating aspects of the AoLE so that learners engage and develop knowledge, skills and understanding. 'Pedagogical knowledge' implies a wide creative approach to teaching and learning, an appreciation of how to engage learners in lessons prompted by an understanding of how children learn. The slowly increasing challenge in the programme as it moves across three stages, enables all participants to address key professional knowledge in increasing depth.



All schools are learning organisations – professional communities with their own distinctive ethos and approach to practice – and it is important for a student-teacher to understand the commonalities and the unique features of each school. Through interaction within the two schools they will have practice learning experiences in the student will learn to deploy subject knowledge and pedagogic knowledge in a way that focuses on the pupil and the way that they learn, and also how the pupils are learning within and outside that particular social context. This is ‘school knowledge’. The curriculum in each AoLE must undergo change, alteration and restructuring if it is to become teachable and accessible to pupils. Through knowledge of the child and their needs and by their work with an AoLE to make it accessible to learners, student-teachers develop a distinctive type of knowledge, e.g. ‘school mathematics’ or ‘school history’. This understanding of aspects of each AoLE, and the relationship to the ‘four purposes’ of the Welsh curriculum, is developed by the work with the mentor and others during the practice learning experience, through online study, and during online seminars.

The student teacher must develop their own identity as a teacher reflecting their own values, they will not become a clone of their mentor. This is a dynamic process of learning the different aspects of professional knowledge and aligning them with past knowledge, their own experiences of learning, their personal view of what constitutes ‘good’ teaching and belief of what the purposes of the AoLE are and why they are taught. During their two years on the PGCE the student-teacher must discover, articulate, test and re-test their personal teaching construct as they move through the stages of the

programme and gain experience. A teacher's identity remains in flux throughout their career as they respond to teaching innovation and curriculum development, but student teacher is asked to confront cognitive dissonance initially almost on a daily occurrence basis. The constant questioning of their personal beliefs about what they teach and how they teach can cause an emotional reaction that will need to be worked through with their mentor.

In summary – in the OU Partnership vision, the student teacher learns through:

- both support and challenge: learning is seen as becoming, joining communities of practice in which their individual identity as a teacher fits and is sustained.
- a slow start which nurtures resilience and self-efficacy through successful experience and encourages a reflective stance
- understanding how far theory informs practice and practice informs theory.
- learning how learning is occasioned through observing and enacting this understanding in classrooms
- building good learning relationships through the mentor–student relationship and observing and enacting those relationships within and without the classroom.

# Purpose and Structure of the Guidance Materials

This guide and the associated resources linked to it have key purposes:

- to provide an opportunity for mentors to audit and reflect upon their training needs in respect of mentoring skills and the pedagogy of teacher education
- to explain the conceptual framework underpinning the course structure
- to identify the key elements that exemplify effective mentor practice and the links to professional learning
- **to signpost additional resources that may help to further develop professional skills for mentors**

## What is mentoring?

There are many ways of defining mentoring. Estyn (2018) defines it as: *'Mentoring in teacher education may be defined as a one-to-one relationship between a relatively inexperienced teacher (the mentee) and a relatively experienced one (the mentor), which aims to support the mentee's learning and development as a teacher, and their integration into the cultures of the school and the profession.'*

Mentors work in a developmental capacity, utilising aspects of both mentoring and coaching, with close support offered to students initially and then as their skills, knowledge and understanding increases and the student

becomes both more proficient and confident, their autonomy increases and so there is an emphasis on mentors empowering and enabling (Clutterbuck, 2004, in Estyn, 2018, p. 3).

# Roles, Responsibilities, and skills



Figure 1 The relationship between roles and responsibilities

Figure 1 is based on the ideas of Hobson and Malderez (2013, p. 2, cited in Estyn, 2018, pp. 3–4) with some additions.

Mentors will have several roles that they have to play in order to facilitate the mentee's (student teacher's) development. These include the roles of:

- Collaborator
- Judge
- Model
- Acculturator
- Educator
- Sponsor.

Each of these roles informs the responsibilities that mentors have in developing student teachers as shown in Figure 1.

To address these responsibilities, the mentor will have to demonstrate key mentoring skills.

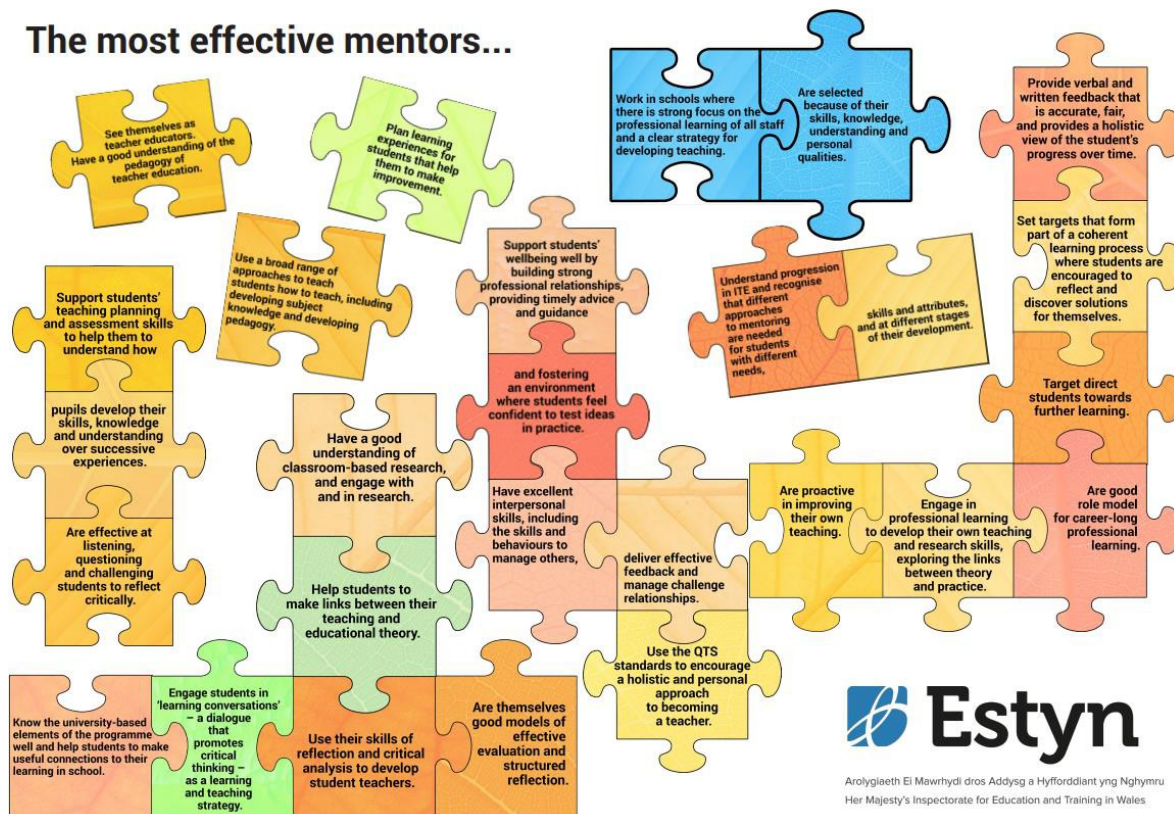
The skills noted below in Figure 2 could be considered in line with the characteristics of effective mentors as envisaged by Estyn (2018).



Figure 2 Key mentoring skills

Source: based in part on the criteria for 'The most effective mentors' in *The Professional learning continuum: mentoring in initial teacher education* (Estyn, 2018).

## The most effective mentors...



**Estyn**

Arolygiaeth Ei Mawrhydi dros Addysg a Hyfforddiant yng Nghymru  
Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales

Figure 3 The Most Effective Mentors

Source: based in part on the criteria for 'The most effective mentors' in The Professional Learning Continuum: mentoring in Initial Teacher Education (Estyn, 2018).

# Mentoring and Coaching

The mentor may draw on elements of both mentoring and coaching practice. The Welsh Government's (2014) document relating to the 'Principles of mentoring and coaching' refers to mentoring as 'a structured, sustained process for supporting professional learners through significant career

transitions'. Coaching is described as a 'structured, sustained process for enabling the development of a specific aspects of a professional learner's practice. Consequently, there are some similarities between mentoring and coaching as well as some subtle but important differences. From our perspective, coaching can be seen as a subset activity of mentoring (CUREE, 2005).

The nature of the mentoring and coaching support given to individual students will be based upon individual requirements, the level of training they are undertaking and the targets that they have been set. Consequently, the nature of mentoring and coaching will be undertaken in an incremental and progressive capacity with coaching aspects becoming more evident as the student teacher moves towards increasingly autonomous practice.

Additional detail in relation to mentoring and coaching can be found by referring to the Welsh Coaching and Mentoring Framework (Welsh Government, 2014) and the ten principles of effective mentoring and coaching as identified by the Welsh Government.

## **Principles of Mentoring and Coaching**

(Source: Welsh Government, 2014.)

The document outlines ten principles of effective mentoring and coaching.

These involve:

- A learning conversation structured professional dialogue, rooted in evidence from the professional learner's practice, which articulates



existing beliefs and practices to enable reflection on them.

- A thoughtful relationship developing trust, attending respectfully and with sensitivity to the powerful emotions involved in deep professional learning.
- A learning agreement establishing confidence about the boundaries of the relationship by agreeing and upholding ground rules that address imbalances in power and accountability.
- Combining support from fellow professional learners and specialists collaborating with colleagues to sustain commitment to learning and relate specialist inputs to everyday practice; seeking out specialist expertise to extend skills and knowledge and to model good practice.
- Growing self-direction an evolving process in which the learner takes increasing control over their professional development as skills, knowledge and self-awareness increase.
- Setting challenging and personal goals identifying goals rooted in aspirations for pupils that build on what they know and can do already whilst attending to school and individual priorities.
- Understanding why different approaches work developing understanding of the rationale for new approaches so practice and theory can be developed side by side and adapted for different contexts.
- Acknowledging the benefits to the mentors and coaches acknowledging the professional learning that mentors and coaches gain from the opportunity to mentor or coach and using them to model professional learning.

- Experimenting and observing creating a learning environment that supports risk-taking and innovation and encourages professional learners to seek out and analyse direct evidence from practice.
- Using resources effectively making and using time and other resources creatively to protect and sustain learning, action and reflection on a day-to-day basis.

## **Development of mentor skills and links to professional learning**

Mentoring is a process of professional learning not only for the student but also for the mentor. We are aware that mentors can be at very different career stages and also at different points of development in their roles. However, all mentors can benefit in some way from training that builds upon their strengths as Mentors as well as facilitates the development of their skills still further. Estyn (2018, p. 13) refers to the fact that:

*Mentors who have participated in professional learning in mentoring and coaching speak with a greater understanding of the skills, approaches and techniques required to mentor successfully*

As a mentor supporting students on the alternative routes, you will be provided with training which will support you to enhance your mentoring practice and support your role as a teacher educator with adult learners.

As part of the training process, we have included a skills audit in [Appendix 2](#) which can be used to clarify your skills at present and to highlight

development needs and resources that you can draw on. This audit is designed to be reviewed prior to each module and discussed with the School Coordinator and Practice Tutor as appropriate. Such a process can help mentors meet appropriate professional development targets in relation to both teaching and formal leadership and importantly allow you to identify your specific needs in relation to mentoring.

## Sharing Practice

One key activity for the student teacher is observation of and discussion about the mentor's lessons. This serves some important functions – for example, it:

- allows the student teacher access to an experienced teacher's thinking
- helps to establish trust
- provides a model of self-evaluation that the student teacher can adopt

Effective sharing of practice requires a mentor to:

- be open about their own strengths and weaknesses
- be prepared to explore in detail the thinking behind their actions
- move the student teacher from a simple analysis of teaching and learning to a more complex one.

This process of shared practice therefore provides an opportunity for the mentor to clearly reflect upon and articulate the reasoning behind their pedagogical approaches, something that Haggarty (1995, in Cain, 2009, p.

58) noted mentors were 'less successful' at, specifically in respect of 'talking about the practicability concerns that underpinned their own decision making'. Consequently, this approach allows the student to consider in more depth the complexities of the decisions that have been made and how this may impact upon their own practice.

## Facilitating Feedback

The process of feedback and discussion through continual dialogue is vital in developing not only professional knowledge but equally as important, trust between the mentor and the student. This relates to the key skills of the mentor. As part of this dialogue, there is a balance to be met between support and challenge (see Figure 4).

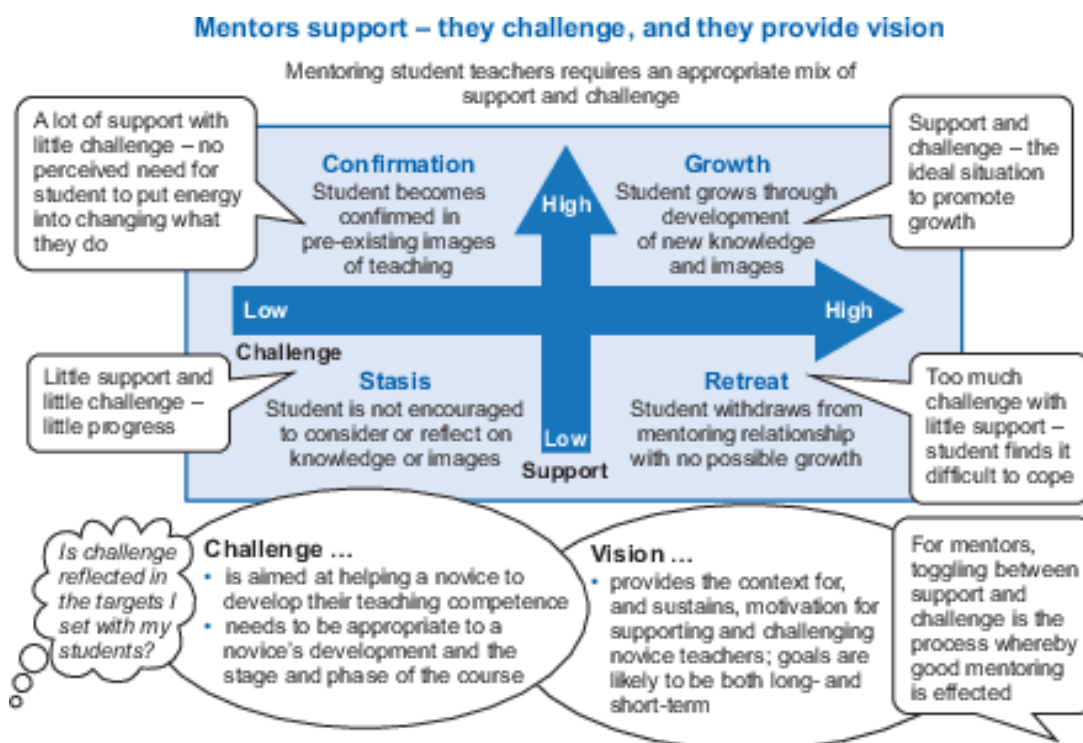


Figure 4 The balance of support and challenge in the mentoring process. (Source: adapted from Martin, 1996; Daloz, 1986)

The mentoring process will therefore involve both elements of mentoring and coaching, with the coaching aspects becoming more specific as the student teacher moves through the course.

An important element of feedback is the tone in which it is given. Referring to the student as 'you' when providing written feedback is more collegial than 'the student' and enhances the collaborative and co-constructed element of the course.

Another important aspect when engaging in discussion is the need to listen – encouraging the student to lead any evaluation and use questioning as a prompt for further critical reflection by the student (Estyn, 2018).

## **Wellbeing**

The importance of wellbeing cannot be overstated. As noted in the introduction to the Health and Wellbeing areas of learning and experience (AoLE), good health and wellbeing is recognised as being a 'key enabler of successful learning' (Welsh Government, 2019b). The Open University, along with its partners in the programme, is committed to assist all student teachers on the programme to manage their own wellbeing and to contribute to the wellbeing of the pupils in their care. This commitment extends to all those involved in supporting student teachers including mentors.

The approach to supporting student teachers is multifaceted. In school, the

mentor is pivotal in supporting the student teacher on a day-to-day basis, particularly in the crucial early stages of familiarisation. Through continual and sensitive dialogue, the student teacher is supported as they undertake their practice learning activities. They have access to the school coordinator and the practice tutor if they would like to discuss any concerns with another individual and it is important that student teachers are made aware of this from the outset.

Another source of support of student teachers is the [Big White Wall](#), a mental health and wellbeing service provided by The Open University.

## **Reporting Concerns**

The mentor is in the best position to identify any concerns raised as part of the practice learning process. Any issues should initially be discussed with the student teacher, and a record made on the mentor session record. This process may also involve the school coordinator as appropriate. It may also be that the school coordinator and practice tutor as part of their observations also identify concerns independently.

If concerns are raised by a mentor, school coordinator, practice tutor and/or curriculum tutor, then a student support framework may be initiated. Such a framework is a mechanism by which a student receives additional support. A diagrammatic representation of the processes involved to report and act on concerns is shown in Figure 5 (next page).

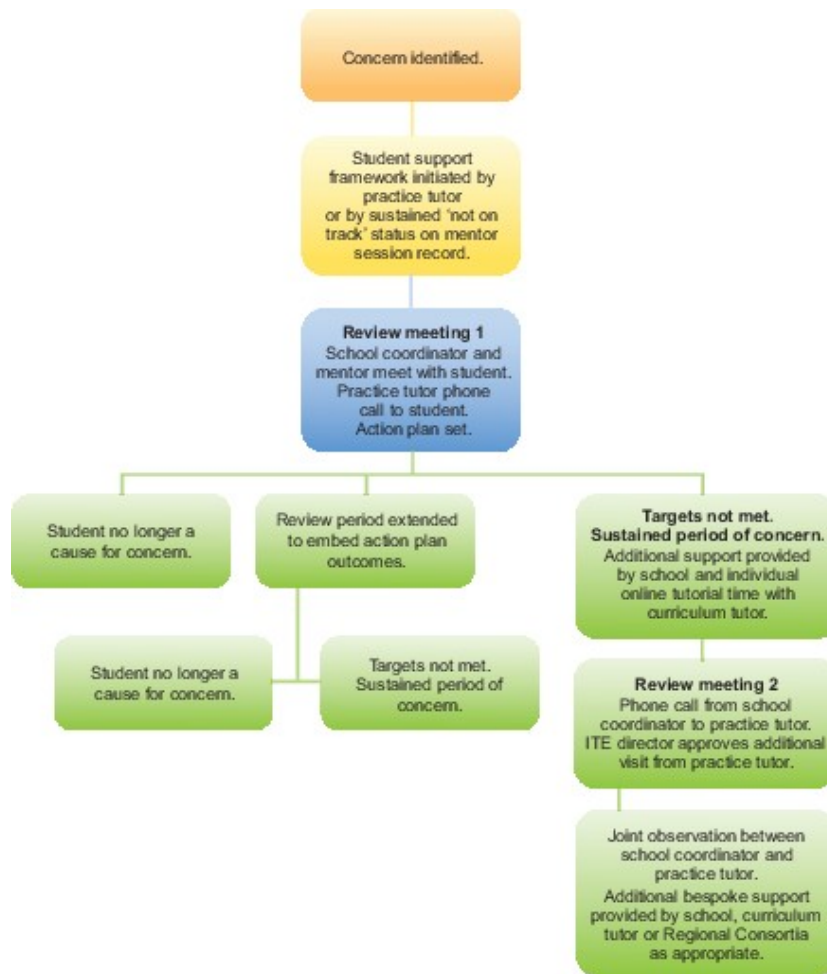


Figure 5 Flowchart to show pathway to address concerns (SSF = Student support framework)

# Professional Learning

## How can I support my own and my student's professional learning?

As identified in the introduction, Estyn (2018) has identified that mentors have a vital role in developing student teachers' skills as part of the revised professional standards for teaching. **Crucially, the role of the mentor in supporting student teachers will also impact on the professional learning of the mentor in that such learning is identified as:**

*The teacher consistently extends knowledge, skills and understanding and can show how reflection and openness to challenge and support informs professional learning to progressively develop pedagogy. (Welsh Government, 2017)*

The national approach to professional learning (Welsh Government, 2018b) is made up of eight elements – one of which is professional learning pedagogy (Wales Government, 2018b). This element is broken down further into a ‘four element design mode, shown in Figure 6.

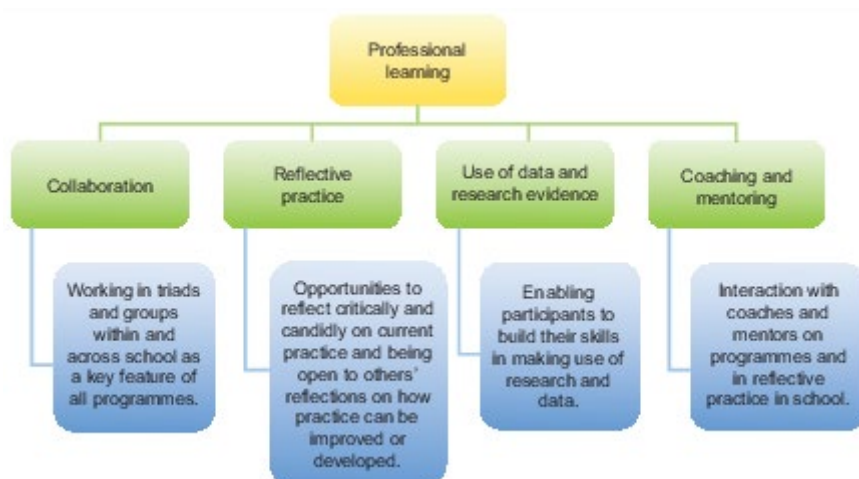


Figure 6 The four elements of professional learning (Welsh Government, 2018c)

These four aspects inform the approaches that will be beneficial for mentors to utilise when supporting the professional learning of student teachers and assessing them in line with the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) descriptors of the professional standards. Consequently, it is useful to consider the mentor role in line with these four elements. As a professional learner, the mentor will also consider the four elements in the context of their own development towards the teaching and the formal leadership descriptors.



Additional information on the principles of professional learning and the research that has informed the Welsh Government's approach to professional learning can be found at: [National approach to professional learning](#).

## Collaboration

Collaboration is one of the core components of professional learning (Welsh Government, 2019) and of the professional standards (Welsh Government, 2017).

The student is the key focus of a collaborative network with different parts of the network either directly or indirectly supporting the development of that student. Schools will be the primary provider of professional education but will have 'close collaboration' (Furlong, 2015, p. 24) with the university as well as colleagues from the Regional Consortia. Such collaboration has also been identified as a recommendation by Estyn (2018).

In the context of mentoring provision, there will need to be close collaboration between key individuals working alongside the mentor such as other teaching colleagues, the school coordinator, the practice tutor and the curriculum tutor. Such collaboration may take the form of informal discussions post observation or through joint observations and assessment.

Collaboration between the mentor and the student teacher will also be important in addressing the lesson study aspects in PGCE1 and 2 and the small-scale study in PGCE3.

# Reflective Practice

## How can it be used in mentoring?

Reflective practice brings new knowledge and skills, promote self-awareness and deep learning (Welsh Government, 2015).

Both the Welsh Government (2015) as well as Estyn (2018, p. 4) have identified the following key components of reflection. These are:

- Reflection – recalling, describing and explaining.
- Critical thinking – a deeper form of reflection using evidence to evaluate practice. It may involve analysing the practice of others as well as being self-critical and questioning in order to develop practice further through change or improvement.
- Evaluation – the process of judging the value of aspects such as ‘teaching strategies, teaching skills and resources’ and their impacts upon learning.

Importantly for student teachers and their mentors, the Estyn (2018, p. 7) report has identified that ‘students do not develop their skills of critical analysis, reflection and evaluation’

Consequently, it is vital that mentors draw on and model their own reflective

skills alongside the student in facilitating students to develop these vital skills. This has clear benefits for the student but will also enhance the skills for the mentor and impact directly upon their professional learning journey in regard to both the teaching and formal leadership descriptors (Welsh Government, 2017).

Furthermore, such a reflective approach will facilitate the use of a more holistic consideration of the QTS descriptors based around constructive dialogue between mentor and student teacher.

What is also important to consider throughout the mentoring process is that the mentor is reflecting not only upon mentors' teaching practice but also their mentoring practice and hence further exemplifying career long professional learning (Estyn, 2018).

## **How do I develop reflection?**

It is useful when developing reflective practice, individually as well as with student teachers, to draw upon models of reflective practice. There are a number available but in essence most are cyclical and demonstrate the ongoing nature of the reflective process. Additional information on the different models can be found in the Welsh Government's (2014) document on [reflective practice](#).

A useful model to utilise both with student teachers as well as for mentor reflection is Brookfield's (1995) four lenses. Here practice can be viewed through four interconnected lenses.

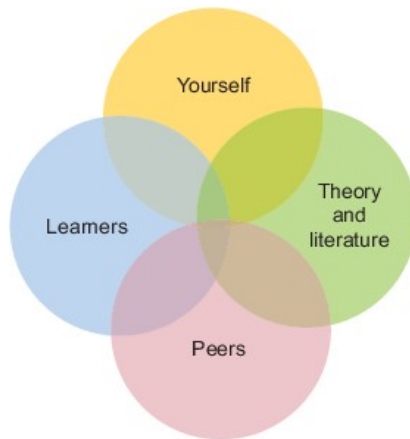


Figure 7 Brookfield's four lenses

Experts on reflective practice such as Andrew Pollard (2014) have also referred to the need for such reflection to be open-minded and use evidence to inform practice (Reflective Teaching in Schools, 2014).

Different models of reflection can be amalgamated into key actions as shown in Figure 8

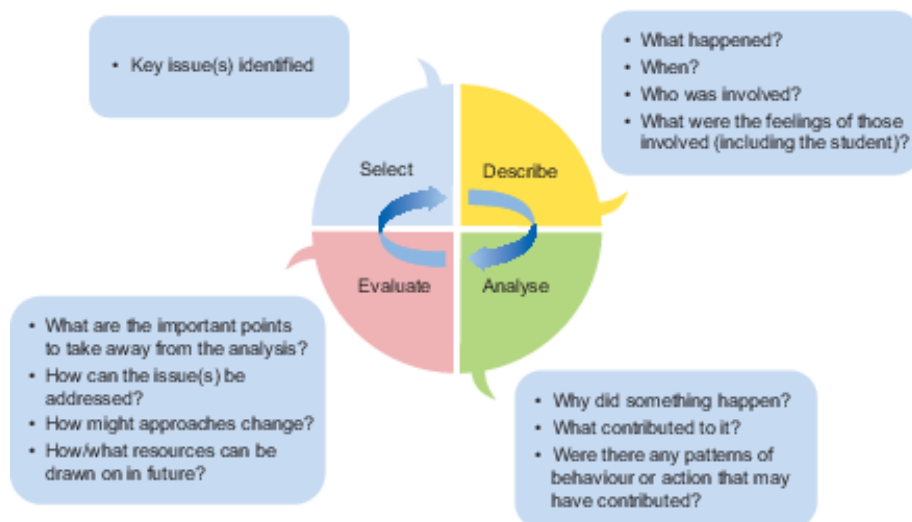


Figure 8 Based on the 'Key actions within reflective practice' (Welsh Government, 2015, pp. 10–11)

The key issue or event does not need to be a critical incident but something that may be important/useful to discuss and form the basis for critical reflection between mentor and student.

### **When and how can reflection take place?**

Reflection can either be formal or informal and will be most powerful if the three elements of reflection (reflection, critical thinking and evaluation) are in some way considered. The majority of reflection by the student (and by the mentor) and between the student and the mentor along with other colleagues may be undertaken informally. The importance of exploiting opportunities for informal reflection should not be underestimated. In research undertaken by Jones et al, (2018), informal dialogue (which would likely involve some reflection) between mentors and student teachers was seen as where students made most progress, particularly when the relationship was both positive and collaborative. Some ideas for strategies to support reflective practice.

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Specific use in the course</b>
Reflective journals or diaries	Record incidents, ideas and reflections gained from different sources such as observations and training courses	Mentor notebook to include informal reflections that can be considered during mentor meetings and

		during informal feedback
Mentor sessions	Set time for in-depth reflection, evaluation and target setting	Weekly Refer to 'Mentor sessions'
Shared practice	Observation of the mentor	Used to consider the rationale behind decisions made in the lesson and how this applies to student practice  Refer to 'Shared practice'
Observation	Lesson observations - both formal and informal	Informal - used to consider reflective practice and to provide a basis for formative assessment and discussion  Formal - used for assessment purposes

		<p>in collaboration with the practice tutor and school coordinator</p> <p>Refer to 'Observation'</p>
Feedback	<p>Part of professional dialogue and often following a lesson observation</p> <p>Can take various forms (e.g. formal, informal general, specific, directive, open-ended)</p>	<p>Ongoing and throughout</p> <p>May involve discussion relating to Lesson Study</p>
Problem based learning	Analysis of real-life scenarios	Could be used in conjunction with Shared practice
Learner voice	Set aside time for learners to complete evaluations or talk to them about their learning and use these to inform reflection	Set time allocated perhaps in line with 'lesson study' activities

Strategies to support reflective practice based on the ideas of Grigg *et al.* within the guidance on 'Reflective Practice' (Welsh Government, 2015) with some additions.

## Setting SMART Targets

Students have requirements they must meet at each level in order to progress to the next module of the course and at PGCE3 to meet the standards required to obtain 60 masters credits and the professional standards for QTS.

Therefore, the term 'targets' is used to describe the smaller steps that studentteachers need to make to move towards bigger steps of progress. Such targets are usually discussed in depth during a mentor meeting.

There are two main types of targets, shown in the diagram below.



Figure 9 The elements involved in setting SMART targets



The acronym SMART is widely used to describe the dimensions of good target-setting. These are:

- **S**pecific
- **T**ime-related
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**elevant

Overall, targets should focus everyone involved in the training of a student (as appropriate) on the important aspects of the student teacher's practice that need further development.

### **S – Specific**

Specific targets make it clear what has to be achieved. Examples of specific targets might be:

- Participate in extracurricular provision such as science clubs in order to gain insight on the contribution this makes to the life of a school and to the rapport between teachers and their pupils.
- Differentiate learning outcomes in your planning.
- Use a greater range of strategies for assessing pupils' understanding.
- Develop a more positive rapport with your classes by using pupils' names, finding out about their interests, and building on these when planning
- Arrive on time for lessons.

Of course, it is possible to be too specific. Highly specific or tightly focused targets may be of limited value in terms of the student teacher's professional development, or they may be too difficult to achieve.

Targets that are too general or vague are not helpful. Examples of targets that are not specific include:

- Continue to develop your role within the school during your first year of teaching.
- Continue to meet the standards.
- Develop further your role as a form tutor.
- Consolidate what has already been done.
- Improve classroom management.
- Try to develop better discipline.

Consider the target to 'improve classroom management'. Classroom management is a huge aspect of teaching with many components. This target does not make clear what aspect of classroom management the student teacher is expected to improve. It is also not clear how much improvement is expected. A conscientious student teacher might fret over this and never feel that enough improvement has occurred, whilst the less conscientious student teacher might make a minimal improvement and believe the target had been met.

Many of these vague, general targets use words such as 'develop', 'improve'

and 'continue to', which are not helpful. When the words 'develop' and 'improve' are used, the first question that springs to mind is: in what way(s)?

The other word to be wary of is 'try'. This is a legitimate word to use in the context of 'try out different ways of assessing conceptual understanding', for example, but not when it is used in the context of 'try to develop better discipline'. This simply serves to devalue it as a target and becomes merely a plea to the student teacher to 'try a bit harder'. Targets should focus everyone on the important aspects of the student teacher's practice that need development. Asking them to try suggests that it doesn't matter if they don't succeed. Indeed, a student teacher who has tried to develop better discipline but failed has met the target, because they did at least try. However, this would not help the student to address the fundamental issues relating to behaviour management.

### **M – Measurable**

This is perhaps the most difficult feature of target-setting to achieve in relation to professional development. Measurable implies statistics and numerical results. So much of what teachers do is not easily measured, but without achievement indicators, a target is useless.

So, it is important to think about what these indicators might be when setting a target, since this will be an important part of reviewing progress. How will you be able to tell whether the student teacher has met the target, and what

evidence will you need? The achievement indicators of 'job' type targets are obvious – it is either done or it isn't. Other targets might rely on evidence from other teachers, the student teacher's planning and evaluation or a conversation with the student teacher may be needed.

The examples of specific targets given above all have obvious achievement criteria. Most of the non-specific examples do not have clear achievement indicators or have indicators that are not explicit enough without further discussion.

### **A – Achievable**

It is important to set sensible but challenging targets and goals for the student teacher to work towards. This should be the most straightforward target characteristic to ensure. It involves thinking about the time scale involved and the task being set. The target of revising all of 'Living things' at KS4 by the end of the practice learning is not realistic for someone who did not study biology beyond GCSE.

It is also tempting to set far too many targets or to disguise the number of targets by setting several targets within one, Russian-doll style. Whether a target is achievable or not is also heavily context dependent. Students should be able to feel that they are able to achieve their targets and the meeting of such targets, particularly if they have been challenging, will improve their confidence.

## **R – Relevant ... and appropriate**

Targets should be relevant to the student teacher and the level at which the student teacher is working. For example, the target of setting differentiated outcomes is appropriate for a PGCE3 but not for a PGCE1 student. The target also needs to be relevant to the priorities for the student teacher. It is not appropriate to focus on minor matters when there are bigger problems to address.

## **T – Time-based**

Student teachers don't have an indefinite amount of time in which to achieve targets. All parties should be clear about the timescale involved for meeting a target. This might be by the next mentor session or by the end of the practice learning experience. Or, it may be the case that a target has to be met immediately and maintained, such as attendance or time keeping.

# **Research and Data**

## **Drawing on data and research evidence**

One component of professional learning includes drawing on data and research evidence. Teachers use data all of the time and such evidence may be drawn from a range of sources. Students will also be able to draw on (and be expected to do so) their module study. Such data sources can then be used (often interchangeably) to enhance the development of reflective practice through the use of an evidence-based approach in order to

develop teacher professional knowledge. Ratcliffe et al, (2005, p. 183, in Cain, 2009, p. 63) refer to the fact that ‘teachers with first-hand experience of a research culture seem better able to view professional practice through an “evidence-informed” lens’.

What is important in supporting student teachers is that mentors contribute towards preparing teachers not only to be ‘critical consumers’ of research but that they prepare them to be ‘participants in research’ (Furlong, 2015, p. 17).

Mentors will assist in this regard by critical reflection and evaluation during mentor sessions and by supporting students through the lesson study activities (PGCE1 and 2) and the small-scale study (PGCE3). It is important that mentors are aware of current research that is evidenced in the module materials and understand the principles of research practice that their students will utilise either through having undertaken their own research or by being aware of the research of others. Estyn (2018, p. 13) refers to the fact mentors that undertake research have ‘...the most effective teaching strategies and encourage the same in their student teachers’.

Sources of research data to draw on:

<b>Type or research/datasource</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Internal research	Locally produced and context specific  Relates to study of professional

	<p>practice and the reflection and evaluation of it. Links to the use of a Lesson Studies approach</p> <p>May involve a participatory action research model</p> <p>May involve pupil voice</p>
Administrative data and statistical analyses	Date drawn from school management systems and those related to progress and attainment data, observations and national data sources
External research	Publicly available, scientifically based research including research synthesis, produced by academics and government departments. Research underpinning policy, pedagogy and assessment useful to refer to
Module Study	Six online units per module

Taken from Forms of research-based knowledge as based in part on Wales Centre for Public Policy 'Promoting Teacher Engagement with Research Evidence' (2018).

# Training courses and case studies

The following courses are free to access. Those completing these courses can access a 'statement of participation'.

## **OpenLearn Course: A Mentoring Mindset**

This free course, A mentoring mindset, will support anyone based in an education setting to develop an understanding of effective mentoring of beginner teachers in the initial teacher education and newly qualified phases.

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- understand the principles of effective mentoring in initial teacher education and the role of the mentor as a teacher educator within a school-based context
- understand that mentoring is a continuum which also includes coaching
- apply theories of mentoring and coaching within teacher-practice when supporting beginner teachers
- understand mentoring as a professional learning opportunity for the development of personal teaching and leadership development.

## **OpenLearn Course: Mentoring Matters**

This short course is designed to provide you with an introduction to the topic



of mentoring, clarifying exactly what it means and why it is seen as such an important area.

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- Understand what is meant by the term mentoring.
- Appreciate the importance of the mentoring role for both the mentor and the mentee.
- Recognise the key personal skills you may need to draw on in order to be an effective mentor.
- Consider the different ways in which these skills might be developed in order to develop and maintain effective ongoing mentoring relationships.

### **OpenLearn: Exploring career mentoring and coaching**

This course explains what mentors and career coaches do and explores important skills in, for example, asking the right questions and challenging assumptions that can be applied in a wide range of contexts in order to find effective solutions. The course can be accessed at the link below.

### **OpenLearn: Learning to teach: mentoring and tutoring student teachers**

After studying this course, you will be able to:

- understand the differences between tutoring and mentoring in Initial Teacher Education (ITE)
- consider the similarities and differences between tutoring and mentoring pedagogy

- develop a range of strategies for supporting beginner teachers.

## **OpenLearn: Learning to teach: an introduction to classroom research Postgraduate research degrees**

After studying this course, you should be able to:

- Know how to approach the design of a piece of research.
- Understand two particular methodologies: case study and action research.
- Understand some of the issues around collecting and analysing data.
- Consider how best to disseminate your work.

At the OU, we offer a range of postgraduate opportunities:

- Single modules, e.g.:
- Workplace learning with coaching and mentoring (30 credits)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Professional Studies in Education
- Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Studies in Education
- Masters in Education (MEd)
- Doctorate in Education (EdD)
- PhD in Education or Educational Technology.

## **Case Studies**

Case studies of effective mentoring from across the partnership. This publication is the result of a research project with partner schools and was supported by funding from the OU's PRAXIS Centre for Scholarship and

Innovation. It showcases approaches to effective mentoring in 10 partner schools and can be found [here](#).

- Teachers TV: How teachers can be better mentors – [Margaret mentors Emma](#)
- Teachers TV: How teachers can be better mentors – [Jude mentors Christabel](#)
- Mentoring in Primary Science: [a classroom case study](#)

## **Additional resources for the mentor and the student**

[Big White Wall](#)

[OpenLearn](#) and [OpenLearn Create](#) offer a wide range of free online courses.

There also free courses at [Future Learn](#).

# **Summary**

The materials and ideas for action outlined in this guide and the accompanying resources bring us full circle. Mentors need to develop their professional skills to work effectively with their student teachers. This is at the core of the professional learning pathway (Welsh Government, 2018b) and for their part, student teachers have consistently shown that they consider good mentors to be those who enable them to make the most progress because they:

- view the mentoring as a dialogue, a sharing of ideas
- guide rather than insist on specific teaching methods

- identify a range of teaching and learning strategies and leave the student teacher to select a preferred approach
- encourage student teachers to evaluate their performance and identify their learning needs.

A good mentor will also offer constructive criticism alongside sensitive support and encouragement because 'All learners, of whatever age, need the same things: clearly described goals and/or tasks; praise and reward; recognition of achievement; and clear information, or guidance, on what might be done to improve.' (Gipps 1997)

We hope that you will enjoy your time as a mentor on the OU PGCE and find it to be a valuable professional experience as well as a personally rewarding one. As a teacher-educator, mentors are central to the OU PGCE and you will play a pivotal role in the development of a new entrant to the profession – we recognise that this is both a responsibility and a privilege. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your work in this role and hope that you will benefit from the formal recognition for the practice-based learning which you will support. Thank you for being a part of the Alternative routes and for shaping the journey alongside us.

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## **Appendix 1 Glossary**



Assessment task	A written task completed as part of each end-of-module assessment (EMA). (See Section 6 of the Programme Guide (PG), and the Assessment Guide.)
Associate Partner school	Schools supporting an initial teacher education(ITE) student on the part-time route.
Curriculum tutor	Employed by The Open University in Wales. They are your key contact with The Open University. They facilitate online seminars, moderate forums and assess your EMA. (See PG, Section 6.)
Digital competence audit	An audit completed at the start of the PGCE to identify areas for development. (See PG, Section 4.)
ePortfolio – Personal Teaching Folder and Professional Learning Passport	At the end of each module, students must submit evidence to show their progress towards the outcomes of the PGCE. Mentors, school coordinators and tutors also complete parts of to identify progress and set targets for ongoing study and practice. (See PG Section 6, and the Assessment Guide.)

Employer school	For the salaried route, the school in which an initial teacher education student is employed. Student teachers are employed at unqualified teacher rate for two years.
End-of-module assessment (EMA)	The assessment tasks and ePortfolio submitted via the eTMA (tutor-marked assignments) system at the end of PGCE1, PGCE2 and PGCE3.
Individual learning plan (ILP)	At the beginning of the programme, students will start to develop an individual learning plan (ILP). This brings together targets for development in subject knowledge, digital competence, using Welsh (see 'Welsh language audit') and meeting the teaching standards.
Lead Partner schools	Schools that are members of the Partnership Committee. They provide strategic input into the programme and are key sites of learning for students on the salaried and part-time routes.  Lead partner schools support students from other associate and employer schools during their second practice learning placement.

Mentor	An experienced member of staff in a student's subject/phase. They will support and advise in their developing teaching practice and introduce them to the wider context and staff of the schools. (See PG, Section 7.)
Modules	There are three modules: PGCE1, PGCE2 and PGCE3. Students must pass both the academic assessments and the practice learning requirements to pass each module and therefore to pass the qualification.
Online forums	Online, asynchronous forums where students complete activities, share experiences, ask each other and the curriculum tutor for advice, and share resources.
Online seminars	Subject- and phase-specific seminars led by the curriculum tutor. These are 'live' interactive seminars linking students across Wales. They will be recorded if students wish to consider further the points that were made. (See PG, Section 3.)

Online study units	The primary and secondary pathways each have online study units with study materials, activities, online seminars and Practice Learning Activities to be studied and completed. If students are on the part-time PGCE route, they complete the online study in each module prior to undertaking practice learning placement. If they are on the salaried PGCE route, they will have protected time in school to complete their online study and Practice Learning Activities. (See PG, Section 3.) (See also 'Unit'.)
(The) Partnership	Partners are The Open University, Regional Consortia and Lead Partner schools with the Welsh Government.
Practice learning (PL)	Time spent in school dedicated to completing PGCE activities and developing teaching. (See PG, Section 5.)
Practice learning Guide (PLG) and Practice Learning Activities (PLA)	A resource of activities to carry out in school, which is designed to build on the ideas, concepts explored during online study and seminars, as well as offering guidance on each placement and

	assessment.
Practice tutor	A senior teacher who will visit you once during PGCE1, once during PGCE2 and twice during PGCE3, to support the student and Mentor. (See PG, Section 7.)
School ITE coordinator	A senior member of the school staff who supports the Mentor and student during practice learning placement. (See PG, Section 7.)
Subject knowledge audit	This is primary or secondary specific, to help students identify areas of subject knowledge that are strong and those that need further development, so that they can teach the subject in schools. Progress and targets are reviewed with a mentor throughout practice learning and are reported at the end of each module. (See PG, Section 4.)
Unit	A unified block of online study. There are six strands, or themes, and a unit related to each strand is included in each module: there are 18 units across the whole course, from Units 1A to 3F. (See PG, Section 3.)

Welsh language audit	An audit completed at the start of the PGCE to identify targets for development.
Welsh language coordinator	An OU tutor who will support students in developing their Welsh language skills and their capacity to support pupils in developing their Welsh language skills. (See PG, Section 4.)

# Appendix 2 Mentor Skills Audit

Skill	Red			Amber			Green			Training needs identified	Training Resources to be used
	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3		
I am a strong practitioner											
I understand the pedagogy of teacher education											
I have a good understanding of the principles of coaching and mentoring											

<p>I can plan learning activities that will help student teachers to improve their practice</p>											
<p>I can support student teachers in improving their planning and assessment</p>											
<p>I use a range of strategies to help students develop their subject knowledge and subject pedagogy</p>											
<p>I use the QTS descriptors to help student teachers take a holistic view of teaching</p>											



I am effective at listening, questioning and challenging students to reflect critically											
I have a good understanding of classroom research and engage with and in research											
I am familiar with the requirements of the university and can help students make connections between theory and practice											
I provide verbal and written feedback that is accurate and fair and helps student teachers											

take a holistic view of their progress											
I take my own professional development seriously and I am a good role-model for student teachers											
I vary my approach to mentoring to suit the needs of individual student teachers											
I am developing my own research skills to explore the links between theory and practice											

I can create an atmosphere in which student teachers are confident to take risk and experiment in their teaching											
I have excellent interpersonal skills, can give constructive feedback, and manage challenging relationships											
I am able to target-direct student teachers towards resources to support their learning											

