

# Teaching practice and mentoring: guidance for mentors on observation, feedback and support

## Resource description

- A session plan and notes for use in mentor training: Levels of support
- A presentation to accompany the session: Levels of support
- A handout for mentors: Giving feedback after observations

## Additional resources needed

- Statements on cards for activity 3 (descriptions of support given by mentors)
- Link to the HUDCETT website – videos of feedback sessions

These are extracts from a mentor training programme developed by Blackburn College to support mentoring on Additional Diploma courses for Literacy and ESOL teaching, partially integrated diplomas which are awarded by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLAN).

The session plan, notes and presentation are about stages in a trainee teacher's development and the differing levels of support needed at each stage.

## Mentor training – levels of support

Time (mins)	Activity	Materials
5	<b>1. Introduction</b> to aims of workshop and participants	PPT
25	<b>2. Developmental stages</b> Small groups describe characteristics of trainees at four stages of development: 1. completely new to teaching 2. after observing experienced practitioners 3. when planning/teaching first lesson 4. having taught several lessons. Swap flipcharts – compare notes.	Flip chart paper and pens.
30	<b>3. Levels of support</b> Participants categorise the statements describing support given into ‘beginning’, ‘middle’ and ‘end’ of process. Feedback: <i><b>*caution* it’s a continuum rather than clearly defined steps.</b></i>	Statements/contributions from initial training.
20	<b>4. Scaffolding</b> Refer to Vygotsky, ZPD, some quotes, 4 stages of scaffolding. Groups discuss ‘How we can apply the 4 stages to working with a trainee?’ ‘What would each stage comprise?’	Ppt: Vygotsky, etc.
30	<b>5. Increasing trainees’ autonomy</b> Groups note possible responses to typical trainee questions/queries/requests. Feedback: <i><b>remind mentors of do’s and don’t’s.</b></i>	
10	<b>Introduce UCLAN Mentoring Module</b> Note interest in pursuing this.	UCLAN Mentoring Module descriptor
10	<b>Evaluation and close</b>	Evaluation forms.

The notes from **Activity 2: Developmental stages** show the characteristics of trainees at different stages, as identified by mentors on the training programme.

## Developmental stages

### **Completely new to teaching:**

#### **Trainees can/do:**

- communicate appropriately with learners / establish a positive rapport
- have a relaxed and friendly manner
- assist the class tutor under guidance
- use technology effectively
- have teaching experience
- have some subject knowledge
- empathise with learners
- respect individuality.

#### **Trainees can't/don't:**

- relate to curriculum levels / areas of knowledge
- demonstrate subject knowledge
- describe institution's systems and procedures
- formulate ILPs, SMART targets etc
- describe the learning journey / experience
- relate to the concept of 'beginner'
- have an awareness of that which they don't know
- have knowledge of curriculum
- have knowledge of systems/planning requirements/ diagnostics etc
- have realistic expectations.

**After observing some experienced practitioners:**

**Trainees can/do:**

- identify the requirements of the subject area
- be more focused/effective when assisting learners
- recognise basic teaching skills and the teacher's knowledge
- have a clearer idea of curriculum levels
- describe some general teaching techniques
- recognise what engages learners
- recognise how rapport is built
- recognise how a variety of activities works.

**Trainees can't/don't:**

- recognise the stages of a lesson
- feel ready or confident to take on the full class
- recognise levels
- grade/adjust language.

**When planning/teaching the first lesson:**

**Trainees can/do:**

- use technology
- have a strong classroom presence
- project voice appropriately
- present information confidently but inappropriately
- rely on support/guidance of mentor
- respond to feedback positively
- follow tutor's advice/instructions
- produce resources.

**Trainees can't/don't:**

- source/select/adapt resources
- pitch the lesson at the right level
- cater for individual needs/differentiate
- get timing/pace right; assess achievement
- use specialist equipment
- formulate objectives
- grade language appropriately
- contextualise teaching
- recognise lesson stages and their purpose
- get timing right
- anticipate potential problems.

**Having taught several lessons:**

**Trainees can/do:**

- describe stages/sequence of lesson
- have more presence/confidence
- deliver lesson effectively in terms of presentation and flow
- use equipment
- source/select materials under guidance
- reflect/evaluate
- have an awareness of differentiation
- grade language appropriately
- implement suggestions for improvement in further lessons
- use technology
- adapt resources
- have an awareness of differentiation.

**Trainees can't/don't:**

- plan/choose/adapt materials/activities independently
- use a wide range of differentiation techniques
- reflect/evaluate
- have confidence in subject knowledge/ability to deliver subject.

For **Activity 3: levels of support**, the mentors categorised the support given to trainees at different stages of their development:

At the **beginning** of the mentoring process, mentors

- give trainees background information on: curriculum; lesson plan content; learners; systems/procedures; where to source resources; learners' expectations
- give focused observation tasks
- facilitate observing a range of teachers, levels, venues, etc.
- team teach with trainees
- teach part of a lesson
- give trainees small groups
- give detailed guidance re: materials – use own experience to avoid pitfalls
- give trainees everything – materials, notes
- discuss/talk through a planned lesson
- observe the same lesson being taught
- observe a whole lesson
- give some help with planning formal observations
- impose structured/regular meeting schedule.

By the **middle of the course**, mentors

- give teaching points
- talk through lesson/notes
- invite trainee's thoughts, ideas, prompting not giving
- refer to observations
- refer to action points from previous teaching practice
- observe parts of lesson – focus on particular features
- check trainee's lesson plan, ask specific questions
- do not help with formal observations other than responding to specific queries
- question whether or how activities cater for individual needs
- give ideas for differentiation
- question/give ideas for assessment strategies
- prompt focused reflection by asking them how they catered for individuals/assessed achievement.

**From the middle to the end of the programme, mentors**

- give less guidance re. finding appropriate resources when given teaching points
- point towards likely resources
- encourage adapting/designing resources
- question/confirm trainee's own ideas/approaches
- question/prompt self-evaluation/reflection.

*Activity 4: Scaffolding* is supported by the Powerpoint presentation, Levels of support.

*Activity 5: Increasing trainees' autonomy* produced the following suggested responses to trainees' questions:

*Do you have any materials for this teaching point?*

- "Have a look in this course book or the resources cupboard"
- "Here's a list of useful websites"

*Could you check my lesson plan? Is it OK?*

- "Is there anything in particular you're unsure about?"
- "Specify which parts you want to discuss"
- "Let's focus on the main point"
- "What could you learn from your last observation?"
- "I only have 10 minutes – what would you like to focus on?"

*I don't know how to teach this...*

- "Let's break it down"
- "What's the focus/objectives of the session?"
- "Have a look at the teacher's notes"
- "Research the item in teachers' reference books"
- "Why don't you know?"
- "Have a look at the curriculum"
- "How could you present this part?"
- "What context could you establish?"
- "Could you make use of visuals/realia to establish the context/check the concept?"

*What shall I put for the outcomes?*

- "Ask yourself what you want the learners to do by the end, using what language to achieve what communicative purpose!"
- "What will your learners be able to do at the end of the lesson that they couldn't at the beginning?"
- "Look at some of these examples – could you use/modify these?"

*Could you open the room/photocopy these/print off this/insert request for me?*

- "Use these repro slips; here's my copier code; please use the library facilities"
- "Here's a key"

*Where can I find ...?*

- Give brief induction/guide to department/who's who at the start of the programme.

*Can you help me with my assignment?*

- "Sorry, no. Please request a tutorial with your personal tutor."

*What shall I teach next week? (asked every week)*

- "Use/create a four-week scheme of work based around these objectives/targets"
- "What would you like to do that you haven't done yet – skills, grammar, etc?"
- "Select a topic/item from the module you'd like to cover"

Handout for mentors:

## Giving feedback after observations

Feedback needs to be both constructive and also 'critical' in that it will aim to analyse the observed session and make recommendations for improvement. Just as with any form of feedback it is essential that the receiver has 'ownership' of the feedback in order that they may act on it in the future. Good practice would therefore suggest that the focus of the feedback should be to facilitate the mentee to identify strengths and limitations in their performance and then design their own strategies to become more successful in their teaching.

Feedback should be: specific, immediate, based on issues, helpful, forward looking, built on strengths and identifying areas for improvements. It can be viewed as having five stages:

### Stage 1: Description

This is about describing what you saw in the classroom rather than what you 'think' you saw. To help set the scene you could both discuss:

- What actually happened
- What the teacher said
- What the teacher did

### Stage 2: Strengths

This is about what went well and why it went well.

- What aspects went well?
- Where did you feel most confident?
- What did the learners achieve?
- What did you like best about the session?

### Stage 3: Limitations

This is about what went less well and why.

- What were you unhappy with in the session?
- When did you feel less confident?
- What problems arose for you?
- What happened that you had not anticipated?
- What would you do differently next time?

### Stage 4: Conclusions

This is about the shared sense you can both make out of the teaching session.

- What have you learnt from the session and discussion?
- What might you do differently next time?
- Could you improve on any part of the session or planning?
- Which part of your curriculum knowledge has been valuable?

## Stage 5: Action

What are you going to do in the future? What have we learnt?

What are the next steps for you / us?

What support or guidance do you need?

When will you do this?

When do we meet again?

These questions help us to focus our feedback and ensure that some development in relation to future action takes place. What is important is that the mentor asks the questions of the mentee and allows them to arrive at their own answers so that they may develop into the teacher they want to be. This is not the place for the mentor to tell the mentee how they would do it if it was their session.

For further training on giving feedback, see the material on the [Huddersfield website](#), which has videos and tasks for you to work through.

Blackburn College

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