

THE ROUGH GUIDE TO MENTORING

A practical handbook for mentors

Menttime

Acknowledgements

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Project partners

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Vilnius Pedagogical University, Lithuania


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Introduction





Guidance for using the material

IT IS NOT INTENDED that you should read this handbook from cover to cover. The format is designed specifically so that you can dip into relevant sections at times appropriate to your needs or interests. You can copy pages to distribute to other mentors and teachers in your department or elsewhere in the school and you can add extra material and ideas using extra 'blank' pages included at the end of each section. These are specifically designed for you to note down your reflections and thoughts.

Each section is colour-coded so that you can easily find what you are looking for. You will also notice that we have presented the material in a variety of different ways – text,

bullet points, diagrams, spidergrams, thought bubbles and tables – because different people find different styles useful and we can't please everyone all of the time. By presenting the material in a variety of contrasting ways, we hope to cater for most of you most of the time!

As we have already indicated in the general introduction, the purpose of this handbook is to enable you to monitor, evaluate and improve your own practice as a mentor and also perhaps that of other mentors and teachers with whom you work. The emphasis is on quality and improving quality. We hope that you find the 'criteria' in each section useful in helping you to evaluate your effectiveness.

The sections in brief



SOME SECTIONS may prove to be more useful than others, depending on your experience and needs.

1. Good language teaching and learning is aimed at everyone – and it may well be a useful exercise to brainstorm for yourself what you would expect to see going on in a good languages classroom and then compare this with what we have produced.

2. What it means to mentor outlines the roles and responsibilities of a mentor working with trainees. It is a useful exercise to try to work out what makes a mentor different from a teacher, as well as the knowledge, skills and qualities necessary to perform this role successfully.

3. Planning for having trainees takes this a step further practically and outlines what needs to be done in preparation for having trainees working with you in the department together with some useful suggestions about what to do and not to do!

4. Weekly mentoring sessions, produced in response to mentor requests, offers more detailed 'lesson plans' plus suggestions on how to run sessions and deal with difficult mentees!

5. Supporting the trainees' planning provides clear instructions for both long-term and short-term planning (with concrete examples of both schemes of work and lesson plans in **Appendix 1** and the planning guidelines we give to our trainees in **Appendix 2**).

6. Observation and feedback looks at the purposes of observation, things to look for and general guidelines, backed up by specific guidelines for both verbal and written feedback plus examples of trainee evaluations. This should help you judge whether or not your trainees are writing useful lesson evaluations.

7. Expectations and target setting includes agreed expectations of very good, good, satisfactory and weak trainees at two key points during their training year – at the end of School A and at the end of School B. These will help you (and the trainees themselves) to assess whether they are on-line, ahead of expectations or falling behind at these important stages. We then focus on target-setting and moving trainees on, followed by a whole series of target flowcharts dealing with different but frequent issues and areas for development which should prove useful to both you as mentor and to the trainees.

8. Assessment looks at good practice in assessing trainees' development and progression and how this is then recorded. (Concrete examples of good and poor practice are included in **Appendix 3**.)

9. What if? looks at common problems experienced with trainees in a variety of contexts and offers possible solutions. It is not intended to provide answers to everything but to suggest strategies and ways of working which can help to resolve the majority of difficulties.

The Glossary is intended as a demystifier of acronyms, terminology and jargon (both educational and 'in-house') which so often act as a complete barrier to communication!

Development and trialling of the material



INITIAL FEEDBACK on this handbook from mentors (experienced, new, intending) working within languages, from mentors working across a variety of subjects and from mentors working in other countries, suggests that much of the material can and should be shared with trainees (for example the section on 'what it means to mentor' would certainly raise trainees' awareness of the complexity of the job!), with other teachers working within the subject whether or not they are working with trainees, with the head of subject, with mentors who have responsibility for new teachers and with mentors in other subject areas altogether.

Much of the material has been trialled and developed not only with new and experienced St Martin's Modern Languages mentors on an

annual basis but also during the past few years in a variety of contexts in a range of different countries. All partners in the MentTime project have been involved in trialling the material and have found it useful, adapting it to their own needs and contexts. In addition it has been the basis for a 'training the trainers' course in the Baltic States, a number of EU-funded international training courses for mentors of teachers of English as a foreign language and, most recently, an in-service course for secondary mentors from all subjects in Iceland. It has also been used to develop an approach to effective 'Performance Management'. From these experiences we have drawn the following conclusion: the context may be different but the fundamental principles are the same. The intention is not to 'adopt' but to 'adapt'. We hope that you agree.