

Early career induction and effective mentoring

This fact sheet provides information on strategies for effective mentoring.



Effective mentoring

Mentors, both formal and informal, are a key pillar of support for early career teachers.

Effective mentoring:

- focuses on improving student learning and teaching practices
- is structured
- includes observation
- includes lesson-based discussions
- is context-specific
- values the contributions of new teaching graduates.



Characteristics of effective mentoring programs

- **Evidence-based collaboration:** Effective mentors will work collaboratively to improve teaching practice and use evidence of student learning to guide their improvement actions.
- **A focus on improving student learning:** Mentors should have a dual focus in which the mentor is working with the mentee to improve the quality of their teaching as well as looking for evidence of improvements in teacher effectiveness and student learning.
- **Effective feedback, with challenge, to improve practice:** Effective feedback from the mentor is important to improving mentee practice. Effective feedback should also involve challenging the mentee by asking questions which encourage the mentee to reflect on their values, beliefs and behaviour. Effective feedback is an important component of professional learning, with consideration of evidence of student learning and observation as important inclusions.

- **Positive professional relationships:** Building positive professional relationships between mentors and mentees is integral to creating successful mentoring processes. Professional relationships should be supportive and co-constructive.
- **Mentoring should occur within teaching specialties:** Where possible, mentors and mentees should be from the same content specialty. Strong pedagogical and content knowledge of the mentor allows for greater opportunities for feedback and improving teaching practice compared to mentor-mentee relationships where mentors are not subject experts.

The elements of effective mentoring can be further explored in [AITSL’s Environmental Scan of Mentoring \(2023\)](#).



Practice-focused mentoring

Highly successful mentoring is described as ‘practice-focused’ with an expert teacher who is ‘intent on improving impact’ of beginning teachers.

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Practice-focused mentoring is ...	Practice-focused mentoring is not ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a mentor and early career teacher having a common teaching area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • randomly assigning a mentor to an early career teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the mentor coaching, supporting and challenging the early career teacher to improve practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • criticising ‘weak’ practice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the mentor modelling good practice addressing agreed subject content and teaching practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • just sharing lesson plans or tips garnered over a career
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using observations and data to focus attention on learner outcomes and encourage reflection by the early career teacher and mentor on their practice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice based on only ‘gut instinct’ or personal past experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using information about learner outcomes to enable the early career teacher to improve the effectiveness of teaching approaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • setting goals and finding learning opportunities that are not related to the needs of the learners and early career teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the mentor playing a role in support of the early career teacher’s wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simple, sporadic check-ins on the early career teacher’s wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • regular, scheduled discussions and activities taking place, and sanctioned time set aside for mentor-teacher interactions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • impromptu conversations that have no set purpose and no support from leadership in structuring the time
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using multiple mentors, online media or networks to draw on expertise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • always a one-to-one relationship