

Learning Mentor Module MTL717 – notes for professional mentors

This module presents an opportunity for the student to use reflective dialogue as a tool for their professional and personal development. The module has two principal inter-connected aims:

1. To support students' development in a self-identified area of their professional practice, and
2. To support students to reflect on the process of learning.

Working with an experienced mentor around learning goals which the student identifies, they will reflect on their progress in relation to those goals. At the same time, they will also reflect on how the teacher-learner relationship influences and shapes that development. Students are not only learning how to develop an aspect of their practice, they are also reflecting on the *process* of that learning (meta-learning).

A principle of mentoring and coaching in general is that 'everyone has the resources to make their own decisions' (Annie Murray 2007) and we want to encourage the students to view learning from that perspective. Both you and the student need to agree on the kind of learning you want to undertake, and it is your *joint* responsibility to make it happen. Although you may have more experience in the area of learning identified, it is your *joint* responsibility to ensure that the *process* of learning is the most appropriate for both of you.

We hope you'll support this approach to learning by being willing to engage in a dialogue with the student about the 'how' of learning as much as the 'what'. The approach you take is down to the pair of you to negotiate, but to ensure clarity in the relationship, we suggest you use at least part of your first meeting with them to agree two things:

1. **WHAT** is it that they, the student, want to learn / develop / improve? i.e. what is / are their learning goal/s?
2. **HOW** are you going to accomplish that together?

As a stimulus for initial discussion, we suggest using Jamie Wignall's 'images of 1:1 relationships' (reverse) to break the ice about the 'how' of mentoring. Once you have agreed broad parameters for how to work together, simply get on with doing what you've agreed together. Negotiate how to get the most out of the limited time available, be willing to use at least some of the time for reflective dialogue, even if it's only a brief chat at the end of each meeting to reflect on the learning process. We very much hope and expect that learning on the module is not a 'one-way street', and that there will be useful insights for your *own* practice from your involvement. We'd like to capture your thoughts and reflections in a short survey at the end of the process.

1:1 mentoring is not without its challenges. If either of you feels uncomfortable about any of it, in the first instance, keep talking with each other about it – maintain open lines of communication, and if you feel like you need more support, ask for it from myself. I'm keen to ensure everyone has a positive learning experience.

Trinity Laban normally pays an honorarium fee to the host to compensate them for the time spent with the student. You will have the opportunity to accept or decline this payment when completing the online 'Learning Mentor Agreement Form'. Trinity Laban at the end of the component will send a short survey. Once completed and returned, we will send you a PO number which will need to be quoted on your invoice. This invoice will be processed and paid at the earliest opportunity.

A longer version of these notes is available in the students' module handbook on Moodle, or directly from myself or Tim Palmer, the Programme Leader. Do get in touch with me at any time if you have any queries or concerns. I hope you find the module stimulating and rewarding, and I look forward to hearing about your experiences.

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Images of 1:1 relationships
Jamie Wignall
from 'Preparing for Success'
(Hallam & Gaunt 2012)



fig. 1 – Images of 1:1 relationships