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1. Introduction

CQUniversity's **Student Mentor and Leadership Program** aims to assist students in making a smooth transition into their first year of university. This initiative is an undergraduate support program linking new students with a Student Mentor who use their experiences to inform and offer peer support during their initial year of tertiary studies.

Being a Student Mentor involves more than knowledge of the field being studied. Student Mentors are students who have acquired a great deal of information about the tertiary education environment and how the 'system' works. Student Mentors will not be expected to give academic tutorial assistance however want to assist fellow students and are willing to share their experience of successful study.

Mentoring is a responsibility. When you undertake to join the program we ask that you follow through with the commitment as much as you can. Training sessions, regular contact and support are provided to help you reach what you set out to achieve through the Student Mentor process.

The benefits of being a Student Mentor may be gaining transferrable employment skills; an opportunity to help your peers; enhanced communication skills; recognition by and closer liaison with university staff; increased self-confidence and ability to work with and manage people; valuable professional development including organisational skills and problem solving.

2. Role of Student Mentors

The Student Mentor is a reference point. They guide, advise, coach, provide information and set a course of action with Mentees. This means that as a Student Mentor it is essential that you:

- Have an understanding of what the Mentee is expecting from the program;
- Assume responsibility for the provision of information required by a first year student;
- Contact your Mentees to set a course of action on which you all agree;
- Question Mentees to ensure correct information has been received; and
- Assist Mentees to analyse problems and think their way to the best solution.

You may also:

- Use your own experiences as a student with CQUniversity, as this is a valuable resource (stories of your learning experiences may be significant motivators for Mentees);
- Provide information about the processes and procedures of CQUniversity or how to navigate the system; and
- Act as a sounding board for problems, ideas or plans.

As a Student Mentor you do not solve a Mentee's problems; rather you are a collaborator in the problem solving process. You are not meant to be an 'expert' but someone to help provide options.

One of the most important responsibilities of a Student Mentor is establishing initial contact with the Mentee and ensuring ongoing contact occurs. If you are unable to contact a Mentee

report this to the Coordinator. The minimum number of contacts is four per term.

In summary, the role of a Mentor is to:

- Foster a sense of belonging;
- Provide a supportive, non-judge mental peer relationship;
- Offer appropriate assistance and advice;
- Facilitate the access of vital information;
- Share your own experience of study;
- Listen and assist with making a smooth transition to university life;
- Open doors by effective referral;
- Help Mentees become an independent learner;
- Be a role model;
- Have a positive attitude about study and of CQUniversity.

3. Role of Mentees

The Mentee must be:

- Prepared to take responsibility for their own success and be active in the Student Mentor – Mentee relationship;
- Committing the time required for contacting Student Mentors; and
- Responsible for their own decisions and actions.

By speaking to you, Mentees can gain a better understanding of a problem and work out their own solutions. It is important to remember that whatever matter is discussed, it is the Mentee who must make any decisions or take any actions required.



4. Responsible Student Mentoring

Your responsibilities as a Student Mentor will include:

1. Being accessible and providing an appropriate amount of time to assigned Mentees;
2. Maintaining regular contact and reviewing and evaluating the relationship;
3. Keeping a journal, a record of contacts and issues raised;
4. Advising Mentees of any prolonged absences;
5. Notifying the Student Mentor Coordinator of any changes to the Student Mentor group;
6. Notifying the Student Mentor Coordinator of any difficult situations that you do not feel confident managing;
7. Participation in information sessions and readiness to seek advice from the Student Mentor Coordinator;
8. Listening actively to Mentees then offering assistance and referral;
9. Encouraging Mentees to explore options;
10. Motivating and supporting Mentees in the achievement of goals and referring them to various resources and support; and
11. Acting as a role model.

Remember that you will have influence and that is a responsibility.

Dos:

- Have a non-judgemental attitude.
- Be respectful
- Use discretion
- Be assertive.
- Have a friendly and attentive manner.
- Know that you don't know everything.
- Bring humour with you.

Don'ts:

- You are not meant to be their counsellor, tutor or program advisor.
- Use inappropriate behaviour.
- Abuse your power and influence.
- Encourage dependence. The aim is for them not to need you down the track.

Remember that you have a support person and other staff ready to help you. When in doubt ask.

5. What to do when there is a problem and when to seek support

If you are not comfortable with the way the Student Mentor relationship is working out, let your Student Mentor Coordinator know early. The Coordinator is available to give advice, referral and support on any issue. Some issues raised in other published Student Mentor programs include:

- Dependency on the relationship by either the Student Mentor or Mentee;
- Student Mentors or Mentees may be hard to access or frequently unavailable;
- Mentoring partners may lack the skills required;
- Mentoring partners may have unrealistic expectations; and
- Mentoring partners may not take their roles seriously.

Mentoring boundaries

At times, Mentees may bring up problems that are outside the scope of your mentoring role. Problems you may not be equipped to deal with. It is important that both parties recognise the limitations of the mentoring relationship. If you do not feel confident to offer advice, you must refer the Mentee to other sources. Matters such as program advice should be directed to the Faculty Program Advisor. For Academic Advice the Mentee should be referred to their Lecturer, Tutor or other support people within their faculty. Personal problems should be referred to the Student Mentor Co-ordinator, who will make a referral to a counsellor if needed. Grievances should also be handled through the appropriate channels. Your Student Mentor Co-ordinator will be able to give information on grievance procedures.



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6. Managing the Student Mentoring process

Initial contact

It is important that Student Mentors and Mentees agree to some basic principles and identify the purpose of the relationship in the initial contact. When people have clear expectations and goals their efforts are more likely to produce the desired outcomes. A clear statement of expectations and goals also assists with reviewing, evaluating and improving the relationship. The period up until the last day to drop a course is most crucial, plus it is during this time that you will set the platform for a successful Student Mentoring relationship. At this stage Student Mentors can make clear that their expectation of their role is not that of a tutor.

Assessment

To assist us have a quality Student Mentor program we need to ensure you are giving correct information to your Mentees at the most appropriate time. To do this we need you to complete some assessment. It is not very arduous but is aimed at you demonstrating that you have fulfilled your role as a Student Mentor and giving accurate timely information.

<http://ecourses.cqu.edu.au/>

Maintaining a Journal

All participants in the Student Mentor and Leadership Program are encouraged to reflect on their work practice and their personal style and use a journal to record thoughts, ideas and plans to assist the future development of the program.

Reflective practice is a process of reviewing an experience in order to describe, analyse, evaluate and inform our learning. It involves thinking about and critically analysing one's actions with the goal of improving practice.

Student Mentors are encouraged to keep a journal during the active period of their relationship. The purpose of the journal is to assist in personal reflection on issues influencing your mentoring, to note successes or problems, to plan solutions to problems and to review the success of achieving goals.

Exactly how you choose to set out and keep your journal is up to you. Some helpful features of effective records include:

- log contacts with your Mentee group;
- identify newly acquired knowledge and skills;
- identify remaining problem areas to work on;
- identify resources; and
- keep copies of emails sent to and received from Mentees.

7. Student Mentor schedule of contact when assistance may be required

There is a minimum number of times a Student Mentor must contact their Mentees to be considered active in the program. In many successful mentoring relationships contact between participants is often on a more regular basis.

1. Orientation Week

Establish contact as soon as possible after being assigned your Mentees. Provide a clear statement of expectations and goals. It is a good idea to suggest that you swap biographical information to help build rapport. It is often useful to reflect on your experiences when you were a new student.

- Timetables, faculty contacts, and support services.
- Course profile contains assessment and contact information.
- Have textbooks been purchased?
- Library books need to be considered for assignments.
- How to cope with managing time.
- Use a wall planner and student diary.
- The calendar of principal dates.
- If there are problems they should be addressed to a Faculty Program Advisor as soon as possible.
- If Mentee has concerns about coping refer them to a counsellor.

2. In the first week

This is a busy time for you and your Mentees, but it can also be a time of many questions.

- Finding classrooms.
- Online courses (Blackboard).
- Do they know their lecturers?
- Do they know when the assessment schedule is?
- Are they still sure the subjects are right for them?
- Do they need to be referred to a Program Advisor?
- Do they need any other help?
- Have they checked their student email? They should be checking it very regularly.

3. Prior to Census date

The DEST Census date usually falls at the end of Week 4 and you should contact your Mentees again at this time.

- Remind them that the Census date is the final date to withdraw.
- Explain what academic penalty means and explain that it is possible to undertake a reduced work load.
- Are they having any problems with the course content?
- Are they having any problems finding information?
- Are they having any problems with assignments?

4. Mid term

In Week 7 contact your Mentees again.

- Are they having any problems with the course content?
- Are they having any problems finding information?
- Are they having any problems with assignments?
- Refer them to support staff and encourage them to contact their lecturer
- Discuss the issue of examinations.

5. Prior to examination period

Contact your Mentees again around Week 11 regarding exam preparation or final assignments:

- Discuss ways that you have approached exams;
- Suggest they practice using past exams;
- Suggest that they check what they take into the exam;
- Remind them to take their student ID card;
- Suggest that they double-check the correct date/time venue of the exam



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