

## PCAP Mentor Information

### Identifying a Mentor

When applying for a place on PCAP, each participant should be provided with (through their Head of Academic Unit/Associate Dean for Education) an agreed academic unit-based mentor who will support the participant during their studies.

#### *The mentor needs to be:*

- someone with more teaching experience than the participant (we suggest at least two years)
- someone the participant agrees to (someone the participant feels they will be able to act as a critical friend as described below)

#### *The mentor would ideally be:*

- someone who has completed PCAP, or an equivalent, in the past or is a full member of the HEA
- someone who is **not** the senior colleague who is overseeing probation and is **not** their line manager

*Participants are entitled to request a change of mentor at any stage during PCAP.* If they wish to change their mentor they should complete the 'Change of Mentor' Form available from PDU@soton.ac.uk.

### Role of the PCAP Mentor

In the context of PCAP, mentoring serves two specific purposes.

1) PCAP mentors act as a **"critical friend"**, someone to:

- help them through the process of thinking about what they are learning
- relate what the PCAP participant learns to what actually happens in the learning/teaching environment
- raise questions in relation to what PCAP participants are learning during the face-to-face sessions

2) PCAP mentors act as a **"disciplinary colleague"**, someone who can:

- talk about how learning and teaching happens in their academic field & school
- provide discipline-specific examples of the application of generic learning and teaching concepts learned in PCAP (the learning achieved through the PCAP face-to-face sessions is predominantly generic, that is, applicable to any academic discipline)

### Suggested PCAP Mentor Activities?

There are no formal requirements of PCAP mentors; the participant and mentor are free to negotiate how and when they work together. However, we suggest some or all of the following would be suitable activities for the mentor:

#### *General*

- Discuss learning and teaching with them (please see "aide mémoire" below for examples of things to discuss)
- Offer to observe the mentee teaching and then discuss it afterwards
- Offer for the mentee to watch you teach and then discuss it afterwards
- Offer to look at and comment upon plans for teaching sessions that the mentee is making (possibly including looking at draft presentations/handouts).
- Offer to look at and comment upon any coursework/exam questions or other assessments the mentee is writing/designing

#### *For the PCAP course*

- Ensure you are aware of current PCAP course structure and requirements (mentors will be sent handbooks, have access to the blackboard resources, and encouraged to watch an 'Introduction to PCAP' narrated PowerPoint at: <http://www.soton.ac.uk/pdu/Academic%20Practice/Teaching%20&%20Learning/PCAP/index.html>)
- Discuss and advise on any participant selected components the mentee is planning to do
- Discuss and advise on learning resources/references that might be helpful to the mentee
- Read and give feedback on draft assignments (mentors are not required to formally assess the participants' work, but should provide informal, formative feedback on drafts of the assignments if at all possible)

## **Aide Mémoire for Discussions**

Often, participants and mentors in a mentoring arrangement do not really know where to start or how to proceed with general discussions. Below is an aide-mémoire to help you act as both the “critical friend” and the “disciplinary colleague”.<sup>1</sup> The questions are mainly directed at PCAP participants, however, mentors might find it interesting to try to answer them as well in an attempt to model more experienced thinking in the area of learning and teaching.

### ***Suggested questions or topics of discussion to foster general learning on PCAP (i.e., the critical friend aspect):***

- ❖ What are your goals when teaching? At each level (programme, module, session)?
- ❖ How do you know if you are achieving those goals?
- ❖ What are the characteristics of effective teaching and/or effective teachers?
- ❖ What specific teaching methods do you know? In what situations do you use or plan to use them?
- ❖ What are the main characteristics of students who attend your classes? How do they go about learning the material you introduce in class?
- ❖ What methods do you use to assess the learning of your students? What kind of evidence that they are learning do you obtain through those methods?
- ❖ How does your teaching relate to the whole curriculum? How do you ensure that what your students learn fit in the curriculum?
- ❖ What do you see as the role of the university teacher? What makes university teaching “good”?
- ❖ What do you see as the role of the university student/learner? What makes university learning “good”?
- ❖ What do you think is the main purpose of higher education? What conditions do you feel are essential for the purpose of higher education to be met?

### ***Suggested questions or topics of discussion to foster discipline-specific learning on PCAP (i.e., the disciplinary colleague aspect):***

- ❖ What teaching methods are most widely used in your academic discipline? Why are those methods so widely used? What makes them effective methods?
- ❖ What are students learning in this academic discipline expected to do? How do they go about providing evidence of their learning? What standards of performance are expected of them?
- ❖ What does “knowing” in this academic discipline entail? What specific skills are seen as essential in this field? How may that affect learning and/or teaching?
- ❖ What does the “practice” of this academic discipline entail? What do people who are part of this community actually do? How may that affect learning and/or teaching?
- ❖ What is the level of difficulty of this academic discipline? What specific parts are more difficult than others? How may that affect learning and/or teaching?
- ❖ How is this academic discipline organised (i.e., what are the sub-fields)? Do they differ greatly in terms of how they should be learned and/or taught?
- ❖ What other academic disciplines does this one relate to? What kind of relationship is it? How may that affect learning and/or teaching?

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<sup>1</sup> Many thanks to Denis Berthiaume, whose work this guide is based upon.