Section 3: The Mentoring Process

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Introduction

Colleges involved in developing mentoring programmes stress the importance of:

a. integrating mentoring into other quality improvement strategies by using the outcomes of observation to identify excellent teachers who could become mentors, and to identify teachers who require mentors;

b. linking mentoring to other professional support and development opportunities;

c. developing policies and procedures which are understood by all teachers; and which enable staff to feel some ownership of the process;

d. getting the right people to be mentors, and being clear about their professional role;

e. providing guidance to mentors and mentees so everyone knows what to expect;

f. making clear to individuals and the college as a whole the benefits of the mentoring programme.

It is important to remember that colleges are at different stages in developing mentoring programmes. The materials that follow show a variety of approaches to mentoring from colleges at different stages.

Linking mentoring to other professional support and staff development

To be effective, mentoring must be part of other professional support and development opportunities provided as part of the college's quality improvement strategies. For example, training needs identified in the mentoring process must be analysed and met by the college, either individually or for groups of teachers with similar requirements.

One college has given careful thought to the right organisational structure for its mentoring scheme. Chart A shows how the team of professional development mentors is managed by a co-ordinator based within the college's Continuous Professional Development Unit. The mentors are managed by heads of schools for their tutorial responsibilities and by the head of the unit for their mentoring work. By placing the team in the Unit, the college makes sure development needs identified during the mentoring can be met effectively.

A second college has developed a flow chart (Chart B) showing how its mentoring programme fits with other teacher support and assessment systems.

A third college provides a chart (Chart C) for teachers setting out the key elements of support and continuous development for staff. Mentoring is included as an important element.

Questions to consider:

- How will your college integrate its mentoring scheme into existing quality improvement strategies?
- How will your college ensure that training and development needs identified through mentoring will be analysed and met?

Chart A: Team of Professional Development Mentors in a CPD Unit

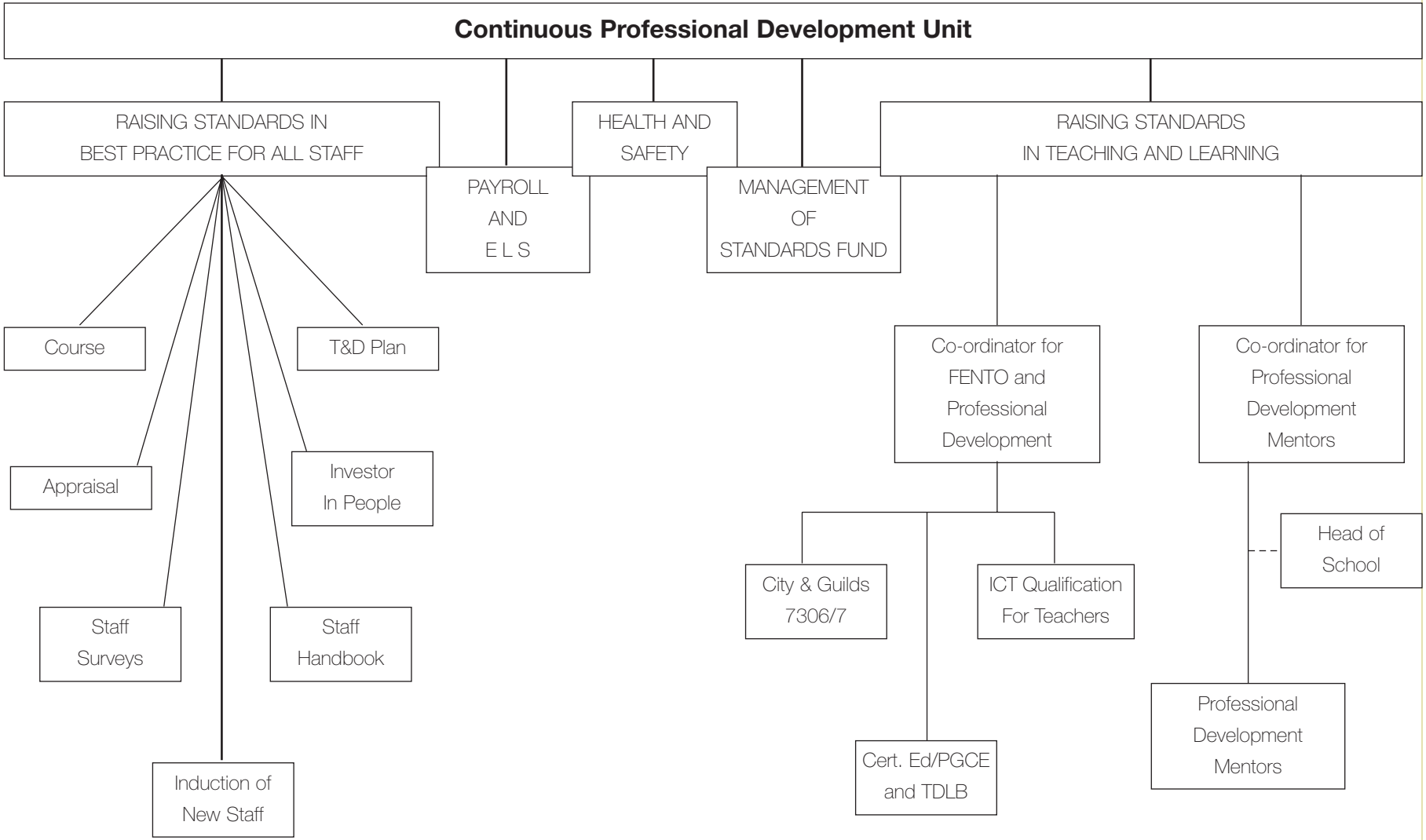


Chart B: Flow chart showing how mentoring programme fits into other teacher support and assessment systems

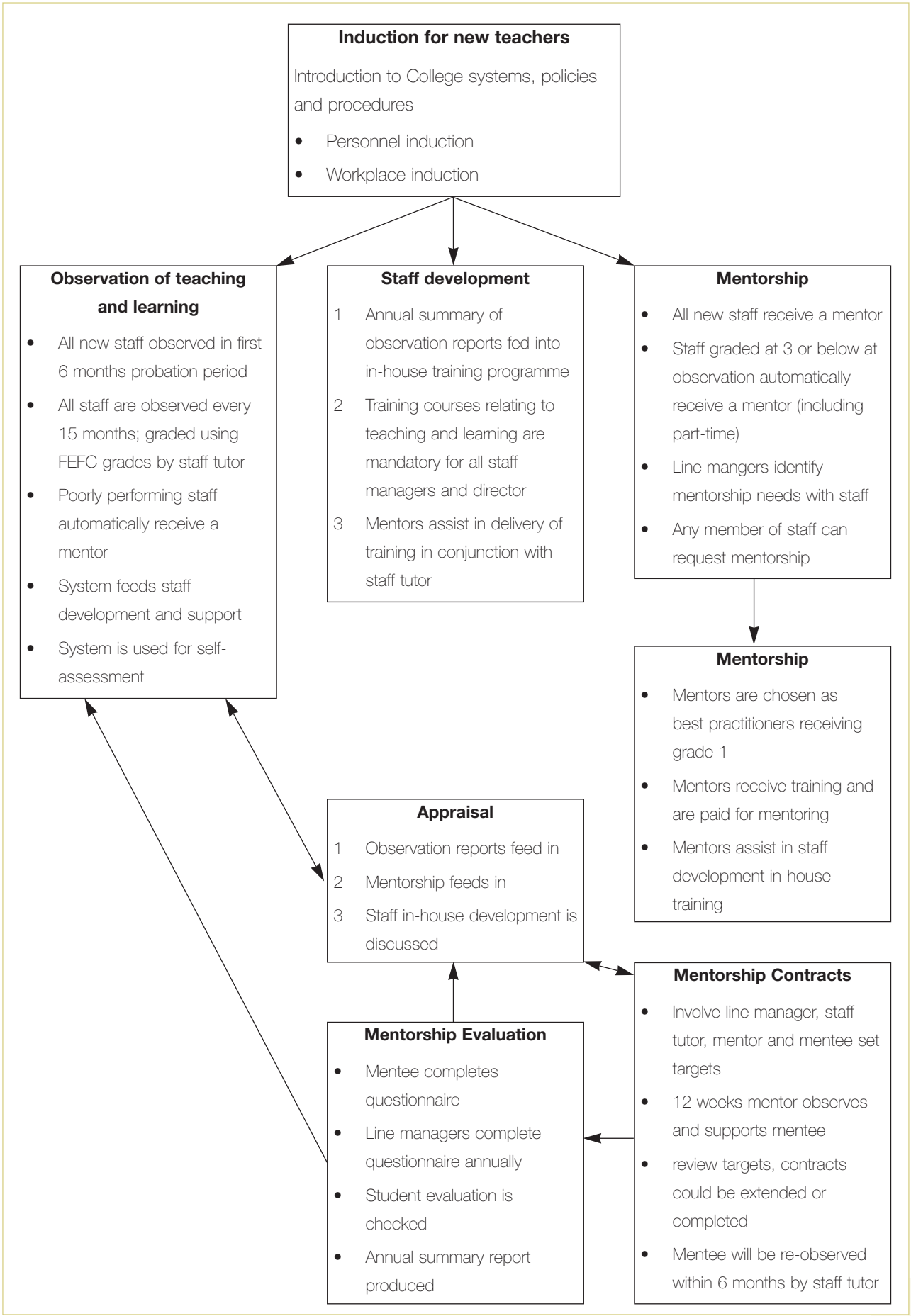
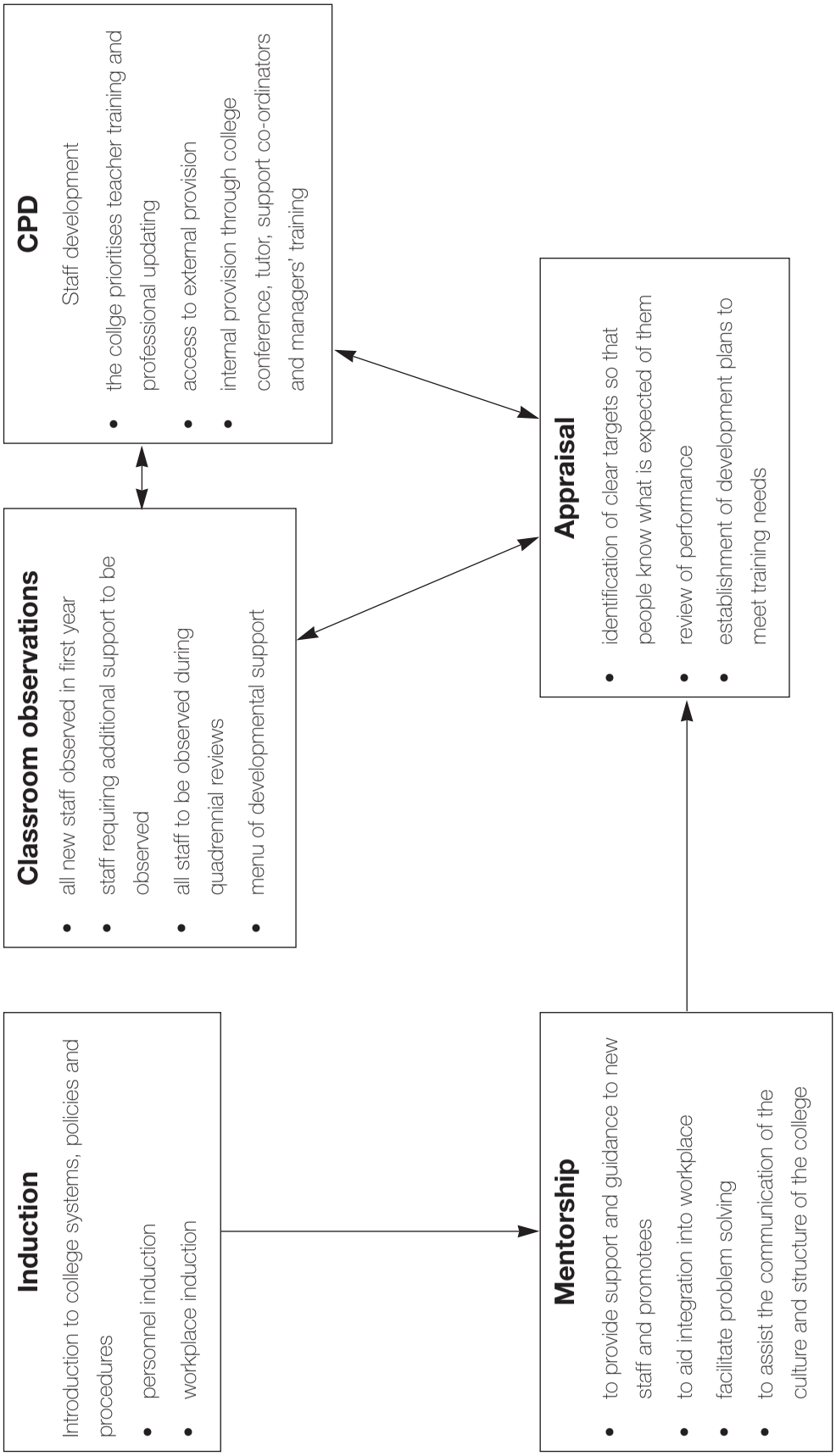


Chart C: Mentorship and Professional Development



The college aims to provide support and continuous development for all academic staff. The chart shows the key elements of this support.

Developing a mentoring policy

Before they develop a mentoring policy, senior managers need to ask themselves:

a. Why do we need a mentoring system?
b. What do we want it to achieve in terms of continuous professional development?
c. Who will it be aimed at initially?
d. What steps do we need to take to get things off the ground?
e. How can we build on the success of specialist mentors?
f. What key steps need to be taken to put mentor training in place?
g. How will we review and evaluate the process?
h. How will mentoring fit into the rest of the college's quality improvement strategies?
i. How will we monitor and support our mentors and mentees?
j. Does the link between mentor and mentee need to be a 'contractual' relationship?
k. How will we seek feedback from mentees?
l. What strategies are in place should relationships break down between mentor and mentee?
m. How will we evaluate a cross-college pilot mentoring scheme?

A growing number of colleges are developing mentoring policies as a first step to establishing a programme. The following draft policy from a college describes the mentoring process. Teachers receiving mentors are carefully selected and include:

- new teachers
- part-time teachers
- existing teachers in new posts
- under-performing teachers
- teachers with professional development needs
- teachers returning from long-term absence.

As well as describing the process, the draft policy describes the relationship between mentor and mentee and the characteristics of a mentor. Staff used the FENTO standards to assist the development of the policy.

Questions to consider:

- Who would need to be involved in developing a mentor policy for your college?
- Which teacher would be a priority for mentoring?
- How might your college review and adapt the draft policy to establish its own policy?
- How might your mentoring policy take account of the needs of strong teachers?

Draft Mentoring Policy

Purpose of the mentoring scheme

The mentoring scheme is designed to provide individual members of staff with support and guidance to help them function and continue to develop in accordance with the demands of their role. A designated mentor acts in a coaching capacity to evaluate a mentee's performance. The mentor advises objectively and empathetically to help improve performance.

Links to other policies

The mentoring scheme should be considered in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- quality assurance policy
- induction procedure
- recruitment policy
- professional development policy and procedures
- staff review policy and procedures
- equal opportunities policy.

Target groups

The mentoring scheme is aimed at the following groups of staff:

A. new staff

B. existing staff in new posts

C. under-performing staff

D. staff with professional development needs

E. staff returning from long-term absence.

A. New staff

All newly appointed members of staff undertake a three-stage formal induction procedure as follows:

Stage 1 Explanation of employment documentation by personnel manager.

Stage 2 Individual interview with professional development director to explain staff development, staff review, mentoring scheme, issues not dealt with in department and any other areas of concern.

Stage 3 Group meeting led by vice-principal (staff and students) to encourage interaction between all newly appointed staff and to explain in detail areas such as equal opportunities and health and safety.

Part-time lecturers appointed through ELS do not undertake the college induction procedure but are introduced to the college and their work by faculty managers.

Part-time staff have particular needs in relation to staff team integration, allocation and resources, access to staff development and familiarisation with college life. These needs are particularly acute for those who work for very short periods or during the evening.

Stage 4 A new member of staff is allocated a mentor on appointment.

B. Existing staff in new posts

When an existing member of staff is appointed to a new post in college, he or she is allocated a mentor. In addition to offering support, the mentor also identifies any immediate staff development needs and plans action through the professional development director. The mentor then monitors progress. In addition, mentors ensure that the mentee's change of role is communicated across college. The mentor is expected to liaise with the mentee's line manager regarding planned action of a non-confidential nature.

C. Under-performing staff

If during staff review, self-assessment observations or managers' observations, a member of staff is considered to be under-performing, a mentor will be allocated. The mentor has the same role and responsibilities as for other mentored staff.

D. Staff with professional development needs

If during self-evaluation a member of staff identifies his or her own additional needs, a mentor is allocated. Again, the mentor has the same role and responsibilities.

E. Staff returning from long-term absence

Staff returning to work following a long-term period of absence are allocated a mentor. In addition to his or

her usual role and responsibilities, the mentor will also arrange an agreed period of reduced workload for the mentee.

Identification of mentors

A 'bank' of staff representing all teaching and support areas of the college will be established. These staff will be trained as mentors. They can be called upon by the professional development director to mentor individuals in their area of work. Mentor status will be subject to line manger recommendation and approval.

Role of the mentor

The mentor is responsible for introducing the mentee to:

- college and department procedures
- campus layout, services and facilities
- relevant colleagues (the professional development director issues a checklist to aid this process).

The mentor is also responsible for:

- identifying any immediate staff development needs that the mentee may have
- planning action in response, through the professional development director
- monitoring mentee progress which may involve classroom/work area observation.

The mentor is expected to liaise with the mentee's line manager regarding planned action of a non-confidential nature.

The mentor will follow the following planned programme:

Week 1	induction review, familiarisation, workload/timetable, job specification, learner recruitment (teachers)
Week 2	induction review, familiarisation, resources support, learner retention (teachers)
Week 3	induction review, familiarisation, relationships with colleagues, learner achievement (teachers)
Week 4	induction review, familiarisation, coping strategies, learner progression (teachers)
Weeks 5 – 7	observation and brief feedback, workload/timetable
Weeks 8 – 11	detailed feedback on observation, improvement strategies
Week 12	staff development needs, closure/ continuation plans.

Mentor characteristics

A mentor should be someone who:

- is regarded by his or her peers with credibility and respect
- is regarded by his or her line manager as a good role model
- can respect other people's view of the world and work with them
- sees the best in other people, empathises with them and offers encouragement
- is supportive and will allow a mentee to take responsibility for his or her own decisions.

Mentoring scheme professional relationship

a. The mentor's role is to respond to the mentee's developmental needs, agreed agenda and set of goals.

b. Mentors and mentees must work within an agreement of confidentiality.

c. Mentors must be aware of any college policies and work within them, for example health and safety, data protection, equal opportunities.

d. Mentor and mentee should respect each other's time and other responsibilities, ensuring they do not impose beyond what is reasonable.

e. The mentee must accept increasing responsibility for managing the relationship; the mentor should empower them to do so and must generally promote the mentee's autonomy.

f. Either party may dissolve the relationship. However, both mentor and mentee have a responsibility for discussing the matter together, as part of mutual learning.

g. Mentors need to be aware of the limits of their own competence, operate within these limits and identify relevant sources of referral.

h. The mentor has a responsibility to develop his or her own competence in the practice of mentoring.

i. The mentor will not intrude into areas the mentee wishes to keep private. However, they should help the mentee recognise how other issues may relate to those areas.

j. The mentoring relationship must not be exploitative in any way and every effort should be made to ensure it is not open to misinterpretation.

k. Mentors should seek the support of the mentoring scheme forum to maintain effectiveness and job objectivity.

Allocation of mentors

Mentors are allocated in response to:

- personal requests
- line manager referrals
- personnel referrals.

In all cases, the professional development director receives referrals/requests for mentors: matches mentor to mentee and co-ordinates the process.

Mentoring meetings

Normally, mentors are expected to meet with mentees for 30-minute sessions weekly for the first month, fortnightly for the second month and as required thereafter. For each individual involved, the mentoring scheme time requirement is expected to be 12 hours.

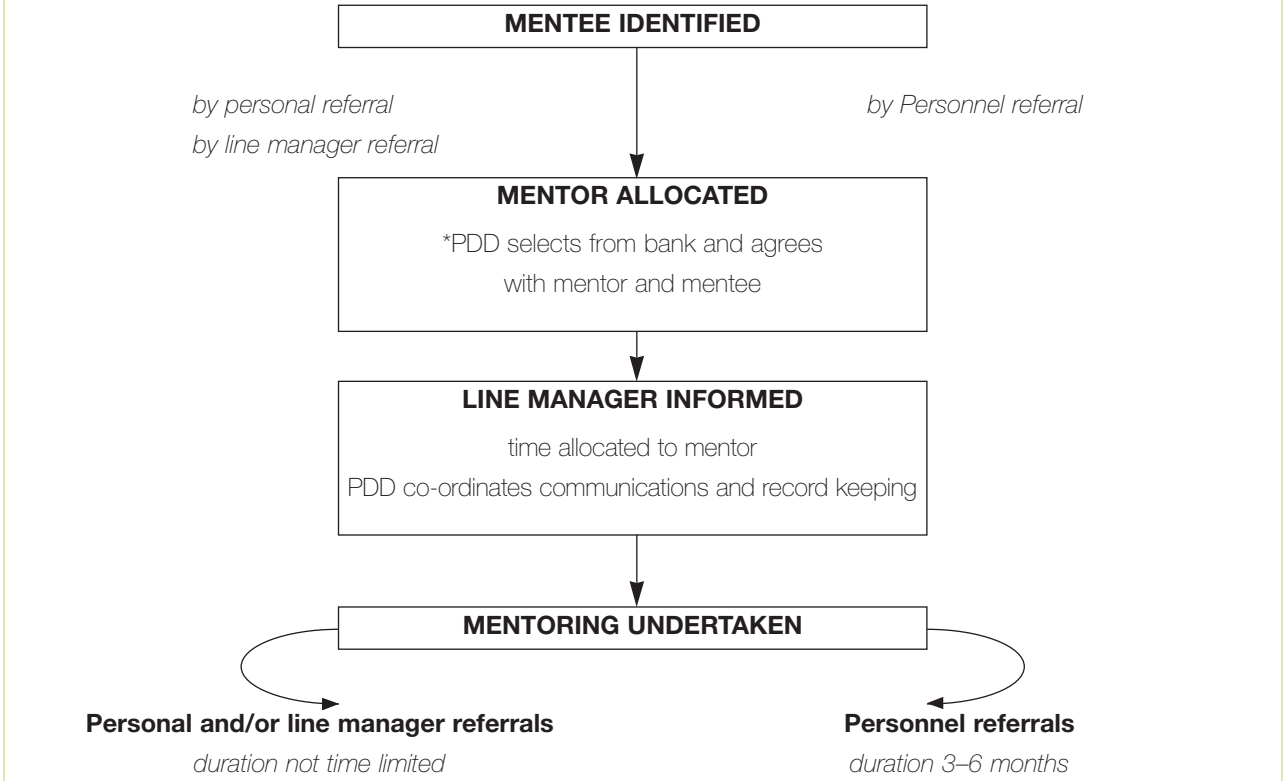
Mentoring scheme forum

Membership for the mentoring scheme forum comprises all college mentors, the professional development director and the quality director. The group meets once a term to discuss issues arising from the mentoring scheme, to share best practice, to up-date on current mentoring methods and to provide guidance and support to mentors about their effectiveness and job objectivity.

Mentoring scheme process

The following diagram sets out the mentoring scheme process.

Draft Mentoring Policy (continued)



Week 1	induction review, familiarisation, workload/timetable, job specification, learner recruitment (teachers)
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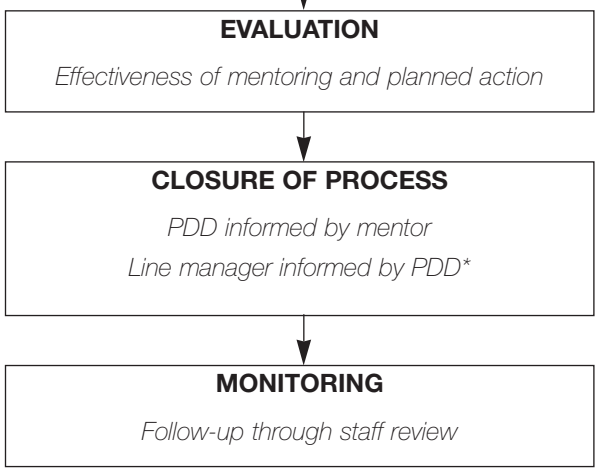

*PDD = professional development director

Mentor job and person specifications

Colleges take considerable care to identify as mentors teachers with the right professional and personal qualities. First and foremost, the mentor must be an excellent practitioner. This requirement is given top priority in job descriptions. A selection of job and person specifications follows. The selection begins with specifications used in a college committed to inclusive learning (Example A). The second example describes another college's ambitious learning directors initiative and includes the person and job specifications for the posts (Example B). In Example C, the job specification for a professional development mentor includes a requirement that the mentor contribute to professional development activities. Finally, one college has developed a team of specialist mentors working to support part-time staff, strengthen tutoring used in key areas of curriculum development tutoring, support key skills teachers, and to assist staff producing and delivering IT-based curriculum materials. Example D shows the specifications for these specialist mentors.

Questions to consider:

- How might your college use the exemplar job descriptions to devise or review job descriptions for mentors?
- How might your college resource the mentoring programme?

Example A: Job and Person Specifications Used in Large Inner-City College

The mentor

Job description

Core tasks

1. To work with a named tutor to support his or her personal and professional development within the context of their job specification.
2. To work with the mentee to produce a professional development plan and monitor and review progress through it.
3. To contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning by observing the classroom performance of the mentee and providing constructive feedback.
4. To maintain the limits of confidentiality at all times with agreed parties.
5. To meet termly with other members of the mentor team to share good practice.
6. To keep a record of the number of contact hours spent with the mentee and pass the record to the staff development advisor responsible.
7. To undertake training as required.
8. To carry out a range of observations of work performance as a means of improving the quality of provision offered at the college.

The mentor

Person specification

Job purpose

To enhance the quality of provision in the college and to assist in embedding the principles of inclusive learning and to develop excellent customer services.

Key qualities

1. A commitment to the principles of inclusive learning.
2. A commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning and/or customer services within the college.
3. An excellent practitioner who models best practice.
4. An ability to manage challenging situations.
5. An ability to work with a broad spectrum of individuals and teams in different and potentially challenging situations.
6. An ability to work independently and as part of a wider team.
7. An ability to work creatively and flexibly.
8. An ability to communicate effectively both verbally and in writing.
9. An ability to network effectively.
10. An ability to offer constructive feedback in a sensitive and appropriate manner.

Example B: Learning Directors

Introduction

The college describes its learning director initiative as follows:

The development is a quality initiative aimed at:

- rewarding excellence in teaching and learning
- improving the quality of teaching and learning by mentoring colleagues
- continuously improving the standards and achievements of learners
- providing an alternative career route for teachers in the college.

Staff are appointed following an interview/presentation process involving students. They follow a new learning director salary scale which ranges from £24,865 to £29,734. The first appointments were made in October 1999. There are now 30 learning directors in the college.

Mentoring lies at the heart of the initiative. Each learning director works to three negotiated key objectives, one of which is mentoring. Mentees would include:

- new staff to area
- existing staff identified as needing additional support
- part-time staff
- colleagues working on curriculum initiatives, for example, new programmes, introduction of ILT.

The principle is that staff have a mentor who is not 'management' and to whom colleagues can turn.

There is a Learning Directors' Forum which meets each month. The forum acts as a 'peer monitoring' activity for the learning directors. Mentors also need mentors. The forum has played a large part in the success of the initiative.

A learning director is not simply a 'super lecturer'. The word 'lecturer' or 'teacher' has been deliberately avoided. Effective learning is not simply a result of teaching. Others also play a vital role, for example, a learning resource manager who worked superbly with students in the LRC became a learning director in the first group of appointees. A member of staff who writes learning materials, but does not have teaching commitments, is also a learning director.

Job and person specifications follow.

Example B (continued)

Job description: **Learning Director**

Learning Directors have the following objectives:

- to continuously improve the standards of teaching and learning
- to impact positively on the colleges' social exclusion agenda
- to focus on learner needs as the key determinant of success
- to reward excellence in teaching and learning
- to provide an exciting career route
- to support staff as ambassadors within the wider community.

Responsible to: Curriculum Manager (as appropriate)

Overall objective: To provide a model of excellence in teaching and learning and as a mentor for colleagues

Weekly hours: Learning Director contract

Key accountabilities:

1. To provide a model of excellence in teaching and learning.
2. To spread good practice with colleagues and seek to improve teaching and learning throughout the organisation.
3. To act as a mentor to colleagues.
4. To help raise retention and achievements for learners on a continuous basis.
5. To assess learners' needs and plan accordingly.
6. To plan and prepare teaching and learning programmes for groups and individuals.
7. To provide learners with appropriate support.
8. To inspire learners and encourage motivation for lifelong learning.
9. To reflect and evaluate on own performance and engage others in evaluation for continuous improvement.
10. To operate in a supportive and professional manner when working with learners and colleagues.
11. To develop and use a range of teaching and learning materials to contribute to learning resources.
12. To keep abreast of local and national developments that impact on learner experiences.
13. To join a cross-college Learning Directors' Forum and develop, encourage and benchmark lateral thinking and excellence in teaching and learning.
14. To contribute to a professional development plan that supports the mentoring of other Learning Directors in the college.

Example B (continued)

Person specification

Learning Director

Skills

Essentials

- an extremely high level of interpersonal skills
- the ability to inspire learners and colleagues
- capacity for analysis of complex issues
- problem-solving
- creativity and innovation
- presenting and delivering information
- preparing effective learning materials
- good listening and questioning skills
- providing constructive feedback
- explaining ideas clearly
- critical self-reflection
- monitoring and reviewing
- setting clear objectives
- effective planning and prioritising
- ability to operate as an ambassador for the college

Desirables

- negotiating
- research and study
- decision-making
- handling conflict

Knowledge

Essentials

- an understanding of the learning environment in further education and the dynamic and complex nature of the curriculum
- an understanding of the essential role of facilitating learning to help students achieve
- knowledge of guidance and support and individual assessment of needs
- knowledge and evidence of curriculum and professional development
- knowledge of quality assurance improvement strategies
- involvement in unitisation of the curriculum

Desirables

- knowledge of the Further Education National Training Organisation standards for FE teachers
- knowledge of the local community and its needs
- knowledge of credit-based systems of learning

Example B (continued)

Qualifications

Essentials

working towards the following essential qualifications will be considered

- teaching/training qualification
- degree or relevant professional qualification
- level 4 qualifications
- English to at least level 2
- Maths to at least level 2
- D32/D33/D34/D36 TDLB awards
- ABE/key skills teaching qualifications
- IT qualifications
- Basic Skills teaching qualification

Desirables

- first aid qualification

Experience

Essentials

- experience of providing inclusive learning
- facilitating learning in large and small groups and for individuals
- experience of working as a tutor
- experience of regular curriculum development

Desirables

- experience of using IT and ICT to support learning
- experience of other education sectors/age groups
- experience of research and publication

Qualities

Essentials

- personal impact and presence
- enthusiasm
- self-confidence
- energy
- reliability
- integrity
- a commitment to learners' achievements
- understanding of different learning styles
- empathy for learners and colleagues
- appreciation of FE values
- sensitivity to needs of learners regardless of age, ethnicity, gender, disability or sexual orientation
- awareness of the variety of 'audiences' in the local community including business and community groups

Desirables

- intellectual rigour
- realism
- assertiveness

Example B (continued)

Person specification: Essentials

Recognised teaching qualification

Recent and substantial experience of working within an FE environment

Willingness to participate in further professional development

Demonstrates excellence, passion and enthusiasm for teaching and learning

Excellent knowledge of pedagogy and subject matter, and is willing and eager to share with colleagues

Is respected by peers and has credibility within new work role

Works well with colleagues; open minded, flexible, resourceful and good sense of humour

Demonstrates a commitment to lifelong learning by supporting colleagues

Willing to be a role model to other colleagues; approachable and generates easy rapport and trust

Active listener and able to encourage reflection of practice

Demonstrates empathy

Able to provide constructive feedback

Offers a 'holistic' approach when working with mentees demonstrating an understanding of different cultural needs

Willing to ensure confidentiality and work within the agreed ethical code of practice

Understanding of the philosophy, values, policies and procedures of the college

Example C: Job and Person Specification Showing Requirement to Contribute to Professional Development Activities

Job title: **Professional development mentor**

The post will be for two years with a review after 18 months.

Responsible to: Head of Continuous Professional Development Unit

Main purpose of role: To support the Head of Continuous Professional Development in developing and implementing strategies to improve teaching and learning, raise standards of retention and achievement and demonstrate professional competence and experience within the learning environment.

Postholder: The postholder will be responsible for supporting teachers within their own school and across the college to raise standards in teaching and learning. He or she will also deliver workshops and formal training in their own area of expertise and teaching and learning as identified in the training and development plan.

Principal accountabilities as professional development mentor:

1. Contribute to the professional development of staff through the sharing of good practice, drawing on the knowledge and expertise of others within the school and college.
2. Support new and existing staff in the development of schemes of work, lesson plans and assignment writing in relation to assessment criteria appropriate for the level of the course.
3. Work within the teacher education team to support the delivery of teaching and learning linked to the FENTO standards.
4. Support the self-assessment action plan in delivering training and development workshops within the school.
5. Develop individual action plans for all staff being mentored which, for those on probation, should be shared with the head of school.
6. Advise Head of Continuous Professional Development on staff training and development issues.

Example C (continued)

Person specification for professional development mentor

Qualifications

The person appointed must possess:

- a teaching qualification at Cert. Ed/PGCE level

And may also have one of the following:

- an assessor's award, for example D32 or D33
- experience or qualification of internal verification, for example D34.

Essential experience, skills and personal qualities:

- minimum of three years' teaching experience in FE
- commitment to champion best practice in respect of equality of opportunity
- good understanding and experience of students and how they learn
- effective organisational skills
- commitment to quality provision
- willingness to undergo training and development to improve own mentoring skills and other aspects of the role
- demonstrates commitment to lifelong learning
- eager and able to share information and ideas with colleagues
- demonstrates excellent classroom management skills
- comfortable being observed by other teachers
- demonstrates high standards of professional competence and effectiveness.

Desired experience, skills and personal qualities:

- enthusiasm and flexibility
- asks questions that prompt reflection and understanding
- listens attentively
- understanding of current government initiatives.

Example D: Specialist Mentors: Specification for Mentor Working with Part-Time Staff

Curriculum mentor for part-time staff – role description

Role

To support part-time/fractional curriculum staff in building on their strengths in teaching and to identify and, where possible, address areas for development so all staff provide high quality teaching and learning.

Role specification

a. To provide support and guidance to part-time/fractional staff enabling them to provide high quality teaching and learning focused on the needs of the individual student.

b. To contribute to the work of the mentoring team led by the quality and staff development manager.

c. To respond actively to the needs of individual lecturers.

d. To support these staff to improve teaching and learning through:

- mutually agreed, non-graded lesson observations of mentees
- confidential coaching
- advice and guidance on college systems, procedures and practices
- organisation of peer observation for mentees
- guidance on best practice in teaching and learning
- joint facilitation and/or organisation for staff development session for mentees
- liaison with mentor representatives from other sectors.

Person specification

Mentors will:

a. be experienced lecturers; responsive to students' needs, and have gained grades 1 or 2 in the last two rounds of classroom observations;

b. have an interest in teaching and learning methodology and in sharing and disseminating good practice with colleagues;

c. possess good interpersonal skills in providing feedback and giving constructive criticism in a supportive manner.

Example D (continued)

Personal tutoring mentor

Role purpose:

To support colleagues to be effective tutors.

The project

The personal tutoring mentor project is an opportunity for the college to develop a whole college tutorial policy and practice. This will allow us to harness our considerable expertise in tutoring, learn best practice and disseminate it throughout the college. The project's focus is on the students' experience of tutoring. Successful tutoring is central to the student's success at college. We have a reputation for excellence in pastoral care systems and this way we can prove it, and improve it.

Role specification

The personal tutoring mentor will:

a. focus on the consistency of the students' experience of tutoring;

b. communicate the tutorial policy, entitlement and curriculum to personal tutors;

c. assist in the training of the personal tutor;

d. support personal tutors to develop confidence and competence in the delivery of the tutorial entitlement;

e. assist in the peer observation of tutoring in their programme area;

f. assist in the promotion of an individual tutorial programme;

g. identify opportunities for the introduction of the wider key skills in the tutorial curriculum and support their introduction;

h. disseminate 'best practice' in personal tutoring;

i. meet regularly with fellow mentors.

Personal specification

The personal tutoring mentor will:

a. have gained grades 1 and 2 in tutorial observations (where applicable);

b. be experienced and capable team members;

c. be responsive to new ideas;

d. be able to communicate ideas and strategy;

e. be able to motivate others;

f. be a 'critical friend';

g. respect difference but work for consistency;

h. co-ordinate and plan;

i. have at least two years experience of personal tutoring.

Example D (continued)

Specification for key skills mentor

Role purpose

To support colleagues integrating key skills into their curriculum and to support the assessment of key skills.

The project

This is a developmental opportunity for those keen to be at the forefront of a curriculum initiative. It offers scope to lecturers who want to share their initiative, ideas and best practice in curriculum development. It provides a chance to gain experience as a trainer, champion, motivator and administrator.

Role Specification

The key skills mentor will:

a. support the development of key skills;

b. support teachers in their diagnostic assessment of key skills;

c. ensure all staff in his or her programme area are aware of the key skills policy and procedures;

d. support CITs integrating key skills into their schemes of work;

e. support assessors identifying key skills in their programme area;

f. support individuals and CITs with the assessment of key skills;

g. attend mentor meetings to share issues and best practice;

h. help promote consistent practice across the curriculum;

i. develop the delivery of basic skills where appropriate;

j. contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of key skills strategies.

Person specification

Key skills mentor will be:

a. responsible for his or her expertise;

b. knowledgeable about key skills development.

Example D (continued)

Specification for ILT mentor

Role purpose

To disseminate good practice and support colleagues in the use of IT-based curriculum materials.

Role specification

The ILT mentor will:

a. contribute proactively to the work of the project team including attendance at project meetings;

b. respond actively and sympathetically to the needs of individuals, particularly those with little or no experience of computer use, CITs and schools;

c. support and encourage colleagues to plan and incorporate IT-based teaching materials into the curriculum as a means to improve differentiation, student support and respond to individual learning styles and, by doing so, improve student retention and achievement;

d. review, using an agreed set of criteria, commercial software relevant to particular curriculum areas and report on these to CITs and heads of school as appropriate;

e. advise colleagues on the quality of commercial software and on how it might contribute to teaching strategies;

f. promote the college's ILT strategy and support CITs incorporating this into their schemes of work;

g. liaise closely with the web development team regarding the college's learning intranet and, with the library about the use of commercial software;

h. disseminate the latest research and developmental activity in the FE sector where appropriate;

i. support colleagues in their work towards achieving the JEB;

j. demonstrate IT technologies to staff.

Person specification:

ILT mentor will:

a. be experienced, energetic tutors with a successful record of using IT-based materials to support teaching and learning;

b. have genuine enthusiasm for IT-based learning and a commitment to disseminate good practice;

c. be competent in multi-media software (or be willing to learn);

d. have achieved the JEB (or be committed to an early completion);

e. possess good interpersonal and communication skills;

f. be sensitive to the needs of colleagues especially those with little or no experience of IT.