



# **HERDSA Fellowship Professional Recognition and Development Scheme**

## **Handbook for Mentoring**

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## Introduction

One of the aims of the HERDSA Recognition and Development Scheme is to help Registrants to develop a reflective approach to their educational practice and to build a community of educational scholars. That is why the process encourages Registrants to develop their HERDSA portfolio with the support of a mentor, if they wish. The choice of the mentor depends on each Registrant. Some like to work with a mentor that they choose from a pool of colleagues that they know from their own educational context and with whom they can have face to face meetings to discuss their developments. Others prefer to work with someone who already holds a HERDSA Fellowship. This means that they have gone through the process of completing their portfolio and of having it assessed. Because the HERDSA Fellowship Scheme is a recognition and development scheme, the mentoring relationship is viewed as an important part of the requirement of the Fellowship. However, at the end the day, the choice of mentor is made by the Registrant.

HERDSA Fellows have commented on the value and importance of their mentors in preparing their portfolios. You are advised to contact your mentor as early as possible in preparing your portfolio. As far as possible the HERDSA Fellowships sub-committee allocates mentors who are physically located near to their mentees. However, this is not always possible and it may well be that your mentoring relationship will be carried out over the telephone, by email or using a web based communication tool (e.g. MSN or Skype). Before you start the mentoring relationship you should read the different sections of this handbook and jot down some ideas about what you hope to gain from the mentoring relationship, how you want it to work and any concerns you may have about mentoring.

Mentors can provide advice on how to approach the writing of the portfolio, but they cannot write the portfolio for the mentee. How a mentee uses the advice of a mentor is important. Mentors cannot guarantee that a portfolio will be assessed as meeting the required standard; this is the judgment of the two independent assessors. Mentors will provide feedback on the portfolio; they do not make judgments about the person. If assessors determine that a portfolio requires further work, then the mentor can assist by providing examples of what the mentee might be able to do to meet the requirements. A mentor will not broker on behalf of a mentee with the assessors, nor with the Fellowship Committee, but may seek clarification or further information, in order to assist a mentee.

## Guidelines for mentoring

We have included here some guidelines to assist you in establishing your mentoring relationship, however each mentoring relationship is completely different and you would need to explore what may work best for both of you. We have learnt from the participants in our scheme that there are five stages involved in a mentoring relationship that assist prompt completion of the HERDSA teaching portfolio. These are discussed in this handbook.

Stage	Mentee	Mentor
One	Getting to know each other and our expectations	
Two	Writing the Teaching Philosophy and one of the criteria	Providing Formative Feedback
Three	Getting the first draft of the portfolio	Providing Formative Feedback
Four	Working on the final version of the portfolio	Providing Formative Feedback
Five	Celebrating the submission of the portfolio	

Before you start the mentoring relationship you should read this handbook carefully and jot down some ideas about what you hope to gain from the mentoring relationship, how you want it to work and any concerns you may have about mentoring.

When you first make contact with your mentor. Share your goals for mentoring

- Share your ideas about your expectations for mentoring
- Consider your respective responsibilities
- Consider how long you envisage the mentoring relationship lasting
- Decide how often you are going to have contact (be flexible)

- Decide what form that contact will typically take and who will contact whom
- Share ideas about how much time you are willing to invest in the mentoring relationship
- Decide what you are going to do if the relationship seems not to be working
- Decide if one of you needs to take notes on what has been discussed.

These are the 'ground rules' for your mentorship. Taking time to set these up in the beginning may help to avoid frustration later on and provide a focus for discussion if your expectations are not being met later on.

### **Mentoring is a way for you to:**

- Receive feedback on the progress of your portfolio
- Discover new ideas and surface new insights on your teaching
- Receive encouragement to complete your portfolio
- Gain new or different perspectives
- Get help with ideas
- Be challenged to think in new ways
- Talk over your teaching with a critical friend

### **Mentoring is not:**

- A way for you to become dependent or reliant on someone else
- One person dominating, directing or controlling your decisions
- Someone criticising or disparaging you
- Someone providing unlimited time or resources
- Having access to someone who is an expert in everything
- A guarantee of a HERDSA Fellowship being awarded

### **What to do if you have problems contacting your mentor?**

If you have problems contacting your mentor you should email the HERDSA office ([office@herdsa.org.au](mailto:office@herdsa.org.au)) who will provide alternative means to contact your mentor.

### **What to do if you have problems with the mentoring relationship**

In the first instance you should discuss your problems with your mentor. If the matter cannot be resolved, you should contact the HERDSA Office ([office@herdsa.org.au](mailto:office@herdsa.org.au)) who will inform the Convenor of the Fellowship Committee.

## **Stage One: Getting to know each other and your expectations**

We recommend that the first meeting should take place face to face or by phone where people are geographically close. In the case where people may be in different states or countries, web based audio or video conferencing have been found very useful and cost effective. Freeware like Skype (free internet telephony that can be found in <http://www.skype.com>) or MSN (<http://www.msn.com/>) are available on the net and they are easy to install and use. When you first make contact with your mentor:

- Share your ideas about your expectations for mentoring
- Consider your respective responsibilities
- Consider how long you envisage the mentoring relationship lasting
- Decide how often you are going to have contact (be flexible)
- Decide what form that contact will typically take and who will contact whom
- Share ideas about how much time you are willing to invest in the mentoring relationship
- Decide what you are going to do if the relationship seems not to be working
- Decide if one of you needs to take notes on what has been discussed.
- Decide how you will respond to mentor suggestions?

These are the 'ground rules' for your mentorship. Taking time to set these up in the beginning may help to avoid frustration later on and provide a focus for discussion if your expectations are not being met later on. As part of these guidelines, we have enclosed two tables in appendices 1 and 2 to help you to know each other better in the first meeting and establish a working schedule. Table 1 aims to help you in the process of introducing each other and breaking the ice, as well as to help you to exchange views on the role and responsibilities of the mentor and mentee. Table 2 aims to help you to prepare a timetable to work together

and achieve the submission of the HERDSA Teaching Portfolio. Remember that your mentor cannot guarantee that your portfolio will be deemed acceptable without any changes.

## Stage Two: Writing the Teaching Philosophy and one of the criteria

Successful mentoring relationships have shown that it is a good idea to start small. Some have found it very useful to write their teaching philosophy and one of the criteria first. This allows the Registrant/Mentee to get on track with the assistance of the mentor before completing the whole portfolio.

It is important to remember that the criteria for the HERDSA Fellowship Scheme are based upon HERDSA's document: *CHALLENGING CONCEPTIONS OF TEACHING: SOME PROMPTS FOR GOOD PRACTICE* that you can find in the HERDSA Fellowship website, and quotations and suggestions for areas to think about are from that document.

The areas to be considered have been updated to take account of developments in the scholarship of teaching and recent research on teaching and learning in higher education. Applicants are not expected to address all questions under each of the criteria as per the examples in the Registrant's Handbook. They are provided as prompts only. However, mentors can stress the absolute necessity to address each of the three mandatory components within each criterion, namely evidence of outcomes, reflection and plans for further development.

## Stage three: Getting the first draft of the portfolio

Once mentees received formative feedback on their teaching philosophy and one of the criteria that they have prepared then they are ready to address the other criteria and to write their reflective statement for the HERDSA teaching portfolio. Once this is ready they should submit it to their mentors and arrange a time with their mentor for the reception of formative feedback on the first draft of their portfolio.

## Stage four: Working on the final version of the portfolio

Once the mentee reviews the whole portfolio according to the formative feedback received from the mentor, then the mentee is ready to send the final version to their mentor. The mentor can advise you when your portfolio is ready for submission for the assessors. Remember that this does not guarantee acceptance by the assessors. How you have responded to your mentor's advice may determine when your portfolio will be ready for submission.

## Stage five: Celebrating the submission of the portfolio

Some participants have found it useful to build up a reward component as part of their action plan. This is up to you and your mentor.

## Some thoughts for mentors

It is important to remember that once upon a time mentors were also mentees, who valued feedback from their mentors. That is why we have enclosed here some guidance on how mentors might usefully provide formative feedback.

- Please **read the documentation** for Registrants carefully and use any templates provided.
- **Be positive but honest.** Plan to give positive comments and questions of interest as well as questions of challenge. Remember that your comments should be about the portfolio and not the person.
- **Discuss areas of strength as well as areas for development.** Remember that this should be a positive experience for the mentee. It is a chance for them to obtain direct feedback on their work. Your feedback should be specific, positive and honest.
- **Be critically reflective of your own assessment** and the way you are providing the feedback. See this as a learning opportunity for yourself as well as the mentee.

- **Start the feedback provision session with reassurance.** Clarify the areas in which there are no problems and then address areas where the evidence or reflection is unclear or appears to be missing.
- **Begin by giving positive feedback.** If possible give an indication of the expected outcome. Then lead off with straightforward questions, not 'killers'!
- **Encourage the mentee to be reflective in order to self-assess** and justify.
- **Make it developmental for the mentee.** Don't be in a rush – listen, but do not be reluctant to provide honest advice that will assist the mentee.
- **Be kind to mentees.** Even experienced academics can be nervous. Frame the experiences, as far as possible, with positive comments. Ask a general question to allow the candidate to 'free up' before hitting them with the hard questions. A list of questions written out for the mentee to see is helpful.
- **Keep a balance.** Peer assessment can be quite stressful for both mentor and mentee. The balance between challenge and support is crucial.
- If you genuinely feel that the portfolio is **not ready to be submitted**, then let the mentee know this.

## Some thoughts for mentees

Sometimes receiving formative feedback can be a challenging experience. It is important to remember that the aim of the feedback provision is to help the mentee to improve the quality of their HERDSA Teaching Portfolio, and in doing so to help the mentee to reflect on teaching and learning. This would contribute to enhance the mentee's teaching scholarship.

- Remember that mentors and assessors are making comments about your portfolio, not about you as a professional
- Focus on the feedback not on the mentor
- Read/Listen carefully to the feedback
- Read/Listen to the good and congratulate yourself for your achievements
- Learn in what areas you can improve and how
- Make questions when the feedback is unclear
- Write a plan of action to respond to the feedback received as soon as possible
- Accept that some aspects of your portfolio may require further work to meet the requirements for the Fellowship

## Where to go if the mentoring relationship does not work

If any of you have problems contacting your mentor or mentee you should email the HERDSA office ([office@herdsa.org.au](mailto:office@herdsa.org.au)) who will provide alternative means to contact your mentor or mentee.

In the first instance you should discuss your problems with your mentor. If the matter cannot be resolved, you should contact the convener of the HERDSA Fellowships sub-committee via the HERDSA Office ([office@herdsa.org.au](mailto:office@herdsa.org.au))

# Appendix One

## Table 1: Getting to know each other

Themes		Mentee	Mentor
My evidence that will be presented in the portfolio			
Communication Patterns	Who should contact whom?		
	Preferred form of communication?		
	Frequency?		
	Other		
Expectations	What should the mentor do and how?		
	What should the mentee do and how?		
Potential Troubleshooting	What could go wrong in the mentoring relationship?		
	What shall we do if that happens?		
Other issues to be discussed			

## Appendix Two

### Table 2: Setting a Plan of Action

When completing this table please take into consideration all your working and family commitments when proposing dates. Be honest and realistic as possible. The number of stages to be included would depend upon both of you.

Stage	Date	Mentee	Date	Mentor	Comments
One		Getting to know each other		Getting to know each other	
Two					
Three					
Four					
Five					
Six					
Seven					
Eight					