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## Creating Collaborative and Successful Partnerships for SINQ Faculty and Graduate Peer Mentors

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Graduate (GR) Peer Mentors are integral to the success of Sophomore Inquiry courses. The mentor sessions provide opportunities for smaller groups of students to interact, give increased attention to enhance student learning, coach and assist students in achieving University Studies goals, increase the sense of community within PSU, and serve as role models for students.

Mentors have received training for the job and are capable, creative individuals. However, mentors do not work in a vacuum and do need support. A mentor's work is successfully carried out through a close working relationship with their faculty partner. Faculty members in Sophomore Inquiry strive to *teach to* the University Studies' goals and work with the mentor to develop mentor sessions that enhance and extend the material that is covered in the main class.

The Faculty-Mentor team has great potential for aiding and mentoring students in their early learning in higher education. Mentors and Faculty each have responsibilities to nurture their unique and powerful relationship, a relationship that is significantly different from the traditional teaching assistant model. Successful Faculty-Mentor partnerships reflect the strengths of both partners and will be different for each team. There is more than only one way to work together. For example, some faculty choose to develop the majority of curriculum for mentor sessions, while others prefer to co-create curriculum with the mentor, and still others discuss and approve lesson plans created by the mentor. All formats have the potential to be successful, although we have found that often some of the best partnerships come out of and are strengthened by co-constructing material.

The following document is intended to **clarify the responsibilities of and positively enhance the relationship between graduate mentors and UNST faculty**, address common questions, and serve as a starting point for discussion toward an effective and positive collaboration.

Please review and discuss the responsibilities prior to meeting with your faculty partner or graduate mentor. If you have any questions or concerns at any time, please contact me.

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## UNST SINQ Faculty Responsibilities:

**1. Provide your mentor with all essential course materials well in advance**, including class rosters (download “by mentor session” for mentors from your BanWeb minus FERPA info). Give and order your mentor desk copies of your texts, a copy of your materials and packets, and all assignments AHEAD of time (and well before mentor sessions) so they may review the materials and be helpful to your students.

**2. If course is online or hybrid or uses D2L format for course support, do this as soon as possible for your mentor, especially for online.** See “Faculty Instructions for Activating your Mentor” (last page of document).

**3. Meet with mentor a minimum of one hour per week during the term to:**

- a. Plan curriculum for mentor sessions and learn about what the mentor could actually plan.
- b. Discuss progress of individual students in the course.
- c. Discuss course progress, successes, and/or challenges.

**4. Lead all main class sessions and work with mentor in defining her/his role in the mentor session.**

↓↓Please note: GR mentor stipends are based on the teaching they perform in the mentor classrooms. GR mentors are typically **not** to teach during the main class session with two exceptions:

- a. Graduate mentors may show a film/video during a main session if faculty must be absent from class for a pre-planned event (e.g., conference). This should be discussed ahead of time.
- b. Graduate mentors may occasionally lecture or help facilitate an activity in main class as part of their professional development and with faculty support or guidance. Although they are not specifically paid for doing main session teaching, it can contribute to their own development if focused and supported by the faculty partner and if the mentor agrees to do it.
- c. Mentors should not be viewed or treated as substitutes for class sessions that should be formally canceled, such as in the event of an illness or other absence. Please contact the main office in 117 if this arises so they can arrange a substitute faculty.

**5. Work with mentor to develop curriculum for mentor sessions or provide guidance if needed.**

Mentors have varying levels of experience and have participated in training. As GR mentors become more experienced, you may find they can function independently and with great capacity and creativity in their role in terms of session planning. However, it is most important that mentor sessions align in some way with the primary goals, skills, and outcomes of the main class. New mentors especially appreciate support in their professional development to become great mentors. Therefore, you ideally should do one or a combination of the following as the mentor’s skills emerge and evolve with practice:

- a. Provide curriculum or clear guidance for mentor sessions and/or
- b. Discuss and approve mentor-generated curriculum and/or
- c. Work together to develop mentor session curriculum and/or
- d. Allow the mentor to develop curriculum independently and with autonomy.

**6. Assist mentors (if needed) in learning to assess students’ work in the mentor session.**

↓↓Please note: GR mentors are **NOT** supposed to grade in main session or for main session assignments. Being a peer mentor is a supportive role. However, mentors may create short mentor session assignments or give feedback on less formal class activities, such as writing, journals, or other participatory activities. They also keep track of participation and attendance. Let your mentor know what percentage mentor session attendance is within the total course grade, and this will help guide them as well.

**7. Communicate directly with your mentor in a fair, direct, constructive, and respectful way about any classroom or mentor session issues of concern or classroom successes.**

**8. Provide Feedback for Professional Development.** Faculty are expected to provide ongoing specific feedback as well as an end-of-term evaluation for the purposes of mentor development and evaluation. The Mentor Director will send out an evaluation individually to faculty at the end of the term.



## **Mentor Responsibilities:**

- 1. Attend class sessions led by assigned professors (3 hrs./wk.).**
  - a. Come prepared for the class.
- 2. Assist in the class as discussed and decided by the faculty and mentor, e.g.:**
  - a. Role model appropriate student behavior in the classroom.
  - b. Actively participate in class discussions and activities or as faculty partner states.
  - c. Participate in other ways as defined by faculty and mentor within appropriate limits.
- 3. Lead all mentored inquiry sections linked to the large class sections.**
  - a. Develop plans for mentored inquiry with faculty partner or at the direction of the faculty.
  - b. Utilize resources for ideas and input for mentor section, aligning class with main session.
  - c. Consult staff as needed to be able to coach students for presentations, research, etc.
- 4. Provide informal coaching, advising, and referral for students within appropriate limits.**
  - a. Recognize your strengths and limits of the role of mentor.
  - b. Refer students directly to campus resources as needed and in a respectful manner.
  - c. Exercise appropriate professional boundaries at all times with students and faculty.
- 5. Provide feedback to students on their work in the course and the mentor section.**

Provide faculty with input on students' grades as related to the mentor session.
- 6. Meet with faculty partner and/or team a minimum of one hour per week to:**
  - a. Plan curriculum for the mentor sessions and review main session plans.
  - b. Discuss progress of individual students in the course.
  - c. Discuss course progress, successes, and challenges.
- 7. Create and utilize professional materials for mentor session teaching and learning.**

Creating clear and equitable expectations for students is good teaching. Offer and prepare materials in multiple formats when possible as well for an inclusive classroom.

  - a. Examples include: daily lesson plans, clear session goals, daily agenda, readable handouts, and a mentor session syllabus that aligns with faculty main sessions.
- 8. Deal with problems with students, faculty, and program in a timely, constructive and direct manner, seeking assistance from the Director when necessary.**
  - a. Alert your faculty partner when encountering a problem with a student.
  - b. Review handbook details for working safely in "crisis/disruptive" moments (e.g., professional language for addressing behavior, removing student from mentor session with repeated behavior, and alerting faculty and mentor director to situation).
- 9. Be knowledgeable about the PSU Code of Conduct as a mentor and student.**
  - a. Examples of inappropriate conduct at PSU related to mentoring include:
    - i. Sexual harassment (e.g., inappropriate comments, dating your students)
    - ii. Discrimination of any kind (e.g. sexist/racist/homophobic remarks)
    - iii. Consumption of alcohol or drugs while on campus or while mentoring or at mentoring or class-sponsored activities.
    - iv. Acting inappropriately toward other mentors or university staff.
- 10. Arrange a substitute for a missed class when possible.**
  - a. Generally, mentors with advance notice will email other mentors or the listserv to seek a substitute. Be helpful to others who may need to do this as well.
  - b. Provide any sub with a lesson plan and discuss it with them ahead of time.



c. If you experience an emergency, call the front desk 117 Cramer Hall (503-725-5890).

## **Mentor/Faculty Meeting Checklist** (Things to discuss)

### **How to contact each other**

- \*Email
- \* Telephone
- \* Emergencies (illness, etc.)

### **Weekly meetings with your mentor** (UNST program expectation is at least once a week for one hour)

- \* When?
- \* Where?
- \*What?

### **Attendance policy**

- \* Does attendance count in the grade?
- \* Who will record attendance?
- \* Preferred method for taking attendance?

### **The role of the mentor in the classroom**

- \* Where should mentor sit?
- \* Role of the mentor: active participant, “teacher’s aide,” active contributor?
- \* Can role be renegotiated throughout the term as the mentor becomes more autonomous and experienced?
- \* How will instructor/mentor deal with disruptive students in class and in mentor session?

### **The purpose of mentor session**

- \* Skill acquisition? (Esp. writing and technology goals)
- \* Furthering discussions of main session content?
- \* Activities that help complete assignments?
- \* Community building?

### **Planning mentor sessions**

- \* How will mentor sessions be planned? (mentor planned primarily, faculty planned primarily, mutually planned)
- \* How should plans for mentor session be communicated?

### **Grading**

- \* Clarify who will do what when (re: attendance points, percentage of grade for mentor session, etc.)
- \* What is the grading procedure? (Recall: Mentors do NOT grade anything for main class.)
- \* What will the grading criteria be for mentor session assignments?
- \* Will students be provided grading criteria before completing assignments?
- \* Is there a grading rubric for each assignment?
- \* How will grades for mentor session be handled?
- \*What percentage of the grade does it count for?

### **Class Field Trips or Off-Campus Class Activities**

- \*Responsibility and limits of mentor (not to be liable for transportation or off-site activities)
- \* Not to conflict with mentor’s own class schedule(s) or mentor sessions (if possible – please discuss)
- \* Note any reasonable limitations of your mentor, such as transportation, etc. and work ahead of time.

### **Student Concerns**

- \*Communicating with students about problems? How?
- \*Students with disability accommodations
- \*Best protocol for handling students in crisis or who are disruptive

### **Technology**

- \*Has the mentor been “activated” in the D2L course shell in the appropriate role by the faculty?

## Faculty Instructions for Activating D2L Mentor Roles

Depending on your course delivery format (e.g., online, hybrid, or face-to-face), you may need to activate your D2L shell and assign appropriate roles for your mentors. Faculty need to do this for the mentors to activate the mentor's agency in the course shell prior to the term. Mentors cannot attain D2L access until the faculty creates this access following the instructions below.

### Types of Mentor Roles

1. **For Fully Online Courses**, faculty need to add their mentor as a "TA-Course Builder" to the mentored inquiry section itself. Faculty will also need to add the mentor as a "TA-Teacher" in the main course shell. Online mentors typically run and design or adapt their own course shells as "mentor session shells" separate from the main course shell or adapt an alternate model with faculty based on course goals for mentored sessions within the course scope.
2. **For Hybrid Courses**, faculty need to add their mentor as a "TA-Teacher" (or selecting the appropriate role based on faculty goals for the course). Mentored sections for hybrid classes meet in person, so the most appropriate role for a mentor is face-to-face with minimal work in the course shell itself other than being apprised of what students are seeing online for class.
3. **For Face-to-Face Courses**, faculty need to select the level or role that D2L will play in the course and then add the mentor as a TA-Teacher if needed only for viewing purposes or minimal assistance). Mentors in face-to-face courses are primarily responsible for in-person sessions and the usual mentoring duties to attend main session.

### How to assign a TA to your course:

- Go to your D2L class list and click **Add Participants**.
- Select **Add Existing Participant** and search for the name of your TA. Use the **Select a Role** drop down menu to the right of the TA's name to assign the appropriate role as noted above. (This will appear where "Guest" is listed in the screenshot below.) Select the appropriate course and section from the **Select a Section** dropdown menu.
- Click the **Enroll Selected Users** button to complete the role assignment.

### Related Links

The webpage for handling D2L is here:

<https://www.pdx.edu/oai/desire-2-learn-d2l>

The tutorials are here:

<https://pdxutorials.uservoice.com/>

One of the Tutorials deals with adding a Teaching Assistant (excerpted above):

<https://pdxutorials.uservoice.com/knowledgebase/articles/1165558-enroll-people-in-your-course>

### Contact:

Katherine Barich, [barichk@pdx.edu](mailto:barichk@pdx.edu) for more assistance in UNST