

ALC Student Guidelines for Additional Support Options [Mentors]

Staff at Australian Lutheran College are aware of the diverse pressures students face as study commitments are juggled with work, family and social responsibilities and therefore endeavour to support students in every possible way to achieve their study goals.

Flexible education students require self-motivation, self-discipline and perseverance. With sensible time-management and good study skills, study by flexible education can be successful and fulfilling.

We encourage students to keep in contact with ALC by email or phone throughout their studies. For those students studying via online mode, regular contact with lecturers via forums is encouraged.

All ALC students enrolling to study by flexible education may choose to work with a personal mentor, with whom they meet for dialogue, guidance in reading and/or assistance in the various tasks associated with research and essay writing. A mentor offers dialogue, support and prayer to the student. ALC suggests the lecturer or head of school be consulted for guidance.

- For *EDU1007 Principles and Context of Lutheran Schooling*, *EDU1012 Practice of Christian Education*, *EDU2014 Lutheran Principles of Education* and *EDU2015 Practice of Christian Education*, we suggest a teacher in a Lutheran school who has their postgraduate qualification in educational theology through Australian Lutheran College [for example: MEd; GradDipTh(Ed)] or who has at least completed the unit of enrolment.
- For *NUR3001 Principles of Faith Community Nursing* and *NUR3002 Practice of Faith Community Nursing*, we suggest a health professional or pastor who has higher degree qualifications in their discipline at Graduate Diploma level, or preferably Masters/Doctoral level. This person must have a practising faith, preferably in the student's preferred denomination. They should hold a theological qualification if possible, or at least have a developed interest in theology.
- For all other units, we suggest the local Lutheran pastor.

ALC defines the **role of the mentor** as someone who:

- spends time with the student encouraging them to reflect on their reading and to integrate new concepts or ideas into their practice
- meets regularly with a student eg fortnightly or monthly

A mentor can be described as a wise, experienced and trusted adviser. A useful mnemonic (adapted from Clutterbuck, 1985, p 20) to describe the role of a mentor is someone who:

Manages the relationship
Encourages you
Nurtures you
Teaches you
Offers mutual respect
Responds to your needs

Before someone agrees to act as your mentor, the person needs to make sure that they can *manage the relationship* with you by meeting the time commitment without overloading themselves. The time commitment is something you will negotiate, but desirably is a regular commitment, for example fortnightly.

A mentor will offer you *encouragement*, will support you as you become an independent learner and will celebrate with you as you succeed in your studies. The mentor *nurtures* you by creating an open and non-threatening atmosphere where you feel free to ask questions and receive constructive comments on your work. This role is especially important if your experience at school was negative or you are hesitant about undertaking further study.

From time to time the mentor will adopt a *teaching* role in order to build up your confidence and encourage you to experiment with different learning approaches. You may be asked: 'How did you get to that point?' or 'Can you see any problems in your reasoning?' or 'Can you think of any other arguments and conclusions?' Through this sort of discussion and dialogue your mentor will help you develop higher level thinking, which will be expected in your assignments.

While assisting you to extend and expand your ideas, the mentor will still *offer respect*, avoiding being either patronising or subservient. The mentor is someone who *responds to your needs*—in other words, doesn't listen passively but provides practical help. It is important to note that mentors do not:

- interpret your assignment questions
- tell you the answers
- locate the information for you (although they may direct you to it)
- write or edit your assignments (although they may read them, checking whether they flow logically and are clear enough).

Your mentor may assist or guide you with your reading, discuss with you as you wrestle with issues and seek to apply them, and support you as you research and write essays.

Feedback

The mentor may wish to provide written informal feedback to the lecturer as negotiated with the student. A form for this purpose can be downloaded from www.alc.edu.au/feforms.asp. This form gives the mentor the opportunity to comment on:

- evidence of growing understanding of the subject matter
- student strengths
- any difficulties being experienced
- regularity of meetings

Further reading

Clutterbuck, D, 1985. *Everyone needs a mentor: how to foster talent within the organisation*, Institute of Personnel Management, London.

Parsloe, E, 1992. *Coaching, mentoring and assessing: A practical guide to developing competence*, Kogan Page, London.

Rylatt, A, 1994. *Learning unlimited: practical strategies and techniques for transforming learning in the workplace*, Business and Professional Publishing, Sydney.

Questions

Please contact the head of school if you have any questions about mentors.