



The Uniting Church in Australia
QUEENSLAND SYNOD

Period of Discernment Mentoring



The mentoring relationship is paramount in the learning and discerning of POD participants. The mentoring relationship allows participants to reflect on their experiences while seeking to make sense of learning that emerges from their study. The relationship between Mentor and Participant will be at its best when both parties engage, reflect and discuss things openly and honestly. The mentoring relationship within the POD is not about the Mentor assessing the Participant but journeying with them along a discernment pathway. Therefore, the mentor's goal is to enable and encourage the participant to hear God's voice and leading

Understanding the roles and expectations of the Mentoring Relationship

There are various responsibilities within the POD mentoring relationship, that have particular expectations. The roles of Mentor and Participant require a commitment to the mentoring relationship that constantly holds the following expectations in view:

Mentors

The vital nature of the role of Mentor ensures that people with significant experience in ministry and suitable training in the POD pathway are engaged within a mentoring relationship. Mentors should have the following qualities:

- be a good listener
- have wide experience of the Church
- be committed to lay and ordained ministry within the Uniting Church
- be willing and able to discuss and explore their own faith
- know how to develop rapport with others
- be wise and affirming
- be trustworthy and able to maintain confidentiality
- be willing and able to ask probing, challenging and thoughtful questions

Mentors will be required to exercise the following practical skills in relation to the POD pathway:

- make themselves available as much as is reasonable to meet with Participants either face to face or via online meeting platforms. Mentors and Participants should connect at least two hours per month and at other times as needed
- assist Participants in the development of their Formation Plan
- collaborate with Participants in the development of their Go Deep Learning Agreement (see appendix 1)
- assist Participants to theologically reflect and integrate their learning and experiences
- focus the discussion on the Participants relationship with God and growth in faith and discipleship
- help Participants discern future directions for ministry
- assist Participants in the development of their portfolio statement for presentation to the presbytery representative
- advise Participants honestly or seek advice on the steps they might take to follow God's call on your life.



Participants

In order to make the most of the mentoring relationship the Participant also needs to fulfill certain responsibilities and expectations. The Participant should:

- be teachable (i.e. committed to listening, reflecting, and learning)
- be trusting enough to engage fully in the mentoring relationship
- be reliable willing to meet with the mentor regularly for at least two hours each month
- be prepared to ask for help when needed

It is the responsibility of the mentor and the Participant to arrange meeting times and ensure that they happen. The mentor is required to make themselves available as much as is possible within reason, and to determine the content and direction for those times.

In particular, the Participant, through the reflection process, should be able to articulate:

- What have I learnt about God, ministry, mission and the church?
- What have I learnt about myself and my faith, gifts, passion and character?
- Where do I believe God is leading me through these learnings?

Mentor Training

Training and equipping of POD Mentors is a responsibility of the Synod and, as such, Trinity College Queensland to provide adequate resources for this to occur. Trinity will offer a half day Mentoring short course that will provide specific training for POD mentors.. This short course will be run each year with the expectation that those undertaking POD mentoring will attend. The training will aim to develop skills in mentoring as well as a robust understanding of the POD process. When required, subsequent training and development opportunities will be facilitated during the year for current and potential mentors. This will be worked out in collaboration with Presbytery POD co-ordinators.

Outline of Mentoring Sessions

Purpose

The general purpose of the Mentoring sessions will be: **To reflect on the Participants discernment, progress and experiences to date.**

There will be certain occasions when the mentoring session needs to have a particular focus such as:

- The first two mentoring sessions will need to have the clear purpose of Mentor and Participant getting to know something about each other including their respective faith stories. Furthermore, a critical element of these initial sessions is the establishment of a clear understanding of the POD pathway by the Mentor for the Participant, including the development of a Formation Plan. This should be finalised by the end of the second session and sent to the Presbytery POD Co-ordinator
- At the midway point of the POD (usually after 6 months), the Mentor and Participant will meet for the specific purpose of reviewing progress (see Appendix 2)
- The final mentoring session will be an opportunity to celebrate what God has done during the POD and conclude the mentoring relationship



Outcomes for the Midway Progress Check

1. Reflect on the Period of Discernment experiences so far
2. Discuss questions/issues that have been emerged for the Participant
3. Plan for or reflect on the Go Deep ministry experience
4. Plan for or reflect on the various Go Wide learning experiences
5. Plan for next month and any resources needed

Resources

Both the Mentor and Participant need to consider, prior to their meeting, what resources will assist them during their session. These resources might be directly related to the Go Deep Project and Learning Agreement. However, the resources might be books, podcasts etc. that either the Mentor or Participant have engaged with that will directly speak into the discernment of God's leading.

Suggested process

1. Welcome and prayer
2. Debrief of ministry experiences and study using the What, So What and Now What reflection model (See appendix 1)
3. Consider questions raised by the Participant regarding:
 - themselves
 - theology/faith
 - church
 - ministry and mission?
4. Work through any planning and/or reflections required for the Participant's Go Deep project
5. Consider what study still needs to be undertaken and hold the Participant to account regarding the completion of it
6. What other topics does the Participant wish to discuss?
7. Note down what Mentor and Participant need to do before next session:
 - Participant to email mentor brief summary of reflections from the month before next session.
8. Prayer for the Participant
9. Set date and time for next meeting.



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Mentor Reporting

At the conclusion of the participants POD the Mentor will provide a written report that includes the following:

- Completed Learning Agreement for Go Deep Project
- A reflection (up to 500 words) on the Participant's discerned calling including any affirmations and/or concerns.
- The report can also include any appendices that the Mentor deems helpful including notes from the midway reflection with the Candidate or records of other salient events that emerged during various mentoring sessions.



Appendix 1

Learning Agreement

The Learning Agreement is the significant point of integration for the Go Deep Project. It is the reference point for Participants and Mentors that brings clarity to the direction and shape the Project needs to take. The Learning Agreement needs to be established as part of the initial work of developing the Go Deep Project. The key components of the learning agreement are:

- Go Deep Project Goals:** Participants and their Mentor need to develop up to 5 project goals that are directly related to the Go Deep Project. Project goals should articulate simple and specific actions that, when fulfilled, allow for the project to be completed. The goals can be sequential and/or integrated steps in completing the project. The following elements and questions are helpful guides in the development of the project goals:

Purposeful – Why are you setting this goal as part of the project?

Outcome focused – What outcomes are you expecting to see by setting this goal?

Discernment driven – How will this goal help discern God’s leading?

- Resources:** Participants and Mentors will need to outline what resources will be required in order to fulfill the project goals. The resource list can be progressively developed during the project.
- Outcomes and Discernment:** Participants will be required to record what the outcomes and discernment has been during the Project.

A template for the Learning Agreement is as follows:

Learning Agreement	
Participant Name:	Mentors Name:
Participant Email:	Mentor Email:
Participant Phone:	Mentor Phone:
Go Deep Project Focus:	
Learning Agreement Commencement date:	Learning Agreement Conclusion date:

Go Deep Project Goals	Resources	Outcomes and Discernment
Goal 1		
Goal 2		
Goal 3		
Goal 4		
Goal 5		

Signed:

Participant:

Mentor:



Appendix 2 - Participant Midway Reflection questions

Participant questions to consider as part of the halfway reflection with Mentor

During the last six months:

1. What have you learnt about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus?
2. What have you learnt about what it means to be a part of the Uniting Church in Australia?
3. What are some things that you have learnt about God/church/mission/ministry?
4. What are some things that you have learnt about yourself, your faith, gifts, passion and character?
5. Where do think that God might be leading you through this process?
6. What feedback do you have about the Period of Discernment process so far (what was helpful/not helpful)?

Mentor questions to consider as part of the halfway reflection with Participant

To help the Participant reflect on their progress and discernment thus far, Mentors are encouraged to offer thoughts (positive reinforcement and constructive criticism) on the following areas:

1. What gifts/passions/abilities do you discern in the participant?
2. How is the Participant hearing/not hearing the voice of God?
3. How do you perceive what they have written in the Learning Agreement compared with what they are doing and learning? In other words, how are they processing (internally) their (external) experiences and actions?
4. Do you have any reflections on what call you might discern God may have on the participant? (E.g. do you believe that there are possibilities for call that the participant is not exploring? This might be a call to greater leadership in a particular area, new ministry style or specified ministry.)
5. What feedback do you have for the participant around:
 - Preparation for mentoring sessions
 - Openness to reflect on experiences and new possibilities
 - Organisation
 - Character (how they have handled conflict, disappointment, success, obstacles)
6. Have you any other thoughts for the participant at this point?



Appendix 3 – The What, So What and Now What Reflection Model

This structure for reflection questions is perhaps the most widely known and used. It is a basic way to promote discussion that begins with reviewing the details of the experience and moves toward critical thinking, problem solving, and creating and action plan.

What?

This is all about facts and includes questions such as:

1. What did you do?
2. What happened?

The point is to get the Participant to bring back to mind the experience, asking questions to help the Participant be descriptive.

So what?

Here is where the Participant processes their experiences in order to develop learnings or abstractions:

The So What stage marks a shift from descriptive to interpretive which seeks to uncover the meanings inherent in various experiences through exploring questions such as:

1. How did that make you feel?
2. Why is that significant?
3. What could have been done differently?
4. What might God have been saying in the midst of this experience?

Now what?

The final movement is in generalising learnings to apply them to new contexts which gives rise to questions such as:

1. What discernment will you be seeking from God as a result of what you now know?
2. What spiritual practices will you engage to assist with this discernment and seeking after God?
3. How does the learning provide for an understanding of the way the experience fits into the bigger picture of the ministry context?
4. In what ways can the new learnings be integrated and applied as a means for change in a current context