

TEACHING CERTIFICATE PART 2, UNIT 4: THE ROLE OF THE MENTOR

SUMMARY

The role of the mentor is to support and advise the candidate. A mentor may advise more than one candidate. The mentor does not have a role in tutoring or assessing, but should inform the candidates that they may request help. The mentor may make suggestions about lesson planning, choice of dances and methods of teaching, **if asked by the candidate**, but should not impose limitations on or restrict the candidate's range of teaching. The mentor has a crucial role in encouraging analysis and evaluation of lessons and teaching progress through discussion with the candidate. The mentor is also required to sign the form X4-11 – Mentor's Confirmation, which the candidate submits with Unit 4 cover sheet/application to sit Unit 5.

It is expected that the mentor will:

- be a fully-qualified RSCDS teacher of Scottish country dance with experience of teaching in Branches, Affiliated Groups, schools, clubs or other organisations.
- visit, where possible at least twice, a class taught by the candidate during the period of teaching practice. The purpose of these visits is for the mentor to offer help and advice.
- act as a consultant for the candidate to discuss and advise on teaching practice. This may involve giving candidates information about various methods of planning lessons and recording progress, but the mentor should ensure that their contribution is purely advisory.
- concentrate particularly on assisting the candidate to improve their skills as a teacher through self-evaluation.
- be familiar with all of the Unit 4/5 guidance and documentation on the RSCDS website, including forms and the Syllabus, and help the candidate with those.

A mentor should act as a consultant to a candidate, who is required to present a series of lessons and show some understanding of the teaching process. With appropriate guidance and supervision from the mentor, the candidate will be expected to teach, reflect critically and evaluate the learning experience.

Organised mentoring sessions and visits should include:

- pre-session and initial planning meeting
- observation of teaching
- analysis and evaluation
- feedback to candidate

- discussion and questioning
- future planning – guide the candidate to reflect on the teaching experience, and if necessary work together to make required changes.

The mentor's role will be to listen, question, challenge, direct or assist when required and essentially guide the work of the candidate.

Mentors must be able to use skills of:

- observation: Provide focus and be effective in gaining a clear perspective of the candidate's level of ability.
- feedback: Prime purpose is to see how candidate is managing and how help might be offered to enable progression.
- constructive criticism, praise and application of listening and questioning skills should be carefully applied.

WORKING WITH A CANDIDATE

The mentor should perform the following tasks:

- Ensure that communication is always available, in order to give the candidate maximum support.
- Endeavour to give appropriate time commitment to the candidate.
- Visit the candidate where possible, at least twice during the period of teaching practice. Otherwise, a video of the lesson might be made and used by the Mentor to assess the candidate's progress.
- If unavailable to visit, arrange for a candidate to discuss the teaching by some agreed process (e.g., email, telephone, video call, Skype, Zoom, etc) and receive advice. The tutor should offer assistance to achieve this.
- Support and develop the candidate's knowledge of music, both in the selection of recorded music and in the use of a musician.
- Enable the candidate to evaluate the music used in a lesson.
- Discuss the lesson by asking the candidate to state what went well and what didn't go so well. Encourage the candidate to look and evaluate.
- Help the candidate to analyse what went wrong/was less successful and why.
- If possible, see each lesson plan in advance and, if the candidate agrees, comment on strengths and possible flaws.

A mentor should not:

- Write any of the lesson plans.
- Write any of the Record of Teaching Practice.
- Decide what the candidates should teach, or how they should teach.
- Make only critical/negative comments.
- Make only general, non-specific comments.
- Interrupt the lesson.

Note: suggestions for lesson content, range of appropriate dances, variety of teaching approaches and skills exercises for specific steps or formations should normally be made

only if the candidate requests help or advice in these areas, but as each mentoring situation will be different, the mentor must exercise discretion and judgement.

CANDIDATE SELF EVALUATION

The following aspects should be considered by both the candidate and mentor:

1) What insight has the candidate gained in analysing their strengths and weaknesses, in the teaching process? for example:

- Structuring the lessons
- Observation
- Presentation
- Management
- Pace
- Demonstration

2) At an early stage, careful and specific feedback must be given to the candidate by the mentor. Has the candidate learned how they are performing and what changes, if any, are required for future progress?

3) What planning in the light of critical analysis of the teaching experience can now take place?

4) Does the candidate have some understanding about how they present themselves – manner, approaches to teaching, holding the interest of the class, pace and motivation?

5) Does the candidate respond sensitively to the needs of the classes?

6) How much success did the candidate have in progressing one lesson to the next?

7) Does the candidate understand future planning of lessons?

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Other work the mentor may undertake with the candidate includes helping the candidate work toward progressive teaching by analysing the class dancers' level, recent class content, and programme planning, to develop six hours' work to include in the Record of Teaching Practice. If requested, mentors may be involved with the planning for each class session. Mentors can help candidates develop their presentation of Scottish Country Dancing at levels appropriate for the class members present, recognizing the essential flow of skills improvement from steps through formations to dances, and developing the ability to respond to their classes and to teach dancing, not just dances.