



Faculty Guide for Working with Peer Mentors

Purpose of This Guide

Peer Mentors are students who help guide, encourage, and support other AUM students. They serve as an additional support system within the course by attending class, assisting students, holding office hours, and working alongside with their assigned faculty member.

The success of the Peer Mentor experience depends heavily on the partnership between the faculty member and Peer Mentor. This guide is designed to help faculty members understand the Peer Mentor role, establish expectations, develop an effective partnership with their mentor, and meaningfully incorporate the mentor into their course.

1. Understanding the Peer Mentor Role

Peer Mentors provide academic and general student support while serving as a bridge between students and faculty.

Peer Mentors:

- Attend and participate in class sessions.
- Help students understand course expectations.
- Assist students with coursework by guiding them through concepts rather than simply providing answers.
- Support group work, peer-review activities, and review sessions.
- Help students prepare for exams, projects, and quizzes.
- Remind students about upcoming deadlines.
- Hold weekly office hours.
- Connect students with appropriate campus resources.
- Communicate student questions, concerns, and feedback to faculty.

- Help faculty identify areas where students may need additional support.
- Lead discussions or assist with other classroom activities when appropriate.

The Peer Mentor role may look different depending on the course, faculty member, instructional format, semester, class size, and needs of the students.

What Peer Mentors Are Not

Peer Mentors are not faculty members, instructors, or substitutes for the instructor.

Faculty should not ask Peer Mentors to:

- Grade papers, assignments, exams, or other student work.
 - Make decisions about student grades.
 - Serve as the instructor for the course.
 - Assume responsibilities that should appropriately remain with the faculty member.
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2. Before the Semester Begins

Faculty should meet with their Peer Mentor before the first class meeting whenever possible. If a meeting cannot occur before classes begin, it should take place during the first week.

This initial meeting establishes the foundation for the faculty-mentor partnership.

Topics to Discuss

During the initial meeting, discuss:

Course Goals

Explain the purpose and structure of the course, including:

- Major course learning objectives.
- Important assignments and assessments.
- Areas where students commonly struggle.
- Important dates and deadlines.
- Expectations for student participation.

Your Expectations for the Peer Mentor

Discuss what you would like the Peer Mentor to do during:

- Class sessions.

- Group activities.
- Review sessions.
- Office hours.
- Major assignments or projects.

Avoid assuming that the mentor already knows what you expect. Peer Mentor responsibilities vary considerably between courses and faculty members.

The Mentor's Goals

Ask the Peer Mentor:

- What do you hope to gain from this experience?
- What skills would you like to develop?
- What aspects of the course do you feel most comfortable helping students with?
- Are there areas where you would like additional guidance?

Communication

Determine how you and your Peer Mentor will communicate.

Discuss:

- Preferred communication method.
- Expected response times.
- What types of issues should be communicated immediately.
- How the mentor should communicate student concerns or feedback.
- What to do if the mentor cannot attend class or a scheduled meeting.

3. Establish a Weekly Faculty-Mentor Meeting

Peer Mentors are expected to meet with their assigned faculty member each week for approximately 30 minutes.

These meetings should be purposeful rather than simply a requirement to complete.

A consistent meeting schedule is recommended. If this meeting is no longer useful after some time, the 30 minutes can be allocated to office hours instead.

Suggested Weekly Meeting Agenda

Look Back

Discuss:

- What happened in class this week?
- What questions are students asking?
- What concepts appear to be causing difficulty?
- Did students attend the mentor's office hours?
- Are there patterns the mentor is noticing among students?

Look Ahead

Review:

- Upcoming assignments.
- Exams or quizzes.
- Group activities.
- Difficult concepts.
- Important deadlines.
- Opportunities for the mentor to participate in class.

Mentor Responsibilities

Clarify what the Peer Mentor should do during upcoming class sessions.

For example:

- Facilitate a small group.
- Assist students during an activity.
- Help explain assignment expectations.
- Participate in a class discussion.
- Prepare a review activity.
- Remind students about upcoming deadlines.

Questions and Support

Give the mentor an opportunity to ask questions or raise concerns.

Faculty should create an environment where Peer Mentors feel comfortable saying:

- "I'm not sure how to answer that."
 - "Students seem confused about this assignment."
 - "I'm not sure what you would like me to do during this activity."
 - "A student approached me with a concern that I think you should know about."
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4. Introduce the Peer Mentor to the Class

The Peer Mentor should be intentionally introduced at the beginning of the semester.

Faculty participation in the introduction reinforces the mentor's credibility and helps students understand why the mentor is part of the course.

Consider explaining:

- Who the Peer Mentor is.
- Why the course has a Peer Mentor.
- What the mentor can help students with.
- What the mentor cannot do.
- When and where the mentor holds office hours.
- How students can contact the mentor.

Faculty should reinforce that seeking assistance from the Peer Mentor is a normal and encouraged part of the course. Some faculty have found success in offering a few bonus points to those who make a habit of visiting with their Peer Mentor.

This introduction is particularly important in online courses, where students may otherwise have fewer opportunities to establish a relationship with the mentor.

5. Integrate the Mentor Into the Course

Simply having a Peer Mentor attend class does not guarantee that students will use the resource.

Faculty should intentionally create opportunities for meaningful mentor-student interaction.

During Class

Depending on the course, faculty might ask the Peer Mentor to:

- Circulate during individual or group activities.
- Work with small groups.
- Assist students who have questions.
- Participate in discussions.
- Help facilitate peer review.
- Share strategies that helped them succeed in the course.

- Help students navigate Canvas or course resources.
- Assist with review activities.

The goal is to make the Peer Mentor a recognizable and accessible member of the course community.

Avoid the “Passive Mentor” Problem

A Peer Mentor who attends every class but has no defined role may struggle to establish relationships with students.

Faculty should avoid having the mentor simply sit in the classroom without meaningful opportunities to participate.

Before class, consider asking:

“What specifically can my Peer Mentor do during today’s class that will help students?”

Even a small responsibility can provide the mentor with a clear purpose and increase student interaction.

6. Help Students Use Peer Mentor Office Hours

Peer Mentors hold two office hours outside of class each week.

Office hours may include:

- Helping students with coursework.
- Preparing students for exams, quizzes, and projects.
- Conducting review sessions.
- Connecting with students through Canvas.
- Helping students plan or organize their work.
- Preparing activities for future class sessions.

Faculty can significantly influence whether students use these office hours.

Faculty Can Promote Office Hours By:

- Including Peer Mentor office hours in Canvas.
- Including the information in the syllabus when appropriate.
- Reminding students about office hours before major assignments and exams.
- Personally recommending office hours to students who may benefit.
- Explaining specific reasons students might visit the mentor.

Instead of simply saying:

“Remember that your Peer Mentor has office hours.”

Consider saying:

“If you would like additional help preparing for next week’s exam, your Peer Mentor will be available during office hours on _____.”

7. Use the Peer Mentor as a Source of Student Feedback

Peer Mentors occupy a unique position within the classroom.

Because they are fellow students, mentees may ask them questions or share concerns that they are hesitant to bring directly to the instructor.

Faculty should regularly ask mentors what they are hearing from students.

Useful questions include:

- What are students asking you about?
- What seems to be confusing students?
- Are students talking about a particular assignment?
- What concepts appear to need additional explanation?
- Are students aware of upcoming deadlines?
- What could we do differently to help students?

This feedback should supplement—not replace—faculty communication with students.

8. Give Your Peer Mentor Context

Peer Mentors can provide better support when they understand what is happening in the course.

When appropriate, provide the mentor with advance information about:

- Upcoming topics.
- Assignment instructions.
- Class activities.
- Review materials.
- Major deadlines.
- Changes to the course schedule.

If you want the mentor to participate in a particular activity, communicate expectations before class whenever possible.

Because your student will be added to Canvas, they should be able to progress through the course alongside the students.

9. Interaction Logs

Peer Mentors are expected to document interactions with both mentees and faculty members through the program's Interaction Log.

Interactions may include:

- Weekly faculty meetings.
- Office-hour interactions.
- Classroom interactions.
- Review sessions.
- Group work.
- Canvas announcements or communications.

The Interaction Log helps the Experiential Education and Engagement Center understand how Peer Mentors engage with students and faculty and provides information that can be used to improve the program.

The Three Most Important Faculty Practices

If you do nothing else, focus on these three practices:

1. Meet Every Week

Use the weekly faculty-mentor meeting to discuss what students need, what is coming next, and what the mentor should do.

2. Give the Mentor a Purpose

Do not allow the mentor to become simply another student sitting in the classroom. Give them specific, meaningful opportunities to interact with students.

3. Reinforce the Mentor's Role

Students are more likely to use the Peer Mentor when faculty consistently demonstrate that the mentor is a valuable and intentional part of the course.

A successful Peer Mentor program is not simply about placing a mentor in a classroom. It is about creating a purposeful partnership among the **faculty member, Peer Mentor, and students.**



The Experiential Education and Engagement Center is here to support faculty throughout the Peer Mentor experience. Whether you have a question about the program, need assistance navigating a challenge, or would like ideas for utilizing your Peer Mentor more effectively, we encourage you to reach out.

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