

# Supporting participants on Guidance Skills (Advanced)

Thank you for allowing one or more of your team to attend the AGCAS Guidance Skills (Advanced) residential course.

We want to make sure that your team member and your whole service gets the most out of this training investment. Below are a few tips and suggestions on how to support your team member before, during and after the course based on the feedback and experiences of previous participants.

## Before

- **Make sure they start the pre-course work early.**

Participants will receive a pre-course pack and we encourage participants to do a lot of preparation. This includes reading, completing reflective questionnaires and receiving feedback on their practice. Fitting these things into a busy schedule can be hard, so it's best to start planning as soon as possible. We will check with the participant before the course to see how they are getting on, but if you can add your gentle reminders to ours that would be a great help.

- **Make sure they have a mentor in place.**

Participants will get more from the course if they have the opportunity to discuss their practice and get feedback from an adviser with more guidance experience before and after the course. If you don't have anyone in your service who could fulfil this role, please encourage the participant to contact AGCAS to arrange a mentor from another service. Again, the sooner they do this the better.

- **Make sure they have one-to-one guidance discussions.**

A large component of the course is about developing strong reflective practice. It's easier to engage in reflection if you have done a fair amount of practice recently. If possible, think about how you allocate workloads in the lead-up to the course so that the participant has plenty of opportunities for one-to-one guidance.

## During

- **Make sure they are not distracted.**

The course is demanding and exhausting. If participants have to keep checking their e-mails or make phone calls back to their home service, this can make the course an even more stressful experience. Of course, you can't always control when important things happen, but if it is possible please ensure that big projects requiring the participant's attention don't overlap with the residential week. Treat them as if they are uncontactable.

## After

- **Make sure they implement their action plan.**

We encourage them to develop concrete action plans to help them continue and consolidate their learning beyond the course. It could be helpful to follow up the course with an individual meeting with the participant to clarify their goals. You may even wish to incorporate this into your appraisal process.

- **Make sure you utilise the ideas and enthusiasm that they will bring from the course.**

We don't just help participants to develop their individual practice; we encourage them to think about how they can share their learning with colleagues or even how they can improve their whole service. You may want to encourage the participant to contribute to subsequent in-house training or team meetings.

- **Be kind to them.**

If they return to your service immediately after the course they are likely to be (a) emotionally drained, (b) still processing the transformation, (c) questioning everything, (d) using strange language, (e) all of the above. Please treat them with tenderness, understanding and possibly chocolate (or healthy fruit depending on how much cake they ate during the course).

Obviously, circumstances within your service may make it difficult to provide all of this support and we appreciate whatever help you can provide. If you have any problems or questions, please feel free to contact the lead tutor David Winter ([d.winter@careers.lon.ac.uk](mailto:d.winter@careers.lon.ac.uk)) or AGCAS Training, Events and Publications Manager Linda Byrne ([linda.byrne@agcas.org.uk](mailto:linda.byrne@agcas.org.uk)).