Erasmus+

Orienta 4VET

# Strategy 2 | Mentoring in VET Education

| **Mentoring in VET Education** |
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### TYPES OF STRATEGY

☐ Prevention ☐ Intervention ☐ **Compensation**

### ADDRESSED TO THE RISK FACTORS

☐ **Personal challenges**
    ☐ **Lack of motivation, interest and expectations**
    ☐ **Low self-esteem and self-perception**
    ☐ **Low educational achievement**
    ☐ **Disengagement**
    ☐ **Irregular transitions**
☐ **Social relations**
    ☐ **Difficult relationships at the VET centre (with tutors, teachers, peers, etc.)**
    ☐ **Peer group pressure and negative external influence**
    ☐ **Peer group expectations: low future expectations of the peer group**
☐ **Institutional factors**
    ☐ **Absenteeism / Exclusion from classes**
    ☐ **Lack of trust and support from the institution**

### STRATEGY LEVEL

☐ **Individual level (psycho pedagogical actions)**
☐ **Institutional level (institutional actions)**
☐ Education system level (actions of the education system)

### AIM

Avoid academic abandonment due to risk factors through **individual support** to young people's learning, offering them a positive role model of confidence, the resources and skills needed to reach their potential and respond to their support needs.

### DESCRIPTION OF THE STRATEGY

Tutoring works as a strategy to prevent the risk of young people dropping out due to risk factors, such as transitioning from one educational stage to another and during the beginnings of a new one. It can help them overcome any problems that affect their learning, whether related to the course or not. Ongoing mentoring can help keep a young person motivated to learn, can improve their career opportunities and help them succeed in life, or can provide that young person with the confidence, resources and skills needed for the development of their potential.

Mentoring can fulfil different objectives, depending on the needs of the young person involved and the characteristics of the mentor figure (for example, if they are internal/external agents, adults/peers, volunteers/employees). The relationship and the communications/activities involved vary depending on the student's needs.

Quality mentoring is described through the creation of a relationship based on trust, continuity and commitment of the mentor figure towards pointing out the young person's interests and talents, with

therapeutic listening, mediating for the young person, establishing limits and apologizing when they are wrong. All this involves, among others, agreeing on goals and activities adapted to the young person, choosing the right mentor figure, providing training and offering long-term support. It also means assuming that the young person already has a decision-making capacity and that they must act with a certain autonomy, which the tutor must respect, in order to make their own decisions responsibly.

## BENEFICIARIES

☐ **Young people**   ☐ Teachers   ☐ Families   ☐ Community   ☐ Others ..................

## WHO IS IN CHARGE OF THE STRATEGY

☐ **Tutor**   ☐ Teacher/Trainer   ☐ **Support staff (e.g. counsellor)**   ☐ Families

☐ **Other professionals (internal or external to the institution):** ..........................................

## IMPLEMENTATION CHRONOLOGY *(When will the strategy be implemented)*

☐ **At the beginning**   ☐ During the academic year   ☐ At the end of the academic year

☐ **Transition from lower secondary education to upper secondary education (VET/Baccalaureate)**

☐ Others (specify): .....................................................

## COST OF THE STRATEGY

☐ Low   ☐ **Medium**   ☐ High

## STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT *(How can the strategy be achieved?)*

Mentoring is a combination of face-to-face and on-line activities designed to enable the adoption of mentoring as a regular practice in career counselling and development services. Within this mentoring approach, face-to-face communication is complemented by on-line communication and social networks so the barriers are broken, and ongoing cooperation can take place. The advantages of a blended mentoring approach are flexibility in terms of time and independence in terms of space.

Successful mentoring relationships go through four phases: preparation, negotiation, opportunity for growth, and closure. These sequential phases vary in time. In each phase, there are specific steps and strategies that lead to mentoring excellence. However, it is important to note that mentoring should provide long-term support. To achieve a relationship of trust, it is important that the mentoring takes place over the long term and is not reduced to a single session. The duration of the intervention will depend on the needs of the young person, but particularly for those with complex barriers to learning, the intensity and duration of the tutoring are important.

**Mentoring phases:**

1. **Preparation**. This first step requires the preparation of the mentoring process and the selection and matching of mentor and mentee figures. During this first phase, it is necessary to decide, for example, which young person will participate in the mentoring action and who will act as a mentor figure. Mentor figures can be professionals (e.g., counsellors, teachers or tutors), volunteers (e.g. from the business community, students) or peers. If the mentor is external to the school, it can facilitate the young person to discuss their issues and difficulties. Similarly, peer mentoring brings together young people who are independent of the 'system' and who may have experienced similar problems. For this reason, peer tutoring can be useful to address, for example, personal concerns, social problems, motivational problems, sharing learning experiences and study techniques, etc. We suggest the collaboration of professionals external to the educational centre as mentor figures (for example, professionals who work in administrative institutions such as technical advisory figures for young people from the City Council or technical staff specialised in job placement from the City Council; also, you can count on foundations and other entities that promote the accompaniment of young people). The teaching staff and the guidance counsellor of the centre must be responsible for

matching the group of students and mentor figures involved, and work together with the mentors in follow-up tasks, support, etc.

**Required tasks and suggested activities:**

- *Choose the right mentor figures and provide training.* Training is important for the mentor figure before starting to work with young people. It is particularly important for student mentors, for example.

- *Initial face-to-face meeting between tutor/mentor and mentor figure to agree on the mentoring plan:* objectives, phases, roles and tasks, description of students' profile and needs, etc.

- *Strategies to prepare the relationship between students and mentors.* The VET tutor and/or advisor must explain the mentoring program to their group of students and prepare them for the meeting with their mentors. This action can be developed individually (individual tutorial session) or in group (group tutorial session).

- *Meeting between students and mentors.* Mentor figures match the group of students and start the relationship using the interview as a tool. It is very important to build a relationship based on trust. A key advantage of mentoring is that through the relationship that is developed, the young person in VET can benefit from the advice and support of an adult figure who is often external to their learning and family environments or is considered by the young person as neutral and closer. This type of positive relationship with an adult figure can be important for young people who are at risk of disengagement from their learning environment. For some, it may be the only adult figure they feel supports them in their learning and/or academic career.

- *Meeting of the mentor figure with the teaching tutor,* in a periodic manner to exchange information and promote joint action strategies that are necessary.

2. **Negotiate.** This is the phase of agreement on the objectives to be worked on in the mentoring association. After the first meeting between student and mentor, it is important that the mentor figure negotiates the objectives of the mentoring according to the SMART criteria and plans the actions that must be developed to reach their achievement (planning meeting - session of individual tutoring).

   **Recommended activities:**

   - *Description and analysis of the initial situation.* Configuration of a mental map with all the essential aspects of the personal circumstances of the VET student. Mind mapping serves as a means of visualising and documenting the starting point of the mentoring. The focus is on the perceptions from the student's perspective; therefore, it is one of the first tasks to be carried out before new viewpoints develop. Based on this mind map, goals can be drawn up and resources identified.

   - *Self-assessment and self-perception exercise*. VET students must think and be aware of their own circumstances and expectations, their learning styles, etc.

   - *Students discovering their goals*. This exercise should take place in order to discuss objectives with the student group. In the tutoring process, the task can also be carried out on-line in a personal exchange. It is helpful if the participating student group takes some time to think about their goals and document them in writing.

   - *Action Plan.* The agreement on tutoring activities that must be written.

3. **Enable growth**. Phase of animation and empowerment to carry out the agreed activities. Continued contact should take place through face-to-face and non-face-to-face communication media (social networks that break down potential barriers and enable continuous cooperation). The time intervals must be determined by the mentor figure and the student, as well as the rules of cooperation. It makes sense to set this in a written agreement signed by both parties.

This phase of the mentoring process requires strategies such as: regular review (questionnaire technique is key), active listening/advising; ask for and provide feedback so that the learning experience is satisfying and the pace is comfortable, provide timely support, create appropriate challenges to facilitate learning, use shared time productively, assess goals and deadlines throughout the process, make constructive criticism and accepting and reflecting, seeking other resources if mentor guidance is not possible, celebrating every small success, to name a few. Finally, resources such as a personal learning journal with a notes guide can be quite interesting.

4. **Develop a relationship based on trust**. Trust cannot simply be asked for, nor given at the beginning of the relationship between the mentor teacher and the young person in VT. It must be created over time. However, the factors that can contribute to the creation of trust are confidentiality, respect, consistency, commitment, or the ability to apologise when we are wrong. A good mentor teacher is friendly without being a "friend", is honest and close but maintains boundaries, is clear and firm in his/her expectations, but negotiates the rules of engagement with the young person.

5. **Arrival at closing (*goal review, final discussion and feedback*)**. Once the mentoring relationship is established and fostered, it is important to understand the parameters of when the partnership should change or end. Ending a mentoring relationship does not mean it has failed. Often, it simply means that the initial goals of mentoring have been achieved and that it is time to move forward with greater autonomy. It is important to end a mentoring project with a check on the achievement of the objectives, giving each other feedback and making suggestions for improvement. The aim of this part is to build a commitment between the two people and create sustainability in terms of what has been experienced.

Remember: These activities must be carried out within the framework of **tutoring sessions.**

## RESOURCES *(What is needed?)*

☐ **Mentor and student figure**
☐ Adequate and comfortable space
☐ Schedule
☐ Materials / tools:
    ☐ Diary
    ☐ Discussion guide
    ☐ Worksheets
    ☐ …………
☐ **Other (specify):** ……Examples of Mentoring Plans…………………………………….

## OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

▪ Related protective factors:
  - Health and wellness.
  - Positive vision of oneself and career options (future expectations).
  - Positive self-perception linked to learning ability.

▪ Strategy relevant to personal factors, social factors, institutional factors and compensatory factors.

▪ Key element to address the social support strategy: feeling cared for by teachers and/or tutor teachers.

▪ It must include an educational element to use social media effectively and responsibly.

▪ Need to specify parameters for communication. For example, when are mobile messaging apps (WhatsApp, text) used? How many hours of the day/week must the young person wait to get an answer?

## REFERENCES *(Related resources)*

POLITÉCNICO DE LEIRIA    UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST    Universität Bremen    AARHUS UNIVERSITY    UAB Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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*Mentoring. Service-Learning Project.* https://www.mentoriaescolar.es/

*Mentoring in Dual Vocational Training, at the Edith Stein col·legi.* https://www.alianzafpdual.es/buenas-practicas/colegio-edith-stein/

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