

MENTORING

Guidelines for Effective Practice in Secondary Schools in Aotearoa New Zealand

Ako, Aroha, Ākonga – guiding with heart, growing with purpose
Where teaching begins – with guidance, growth, and mahi



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The Poutama pattern used in these guidelines aligns well with the kaupapa of mentoring as it is centred in learning and growth for both the mentor and mentee. The two shades recognise the relationship of the tuakana and teina and the horizontal steps acknowledge the importance of space to consolidate the learning.

Introduction

PPTA Te Wehengarua's vision for the secondary teaching profession includes that it is culturally responsive, that teachers are well supported in their roles, and that they are properly resourced.

Having an effective mentor at all stages of one's teaching career is a critical part of being well supported and we know that the support received in the first five years of a teacher's career will often determine whether they stay in the profession for longer. PPTA believes that providing all mentors with specific guidance and development is a necessary and invaluable investment. All ākonga deserve to have teachers who have access to relevant mentoring throughout their career. Effective mentoring helps teachers to be the best they can be and keeps people in the profession.

Investing in effective mentoring for all teachers has the potential to improve the quality of teaching in the school, improve the experiences of teachers and save money for the school as a workplace with




staff that care about each other will also have fewer incidences of employee conflict.

Many teachers take on the role of mentor for teacher education students, beginning teachers, overseas trained teachers, or for their colleagues. Many others also act in less formal mentoring roles for colleagues without additional time allowances, training, or other targeted support.

Purpose

The purpose of these guidelines is to support mentees and mentors alike across all stages of their teaching career although it is likely that those who will gain the most benefit from these guidelines will already have been teaching a few years.

Rather than a prescriptive set of instructions, these guidelines provide suggested frameworks and questions to guide conversations to support mentors to be as effective as possible. To this end, you will see this icon:  throughout the guidelines with questions to consider for your own practice.



empower
encourage
problem-solve
organise
understand
walk alongside
develop
prompt
question
model
relational
counsel
constructive
inform
lead
co-plan
help
curriculum
collaborate
challenge
whakarongo
share
feedback
inspire
unpack
listen
coach
reflect
tailor
solution
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Establishing a positive mentee–mentor relationship

There are many studies and literature reviews that point to the establishment of a positive mentor-mentee relationship as the most important aspect of a mentoring programme. Shared understandings that underpin ways of working are critical to ensuring that the interactions are genuine and all parties feel safe.

What makes a relationship mana-enhancing?

The mana-enhancing paradigm supports practices that are relational, inclusive, restorative and purposeful for all. These include practices that promote clear communication, mutual understanding, and respect. Mana-enhancing practices recognise and value an individual's strengths, support their agency, and foster positive relationships based on respect and authenticity.



How does your mentoring programme consider these mana-enhancing practices? ¹



- ☐ **Strengths-based:** identify and build on individual and collective strengths.
- ☐ **Purposeful:** a clear purpose and a commitment to positive outcomes for all involved.
- ☐ **Self-determination:** ability to make decisions about one's own life.
- ☐ **Inclusive:** all voices and perspectives included, close the space between different understandings, while building trust and mutual respect.
- ☐ **Relational:** strong, authentic relationships based on trust and mutual respect.
- ☐ **Cultural Identity:** recognised and affirmed.
- ☐ **Restorative:** restore well-being and address injustices.

¹ Adapted from [Principles for Oranga](#)

Bringing these practices together in a framework

The following framework is one used across education settings to guide culturally responsive teaching, mentoring and leadership and reflects Te Ao Māori and the unique context of teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand.

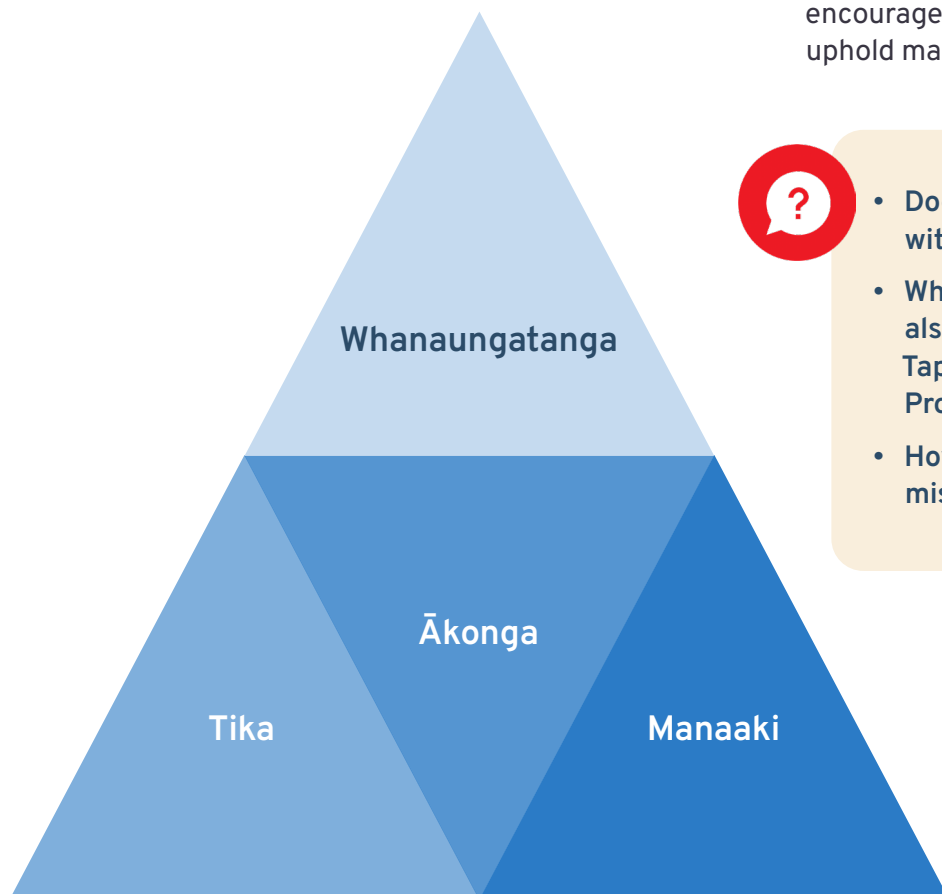
Frameworks help to provide structure, clarity and consistency as they help establish shared expectations, provide clear boundaries and help ensure all participants can participate.

Whanaungatanga: Emphasises the importance of building strong, respectful relationships and a sense of belonging.

Ākonga: At the centre is the learner—be that the mentee (teina) or tuakana (mentor)—with both fostering a love of learning and supporting professional growth.

Tika: Upholds integrity, fairness, and ethical practice in the context of the school while reflecting what is right for the individual.

Manaaki: Demonstrating care, empathy, and support for others. Manaaki combines the two words 'mana' and 'aki' (to exert or encourage) so it refers to practices that uphold mana.²



- Does this framework resonate with you?
- What other frameworks could also be considered? For example: Tapasā, Tātaiako, Te Kotahitanga, Professional Standards for Teaching.
- How could your school vision and/or mission statement be incorporated?

² [Science Learning Hub](#)

'It takes a village' Who supports whom?

It takes a teacher to make a teacher. In fact, it takes several. We need mentors. We need people who will not only tell but who will show how it's done: Give feedback tactfully and sensitively. Be the listening ear. Hold the box of tissues. Buy the emergency chocolate.

(Regional Chair, Kate Halls)

All teachers need access to mentoring throughout their career for different purposes, for different lengths of time and from different people.

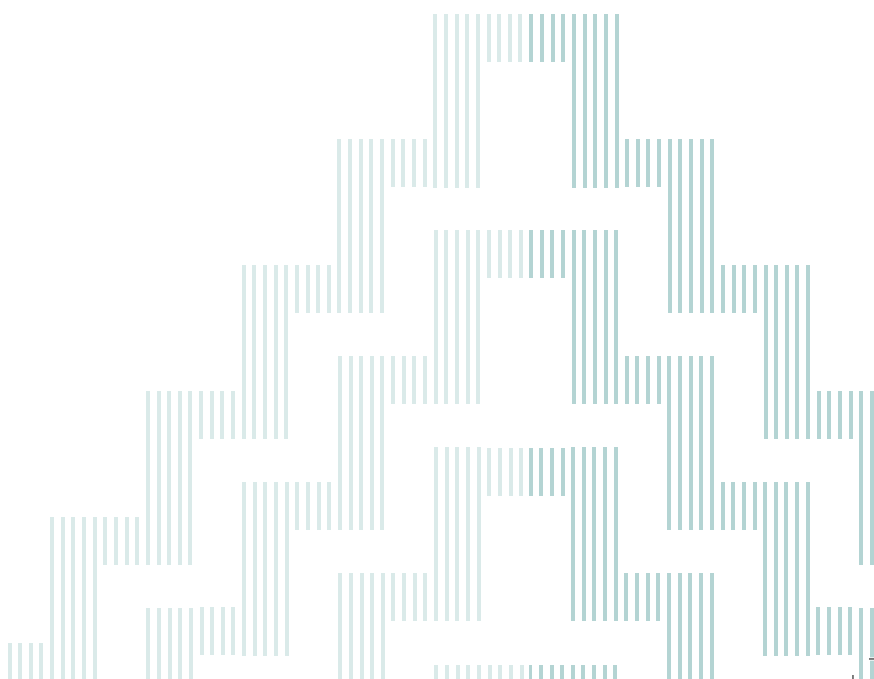
While many middle leaders, including heads of subjects/learning areas might be more likely to mentor student teachers, beginning teachers and teachers from overseas; senior leaders are more likely to be supporting the middle leaders.

Depending on the needs, the purpose of the relationships, the experience and expertise of tuakana and teina, support will likely need to come from more than one individual.

While all of the above statements are correct, they do pose some logistical dilemmas in the school setting.




- What does your school consider when pairing mentees with mentors?
- How is the balance to meet different needs at different times achieved?
- How flexible is your mentoring programme? Do you have some elements of uniform support and others that are more flexible?
- How much agency does the mentee/mentor have over the decisions made about the mentoring programme?
- Who helps kaiako identify their aspirations and grow as a professional?



What approaches might be useful to consider?

A mentor might be called on to take on different approaches depending on the focus or goal of the mentoring relationship and the phase the mentoring relationship is at. The approach might be instructive, collaborative or facilitative.

Instructive	Collaborative	Facilitative
		
Mentor has more control, offers information, suggestions, solutions.	Mentor guides. Mentee and mentor co-construct solutions.	Mentee actively directs flow of information. Mentor facilitates mentee's thinking and problem-solving.



- Which goals would require a more collaborative approach?
- Which phase of a mentoring relationship would lead to a more facilitative approach?
- Where does induction sit?
For example, when supporting a new staff member how to use KAMAR, write reports, whānau hui etc, assessment tools.



What might take place when the mentee and mentor meet?

As with any new relationship, as the relationship between the mentee and mentor begins, there will be different understandings, assumptions and expectations to be worked through.

Consideration will need to be given to understandings about what it means to be a professional such as what's reasonable when responding to emails, leaving work when absent or engaging with parents. In other words, even when there is a clear focus for each meeting, expectations and strategies that work for 'our ākonga', 'how we do things around here' and revelations about the school culture will no doubt permeate many discussions.

The following pages list some possibilities for areas of focus. This list is not exhaustive, but it can serve as a useful starting point for structuring mentoring conversations about different aspects needing support.



- Which teachers are more likely to need support for each aspect? Student teachers? Beginning teachers? Overseas trained teachers? Or all colleagues?
- What approaches would be most suitable for the different aspects/audiences?
- Who is the most appropriate person to support each aspect?

FORMAL MENTORING**From Head of Faculty/subject specialist****Curriculum-related guidance:**

- » Supporting access to subject experts when not available in your school, linking to subject associations
- » Providing useful resources/videos/websites
- » NCEA delivery and assessment

Pedagogical guidance:

- » Encouraging mentees to try different methods to deliver the content to meet the needs of diverse learners
- » Ensuring mentees are exposed to a range of teaching strategies and are supported to develop their own persona as a teacher—allowed to collect the bits that work and leave the bits that don't
- » Time and pace to investigate different approaches

Feedback, Reflection & Accountability:

- » Receiving constructive feedback and reflecting on experiences or performance
- » Checking in on progress and maintaining motivation towards goals

Administrative guidance:

Course outline templates and other administrative tasks

From Specialist Classroom Teacher³ or other expert in pedagogy**Pastoral/emotional support issues:**

- » How to deal with difficult students/classes/colleagues
- » Personal coping strategies
- » Time and task management
- » Visits to classes/specific observations to get feedback

Skill Development:

- » Goal setting: identifying short and long term professional or personal goals
- » Building specific competencies (e.g. leadership, communication, technical)
- » Encouragement and strategies to build self-assurance in professional settings
- » Understanding workplace dynamics, politics, and values

³Refer to the Collective Agreements about the Specialist Classroom teacher role

Group sessions**Facilitated by relevant staff member**

- » Group sharing encouraged—what went well/not so well—share the good and bad to build community
- » Answering the “dumb” questions
- » Group information/sharing sessions/connecting socially
- » How to: write reports/deal with attendance/duty requirements/admin

INFORMAL MENTORING

- » A buddy/critical friend/Kāfe me te kōrero
- » A designated “go-to” person who you can talk to without judgment about whatever is happening in your classroom
- » A colleague who might occasionally pop in/chat to see how things are going

Decision-making about mentoring programmes

Aotearoa New Zealand-based researcher Kate Thornton argues that effective mentoring training programmes, especially when valued by leadership teams, can promote positive shifts in practice across secondary school settings.

Recommendations for successful mentoring programmes in secondary schools from the *Effective Mentoring Practices* micro-credential⁴ include that:

- » mentoring programmes:
 - » are supported by school leadership
 - » have a clear structure
 - » are research and evidence informed
 - » are monitored and evaluated
- » mentors receive training and support
- » time and resources are allocated for mentoring

⁴ Effective Mentoring Practices for Secondary Teachers in Aotearoa NZ micro-credential
Victoria University of Wellington 2022



Sometimes there are outside influences and expectations that can put extra pressure on the staff mentoring programme. Student teachers don't all have the same requirements, and some may be on site for a few weeks while others may be on site for a good proportion of the year. Teachers who have trained or taught mostly overseas will have come from a range of settings and will have a diverse range of needs. Experienced teachers who may be teaching a new subject or level for the first time will also have their own challenges and may need to access a mentor from outside the school.

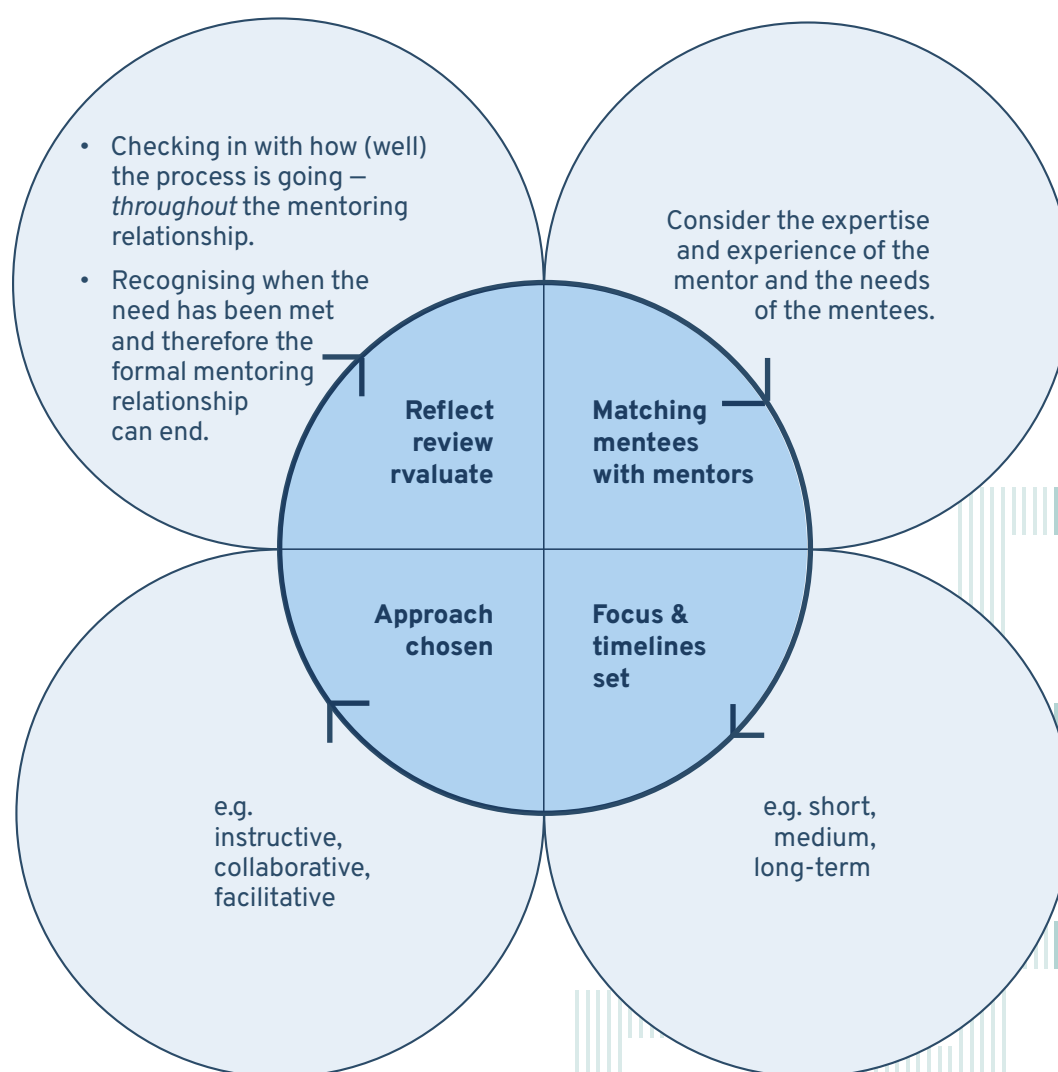
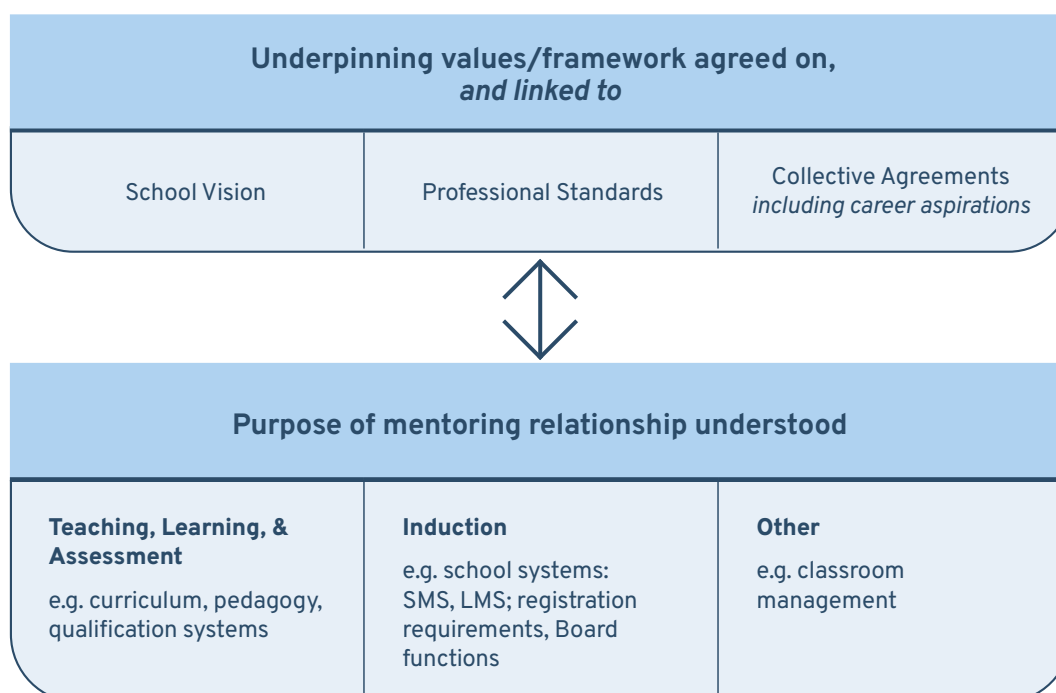
Leadership teams therefore hold a lot of responsibility when it comes to decision-making.⁵ This doesn't mean that embarking on an off-the-shelf school-wide programme is the only answer. Rather, that the needs of all users be considered—some programmes might be more suitable for teachers at a particular stage of their career. School-wide approaches should be flexible enough to reflect different needs.



- How are tuakana/teina chosen? Are there experienced teachers, (not only middle leaders/unit holders) who may also be suitable as tuakana?
- How is confidentiality maintained?
- How can individual professional learning needs be met while also supporting the needs of the school community?
- What specific professional learning is available for tuakana/mentors?
- How does the timetable policy (and other resources) support the needs of all those who need mentoring? Student teachers, beginning teachers, teachers from overseas—and ALL staff?
- What happens if the relationship is not working? How to change who you support/who supports you while maintaining mana?
- How is the mentoring programme evaluated and reviewed? What does success look like?

⁵ The professional standards for leaders and principals outline what these responsibilities are.

The flow chart below summarises some of the decisions that need to be made, incorporating aspects of these guidelines.



Case studies

Here are some insights about mentoring from three schools.

Mentoring Through a Te Ao Māori Lens (for ākonga and kaiako alike)⁶

But not just Māori. What's good for Māori is good for all.

Whanaungatanga – Relationships First

- » Mentor and mentee build connections, starting with kōrero, shared stories finding that common ground of connection
- » Regular, informal check-ins to strengthen trust and show consistent presence—“kanohi kitea”

Manaakitanga – Support

- » Affirming identity as Māori
- » Supporting staff to pronounce names correctly
- » Understanding their pepeha
- » Celebrating their whakapapa
- » Creating safe spaces where they feel heard, seen, and valued without judgement

Tuakana/Teina Support

- » Use more experienced kaiako (tuakana) as role models for less experienced kaiako (teina)
- » Provide opportunities for teina to lead.

Ako – Learning

- » Learning from each other—experiences, cultures, aspirations
- » Incorporating Māori worldviews in goal setting: "What are your dreams and aspirations? How can we as a kura support these? He aha tō Maunga Teitei?"

Wairuatanga – Spirituality

- » Success isn't just academic – it's spiritual, emotional, physical, and cultural
- » Starting sessions with karakia, encouraging reflection, understanding tapu and noa in Te Ao Māori

Tūrangawaewae – Belonging and Identity

- » Encourage all involved to understand where they come from, so they know where they're going
- » Support them to write and share their pepeha or whakapapa, and be proud of who they are—NOT just at the start of the year—Pepeha/Whakapapa is an ongoing learning process.

⁶ Adapted from New Plymouth Boys' High School

Putting the learning from the micro-credential into practice⁷

At Rangitikei College, I have developed a more intentional approach to mentoring, beginning in my English Department and extending across the school through my PPTA roles at branch and regional level.

Completing a mentoring micro-credential reshaped my practice from “watch me and learn” to a focus on active listening and supporting colleagues to find their own strengths.

I now balance formal mentoring roles with informal, everyday support, ensuring guidance is timely, manageable and necessary.

I believe encouraging staff to take up PLD opportunities, such as mentoring training, benefits teachers, schools, and students alike, with the most rewarding moments being when mentees achieve those “aha” breakthroughs of independent growth.

I have focused on ensuring time and roles (SCT, Associate Teacher, HoD) are used strategically (when it has been within my power) to make mentoring relationships sustainable. However, this has often involved aspects that are outside of my reach.

Using the Growth Coaching model as a school-wide approach

At Rototuna Junior High School, the Growth Coaching Model supports middle leaders as they lead their faculties/departments. Elements of the Growth Coaching Model:

- » Regular, structured 1:1 coaching conversations (45 mins each time). Conversational framework to enable productive conversations
- » Achievements celebrated
- » Linked closely to Standards for Teaching Profession
- » Clear goals - confidential to individual (or can be shared if relevant)
- » Co-teachers work with coach, two observations each
- » Four goals per year, six structured coaching meetings
- » Commits to small but significant actions to start moving towards goals.
- » Described as ‘*deep, powerful and actionable professional learning*’.

⁷ Tanya Sherborne, Member and graduate of Effective Mentoring Practices for secondary teachers in Aotearoa NZ micro-credential

Useful readings

He Waka Eke Noa: Mentoring in the Aotearoa New Zealand Research Community. Royal Society Te Apārangi. (2017). <https://www.royalsociety.org.nz/what-we-do/research-practice/mentoring-guidelines/he-waka-eke-noa-mentoring-in-the-aotearoa-new-zealand-research-community/>

Thornton, K. (2025). Mentoring preparation for New Zealand secondary school teachers: Insights from an effective programme *International Journal of Mentoring and Coaching in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijmce-09-2024-0109>



Acknowledgements

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou

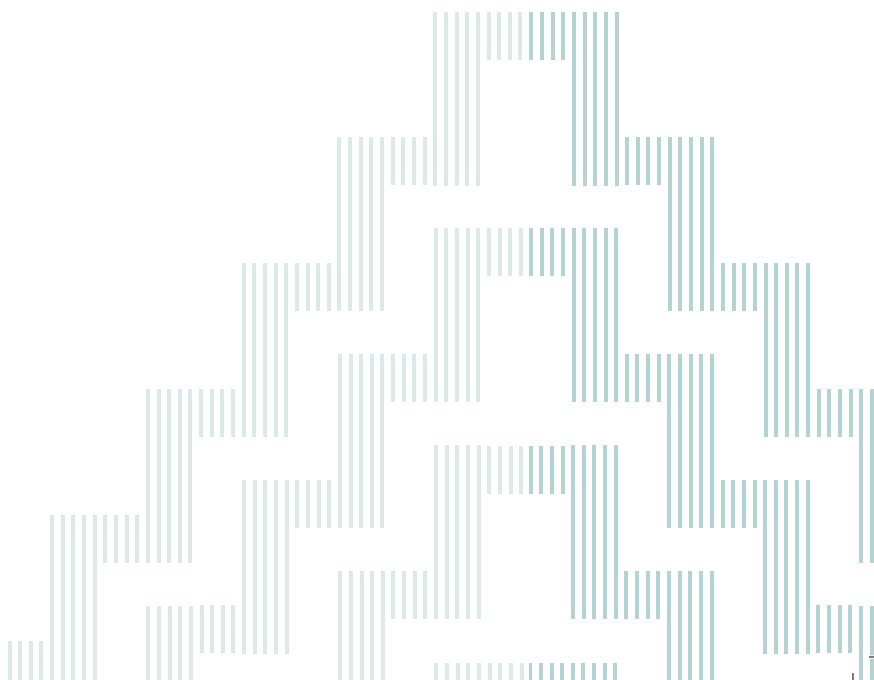
As a member-led Association, it's critical that members can see themselves in the work of the Association.

Many members of PPTA Te Wehengarua have contributed to these guidelines. They have been the focus of the Initial Teacher Education Taskforce (including representatives from The Executive Team and Te Huarahi Māori Motuhake), and the following groups have also had input:

- » Attendees at the Mentoring workshop at the 2025 Issues and Organising Symposium
- » Attendees at the National Association of Secondary Deputy and Assistant Principals' Conference

- » Middle Leaders Advisory Committee
- » Some graduates of the micro-credential course *Effective Mentoring Practices for Secondary Teachers in Aotearoa NZ*. A collaboration between the University of Victoria Te Herenga Waka and PPTA Te Wehengarua. This course was also a great inspiration for these guidelines.

This document is informed by relevant Aotearoa New Zealand research and research from overseas—see references throughout and at the end of this document.





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