

Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) mentorship program

A guide for mentors and mentees

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

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General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration (GPMHSC)

The General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration (GPMHSC) is a multidisciplinary body managed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) and is funded by the Commonwealth Government under the Better Access to Psychiatrist, Psychologist and General Practitioners through the MBS (Better Access initiative).

The GPMHSC includes representatives from the RACGP, the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP), the Australian Psychological Society (APS), and a carer representative and a consumer representative nominated through Mental Health Australia (MHA).

For more information, visit the [GPMHSC website](#).

Overview

Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) mentorship program: a guide for mentors and mentees consists of the following sections:

Section One provides an overview of the FPS mentorship program, including:

- program objectives and outcomes
- benefits of participating in the program
- types of mentoring activities
- how to become a mentor or mentee (application process)
- matching mentors and mentees.

Section Two provides detailed information for mentors and mentees, including:

- roles and responsibilities
- pre-requisites and selection criteria
- mentoring agreement
- first meeting checklist and discussion guide
- how to set goals
- providing feedback and evaluating the program.

Section Three outlines a list of resources on where to get support, including additional information on:

- GP self-care
- GP wellbeing programs
- addressing concerns or issues with your mentor or mentee.

Section One – The FPS mentorship program

The FPS mentorship program provides an exciting opportunity for experienced GP providers of FPS (mentors) to guide and support newly trained GPs (mentees) towards becoming skilled FPS providers.

The aim of the program is to provide GPs with the opportunity to:

- connect with and learn from their peers in a supportive environment
- acquire the best possible advice and guidance by sharing knowledge and experience working with mental health in general practice
- increase the use and uptake of FPS skills in general practice
- improve patient care and outcomes in mental health.

The program objectives include:

- Matching prospective mentees to mentors
- Establishing selection criteria that will ensure the appropriate selection of mentors and mentees
- Promoting flexible learning formats to assist with the development of mentor-mentee relationships
- Ensuring adequate support and guidance is provided to be both mentors and mentees throughout the program.

The FPS mentorship program will support a GP workforce that is better equipped to apply skills in FPS when treating and managing patients with mental health conditions. The program is also expected to enhance collegiality and connectivity between peers who have a common interest in mental health and general practice and enhance professional growth and development.

Table 1: Schedule overview of the previous FPS mentorship programs

Intake	Intake period	Number of mentoring sessions	Frequency of mentoring sessions
1	April to December 2022	8	Monthly
2	August 2022 – May 2023 *	8	Monthly
3	August 2023 – May 2024*	8	Monthly

**There is no mentoring sessions in January.*

1.1 What is mentoring?

Mentoring is a dynamic and mutually beneficial engagement between an advanced incumbent (mentor) and a less experienced person (mentee) ¹. Mentoring may help facilitate professional growth by sharing knowledge and experiences through advice, guidance and support ².

The FPS mentorship program is *not* a supervision program. Mentors must not act as clinical supervisors or educators and mentees are not assessed for their skills in applying FPS in general practice.

1.2 Mentoring benefits

Benefits to mentoring, both for the mentor and mentee include ³:

- Promotion of collegiality and connectivity between colleagues
- Stronger clinical knowledge and skills
- Improved social and emotional wellbeing
- Development of leadership and communication skills
- Improved reflection skills.

1.3 Types of mentoring activities

The FPS mentoring sessions will include the following two formats, dependent on the needs and preference of the mentee. Both parties must agree on the format before the mentoring sessions commence.

- 1:1 mentoring (face-to-face)
- 1:1 mentoring (remote)

There may be scope in the future to extend these sessions as Case study groups (mentor-lead; 3–4 mentees per group and/or combination of case study groups and 1:1 mentoring.

1.4 Preparing for the mentorship program

Mentors and mentee are required to attend an online introductory workshop before mentoring sessions commence. The workshop will cover important elements of the FPS mentorship program, including understanding the goals of the program, roles and responsibilities, time commitment and expectations of the program. The workshop will also outline ways to benefit the most out of the mentor-mentee relationship.

1.5 Assessing suitability

Assessing the suitability of the prospective mentor, including understanding their motivations for mentoring is critical in ensuring the safety of the mentee and reputation of the program as a whole ⁴.

This process also considers the mentee's motivation, desire and preference to participate in the program. This ensures mentees are familiar with the goals and expectations of the program, frequency of the

mentoring sessions and duration of commitment. Managing expectations will ensure mentees are provided with the opportunity to get the most out of the program ⁴.

1.6 How to become a mentor or mentee

Prospective mentors and mentees are required to complete the mentor/mentee questionnaire and submit the following supporting documents:

Mentors	Mentees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current resume that includes training history • Evidence of mental health qualifications or formal mental health training, e.g., certificates of completion and/or academic transcripts • A letter or reference from a professional, e.g., supervisor or mentor 	<p>Letter from Services Australia (Medicare) confirming your FPS provider registration.</p>

1.7 Matching mentees with mentors

Careful matching of mentees with mentors is important to ensure a lasting and effective mentor-mentee relationship. Much of this depends on the individual needs of the mentee and the mentor's skills and experience. Good matches occur when there is a basic compatibility between mentee and mentor in their personalities, personal and clinical interests and goals or expectation for the relationship ⁴.

Applicants will have the opportunity to include their preferences, values and clinical interests on the questionnaire which will be used to match mentors and mentees. The GPMHSC encourages those with experience and have existing mentor-mentee relationships to participate in the program, given that selection criteria and requirements are met by both parties.

Section Two – Information for mentors and mentees

2.1 Selection criteria for mentors

Pre-requisites*

- Currently working as a GP
- Fellow of the RACGP and/or ACRRM
- Successfully completed GPMHSC-accredited FPS ST
- Registered as a GP provider of FPS with Services Australia (Medicare).

Essential*

- Minimum five years' experience using a selection of approved FPS interventions to treat and manage mental health conditions in general practice or extended clinical experience in a mental health.
- Demonstrated experience in other mentoring or clinical teaching roles.
- Clinical supervision in mental health or extended experience in peer-learning, e.g., participation in personal supervision, Balint groups or similar.
- Previous qualifications in a mental health related discipline, e.g., a graduate certificate, graduate diploma, post-graduate or Masters degree in psychology, psychiatry, psychotherapy or another related field.

Desirable

- Advanced specialised training in mental health (ACRRM)
- Advanced rural specialised post in psychiatry (RACGP)
- Education and/or clinical experience in trauma-informed care and practice
- Leadership roles in mental health field, e.g., in mental health education, policy or research
- Involvement in the development or delivery of GPMHSC-accredited FPS ST.

Supporting documents

- Complete the mentor questionnaire
- Current resume that includes your training history
- Evidence of mental health qualifications or formal mental health training, e.g., certificates of completion and/or academic transcripts
- A letter of reference from a professional, e.g., supervisor or mentor.

***Important note:** GPs who **do not** meet all prerequisite and/or essential criteria are welcomed to apply for exemption.

Please contact the GPMHSC Secretariat on gpmhsc@racgp.org.au for further details.

2.2 Selection criteria for mentees

The GPMHSC encourages all GPs to apply, regardless of their experience in treating and managing mental health conditions in general practice.

Pre-requisites

- Currently working as a GP or GP in training
- Member of the RACGP and/or ACRRM.

Essential

- Successfully completed GPMHSC-accredited FPS ST
- Registered as a GP provider of FPS with Services Australia (Medicare).

Supporting documents

- Mentee questionnaire
- Letter from Services Australia (Medicare) confirming your FPS provider registration.

2.3 Roles and Responsibilities

The mentor is an experienced GP provider of FPS with the capacity to advise and support their mentee in:

- the delivery of FPS in general practice
- MBS item numbers that can be claimed for FPS
- any continuing professional development requirements, including where to go to access up-to-date information and resources (e.g., MBS online, RACGP or ACRRM)
- answering general questions about the Better Access initiative.

Mentors are expected to:

- share their knowledge and experience working with mental health in general practice, specifically FPS, with their mentees
- prepare to meet on a monthly basis with their mentee in a mutually agreed arrangement and take part in semi-structured interactions
- maintain confidentiality of the information shared by their mentee.

Mentors cannot:

- provide advice to third parties regarding the academic or professional progress of their mentee
- be personally held liable for any information or advice given to their mentee. Any information relating to RACGP and/or ACRRM policies or programs should be verified by the mentee before acting on the mentor's advice.

Mentees are expected to:

- to meet on a monthly basis with their mentor in a mutually agreed arrangement and take part in semi-structured interactions
- actively participate in discussions with their mentor and take a proactive role in shaping the mentoring relationship
- develop a set of goals with their mentor and evaluate them regularly
- self-reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses
- accept feedback and constructive criticism from their mentor
- verify any information given by the mentor relating to RACGP and/or ACRRM policies and programs before the mentee acts on that advice. Please contact your respective College for more information.

Both mentor and mentee understand that during the course of their relationship they might both become privy to confidential information about one another, which, they both agree to treat with the utmost respect during and also after the program is complete⁴. Exceptions to this are in the case of a mental health issue, or disclosure of information that would require the other party to notify law enforcement authorities⁴.

2.4 Mentoring Agreement

A written mentoring agreement is a document that recognises the commitment between the mentor and mentee during their mentoring partnership⁴. A formal commitment to the program, before sessions commence can help to foster a lasting and effective relationship, allowing both mentor and mentee to get the most out of their time together.

A number of potential conflicts and problems can be avoided by setting clear guidelines for the partnership at the outset. A good mentoring agreement should outline the following²:

- goals the mentee would like to achieve and an action plan for how this can be achieved (see Setting goals using SMART principles).
- duration of the mentoring partnership
- roles and responsibilities of the mentor and mentee
- agreements on time and frequency of meetings and feedback sessions
- the types of contact (e.g., this can include face-to-face or remote meetings)
- how sensitive issues will be addressed (e.g., confidentiality)
- procedure for identifying and addressing conflicts or challenges that cannot be resolved between the mentor and mentee
- set dates for reviewing the mentoring relationship.

See **Resources** section of this guide for an example of a mentoring agreement template.

2.5 First meeting discussion guide

The first meeting is about getting to know your mentoring partner and having an open and honest conversation about goals, rules and expectations. This is an excellent opportunity to complete a mentoring agreement.

It is recommended the following topics should be addressed during the first meeting ^{1,4}:

Personal and professional background

- Mentors should review their mentee's profile, so they know a little about them before the first meeting
- Talk about past experiences in mentoring; what worked well, what didn't work so well?

Mentoring relationship goals

- Discuss the mentee's needs and what they would like to get from the sessions
- Seek mutual agreement on the purpose of the relationship.

Mentoring relationship rules and expectations

- Seek agreement on responsibilities and boundaries. What topics are off-limits (e.g., performance reviews, personal lives)?
- Agree on session format and who will set them.

2.6 Setting goals using SMART principles

It is recommended that mentees take some time to clearly think about their goals, in particular what they want to get out of their sessions with their mentor.

Mentors should assist mentees with goal setting and defining their professional development needs.

Goal setting can be developed using the SMART acronym ⁴:

- Specific
- Measurable
- Relevant or Realistic
- Timely

2.7 Meeting agenda

A meeting agenda provides structure to the mentoring session, allowing both mentors and mentees to plan for discussion topics during the meeting.

The agenda should outline the following ^{1,4}:

- Progress made (what improvements/achievements or setbacks have happened since the last session)
- Agenda items
- Key learning from the meeting
- Follow-up actions
- Details of the next meeting (date, time and location).

See **Resources** section of this guide for an example of a meeting agenda template.

2.8 Evaluating mentoring

The GPMHSC is committed to providing both mentors and mentees with the appropriate level of support and guidance required to ensure the success of the FPS mentorship program. For example, mentees have the opportunity to complete and submit a mentoring session feedback form to the GPMHSC. This feedback will help ensure standards are maintained and provides the mentee with the opportunity to identify concerns or issues that may have a negative impact on their mentoring experience.

Mentors and mentees are encouraged to conduct regular evaluations of their mentoring partnership. This is to ensure both parties are benefiting from the relationship and identify opportunities for improvement.

Questions to ask your mentor/mentee ¹:

- Are you/we following up on agreed action items between each session?
- What do you like most about our mentoring partnership?
- What do you like least and is this something we can change and improve?
- Are we successfully adhering to the agreed rules and expectations of the partnership?
- Is there anything we should stop and/or start doing to improve the effectiveness of this relationship?
- How are you tracking on the overall goals and objectives set at the beginning of the partnership?

Section Three – Where to get support

3.1 GP self-care

It is essential GPs who participate in the FPS mentorship program are able to identify and manage common signs and symptoms relating to burnout, characterised by feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion, increased feeling of stress and pressure at work and reduced professional efficacy. It is imperative both mentors and mentees know where to turn to for support. Sometimes, this may mean de-briefing with colleagues, or accessing [self-care resources](#) to assist with looking after your own mental health and wellbeing.

3.2 GP-wellbeing programs

If required, mentors and mentees are encouraged to seek help through:

- [The RACGP GP Support Program](#) – free, confidential specialist advice to help cope with professional and personal stressors impacting areas such as mental health wellbeing, work performance and personal relationships.
- [DRS4DRS](#) – an independent program providing confidential support and resources to doctors and medical students across Australia.

3.3 Concerns and issues

The GPMHSC Secretariat is available to assist both mentors and mentees with any concerns or issues that may occur during the mentoring relationship. In the first instance, the most effective approach is to address these directly with your mentor or mentee. If this does not work, or if your concern is of a sensitive nature, we encourage you to contact the GPMHSC Secretariat for a confidential discussion. You may also wish to have a confidential discussion with a fellow colleague or mentor.

There may be some instances during their mentoring relationship where the issue or concern may meet the mandatory reporting requirements. For example, as a mentor or mentee, if you believe that your mentoring partner represents a risk to the public then you may have a legal obligation to submit a mandatory notification. The Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA) has more information about the mandatory reporting requirements of each state and territory on their [website](#).

3.4 Contacting the GPMHSC

If you require extra support, or have any questions about the FPS mentorship program, the GPMHSC Secretariat is available to help. You can contact the team via email gpmhsc@racgp.org.au or by calling 03 8699 0556.

Resources

Mentoring Agreement Template

Instructions to mentees: Make a formal commitment to the FPS mentorship program by completing and signing this agreement with your mentor during the first meeting.

Please review sections of the guide for more information.

Mentee Name:
Mentor Name:

Mentee's Goals (use SMART principles):

We have read and understand the Rules and Responsibilities section outlined in the *FPS mentorship program: a guide for mentors and mentees*

Yes No

Our mentoring partnership will officially begin on _____ and will formally conclude on _____

We will review our mentoring partnership after _____ *e.g., every session, every three-months*

The format of our mentoring sessions will include:

- 1:1 mentoring (face-to-face)
- 1:1 mentoring (remote)
- Case study groups
- Combination of case study groups and 1:1 mentoring
- Other: _____

Outline the procedure(s) for identifying and addressing conflicts or challenges during the mentoring partnership and how sensitive issues will be addressed:

Mentee signature: _____

Date: _____

Mentor signature: _____

Date: _____

Meeting Agenda Template

Instructions: Use this template to structure your mentoring sessions.

Date:	
Progress made <i>What improvements, achievements or setbacks have happened since the last session?</i>	
Agenda items <i>List of discussion points for today's session</i>	
Key learnings from today's session <i>Also include any challenges faced</i>	
Follow-up Actions:	
Mentee:	
Mentor:	
Details of the next meeting (date, time, location):	

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