



MenSI
Mentoring for
School Improvement

MenSI Cluster Diary

Briefing Notes

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MenSI Cluster Diary

Briefing Notes

The MenSI project will use what we call 'Cluster Diaries'. to enable groups of schools (both Advanced & Advanced Practitioner Schools) to collect together information to show how mentoring approaches are being adapted, developed and used. The diaries will then be used by MenSI project partners to write some illustrative case study examples of mentoring practice for wider dissemination.

We anticipate that national responses to mentoring and associated activity will vary from one country to the next and the Cluster Diary approach will also accommodate differences between individual schools within the same country.

What is a Cluster Diary?

You can think of a 'Cluster Diary' as a flexible, school-generated way of gathering together a wide variety of evidence of professional practice in mentoring using a range of media. The diary is a record of the collaborative thinking of a group of schools - 1 Advanced School (AS) and 4 Advanced Practitioner Schools (APS) - about self-identified aspect of mentoring.

What process is involved?

Each APS should start by identifying a topic linked to which is felt to be of importance to their school and where the school feels it needs some mentoring support. The APS then collects information about their chosen topic and shares this with other members of the cluster in a dedicated space, moderated by the AS. The 'diary' is a record of this information-exchange amongst all schools (AS/APS) in a cluster.

There are 4 stages in the Cluster Diary development.

Stage 1: each APS gathers information about a key aspect of mentoring practice that has been identified as important in each school context.

Stage 2: This information, which is in the form of multi-media materials and developed according to the interests and experiences of each school, is entered in a template.

Stage 3: information from each APS is discussed by the whole cluster group, mediated by the AS and with input from the National Coordinator. Any additional information is entered in the final section of the template.

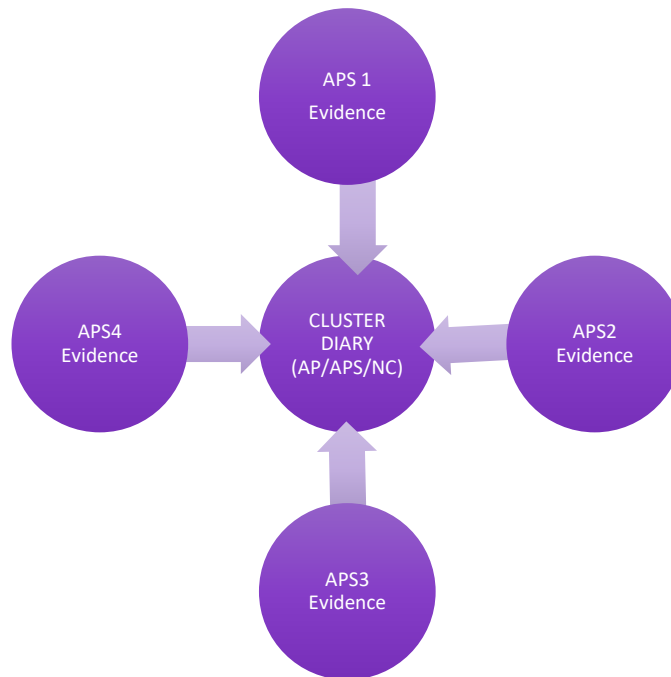


Stage 4: completed APS templates form a record of the groups' work and are then reviewed/analysed by MenSI to create a 'Cluster Diary'. The information the completed Diaries contribute to the project's deliverable relating to illustrations of best mentoring practice. This process is represented in the following table:

| Development Stage | Action | Output |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Stage 1 | APS identify a mentoring focus | Individual APS focus confirmed |
| Stage 2 | APS gather school-based information & reflections | APS |
| Stage 3 | School cluster (APS/AS) discussion; additional reflective comments added | Individual APS Information template agreed |
| Stage 4 | APS Information templates synthesised by MenSI team | Formulation of a 'Cluster Diary' |

Several key actions are involved in the process of developing Cluster Diaries:

- APS must ensure that colleagues are aware of the MenSI project activity, using these Briefing notes as an information source
- Details of confidentiality and data protection are effectively taken into consideration
- Following discussion, each APS in the cluster agrees a mentoring focus - duplication within clusters is acceptable
- APS agree to regularly input evidence, preferably at least twice each school term - any interested teacher can do this
- Observations/reflections/supporting evidence in the e-template can take any form, according to individual preference
- APS share their evidence in cluster meetings with the AS and their National Coordinator; this forum enables a professional exchange of ideas and generates additional reflective comments for each information sheet
- Cluster Diaries are then assembled by MenSI (Work Package 5) colleagues to map mentoring activity and illustrate aspects of development in case studies.



How do I identify a mentoring focus?

The MenSI project places great emphasis on local contexts and aims to capture real-life evidence of practical issues experienced by schools. All our APS settings will be different. They will each encounter challenges or success which, although sometimes thematically similar, will be conditioned by their own unique educational, social or economic conditions. It is suggested that formal/informal discussion in each APS is the basis of identifying a focus: initially/typically the focus is much more likely to be a challenge or problem where the school feels that it needs support and mentoring and/or where it thinks that mentoring could help it take some aspect of successful practice to the next level. It can equally be an aspect of practice which is causing a challenge, or an area of successful practice which the school wants to build upon.

What is the Structure?

Cluster Diary information can be developed in different ways and formats. However, to enable discussion and development between other schools, we recommend using the following common format, which enables contributions to be made regarding various aspects of their selected mentoring-related theme.



| Name of Advanced Practitioner School | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|------------|
| ACTIVITY | ILLUSTRATIVE MATERIAL / EVIDENCE | REFLECTION |
| <p>ISSUE TO BE RESOLVED / ISSUE TO BE CELEBRATED or ENHANCED</p> <p>Why is the topic of significance in your school? What information do you have as a rationale for your selection? What are the major challenges involved? What might promote progress? What is its impact on Learning and Teaching in your school? What discussion has taken place about ways of addressing the issue?</p> | | |
| <p>ACTION TAKEN</p> <p>What plan has your school developed regarding the topic selected? Describe the actions you have taken so far. What factors have assisted you in making progress? What have been the barriers? What external support did you get? Include details of any further consultations, initiatives or changes in policy and practices your school has made. Try to provide concrete examples where possible of the actions taken.</p> | | |
| <p>IMPACT</p> <p>Outline the results of the action taken. How have you evaluated what you have done? What has been the impact on Learners and Teachers? Who in the school has been aware of the results? What has changed as a result? Have there been any surprising outcomes resulting from your actions?</p> | | |



| | | |
|---|--|--|
| NEXT STEPS Summarise any next steps you intend to take. Are any significant changes in school organisation or procedures needed? Why have you decided to take this action? Who is most involved? What do you expect as a result? Will your actions extend to other schools? | | |
| CLUSTER MEETING NOTES This section comprises a compilation of the feedback and summary reflections from the meetings held between APS and the AS. | | |

Who should contribute?

Anyone involved in learning and teaching in the participating APS can make an input to the Cluster Diary Information Template. While there is no hierarchy of importance given to the evidence collected or from whom it has been obtained, contributions from a variety members of the educational community will be valued. Subsequently, additional information can be added as a result of cluster-based discussions involving both the APS, the AS and the NC.

How often should schools input?

All MenSI schools should provide inputs to the cluster template at least **once every 2-3 months**; some schools will do more than this, and we encourage these additional contributions. Contributions will be collected and shared with the NC and WP5 by the AS.

What information is requested?

The Cluster Diary process aims to encourage flexible, creative and practice-based contributions from school leaders, teachers and those working alongside them. This can also include students as well as their families. The APS decides on the kind of content that is appropriate to their given situation and to the mentoring topic they selected to explore. Both 'Evidence-Based' and 'Reflective' content should be captured. Both are interdependent and integral to the diary-building process. We do not place a limitation on the length of contributions in each section of the diary or how the information is presented.



What is Evidence-based content?

A collection of artefacts (meaning any written accounts/words/graphics/film/music/assistive technology/multi-media and other sources) gathered over the project's duration to illustrate the way that you have identified, explored and progressed your chosen mentoring-related topic. The evidence you include can be part of a lesson plan, a meeting agenda, a record of a meeting between two teachers, an extract from a professional development session....the list is open-ended. Our intention is that each cluster of MenSI schools (1 AP and 6 APS) assemble a diverse body of materials that best illustrates their collaborative work in mentoring.

What is Reflective Content?

To obtain a deeper understanding of the mentoring-related actions taken in each APS, we invite teachers, other professionals, students, families and others associated with the school? to contribute their views, commentaries and observations at each stage of the template process (i.e. identifying a focus, the action taken, the results obtained and the potential future actions you might consider). This can include recording (using written accounts/words/graphics/film/music/assistive technology/multi-media and other sources). These ways of reporting can be used to provide illustrations of your thinking regarding the overall process. They can comprise short notes or longer pieces of reflections. It could, for example, highlight one or more of the following:

- why the topic selected in your APS was important to you and your school
- the way you identified that there might be a gap in your professional knowledge
- feelings about receiving further professional support
- views about working collaboratively with others
- ideas about how you learn most effectively
- whether the cluster diary process has brought about any changes in pedagogical practice
- whether the cluster diary process has brought about any changes in motivation or attitude
- how personal development targets are set
- from whom or where is professional support obtained
- what has been most challenging about the cluster diary process
- whether your initial expectations of the process have been realised
- thoughts about building on your achievements

What might be the next steps?

The information you provide contributes to one of MenSI's significant deliverables, the creation of a series of case studies. But it also has implications for your own professional progression and that of your school. So we're interested in receiving your observations regarding the actions that you might consider taking in the future - based on any gaps in your knowledge-base, or any outstanding needs that are apparent in your APS. We are especially interested in what motivates you to take further action, and how might you upscale and disseminate what you have already done.





What about confidentiality?

Your contributions to the formation of Cluster Diaries will initially be confidential to MenSI and its participating schools - they will not be public documents. Distribution, collection, storage, use and disposal of all data from the Cluster Diaries will be subject to the Code of Ethics enshrined within the project's *Data Management Plan* (April 2021). This relates to the following key aspects of research ethics:

- Requirement for informed consent by all participants
- Status of all MenSI staff to be validated by their own national child protection agency
- Agreement of an individual timetable for data-collection with each AS and APS
- Formal undertaking regarding confidentiality, anonymity and storage of all data
- Agreed understanding regarding the use of data obtained from all AS and APS
- Provision of an opt-out option at an agreed point in the research process
- Opportunity for participants to review any contribution they provide to MenSI
- Appropriate acknowledgement, where required/agreed, of schools' contribution/resources

Public version & format

A public version of these documents maybe be uploaded to the MenSI Community of Practice online upon consent of the contributors and following GDPR procedures as stated above. The public version could be the current template, but also in the shape of a blog, a video, forum discussion, etc.

Indicative Examples

Internationally there has been a rapid growth in the volume of illustrative resources to show best-practice in learning and teaching in schools. Some include material which can provide examples to support your construction of school-based evidence in a diary-style format. It will be apparent that all of these examples are illustrations of the way in which a 'community of practice' approach in schools/classrooms can be captured using mixed media.

Some resources produced by a related project, *Living Schools Lab*, will also be worth exploring (<http://lsl.eun.org>) as indicative of a mixed-media approach to presenting accessible school-generated resources that can be used by others to inform practice. Other illustrative resources include those that have been widely developed, for example in Australia and Canada. These include:

<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others/classroom-observation/classroom-observation-strategies>

Elsewhere, the idea of a 'patchwork' of evidence has become a popular way of gathering evidence of practice; one example of this is the 'portfolio' of evidence, as explained in this university-based illustration:https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/academic-development/assessmentdesign/methods/portfolios



Contribution to case studies

The information you provide will contribute to a collective 'Cluster Diary', which will form a record of the professional discussion which takes place between the AS and the APS in each of the 6 clusters in all the project's partner countries. This information will then be reviewed by the MenSI team. It will provide evidence to support a review of mentoring activities (Deliverable 5.1) and a report on *Effective whole-school mentoring* (Deliverable 5.2). The second of these outputs contains illustrations of best mentoring practice, to which the Cluster Diary evidence will provide a significant contribution.

For additional information please contact your national coordinator.



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