

Aged Care Transition to Practice (ACTTP) program

Mentor Guide

Introduction

The Aged Care Transition to Practice (ACTTP) program, developed by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (2025), aims to support the professional development of nurses within the aged care sector. Targeting newly graduated registered nurses (including nurse practitioners), enrolled nurses, and experienced nurses who have transitioned into aged care settings within the past two years, the program emphasises the importance of structured mentorship.

Effective mentoring is essential to achieving positive outcomes for all stakeholders—mentees, mentors, organisations, and older individuals and their carers. However, without robust organisational support, meaningful mentoring can be compromised due to high workloads and the complex, evolving nature of the healthcare environment (Coventry & Hays, 2021).

Organisational support should include recognition of mentors, access to education and training in mentoring practices, and mechanisms for evaluating mentorship effectiveness (Stephenson et al., 2023; Coventry & Hays, 2021). Given the national focus on aged care workforce investment and retention, mentorship is a critical component of the ACTTP program.

Aim

A transparent and well-structured process is essential for the effective implementation of mentor support within the Aged Care Transition to Practice (ACTTP) program. This booklet provides stakeholders of Charles Darwin University's ACTTP program with an overview of the mentorship framework, outlining key components of support available to participating nurses.

Definition

Mentoring is a multifaceted process that involves guiding the mentee through roles such as teacher, role model, coach, advisor, clinical facilitator, and supportive peer, grounded in mutual values of motivation and openness (Akanegbu & Iheduru-Anderson, 2022). Evidence highlights

the critical role of mentorship in enhancing workplace satisfaction, retention, wellbeing, and sustained professional practice, particularly during the transition to clinical settings (Biles et al., 2025; Traynor et al., 2025).

Effective mentorship also contributes to the development of professional competence and confidence in problem-solving among junior nurses, as supported by Davey et al. (2020). Beyond benefits to mentees, mentors gain recognition as valued clinicians, reinforcing their professional identity and positively influencing organisational culture (Pearce, 2023).

Eligibility

Mentors in the Aged Care Transition to Practice (ACTTP) program must be nurses working in health and/or aged care services where the primary focus is care of the older person. While mentors may be internal or external to the participant's service or organisation, on-site mentors are preferred to enhance accessibility and support.

As part of the onboarding process, mentors are required to complete a self-assessment checklist. This tool is designed to help mentors reflect on their current confidence and capabilities. The results are not used to determine eligibility but serve as a foundation for identifying areas for professional growth and guiding targeted development.

Roles and Responsibilities of Mentors

The roles and responsibilities of mentors include supporting the program participants as follows:

- Establish a mutually trusted mentor-mentee relationship
- Set clear expectations on agreed learning goals and needs
- Encourage and motivate appreciation of a career in older persons' nursing care
- Support learning and growth through person-centred care principles
- Engage in transparent and facilitate communication styles, and avoid and manage conflicts arising from miscommunication
- Monitor and evaluate the participant's achievements in practice and provide constructive feedback

- Facilitate reflective practice and critical thinking to enhance participant learning
- Review the participant's learning portfolio entries on a regular basis and provide feedback
- Demonstrate empathy, patience, dedication, approachability, confidence and enthusiasm towards the participant
- Apply reflective practice for self-development as a mentor and make efforts towards personal and professional development (e.g., acquire evidence-based clinical knowledge, mentor training, updating knowledge about organisational processes and policies)
- Be aware of and sensitive to cultural, personal, and generational differences that may affect the relationship with the participant

Commitment to the Mentor Role

- Mentors are allocated a maximum of three (3) participants
- Meet with the individual participants (mentees) weekly, either face-to-face or virtually (approximately 30-60 minutes with each participant)
- Participants may or may not be from the same organisation as the mentor
- Group mentorship may be implemented to support collective learning and professional development; however, this approach should be reconsidered if it impedes the ability to address the individual learning needs of participants.
- Mentors are granted access to Charles Darwin University's ACTTP program learning platform. It is strongly recommended that mentors review the modules undertaken by their mentees to gain a clear understanding of the learning framework and content.
- Attend monthly 'ACTTP Mentor Community of Practice (CoP)' meetings organised by CDU
- Staggered commitment in mentoring activities is recommended to avoid mentor burnout
- Optional: Register to participate in the 'Mentor Program' short course offered by CDU (highly encouraged if the self-assessment checklist has identified multiple areas for improvement in mentor attributes)

Mentor Recruitment Process

Participation in the program may occur through self-nomination by a registered nurse who identifies as a confident mentor, or by nomination of an organisational leader/manager based on their own recommendation, or the recommendation of the nurse's colleagues. Clinicians working in rural and remote areas, as well as First Nations and other culturally diverse practitioners, are strongly encouraged to participate.

Mentor recruitment step-by-step workflow:

- **Step 1: Registration Access**
CDU shares the mentor registration link via website, email, or program flyer. Mentors may also find the link through an internet search.
- **Step 2: Expression of Interest**
Mentor discusses interest with their supervisor/manager or is nominated by their organisation, then completes the registration form.
- **Step 3: Initial Contact**
ACTTP academic lead contacts the mentor for a brief discussion covering program overview, participant allocation, and commencement date. Mentor completes the self-assessment checklist.
- **Step 4: Endorsement Letter Submission**
Mentor submits a letter of approval/endorsement from their current employer, either on official letterhead and signed by the manager, or an email by the manager or a manager delegate sent to agedcarettp@cdu.edu.au
- **Step 5: Onboarding**
Mentor receives onboarding documents and access details for CDU's online learning platform
- **Step 6: Optional Mentor Short Course**
Mentors may choose to enrol in the 'Mentor Program' short course. CDU initiates the registration process if interested.

Community of Practice (CoP) participation

The ‘ACTTP Mentor Community of Practice (CoP)’ offers mentors a collaborative platform to share experiences, raise concerns, provide feedback, and contribute suggestions for program improvement in a psychologically safe environment. Facilitated by the ACTTP academic lead at Charles Darwin University, the CoP meets monthly for one hour via Microsoft Teams. While participation is strongly encouraged, it is not mandatory.

Escalation Pathway for Participant Progress Concerns

Mentors are expected to escalate concerns regarding a participant’s progress or performance to the designated reporting contact within the participant’s organisation, or to the ACTTP program academic lead at agedcarettp@cdu.edu.au, depending on the nature of the issue. Similarly, at any time, health/aged care services or organisations may escalate concerns related to the participant or the program to the same contact.

Mentor wellbeing is a critical factor in achieving effective mentoring outcomes. The Community of Practice group sessions offer mentors a psychologically safe space to openly discuss the challenges they encounter in fulfilling their mentoring roles. When issues arise that may hinder effective participation, escalation pathways include the ACTTP program academic lead or the mentor’s direct manager, depending on the nature and severity of the concern.

Charles Darwin University’s Professional Development Program for Mentors

Stephenson et al. (2023) highlight the importance of professional development and targeted education to build mentors’ capacity, capability, and confidence. With intergenerational mentoring becoming increasingly relevant in healthcare (Ihara et al., 2025), Charles Darwin University offers a free short course designed to support the professional development of healthcare mentors.

The course comprises six modules, which participants may complete in full or select based on the mentor’s individual learning needs. Successful completion of the program provides credit equivalent to one unit toward the Graduate Certificate of Clinical Education. For more information, contact agedcarettp@cdu.edu.au.

CDU's Mentor Program topics:

- Roles and responsibilities of mentors
- Culturally informed, person-centred care educational framework
- Role-modelling and driving practice change
- Adult learning principles, learner styles and experiential learning theory
- Facilitating clinical reasoning and decision making
- Communication skills
- Identifying barriers to learning progress and facilitating support strategies

Evaluation

Evaluating mentors' experiences and the effectiveness of mentor development programs is essential for continuous improvement in mentorship structure and delivery (Biles et al., 2023; Stephenson et al., 2023). The ACTTP program will be evaluated externally from Charles Darwin University using an anonymous survey developed by Nous in collaboration with the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. Participation in this survey is voluntary but strongly encouraged.

Mentors enrolled in CDU's Mentor Program short course will also be invited to complete an educational feedback survey developed by CDU to assess the quality and relevance of the training.

Mentor Readiness: Self-Assessment Checklist

Self-assessment of mentoring skills is a valuable tool for mentors to reflect on their current capabilities and identify areas for growth and future learning (Stephenson et al., 2023). The Mentor Self-Assessment Checklist may be used at the outset to establish baseline skills or revisited periodically to monitor progress and guide intentional development.

Refer to **Appendix 1** for the Mentor Self-Assessment Checklist.

Appendix 1

Mentor Self-Assessment Checklist

Instructions:

Please read each statement and select the number that best reflects your mentoring skills.

There are **no right or wrong answers**. This tool is designed to enhance self-awareness, identify strengths and areas for growth, and guide deliberate actions for targeted development.

5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly disagree

1	Creating a psychologically safe and supportive environment	5	4	3	2	1
1.1	I encourage, motivate, and guide mentees to take actions that promote their growth and learning development					
1.2	I set clear, mutually agreed expectations for mentees' professional and learning behaviour to achieve learning objectives and outcomes					
1.3	I demonstrate respect, patience, empathy, approachability, dedication, and enthusiasm to facilitate mentees' personal and professional growth					
1.4	I have self-awareness of cultural, personal, and generational differences that may affect my relationship with the mentee					
1.5	I possess the skills to implement evidence-based strategies to overcome the challenges mentioned in the above statement					
1.6	I have the skills to acknowledge and respect mentees' existing knowledge and skills, and facilitate building their professional development					
1.7	I escalate identified challenges in the mentee's learning progress to appropriate personnel in a timely manner					
2	Advocating for culturally informed person-centred care of older persons	5	4	3	2	1

2.1	I have a sound understanding of the models of care and principles that guide culturally informed, person-centred care for older persons					
2.2	I consistently demonstrate culturally informed, person-centred care principles					
2.3	I possess the skills to assess the enablers and barriers to the application of culturally informed, person-centred care					
2.4	I am confident to speak up when practice breaches person-centredness or creates a risk to the cultural safety of older people					
2.5	I have a passion for older persons' nursing care, and I appreciate aged care as an exciting nursing specialty					
3	Seeking and providing feedback (reflective practice)	5	4	3	2	1
3.1	I am skilled at evaluating the performance of participants and providing constructive feedback using scientific principles					
3.2	I apply various techniques to facilitate the preceptee's analysis of clinical situations and clinical decision-making skills					
3.3	I facilitate the use of reflective practice tools to enhance critical thinking and meaningful learning					
3.4	I guide the preceptee in combining the most recent research evidence and consideration of the person's holistic care needs to provide needs-based care					
3.5	As a mentor, I practice self-reflection and take ongoing efforts to enhance my own professional development (e.g., seeking feedback from peers, mentees, and managers, acquiring evidence-based clinical knowledge, mentor training, updating knowledge of governing frameworks and policies)					
3.6	I guide the mentee to take up leadership in advocacy for safety and quality, effective teamwork, and interdisciplinary collaboration in older person care					

Appendix 1: Mentor self-assessment checklist CDU (2025). References: Stephenson et al. (2023) & Lee-Hsieh et al. (2016)

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