

First Three Meetings of your PMT

As Peer Mentoring Teams start up, mentors will want to introduce the members, help create expectations for the team's activities, and get started with productive conversation about the PMT topic. The initial patterns of activity and communication in a new team will likely set expectations and habits for the team, so it is important to get off to a strong start.

Below you'll find suggestions for discussions and activity for the first three meetings. These are only suggestions. Peer mentors should certainly facilitate their PMTs using their own style and approach. We do recommend that you make a few clear commitments for team members to abide by in order to benefit the team as a whole. Also, emphasize that although you will be offering comments and suggestions to one another, it is important to be supportive and positive.

Prior to First Meeting

Peer Mentor should send out an email to all team members:

- **Share the list of names, departments, emails of members**
- **Briefly introduce yourself** (a few sentences) and share your experience with the topic of the PMT. Express your enthusiasm to be a part of the team!
- **Ask team members for availability** to hold synchronous online or face-to-face PMT meetings. Some PMTs will want to meet every week for an hour to provide the frequency and duration of meetings to get into details. Other PMTs may function well with every-other-week meetings or meetings that are shorter. It is likely best practice to keep your meetings at the same length and intervals throughout the semester/session that you are meeting.
- Once a time/day has been selected, either **schedule a physical location and/or select a platform for your virtual meetings (TEAMS/ Zoom/Webex etc.)** and then send a meeting invite via Outlook to all team members and include the link to the virtual sessions.
- **Send a quick reminder to the group via email prior to the first team meeting.**

Team Meeting 1

- **For Face-to-Face Meetings**—Be thoughtful about setting locations for your meetings so that everyone in the group is comfortable. Best options are likely on one of the UTSA campuses—either casual dining/coffee shop or the Main Campus Faculty Center. If the group decides to go off campus for a lunch or after hour gathering, just be sure everyone is comfortable with the location.
- **For Online Meetings** --Although it is ideal if everyone on the team has their camera on (so you can see each other and get to know each other), there may be good reasons why some folks cannot do this (many people have children, pets, housemates, spouses who share their workspace and may not wish to be on camera).
- Ask that everyone **take a turn introducing themselves** and say a bit about their interest in the PMT theme.
- **Set expectations for the team together.** Emphasize that you are interested to learn with them (even though you have some more experience than most in the team). The point of the team is to support one another and that includes the Peer Mentor.

- **Manage the time** to make sure that each team member is able to participate. Make sure that the time commitment the team has made to meetings is mutual and has some limits. Mentors may play time-keeper or ask one of the other team members to do that.
- **You may set up a TEAMS site (or other shared platform) for the group to post questions / add resources / share information in between meetings.** Also, ask the group if they would be open to emails from one another in between meetings to work on problem-solving. This is not an expectation, but may be mutually beneficial if folks agree. The Peer Mentor is no more expected to handle the off-meeting emails than anyone else. Let the group know what your bandwidth is for taking emails.
- **Decide if you want to assign homework for the next meeting.** The team may wish to have everyone complete some thoughtful exercise / draft a document / develop an idea and then share and discuss at the next meeting (e.g., everyone could circulate a draft of their syllabus for comments; a grant application introduction; a policy document). Make mutual agreements about how much “off line” homework the group is willing to do in order to make the meetings useful.
- **Set an agenda for the 2nd meeting.** Peer Mentoring Teams tend to run best when there is enthusiasm for the topic of the PMT and when there is some work for the team to do together. Simple open discussion time tends to make the team feel a bit aimless. For individuals to maintain interest there should be a sense of progress. Try to set expectations for everyone to commit to the meetings, participate in the discussion, and come prepared for whatever is on the next agenda.

Team Meeting 2

- Prior to the team meeting, **send a quick reminder** to the group if you can. Remind them of any homework assignment that the group decided to take on.
- You may wish to go around and quickly say each name and **ask how each person’s week has gone.** Keep these to a quick round of 5-10 mins.
- **Make an agreement in the group that you or someone else will serve as time-keeper (loosely) and ensure that the team doesn’t get stuck for too long on a single topic** and that everyone gets a chance to present questions/concerns. You might even set a timer that dings when one person’s time is up. If the group agrees to extend the time of the meeting to 1.5 hours or longer, that is fine –up to the group to decide.
- **Focus the group with a mini-agenda** (e.g., go over the homework assignment with a timer set so everyone gets even time devoted to their own work; take questions that have come up and problem-solve; set homework for the next week; note anything that has been shared on the TEAMS site).
- **Peer Mentors facilitate and provide their own experience and ideas however we do not want to treat Peer Mentors as “help desk personnel.”** Mentors should be integrated into the conversation of all the team members. The idea of PMTs is for all participants to share their ideas/wisdom. As a Peer Mentor be sure to resist the urge to answer every question –you can turn a question back to the group to gather many views and experiences.
- As the Peer Mentor an important part of your job is to **make sure everyone on the team gets a fairly even time to address his/her concerns and questions.** You may need to interrupt a detailed conversation and suggest that it be followed up on the TEAMS site or in a separate conversation –in order to ensure that everyone gets to talk about their own project/work.
- Finish with forming an agreement about **homework /topic** for the next meeting.

Team Meeting 3

- Prior to the team meeting, **send a quick reminder** to the group if you can. Remind them of any homework assignment that the group decided to take on.
- You may wish to go around and quickly say each name and **ask how each person's week has gone**. Keep these to a quick round of 5-10 mins.
- **Focus the group with a mini-agenda** (e.g., go over the homework assignment with a timer set so everyone gets even time devoted to their own work; take questions that have come up and problem-solve; set homework for the next week; note anything that has been shared on the TEAMS site).
- **Remind the group of who will serve as time-keeper to ensure balance devoted to each person's questions/needs**.
- Check in with the team at the end of the meeting to **see if anything about the functioning of the team should be changed**. Is everyone okay with how this is going? Is there anything we could be doing better/different to meet everyone's needs?
- Finish with **preview of homework** that will be the topic for the next meeting

Subsequent Meetings

You may wish to use the **weekly meeting time to focus on single topics**.

Every meeting or so check in with the group about how the PMT is functioning and if the group feels anything should be done differently or something added/ended. As the team evolves its needs may change, so be flexible about how the meetings are run. Also, make maximum use of the TEAMS site for posting/reacting to questions, sharing resources, etc.

Be cautious about the team meetings going past the agreed synchronous time. If the whole group is good with expanded meeting time, that is fine, but some may feel uncomfortable objecting to longer meetings but could drop off the team or find them overly burdensome if the time is not well managed.

If someone fails to show to a synchronous meeting, you might check in with them, or send a quick email to Laurie.lewis@utsa.edu (Associate Vice Provost for Faculty Success) so I can check in with them.

Check-ins and Resources

If your PMT needs support or you, as Peer Mentor, need guidance, please don't hesitate to reach out. Faculty Success can track down an expert at UTSA to provide a resource or may even be able to "meet" with your team to explain something.