

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION - THE EARLY YEARS

PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS IN PRACTICE (PPP) HANDBOOK



Dear Colleagues,

You have been approached by either a University of Wollongong representative or an enrolled UOW student studying Bachelor of Education - The Early Years, inviting you to consider participating in the Professional Partners in Practice (PPP) Program.

PPP Program participation is a compulsory requirement for all enrolled Bachelor of Education - The Early Years students.

PPP is a uniquely designed mentoring program that compliments the academic and professional experience programs of the Bachelor of Education – The Early Years (BEd-EY) degree. All students are connected with a PPP Partnership Service and/or a designated Mentor for the duration of their degree, providing authentic experiences in the early childhood education and care context. The aim is to provide students with the opportunity to have regular and ongoing practical experiences in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) field and to receive support from committed and passionate professionals in ECEC services. Such experience ideally supports students to apply their University learning to real world ECEC contexts and to learn and develop effective partnerships with experienced ECEC professionals.

This program requires a long term and ongoing relationship between individual students, their PPP Partnership Service, designated ECEC mentors, and The Early Years teaching staff of the University.

The ultimate goal of the PPP mentoring program is to nurture and develop reflective early childhood practitioners in the ECEC sector. Additionally, the PPP program aims to develop reciprocally beneficial partnerships with PPP partnership services and early childhood teachers in the field.

If you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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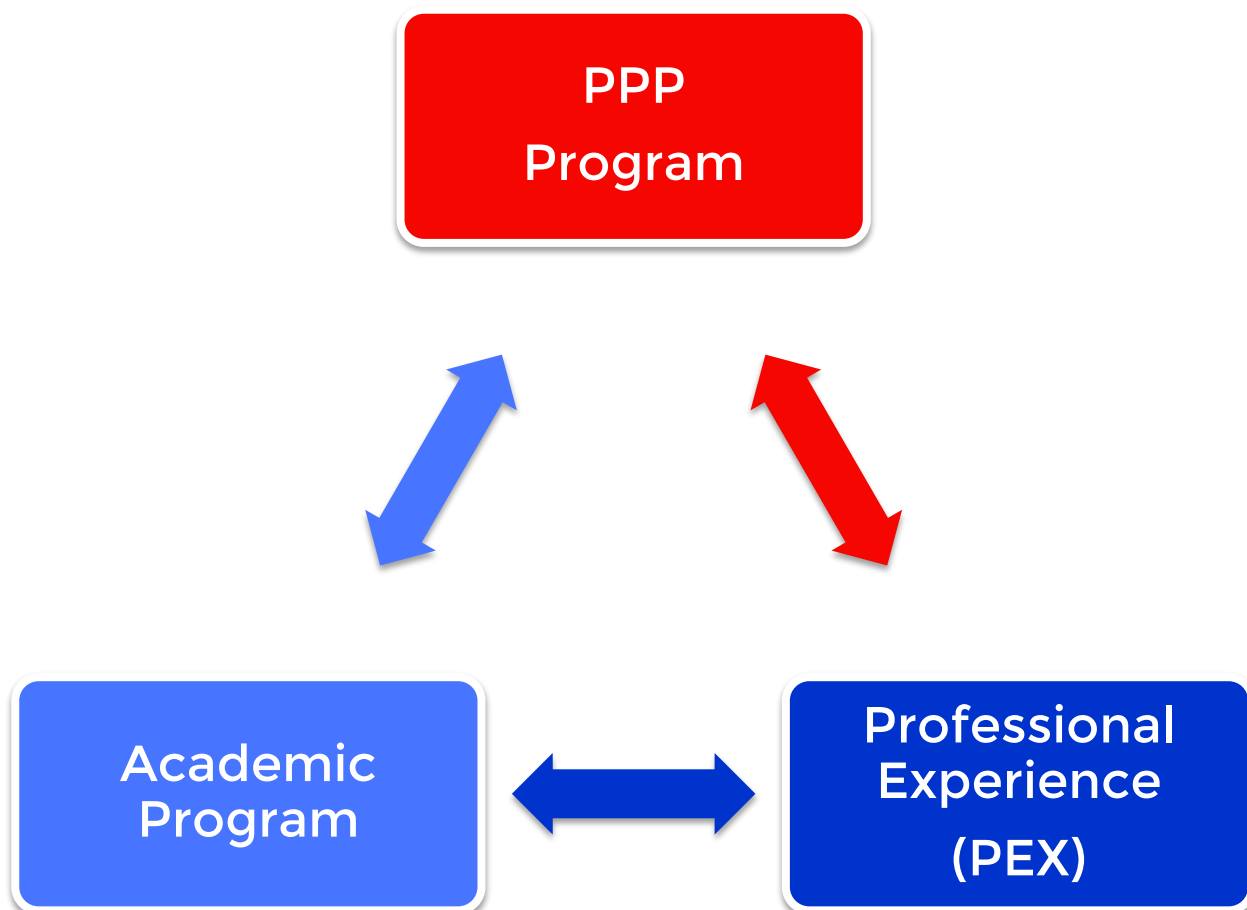


1. Introduction to the Professional Partners in Practice (PPP) Program

In 2009, the University of Wollongong introduced the Bachelor of Education – The Early Years, a specialist, 4-year, Birth-to-5 year teaching degree.

The University has a long history of offering high quality education degrees. In turn, the Bachelor of Education Early Years degree is designed to develop graduating teachers of the highest quality. We aim to develop early childhood teachers who are confident, competent and ready to be leaders in the field of early childhood education and care.

After considerable research, a mentoring model for the Early Years degree was developed. This model adopts a three-pronged approach to student teacher training made up of a rigorous academic program, an extensive Professional Experience Program across the 4 years of student progression, and the Professional Partners in Practice (PPP) Program, a mentor coaching program that operates for the duration of a student's participation in the BEd-EY degree.



2. What is PPP?

The Professional Partners in Practice (PPP) mentor program promotes long-term and ongoing relationships between UOW BEd-EY students, selected PPP Partnership Services in the early childhood sector, and Early Years academic teaching staff at UOW. The PPP program promotes the development of mentoring relationships at all levels, and in a reciprocal fashion, i.e. early childhood education and care (ECEC) educators will mentor UOW students and be mentored by members of the University Early Years academic team. UOW EY students will also have the opportunity to be peer mentors for each other and, in some cases, for members of their PPP centre.

In keeping with the sense of reciprocity in this program, ECEC educators and community are invited to provide mentoring for University staff and students, by sharing their knowledge, expertise and experience of current issues in the early childhood education and care sector.

Our aim is to develop professional early-years pre-service teachers by providing students with the opportunity to experience regular and ongoing practical experience in the field and to receive collegial support from committed and passionate professionals in a range of early childhood education and care services.

The important skills students develop when working in, with and for the community are transferable. We believe that well-mentored students that are effectively immersed in a community environment will develop self-confidence, resilience, and professional responsibility. We believe that such students will emerge from the UOW Early Years degree program better equipped to both contribute to the early childhood education and care profession and remain committed to it.

The UOW Early Years academic teaching team welcome the opportunity to partner with PPP services and to translate their early years teaching experience, academic knowledge and current research with practicing early childhood leaders, teachers and educators in the ECEC sector. We value the expertise of practising ECEC professionals and community support professionals and welcome their contribution to education and professional growth of undergraduate students in the UOW BEd-EY degree program.

It is very important that **all** PPP partners, both staff in the ECEC service and UOW BEd-EY undergraduate students, are committed to the UOW PPP mentor program. Entering the PPP mentor program is a commitment to a sustained professional development relationship.

3. How does PPP work?

- All PPP Partnership Services and individual Mentors enter into a partnership agreement between the centre, individual and University.
- UOW students will be allocated to a PPP service. The student will remain with that service for the entire progression of their degree program.
- The program operates continually throughout the year, with mentors and students negotiating a mutually agreeable attendance routine.
- Additional UOW students may be added to the PPP service each year in consultation with mentors and service staff.
- Students are not permitted to work (casually or contract) in their PPP centre during the first three years of their progression unless approved for a workplace mentor partnership.
- Students are responsible for their own professional development in the PPP mentor program and must therefore pursue learning and development opportunities and seek support from their Mentor. In partnership the student and Mentor will identify short and long-term goals and



suggested timeframes. Students are also required to maintain their own diary notes, attendance records and reflections.

- University staff will provide regular information and updates to support the programme.

4. Participation and attendance requirements

PPP program participation is a compulsory requirement of The Early Years degree and prepares students for the action research project subject (or Honours Research) that all 4th year students complete in their PPP Partnership service in their final year of study.

Students are required to attend, participate and contribute to their PPP service for a minimum of 24 days or equivalent (e.g. one day per fortnight or half day per week*) for each year of the degree. *Note: this is the minimum requirement for engagement.*

Students and their mentors may also negotiate that some of the student contribution and participation requirements can be supplemented when students complete tasks for the service after hours. For example, students may be asked to gather and prepare resources, undertake research in aid of a project or QIP goal, attend staff meetings, participate in professional development and planning days.

Students are welcome to negotiate additional days/contributions in consultation with their mentor.

** As most community-based preschools are open for 40 weeks per year and are generally closed during school holidays, students placed in such preschools may need to negotiate weekly attendance during Autumn and Spring session if planning to spend university session breaks elsewhere.*

During the degree program, most subjects (from second year level forward) will have selected assessment tasks that require the student to be fully engaged and active learners within their PPP Program. Students will be required to submit a signed mentor confirmation that the student has been active and engaged in the PPP mentoring program in order to satisfactorily complete the subject. (See Appendix A for more information).

Students employed in the early childhood sector for a minimum of three days per week may nominate a workplace-based mentor or a mentor working in another ECEC service. In this instance the mentoring partnership will be negotiated in the form of regular discussions and meetings to facilitate goal development, pedagogical reflection and professional mentoring support. A copy of the employment contract must be provided to the PPP Coordinator to confirm eligibility. Such mentor/mentee arrangements will be approved on a case by case basis.

5. Goals of the program

The ultimate goal of the PPP mentoring program is to support the development of professional and reflective early childhood undergraduate teachers as they prepare for their future role in the early childhood education and care sector. The specific goals of this program are that,

Students in the UOW Early Years program will:

- develop an awareness of how theory relates to practice;
- learn from and with a wide variety of early childhood education and care professional staff;
- build confidence and practical skills in authentic real-world educational environments;
- develop interpersonal skills and the ability to work in a team;



- develop ongoing professional relationships with children, families and community members; and,
- become committed members of the early childhood education and care profession from early in the commencement of undergraduate study.

Professionals in the field will:

- share their knowledge and experience with Early Years students from the University of Wollongong;
- have the opportunity to learn about research informed practice and theory from the students and University staff;
- utilise the training opportunities provided and potentially access opportunities to engage in further study at the University of Wollongong;
- develop skills in mentoring practice and protégé development;
- further develop interpersonal skills and reflective practice; and,
- have the opportunity to extend their own professional development through involvement in the academic program, participating as guests on panels and invited presentations.

The Early Years staff at the University of Wollongong will:

- develop and maintain close associations with professionals in the ECEC sector;
- develop social and cultural awareness through interaction with local community;
- model collaborative and cooperative partnerships and networking approaches with and for students;
- provide training opportunities for PPP partners in the field and facilitate pathways to further study at the University of Wollongong; and,
- provide ongoing mentoring, support and training for PPP Mentors and their colleagues.

6. Mentoring model

The PPP program adopts a Mentor coaching model (Nolan, 2007). This is a process whereby an experienced person(s) (mentor coach) introduces, assists and supports a less experienced person (protégé/mentee) in a personal and professional growth process. In order to be effective, this process must occur regularly over time. Mentors and mentees are encouraged to develop action plans and engage regularly in shared reflection and discussions about ECEC practice and professional development. Mentor coaching integrates situational learning (coaching) and mentoring. Situated learning requires the experienced practitioner to guide and scaffold the novice early childhood pre-service teacher's learning and practice. As the mentoring relationship develops the mentor and the mentee progress to setting and achieving professional goals with the aim to help a novice develop as a reflective professional (Rolfe, 2015). Both mentor and mentee ideally benefit and learn from the process. The collaborative mentoring process may also be multi-directional; with role reversals and shifts occurring as knowledge is identified, explored and shared. Mentor coaching skills can be learned to support the development of quality mentoring relationships.



7. Training

MENTOR TRAINING

It is a requirement that at least one member of staff in each PPP mentor service complete the online UOW PPP mentor training module.

The training module and additional PPP resources are available online. The link to the training will be e-mailed to services following the receipt of the Application to be a UOW PPP service.

Note for PPP mentors who are degree qualified early childhood teachers: The UOW BEd-EY team are currently applying for NESAs endorsement of the UOW PPP Mentor training to be recognised as registered professional development. In the meantime, those completing the UOW PPP Mentor Training may list the online course as Teacher Identified PD.

STUDENT TRAINING

UOW Early Years students are expected to complete online PPP training within one month of commencing their PPP placement.

8. Selection

STUDENTS

Students will be invited to provide information via questionnaires and interviews to determine placement requirements and priorities. Location will be considered to reduce travel time between home and the PPP mentor service and to consider student transport options.

ECEC SERVICES

Following an invitation from UOW staff or students, ECEC services willing to be a PPP mentor service will submit an application to be part of the PPP program. The University will then connect students to PPP centres. As required, site visits and discussions with service staff may occur.

INDIVIDUAL MENTORS

Individual Mentors may be identified by university staff or self-nominated for the purpose of mentoring a pre-service teacher who is combining work in the ECEC sector and study. This commitment may occur outside of the ECEC service context. To be a mentor of a student/s who is qualified, working and completing further study it is not essential to be working full time in an early childhood education and care centre, although it is essential that each Individual mentor has completed the mentor leader training. Individual mentors must provide evidence of suitable professional expertise and experience required to mentor an Early Years student.

MATCHING STUDENTS AND MENTORS

Students and PPP mentors are not matched based on personality testing of mentors or protégés. Most students will be linked to an ECEC service in which there may be several trained mentors. We both allow and encourage the development of positive working relationships between individuals in each setting. However, if personality issues or operational factors between a student and their PPP Partnership Service/PPP mentor arise and cannot be resolved through the mentoring process, the student may be relocated.

If any significant issues or barriers to a positive PPP partnership arise please notify the PPP Coordinator immediately.

As most students are allocated to a PPP Partnership Service early in their degree, progression, many will not have determined a specific professional interest. However, if a student identifies a particular interest,



the University will endeavour to match the student to an environment that can maintain and extend this interest.

For students who are qualified, working and completing further study there will be some attempt to link students with Mentors who share that particular interest or passion. For example, working with children with disabilities, Indigenous education, and services for parents with young children or services where they can utilise a first or second language.

REFERENCE LIST

Nolan, M. (2007). Mentor coaching and leadership in early care and Education. New York: Thomson Delmar Learning.

Rolfe, A. (2015). The mentoring guide: Mentoring works! Training & Development magazine, 42(5). Retrieved from <http://mentoringworks.com/articles/>

Appendix A: PPP Program and the Early Years academic program: Assessment tasks

The PPP Program is an opportunity to engage in an authentic practical experience in a supportive environment. It is an opportunity to reflect upon the practical implications of the academic coursework without the added pressure of being assessed within a particular professional experience related subject (PEX).

During the degree program a range of subjects have assessment tasks that require the student to be fully engaged and active learners within their PPP Program.

Some assessment tasks or subjects require Early Years students to submit the Mentor Assessment Coversheet confirming that:

- The Early Years student demonstrates engagement in the PPP Program with a commitment to regular attendance, ongoing professional learning and reflective practice.
- Confirming all work completed by the student for the identified assessment task was sourced, discussed, supported and completed in the approved PPP Partnership Service and/or with the designated PPP Mentor.

It can be challenging trying to find the time to attend between the competing demands of study, work, family and personal life, therefore developing effective time management strategies early is essential for ongoing success.

See Coversheet template overleaf.



Professional Partners in Practice (PPP) Program Assessment Coversheet

This DECLARATION form is to be completed by Mentors in PPP Partnership Services in cooperation with The Bachelor of Education-The Early Years student.

The Early Years student is required to submit an original copy of the PPP Assessment Coversheet with all assessment tasks requiring PPP engagement as per Subject Outline.

Please note: Students MUST retain a copy of the PPP Assessment Coversheet.

Student Name:

Subject Code & Name:

Assignment Title:

DECLARATION: *(Please circle the following)*

I confirm The Early Years student demonstrates engagement in the PPP Program with a commitment to regular attendance, ongoing professional learning and reflective practice.

SATISFACTORY

UNSATISFACTORY

I confirm all work completed by the student for the identified assessment task was sourced, discussed, supported and completed in the approved PPP Partnership Service.

SATISFACTORY

UNSATISFACTORY

Mentor Name:

PPP Partnership Service:

Mentor Signature:

Student Signature:

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