

Irmgard Korber, Vienna Austria

Supervising Mentor for Students and 1st Year Teacher-Practicums

Study-course for the Academic Curriculum leading to a Certificate

Institutional context

Supervising mentors are teachers in colleges and related institutions of higher learning under whose tutelage student-teachers at universities can serve their respective teaching-practicums upon the completion of their degree. Included are also candidates who are teaching their 1st year.¹

It is therefore proper to say that supervising mentors are "educators of teachers". Their exceptional training has special significance. They are prepared for this task by following the Academic Curriculum at the Pedagogic Institute of Vienna, together with university courses given at the Institute for Practical Training.

This special continuing education is planned jointly, organized and executed by the Institute for Practical Training of the University of Vienna and the AHS-Section at the Pedagogic Institute of Vienna.

Goals of the course

The course prepares the new supervising mentors as teacher-educators to do the following:

1. Mentoring of student-teachers during the school-practicum.
2. Mentoring of 1st year teachers in their respective subject areas.
3. Assist the student-teacher while reflecting upon their professional image as teacher, upon their individual views and about their interpretation of the official regulations pertaining to the educational task of their subjects.
4. Assist the students' self-analysis about their own responsibilities to become competent in teaching their subjects. Also evaluate themselves regarding social and self-confidence.
5. Possess an openness and readiness to discuss questions and critiques of methods of instruction, about interpersonal relationships with children, youth, with parents and with co-workers, and superiors.
6. Discussion about key-qualifications, such as: abstraction, critical thinking, being a team-player, creativity and up-to-date scientific knowledge
7. Have the ability to reflect objectively on differing views of teaching methods.
8. Have the ability to switch tasks.
9. Have the ability to reflect on the effect which education has on child-rearing.

¹ According to UPG par.25, Sect.2 and in compliance with applicable laws governing the organization of Universities, also Laws for Highschools 1966 and Directives for Pedagogic Education for Teacher Candidates from 1977 end as ammended, based on Par.7 of the State Law for Studies at Academies, and the establishing of Colleges for Teacher Education (Academy Sullies Law 1999 - AstG) BGBl.I No.94/1999.

Admission Criteria

The appropriate administrative authorities (city or state education boards) will recommend the applicant teacher to admission to the Supervising Mentor Program after considering the following prerequisites:

1. Completed academic curriculum for teachers.
2. Five years teaching-experience and where possible, possess skills to administer comprehensive assessment tests.
3. Recommendations stating that the applicant's teaching performance was "far above average", both in the class-room and in character.
4. Attendance at continuing education seminars (min. 3 days= 24 units) within the past three years.
5. Attendance at seminars or workshops (min. 3 days = 24 units) within the past three years, dealing specifically with further professional development in the following areas:
Social educational methods, open class-rooms, lesson-plans, teaching objective evaluation, curriculum planning, advanced learning etc.
6. Attendance at a practical seminar/workshop (min. 24 units) within the past three years, dealing with: Counselling/advising (such as: coaching, mediation or discussion-leading in advising-sessions)
In place of the counseling seminar, the applicant may submit certificates or transcripts showing completion of the following: Coaching, supervising, therapy, mediation-training.

Arrangement of the study-segments (module)

The academic/university curriculum for the education for "Supervising Mentor" runs over three terms.

"The Supervising Mentor educates Teachers 1"

Module 1 (1/2 days, 4 - 6 units) Lecture: Introduction/orientation for teachers of various subjects.

Content: General educational objectives of the curriculum, structures of the module, requirement for certification, familiarization with the tasks of the supervising mentor during study and teaching practicums, setting limits to the sphere of activity of the mentor, familiarization with the objectives, passing courses and organization.

"The Reflective Teacher"

Module 2: Seminar for teaching various subjects
28 - 30 units (8 units lecture, 22 units practical exercises)

Content:

1. Practical exercises lead the participants to become aware of their strong/weak areas of teaching and upon reflection enable them to find ways to improve.
2. Supervising mentors become aware of the following demands made on them:
 - a) grasp the lesson - objective and be able to "ground" them.
 - b) recognize their personal strengths as teachers and have the ability to reflect on them together with those who are studying to become teachers, as well as with those who are already first-year teachers

3. Supervising mentors should recognize that their lecture-hours (or parts thereof) must represent the model of the UP/SCHP and that they need to discuss this with those in their care.
4. They must be able to explain the "reality of school" that teaching has to be on two levels: on the one hand there are classes to teach, while on the other there are ways to create learning-possibilities for UP/SCHP which influence class instruction.
5. Another goal is learning to perceive attitudes, the recognition of criteria for observing teachers, methods of pre- and post critique of class-sessions, styles of leadership and explanation of the role of the supervising mentor.
6. Supervising mentors should know the basic requirements for writing papers for the accompanying curriculum at the Pedagogic Institute of Vienna and be familiar with the structure and content of the tasks required by the UP/SCHP.
7. General teaching models, lesson-planning, counseling goals, feed-back and feedforward, observation of classes, coaching (leader-styles & comprehension of roles), consultations/group-discussions for student-interns as well as first-year teachers, basic elements of the tasks required by UP/SCHP which are part of the curriculum at the Pedagogic Institute of Vienna and the program at the University of Vienna.

"Teaching / Special Subject Didactics":

Module 3 Specific Subjects Seminar
2 days (15 - 20 units)

Objectives:

Supervising mentors will become familiar with current requirements for a specific subject to be taught according to the latest curriculum regulations; reflect on their own knowledge in that field and incorporate it together with past experiences into the teaching-model.

Discussions about lesson-objectives for each class-session in the light of past teaching experiences.

The importance of Special subject didactics at the respective institute of the university will be discussed and special didactic course-offerings by the University and the Pedagogic Institute will be introduced.

"Observed teaching"

Module 4 basically for teachers of a specific subject
1 1/2 two-day sessions and 3 to 6 half days (28 - 40 units)

Development of requirements for the observed lecture-file, planning the sessions, executing and discussing them.

Application of the knowledge and of the experiences gained in practice.

The "Observed Lecture Sessions" are that part of learning in which instruction (teaching) is presented as a sample-lecture observed by peers and the resulting observations are then reflected upon. They serve as a basis for feed-back and future improvements.

In addition, the following needs to be generated: A year's lesson-plans, Mid-term plans (scheduling of instruction-time) an outline of the session, together with the related criteria for the observers.

Prerequisite for attendees is the completion of module 1, 2, and 3.

The "Observed Lecture" exercise is organised in three segments:

1. Discussions prior to presentation:
 - a) Description of the school-setting (possibly the class-room situation)
 - b) Organization of the school-visit
 - c) Types of observation-methods used during instruction.
 - d) Various perspectives regarding perception
 - e) Description and analysis of the communication-level of the lecture
2. Small group reciprocal:

with three to six teachers on three to six half days

 - a) Perform a preliminary discussion-session
 - b) Observation of a class-session
 - c) Perform two units of review/critique
3. Feed-back workshop the day after:
 - a) Reports from the participants of the sessions (observed lectures)
 - b) Structured exchange of experiences gained
 - c) Continued discussions

"The Supervising Mentor as Teacher 2":

Module 5: 4 - 6 units

Legal fundamentals of school and practicum regulations, evaluation of the entire curriculum by means of a questionnaire

Additional requirements

Self-study

2 - 3 books dealing with teaching-methods and subject matter. 2 - 3 books dealing with educational theory

Peer Group Reflection

Meetings three times (once per semester - documented)

Generating a portfolio on observed lectures

1. School profile and program
2. Mission statement
3. Statistics and facts about the school
4. Importance of this particular subject (in this school)
5. Description of own role as teacher
6. Description of own basic teaching concepts
7. Yearly objectives - breakdown into segments
8. Mid-term planning
9. Daily lesson-plans
10. Supporting notes and materials for the "demonstration lecture"
11. Suitable observation-criteria for use during the demonstration lecture
12. Reflection-papers from the peer groups (minutes and records of the discussions)

Examination Requirements

1. Attendance at all modules
2. Active participation at modules
3. Timely submitting of the "lesson-plan" for the demonstration lecture
4. Submitting the "observed lecture file" on time
5. Successful completion of the demonstration-lecture
6. Successfully leading a pre- and post-discussion group during the semester (module)

Grading

The evaluation criteria for items listed in the exam requirements will be based on a pass/fail grade.

In case of a "failing" grade, the examination may be retaken at the next scheduled date, providing that the module "Observed Lecture" is also retaken and evidence is submitted that further workshops/classes were attended in the following areas: the special subject taught, teaching methods and communication methods.

Credits for Basic Modules

Participants who have successfully completed the entire curriculum in one particular subject, need only to complete the module "Special Subject 2" plus the module "Observed Lecture" in order to obtain certification for the second subject area.