



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN
College of
Arts and Science
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University of Saskatchewan College of Arts & Science Learning Communities

Arts & Science Peer Mentor Handbook 2016-17

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Introduction – Arts and Science Learning Communities

A Learning Community (LC) is a small group of first-year students who take classes together and share some common interests. Arts and Science Learning Communities are designed to ease the transition into university by providing our first-year students with extra opportunities to make friends, study and explore ideas, work together to develop the academic and personal skills needed to succeed in university.

Learning Communities are what a university education is all about; students and faculty from many different backgrounds come together to explore big ideas and a wide range of perspectives on the world; to be creative and to grow personally as they advance intellectually; and to make lifelong friendships.




The College of Arts and Science is proud to be offering our own Peer Mentor Program recruiting over 60 peer mentors for our various learning communities programs. The Arts and Science Peer Mentors and many campus student leaders started university in a Learning Community, where they developed the friendships, confidence and skills that set them apart. The peer mentors are an integral part of our Learning Communities Programs.

Learning Communities students gather in a weekly LC Hour led by two senior student Peer Mentors who facilitate sessions on community building, study skills, goal setting and stress management; help students access academic, health, and other support services; and organize information sessions and social events.

Arts and Science Learning Communities have three main goals:

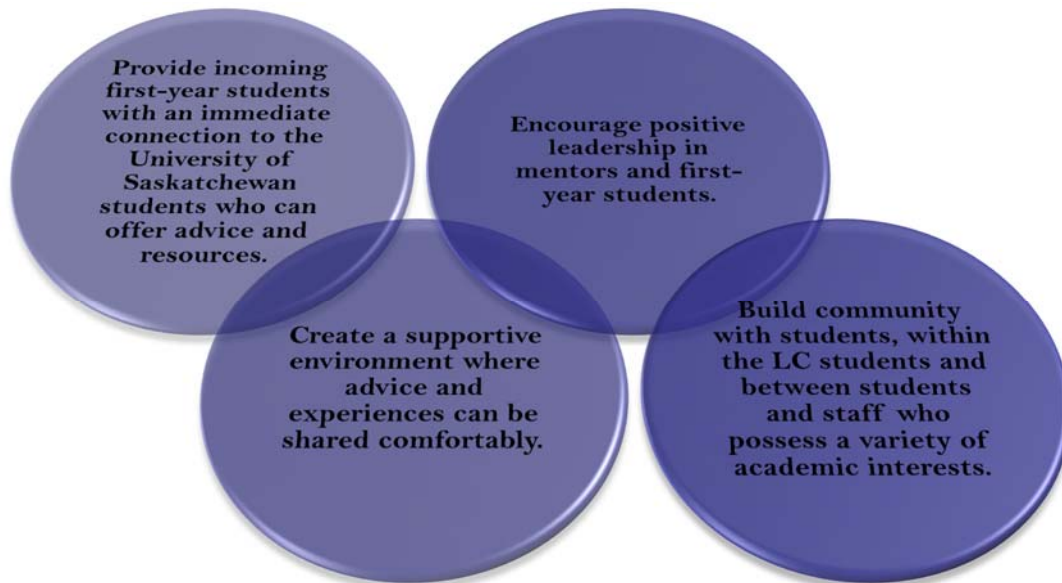
- 1) **Build Community** – Learning Communities allow first year students to begin university surrounded by students who have the same interests and goals. Through learning communities, students build connections to people and places across campus that will help support them on their academic journey.
- 2) **Explore Careers** – University is a great place to come and improve *what* you know, but *who* you know counts too. Learning Communities will help introduce students to programs and colleges across campus that are related to their interests and connect students to professionals who turned similar interests into exciting careers.
- 3) **Enrich Academics** – University is a whole different ballgame than high school. Learning Communities will connect Peer Mentors – our team of expert learners - to first year students to help them develop the academic skills they need to flourish.

We have three Learning Communities Programs in the College of Arts and Science:

-  ASAP – Aboriginal Student Achievement Program
-  UTRAN – University Transition Program
-  FLEX – First year Learning Experience

We also offer ‘Matched with a Mentor’ to first years students that did not sign up in a Learning Community but find themselves in need of mentorship in their first year.

Arts & Science Mentorship Mission



Peer Mentor Roles and Responsibilities

Peer Mentors are undergraduate students in their second year and up who volunteer to facilitate Learning Communities Hours (LC Hour). The role of a Peer Mentor is different than that of an instructor, tutor, or teaching assistant. Peer Mentors are facilitators. As a mentor, you will be facilitating discussions and sharing your experiences to demonstrate how LC students can form their own community and learn about and develop study skills. You will be forming a relationship with the LC group to make them feel comfortable so they can ask questions and/or raise concerns. Peer Mentors will assist LC students in forming a community, connecting with one another, and achieving a sense of belonging on campus.

The format for all the LC Hour sessions will be: Community Building; Making Connections and Academic Skill building/Academic Coaching. The LC Hours will consist of (but not limited to) building community, initiating discussions, facilitation of group discussions, introducing guest speakers, connecting students to Departments within the College and to other Colleges, connecting students to services/resources on campus, delivering information on effective study skills, examination preparation and other academic skills. In each Learning Community there will be some form of Academic Coaching and the Peer Mentors will assist the Academic Coaches in these sessions.

In your Peer Mentor role you will:

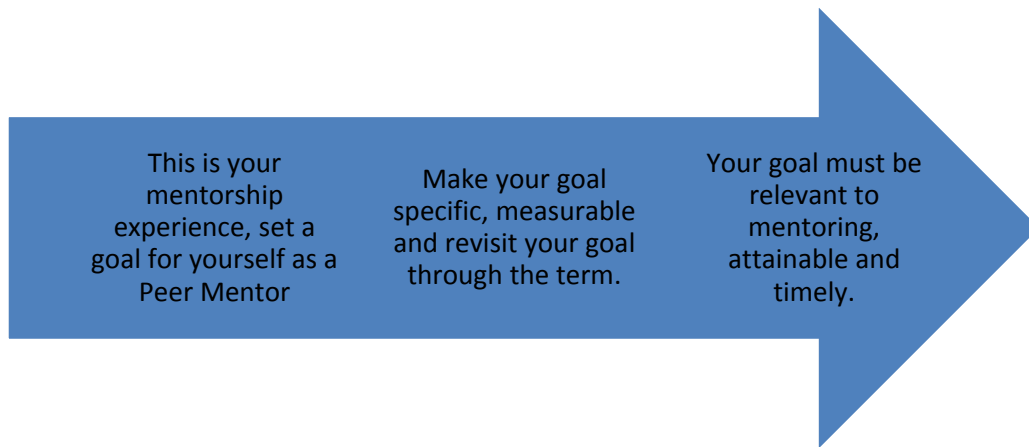


- Attend and be on time to facilitate (from the front of the room) the weekly LC Hour with your co-Peer Mentor.
- Take attendance in your LC Hour.
- Email your LC students weekly promoting and explaining the next LC Hour.
- Encourage your LC students to get involved in clubs and university events.
- Be prepared for each LC Hour by attending training sessions and organizing and preparing materials required for each session.
- Be friendly and at the same time be aware of personal boundaries.
- Maintain professionalism and personal boundaries when communicating to your LC students via email or social media.
- Contact the A & S LC team when you are running late or will miss an LC Hour.
- Contact the A & S LC team if you have any problems or concerns within your LC group.
- Be comfortable, dress casual there is no dress code for Peer Mentors.



- Attend the weekly Peer Mentor training sessions.
- Share experiences and help the first-year students avoid similar barriers that you encountered.
- Develop and improve your organizational and leadership skills.
- Enhance the first-year experience of your LC students and expand their network.
- Portray a positive attitude toward your LC group (be honest about your experiences but stay positive).
- Use appropriate, professional language in front of your LC students.
- Respect your fellow students, embrace diversity within the LC group, be aware of cultural differences and create an atmosphere of openness and sensitivity.
- Prepare a list of Campus Resources to share with your LC group, you do not need to know all the answers but you should know where to go for help.
- Relax and enjoy being a Peer Mentor!

Last but not least, we expect you to set a goal:



See Appendix A – Goal Setting Worksheet

Peer Mentor Roles: We do NOT expect you to:



*Refer students that are having personal problems or academic struggles to an Arts and Science Academic Advisor – UGSO (Undergraduate Student Office) Arts 265 or to one of our dedicated Learning Communities Advisors (see Staff List).

****If you are having your own struggles as a Peer Mentor or find yourself in a situation that makes you feel uncomfortable in your role, contact the Director of Arts and Science Learning Communities at lori.slater@usask.ca**

Communication: email and Social Media

We ask that you communicate weekly with your LC group via email to let them know about the upcoming LC Hour. In these communications you need to be positive and enthusiastic and 'sell' the LC Hour to them; let them know the benefits of this LC Hour and how this content or event may have helped you when you were a first year student. Make sure to get the specifics correct (date, time and the location). For some sessions, we will bring several LC groups together and move to a larger room; this information will be given at each training session. Remember to check spelling on your email and to remain professional on all communications.

If you choose to utilize social media communication in your group – whether it be creating a Facebook group, following each other on Twitter, or utilizing a form of messaging as a means to stay in touch – social media can be tricky as a mentor. Remember you are not only representing yourself, but the Arts and Science Peer Mentor Program and our College to your LC students. Below are a few tips to consider when using social media:

The image contains three chevron-shaped boxes, each with a title and a list of bullet points. The first box is blue and titled 'Posting', the second is green and titled 'Privacy Settings', and the third is orange and titled 'Expectations'.

- Posting**
 - Use good judgement when posting personal information, photos, etc.
 - Be conscious not only of what you post, but also what you share or retweet from other users
 - Stop and think: is this appropriate?
- Privacy Settings**
 - Consider placing your LC students on limited access to your profile.
 - You may want to block your photos, or specific posts in order to remain professional.
 - Set up a separate Facebook group for your LC students.
- Expectations**
 - In order to remain professional with your LC students discuss the Facebook group with your LC students.
 - In your discussion, the group can decide on some regulations to ensure everyone is on the same page.

Partnership with co-Peer Mentor

Each LC Hour will have two peer mentors assigned to the group of LC students. You and your co-peer mentor will work together to prepare for each LC hour and attend all training sessions (see training information). There is one session called 'Learn

from the Experts' for this session you and your co-peer mentor will select the topic as well as plan, collaborate, prepare for and facilitate the session. You will be asked to submit your session topic ahead of time to your LC team trainer for approval and assistance (if requested) in preparing for your session.

If for some reason there are issues or conflicts between co-peer mentors, please bring these concerns to the Director of Arts and Science Learning Communities. Learning to work with other people with personality traits that are similar to yours or very different from yours is a valuable skill for your future career.

Time Commitment:

The time commitment is 3 – 5 hours per week; this includes preparation for your LC Hour, the one hour in the LC Hour session, one hour a week training session. Note: Some of the ASAP Peer Mentors will be hired as casual student staff members due to their role being more than 5 hours per week, for example; Living Learning Communities and Peer Led Team Learning – Chem 112 Peer Mentors.

Working in your LC Hour

Training will be provided for taking attendance with the Arts and Science Attendance system at the Spring Peer Mentor Training in May and again at the first training session. This system is set up so you will use your NSID for signing in; your LC Hour will appear in a drop down menu (only you and your co-peer mentor will have access to your LC hour) for you to enter the attendance. If you wish print off a student list to pass around and enter the attendance at a later time the system has the ability to print a course report for your LC Hour.

At the Spring Training in May you will be able to work with your partner to plan the first LC Hour. The LC Hour list of curriculum/events for each program will be handed out at the Spring Training on May 2 & 3, 2016.

For your first session we want all Peer Mentors to work on *building community* within your LC group. You will meet in your designated room and begin by introducing yourself and your co-peer mentor, take attendance and then do an Icebreaker (see Icebreakers list) with the group, this first session should be relaxed and all about getting to know each other so it is OK do extend the time of this first Icebreaker to 15 – 20 min. This may be your first time in front of a group, so don't be surprised if you are a bit nervous! Tell your 'story' to LC students; a little about yourself, your area of study, struggles you had in your first year, how you found success, why you want to be a peer mentor, where you are from etc. (each Peer Mentor will tell their story). There will be further training information on this first session at the training in May.

Ice Breakers

These are fun short activities that are useful in the first few LC Hours while everyone is still trying to get to know each other and they also help reduce the tension (for some). Some key things to remember, Ice Breakers will set the tone of the session; the length of time should be no more than 5 – 10 minutes and make sure the number of participants is appropriate for the Ice Breaker. These are a few suggestions for Ice Breakers:

- *Speed Dating* – line everyone up so they are facing a pair, give each person a question to ask their opposite partner. Give each pair three minutes to ask their question of one another. Then one side should move along to another partner, the opposite side stays still. Continue this until the original pairs are back together.
- *Roll the Dice* – Bring dice to the LC Hour and everyone takes turns rolling the dice and the number rolled represents the question they will answer:
 1. Why did you choose to come to the U of S?
 2. What did you do last year?
 3. What has been the best thing that has happened at university so far?
 4. What has been the most challenging aspect of university so far?
 5. What has been the most unexpected thing about university so far?
 6. What are you most looking forward to during your time at U of S?
- *Things in Common* – Each student pairs up with another student whom they do not know. They must find three things that they have in common and then introduce each other to the group with their findings. You may then find that others in the group have the same or similar things in common.
- *The Magic Wand* – Imagine you have a magic wand that allows you to change three things about the University of Saskatchewan. You can change anything you want. How would you change yourself, your program, the Faculty the place you live etc.? This can be done as a large group of in pairs or small groups.
- *Ball Toss* – Everyone stands in a circle. Throw a small ball around and say the name of the person you throw the ball to. Add a second ball into the circle at the same time to add to the speed.
- *Memorizing names* – Go around a circle. The first person says their name, then the second person says their name and also the first person's name and

so on around the circle. A game where it is good to go first as the last person has to remember everyone's name.

- *Google more by title: Two truths and a lie, Clusters, Divide and Conquer, Matrices, Before Me, Send a Problem, Think-Pair-Share, Time Lines, K W L, Around the World, Turn to a Partner and..., Verbal Volleyball.*

Group Dynamics

All groups will be different because of the people within them. Some groups will get along immediately, while others may take a little longer to flourish. Here are some general guidelines on how to manage your group of LC students:

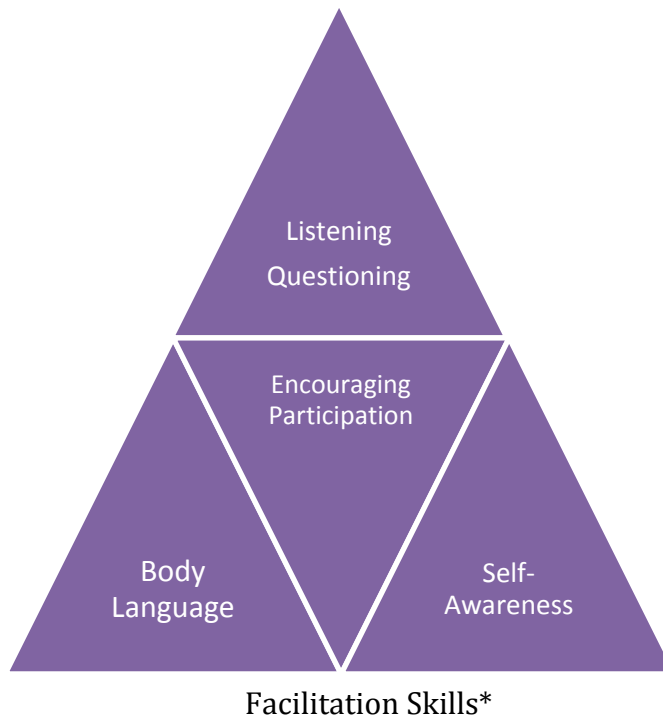
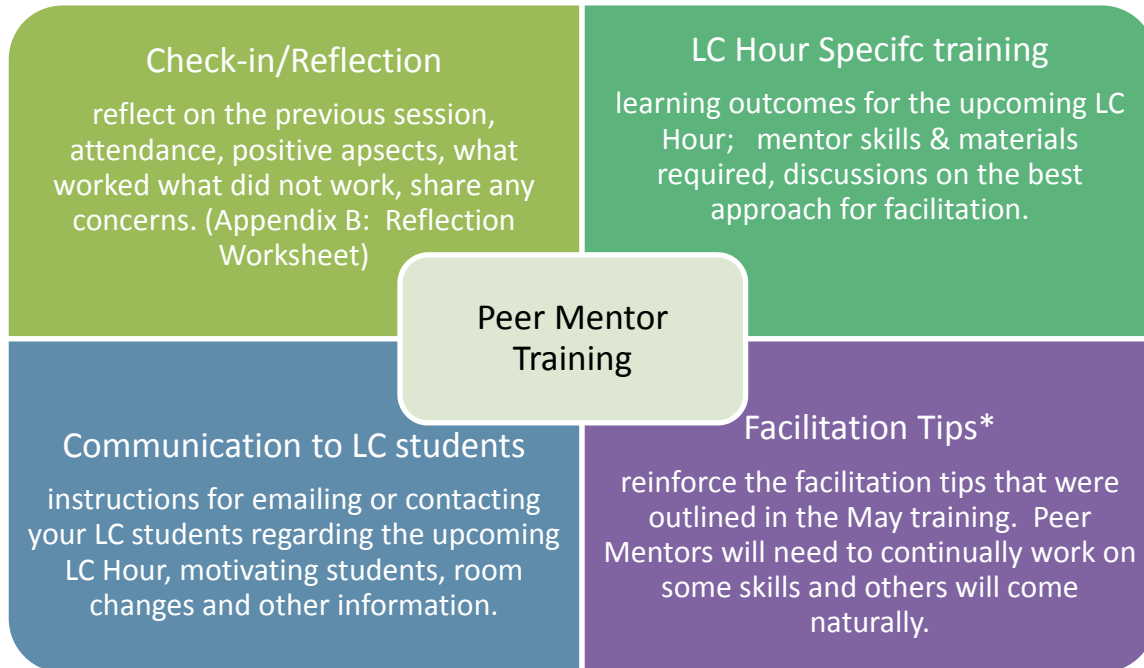
- Listen carefully, try not to interrupt, and respond to questions the students ask. Listening is a skill we all need to work on!
- Stay positive and watch your body language, especially while your partner is talking or presenting.
- Explain yourself clearly and perhaps in different ways if the LC students appear confused about what you are explaining.
- If you have time left over at the end of an LC hour, take some time to check in and review the progress so far, ask them how they feel the LC Hour is going and if they have any suggestions for improvement.
- Remember you are peer mentors and any opportunity to share your experiences with this group of LC students should be taken so that they can learn from you as a mentor.

Peer Mentor Training

Arts and Science training will be weekly for all three programs with most training times at the same time as your LC Hour but the opposite day of the week (LC Hour Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. then you train on Thursdays at 9:30 a.m.). Attendance at these training sessions is mandatory as the Arts and Science training is specific to the upcoming LC hour set on the LC schedules. If you cannot make a training session, just as you would need to do in any professional job, please email your assigned trainer or the Director of Arts and Science Learning Communities in advance of your training session.

At the weekly training in addition to the training specific to your upcoming LC Hours, you will receive facilitation tips to enhance your skills as a facilitator. We will also bring in guest speakers and promote opportunities for you to advance your leadership skills with added opportunities for professional development as a facilitator.

The Arts and Science Peer Mentor Training sessions will consist of:



All LC Hour schedules, LC Hour Learning Outcomes and the weekly training schedules will be handed out to each peer mentor according to their program; ASAP, UTRAN or FLEX Learning Communities at the Spring Training in May.

Benefits of being a Peer Mentor

Serving as a Peer Mentor is a valuable form of service that directly impacts the university community. By volunteering your time, energy and knowledge about university life, you contribute enormously to the success of the first year students by helping them feel a sense of belonging in the university community.

All Arts and Science Peer Mentors are given an honorarium once per term during the term they serve as a Peer Mentor. Each program has a different amount for the honorariums based on different budgets. The reason that the pay is by honorarium is to enable Peer Mentors to remain in the 'volunteer' category rather than a paid student position (note for some ASAP Peer Mentors they are paid as casual staff). If you have any questions about the honorarium rate for your program, direct those questions to the Director of Arts and Science Learning Communities.

Reference Letters will be written for any Peer Mentor that requests a reference from the Director of Arts and Science Learning Communities, for scholarship applications, entry to programs or other colleges or employment references. (Note: Peer Mentors must volunteer for a minimum of one term before requesting a reference.)

Peer Mentor Incentives

Leadership Workshop: There will be a Leadership Workshop for all student leaders on campus each fall (Peer Mentors, Residence Assistants, Student Advisors, Health Mentors, etc.). The Leadership workshop date will be announced in September.

Student Organized Leadership Conference: Student Leaders from across our campus will be organizing and participating in the 3rd Annual Student Leadership Conference set for January 2017. This is an excellent event focused on student leadership and a great opportunity to network with other student leaders from our campus. Leadership Conference information will be sent out to all Peer Mentors.

Peer Mentor of the Month: Your LC students will be invited to complete monthly nominations to highlight the good work of the Peer Mentors in each program (ASAP, UTRAN, FLEX). Small gifts are awarded to the Peer Mentor of the month in each Learning Communities Program each month of the term.

College of Arts and Science Learning Communities Staff List

ASAP – Aboriginal student Academic Advisors – Trish Monture Centre for Student Success



Kayla Goshulak

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Phone: 306-966-3243
email: kayla.goshulak@usask.ca

Transition Program – UTRAN Learning Communities – Academic Advisor and Academic Coach



Paul Gustafson

Academic Advisor

Office: Arts 250
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email: paul.gustafson@usask.ca

Adil Afzal

Academic Coach

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email: adil.afzal@usask.ca

First Year Learning Experience – FLEX Learning Communities – Staff

Ashley Pearse

**Learning Communities Coordinator/
Academic Coach**

Office: Arts 255A
Phone: 306-966-8793
email: ashley.pearse@usask.ca

Paul Thompson

**Learning Communities and
First Year Programs Coordinator/Academic Advisor**

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Lori Slater Pollock

Director, Arts and Science Learning Communities

Phone: 306-966-4327

Email: lori.slater@usask.ca

For more information on each program you can find the link to all three LCs on this website:

<http://artsandscience.usask.ca/undergraduate/about/learningcommunities.php>

Resources:

<http://artsandscience.usask.ca/undergraduate/advising/>

<http://artsandscience.usask.ca/undergraduate/academics.php>

<http://artsandscience.usask.ca/undergraduate/info/firstyear/>

<http://library.usask.ca/studentlearning/>

<http://library.usask.ca/studentlearning/resources/studyskills.php>

<http://library.usask.ca/studentlearning/workshops/writing-workshops.php>

