



NUTA MENTORSHIP GUIDELINES

Supporting Excellence in University Teaching

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT	3
2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE	3
3. MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME STRUCTURE.....	3
3.1 Phase 1: Launch and Awareness (Weeks 1-4 after call announcement).....	3
3.2 Phase 2: Foundation Building – National/Regional Workshop and Category-Specific Guidance (Weeks 5-8 after announcement).....	4
3.3 Phase 3: Portfolio Development and Feedback (Weeks 9-16 after announcement).....	5
3.4 Phase 4: Final Refinement and Institutional Endorsement (Final 2-3 weeks before April deadline).....	6
4. WHO FACILITATES INSTITUTIONAL MENTORSHIP GROUPS	6
Option 1: Institutional Teaching and Learning Centre Staff (For Well-Capacitated Institutions).....	6
Option 2: NUTA-Trained Mentors from the Workshop Programme (For Institutions Needing Additional Capacity)	7
5. MENTOR COMPETENCIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	7
7. TEACHING REFLEXIVE PRAXIS: CORE OF NUTA MENTORSHIP	9
8. AWARD CATEGORIES AND DIFFERENTIATED MENTORSHIP	10
9. THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO: STRUCTURE AND CONTENT	10
10. THE 10 NUTA EVALUATION CRITERIA	11
11. ENSURING SUSTAINED PARTICIPATION THROUGHOUT THE MENTORSHIP CYCLE	11
12. EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION: SUPPORTING HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED INSTITUTIONS	13
13. ASSESSING MENTORSHIP EFFECTIVENESS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	14
CONCLUSION.....	15

1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The National University Teaching Awards (NUTA) recognises and celebrates excellent teaching across South African higher education institutions. These awards honour academics who demonstrate exceptional commitment to student learning, innovation in teaching practice, and scholarly engagement with teaching and learning.

These mentorship guidelines provide structured support to academics preparing NUTA applications. Mentorship is not merely about producing applications – it is about helping academics deeply reflect on their teaching practice, understand their impact, and position their work within the framework of teaching excellence that NUTA seeks to recognise.

This document is designed to work in tandem with the NUTA Processes and Procedures (2026), which outlines the formal application timeline, eligibility criteria, and evaluation framework. As stipulated in the Procedures, "a mentorship system will be in place to support universities as required." These guidelines provide the operational framework for implementing that system effectively.

2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

These guidelines serve three core purposes:

- Support mentors and institutional coordinators in implementing a sustained mentorship cycle, with a central national/regional workshop as the foundational touchpoint.
- Ensure that mentorship activities – beginning with national workshops and continuing through institutional follow-up – develop reflexive practice and high-quality application development.
- Promote equitable access to mentorship, particularly for academics at historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) and in underrepresented disciplines.

The scope encompasses the full mentorship journey from initial announcement of the NUTA call through final application submission (typically a 3-4-month window before the April deadline). A centralised national or provincial workshop serves as the primary awareness and foundation-building event, with sustained institutional mentorship following that event.

3. MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Effective mentorship aligns with the official NUTA calendar and recognises institutional capacity constraints. The mentorship cycle is organised into four integrated phases, with the national/regional workshop(s) serving as the central event in Phase 2.

3.1 Phase 1: Launch and Awareness (Weeks 1-4 after call announcement)

Timeline: Begins when the NUTA call is officially announced by SAUT and forwarded/circulated to institutional leadership.

Key Activities for Phase 1 at Institutional Level (these key activities below are for institutions, **not the mentorship team**):

- Institution-wide announcement of NUTA call, timeline, and national/regional mentoring workshop details.
- Distribution of NUTA call documentation and mentorship schedule to academic departments, support divisions and teaching and learning centres.
- Senior leadership endorsement of the award and encouragement of participation.
- Brief awareness information session at institutional level (30-45 minutes): Overview of awards, categories, eligibility, importance of mentorship.
- Individual outreach conversations with identified potential applicants, emphasising the upcoming national workshop.
- Registration for national/regional workshop and institutional mentorship support (with tracking of who registers).

Success indicators at institutional level: Broad institutional awareness, identified pool of interested applicants, registration for national/regional workshop(s), institutional coordinators engaged.

3.2 Phase 2: Foundation Building – National/Regional Workshop and Category-Specific Guidance (Weeks 5-8 after announcement)

Timeline: Central workshop(s) held 1-2 months after call announcement, allowing time for initial interest to develop and institutional coordination to begin.

The National/Regional Mentoring Workshop

The centerpiece of the mentorship programme is a comprehensive national or regional workshop (approximately 3 hours) that brings together potential designated institutional representatives and mentors. This workshop covers foundational content while including differentiated category-specific breakaway sessions.

Workshop Structure and Content (Approximately 3 hours total):

<p><i>Segment 1: Welcome and Context (15 minutes)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior NUTA leadership welcomes participants • Overview of workshop structure and schedule • Reminder of submission deadline and mentorship resources available
<p><i>Segment 2: Understanding NUTA Criteria and Excellence in Teaching (45 minutes)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview of the 10 NUTA evaluation criteria with discipline-specific examples • What adjudicators are looking for: excellence in teaching across different contexts • How NUTA recognises teaching excellence in resource-constrained and well-resourced contexts equally • Q&A from participants
<p><i>Segment 3: Portfolio Development and Reflexive Practice (45 minutes)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What makes a strong portfolio (coherent narrative, not document collection) • Portfolio components: narrative, evidence, context statement, CV • The role of reflexive practice: "What? So What? Now What?" framework • Common portfolio challenges and how to address them

- Q&A

Technical Break (10 minutes)

- Short break to reset platforms, test breakout room access, troubleshoot technical issues.

Segment 4: Category-Specific Breakaway Sessions (60 minutes)

Participants move into separate breakout rooms by category:

- Breakout Room A: Beginner Teachers (0-5 years of teaching)
- Breakout Room B: Experienced Teachers (5+ years of teaching)
- Breakout Room C: Teaching Collaboration Teams

Content for each breakout (tailored to category):

- Category-specific examples of excellence
- How to position your application within this category
- Category-specific FAQs and challenges
- Facilitated discussion and Q&A

Segment 5: Closing and Next Steps (15 minutes)

- Return to main room
- Summary of key takeaways
- Overview of institutional mentorship support available after the workshop
- Resources provided (templates, exemplars)
- Encouragement and call to action

3.3 Phase 3: Portfolio Development and Feedback (Weeks 9-16 after announcement)

Timeline: Weeks following the national/regional workshop through to final weeks before April deadline. This is the longest and most critical phase for sustained support.

This phase emphasises institution-level mentorship to support applicants in developing their portfolios. Activities build on the foundation established in the national workshop.

Activities (ongoing throughout phase **at institutional level** coordinated by institutional mentors):

- Institutional Mentorship Groups (bi-weekly, 90 minutes): Small groups (8-12) organised by category, meeting at institution or virtually. Focus on portfolio development, peer feedback, addressing obstacles.
- Individual Consultations (as needed, 60 minutes): One-on-one support for applicants needing deeper engagement or addressing specific challenges.
- Exemplar Portfolio Review Session (60-90 minutes): Institutional deep-dive examining 2-3 strong portfolios from previous NUTA recipients, discussing what made them effective.
- Peer Review Circles (every 2 weeks): Structured peer feedback on draft portfolios using guiding questions.
- Asynchronous Support: Weekly emails with tips, FAQs, resources, deadline reminders, and engagement tracking.

- Attendance Tracking and Follow-up: Regular documentation and proactive outreach to those missing sessions.

Success indicators: Regular portfolio development, applicants receiving multiple rounds of feedback, high sustained engagement through phase, deep reflection evident in emerging drafts.

3.4 Phase 4: Final Refinement and Institutional Endorsement (Final 2-3 weeks before April deadline)

Activities:

- Final Institutional Workshop or Consultation (45-60 minutes): Common quality issues, common technical issues (e.g., prescribed length, accessible hyperlinks, etc.), and final polish strategies.
- Final Individual Consultations: Last-minute support for specific questions.
- Compliance Check: Verification that applications meet formatting, word count, and submission requirements.
- Institutional Endorsement: Senior leadership review and official endorsement as required by NUTA Procedures. **CRITICAL:** Only the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning) or the Vice-Chancellor may formally sign off on NUTA nominations. Self-nominations and nominations from junior executives will be disqualified, as stipulated in NUTA Processes and Procedures Section 2.3.

Success indicators: Complete, high-quality applications submitted on time with institutional support documented.

4. WHO FACILITATES INSTITUTIONAL MENTORSHIP GROUPS

The NUTA Procedures (Section 14.1) specify that mentors "should be teaching and learning specialists and/or Teaching Advancement at Universities (TAU) fellows". The NUTA Processes and Procedures also recognise that institutions have different capacities and provide flexibility in how mentorship is delivered:

"Institutions may choose to offer advice and feedback from their own institutional teaching and learning centre peers, or to make use of the NUTA mentors in the workshop and mentoring programme [in instances where an institution believes it requires further assistance from the NUTA mentors]" NUTA Procedures Section 3.3.

This intentional flexibility recognises that while every institution has teaching and learning specialists/centre staff, not all institutions – particularly historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) – have adequately capacitated staff to facilitate ongoing mentorship groups. Institutions should choose the approach that best matches their capacity while ensuring mentorship quality.

Option 1: Institutional Teaching and Learning Centre Staff (For Well-Capacitated Institutions)

Institutions with dedicated, adequately capacitated teaching and learning specialists/centre staff may facilitate mentorship groups using their own staff.

These mentors should:

- Have attended the national NUTA workshop and fully understand the criteria and portfolio expectations.
- Have expertise in teaching and learning (as per NUTA Procedures).
- Receive any necessary additional orientation on mentoring practices and group facilitation.
- Be adequately supported and resourced to facilitate groups sustainably throughout the mentorship cycle.

Option 2: NUTA-Trained Mentors from the Workshop Programme (For Institutions Needing Additional Capacity)

Institutions – particularly HDIs or those with limited teaching and learning centre capacity – may utilise NUTA-trained mentors identified through the national workshop programme. This option is explicitly provided in the NUTA Processes and Procedures to ensure equitable access to quality mentorship.

These mentors should be identified during or immediately after the national workshop as individuals who:

- Are teaching and learning specialists, TAU fellows, former awardees, or experienced academics with demonstrated commitment to teaching excellence.
- Attended the national/regional NUTA workshop.
- Express willingness to facilitate institutional mentorship groups.
- Are available to commit to the full mentorship cycle (Phases 3-4).

Institutional leadership should connect these mentors with potential applicants at their institution and provide appropriate support.

5. MENTOR COMPETENCIES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As stipulated in the NUTA Procedures, institutional mentors should be teaching and learning specialists, former awardees, and/or TAU fellows. This section details the competencies mentors need and the professional development support institutions should provide.

Core Competencies for Institutional Mentors

- Deep knowledge of NUTA criteria, portfolio expectations, and evaluation standards.
- Teaching experience and demonstrated credibility in own discipline.
- Ability to ask powerful questions that promote reflection and deep thinking.
- Skill in giving constructive, growth-oriented feedback.
- Sensitivity to equity and diversity issues in higher education.
- Facilitation skills for diverse group settings and conflict navigation.

Professional Development and Support for Mentors

Mentors require intentional preparation and ongoing support:

- **Attendance at national NUTA workshop:** All mentors should attend the full national workshop to understand criteria, portfolio expectations, and category-specific guidance.
- **Orientation to mentoring role:** Provide workshop or detailed documentation covering: NUTA criteria and rubrics, portfolio development process, strategies for teaching reflexive practice, group facilitation and peer review processes, tracking participation and proactive follow-up, strategies for supporting diverse learners and HDI contexts.
- **Access to mentorship resources:** Provide mentors with: exemplar portfolios, portfolio templates, checklists, FAQs, common challenges and solutions, writing support materials, discipline-specific guidance.
- **Support contact and peer mentor network:** Establish a support contact (email/phone) for mentors to ask questions or seek guidance. Consider creating a peer mentor network or discussion forum where mentors can share experiences and learn from each other.
- **Recognition and appreciation:** Acknowledge mentors' contributions through certificates, institutional announcements, or small tokens of appreciation.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS

To enhance mentorship effectiveness, institutions are recommended to employ multiple mentorship delivery formats to accommodate different learning needs and institutional contexts. The following formats represent recommendations and options for institutions to consider, rather than prescriptive NUTA team requirements. Institutions should select approaches aligned with their capacity, context, and applicant needs.

1. **National/Regional Workshop (Central Touchpoint):** A comprehensive 3-hour virtual or hybrid workshop efficiently covering foundational content and category-specific guidance (as detailed in Section 3, Phase 2).
2. **Institutional Mentorship Groups (Bi-weekly, 90 minutes):** Small groups (8-12 participants) organised by category (individual vs. team applicants), meeting regularly during Phases 3-4. Core mechanism for sustained engagement, providing opportunities for peer feedback (structured), mentor guidance, and resource sharing.
3. **Individual Consultations (60 minutes, as needed):** One-on-one support for applicants needing deeper engagement or addressing specific challenges with their portfolios.
4. **Exemplar Portfolio Review (60-90 minutes, Phase 3):** Institutional session examining 2-3 strong portfolios from previous NUTA recipients, discussing what made them effective and how they demonstrate reflexive practice and criterion alignment.
5. **Peer Review Circles (Every 2 weeks, Phase 3):** Structured opportunities for applicants to exchange draft sections and provide peer feedback using guiding questions.
6. **Asynchronous Support:** Weekly or bi-weekly emails with writing tips, FAQs, encouragement, resources, deadline reminders, and engagement tracking. Essential for reaching those unable to attend all live sessions.

Virtual vs. In-Person Hybrid Approach

- Workshops: Offer in-person with virtual option (Zoom/TEAMS with interactive components).
- Mentorship groups: Can be fully virtual to increase accessibility.
- Individual consultations: Offer both options.
- Asynchronous support: Essential for virtual reach.

7. TEACHING REFLEXIVE PRAXIS: CORE OF NUTA MENTORSHIP

Reflexive practice is central to NUTA. It distinguishes applications that describe accomplishments from those showing deep, scholarly engagement with teaching excellence. Both the national/regional workshop and institutional mentorship should emphasise reflexive thinking.

What is Reflexive Praxis?

Reflexive praxis integrates reflection (critically examining practice) with praxis (making informed adjustments). Excellent teachers engage in continuous cycles of action, reflection, and refinement, asking: Why did I make this choice? What evidence suggests whether it worked? How am I adjusting my teaching and learning practices based on what I learn?

The "What? So What? Now What?" Framework

- **"What?"** describes the specific practice, innovation, challenge, or decision. Be concrete and detailed.
- **"So What?"** explores why it matters – the principles, impacts on students, alignment with scholarship, what have you learned.
- **"Now What?"** articulates how this shapes ongoing practice and future decisions.

Example: **"What?** I redesigned large class assessment to include frequent low-stakes quizzes instead of two high-stakes exams. **So What?** Research on metacognition suggests this approach helps students regulate their learning; course evaluations improved; I see more consistent engagement, etc. Also, applicants should be encouraged to include citations to demonstrate scholarly underpinned practices, and, since the teaching portfolios will be available as a teaching and learning tool for other academics, they should be able to follow up on literature and resources mentioned. **Now What?** This fundamentally changed how I see my role – I now view frequent feedback as central to teaching, and I am implementing similar approaches across my courses." Applicants should also be encouraged to provide evidence.

Mentor Strategies

- Ask probing questions: "Why this approach?" "What evidence shows this was effective?" "How does this connect to theory?"
- Use exemplar portfolios to model reflexive thinking.
- Give feedback on reflection quality: "Help us understand not just what you do, but why and what you have learned."
- Encourage evidence-based reflection: "What evidence supports this claim?"

8. AWARD CATEGORIES AND DIFFERENTIATED MENTORSHIP

NUTA recognises three categories. Mentorship must be differentiated to match the distinct context and needs of each category. The national workshop includes category-specific breakout sessions; institutional mentorship should organise groups by category.

Individual Applicant Track: Beginner Teachers (0-5 years)

Mentorship focus: Help establish teaching identity and voice. Guide articulation of teaching philosophy foundations, connect early experiences to excellence principles, build confidence in growing expertise.

Individual Applicant Track: Experienced Teachers (5+ years)

Mentorship focus: Support synthesis of extensive experience, identify and articulate innovations and scholarly contributions, demonstrate disciplinary leadership and vision.

Team Applicant Track: Teaching Collaboration Teams

Mentorship focus: Emphasise collective strength and vision. Help articulate how collaboration enhances student learning, how members have influenced each other's practice, and the team's broader impact.

Implementation: Ensure all applicants receive category-specific guidance (integrated within Phase 2 workshops). Organise at least one category-specific mentorship group during Phase 3.

9. THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO: STRUCTURE AND CONTENT

According to NUTA Processes and Procedures, applications must include a portfolio containing a reflective narrative and substantiating evidence. The narrative must not exceed 10,000 words. Portfolios must be coherent narratives, not document collections.

Portfolio Components

- **Reflective Narrative (maximum 10,000 words, REQUIRED):** Heart of application. Tells the story of teaching excellence, demonstrates reflexive praxis, explicitly addresses criterion alignment.
- **Substantiating Evidence:** Documents supporting narrative claims. Should be curated (5-10 strong pieces) rather than comprehensive.
- **Teaching Context Statement (1-2 pages):** Describes institutional context, student demographics, discipline-specific considerations.
- **CV or Resume (teaching-focused):** Highlights teaching achievements, professional development, contributions to teaching community.

Using Exemplar Portfolios in Mentorship

Exemplar portfolios from previous NUTA recipients are powerful mentorship tools. The Exemplar Portfolio Review activity (Section 5.4) provides structured examination of these models. Secure permission from previous award recipients to use their portfolios as exemplars.

10. THE 10 NUTA EVALUATION CRITERIA

All applications are evaluated against these 10 criteria as detailed in NUTA Processes and Procedures:

1. Teaching competency and mastery of content
2. Student-centered teaching approaches
3. Innovation in teaching and curriculum design
4. Scholarship in teaching and learning
5. Responsiveness to diversity and context
6. Effective use of technology and resources
7. Leadership and contribution to teaching community
8. Reflective practice and commitment to improvement
9. Demonstrated impact on student learning
10. Alignment with institutional and disciplinary context

11. ENSURING SUSTAINED PARTICIPATION THROUGHOUT THE MENTORSHIP CYCLE

Research shows that mentorship effectiveness depends on consistent participation. The national/regional workshop is a critical first touchpoint, but the real impact comes from sustained institutional support in Phases 3-4. Institutions must implement deliberate mechanisms to ensure that applicants who attend the national or regional workshop remain engaged through final submission.

Workshop Registration and Pre-Workshop Communication (Weeks 5-7 after announcement)

Create anticipation and clarity before the workshop:

- **Registration form:** Request that workshop registrants identify their home institution. This allows institutional mentors to reach out post-workshop with follow-up support.
- **Pre-workshop communications:** Send reminder emails with workshop details, time, technical requirements, how to join, and what to prepare.
- **Technical support available:** Make available a technical support line or email for participants to test access, troubleshoot issues, or ask questions before the workshop.

Workshop Execution and Immediate Post-Workshop Handover (Workshop date through 24 hours after)

Ensure smooth execution and continuity from workshop to institutional follow-up:

- **Workshop participation tracking:** Document attendance during the workshop. Most virtual platforms (Zoom, Teams, etc.) automatically track and record attendance; use these records.
- **Post-workshop contact list:** Within 24 hours of workshop completion, provide institutional mentors with contact information for all participants from their institution. Include: name, email, discipline, career stage, category of application (individual vs. team).
- **Workshop recording:** Make the workshop recording available to those who could not attend live. Share recording link via email within 48 hours.
- **Workshop resources:** Simultaneously distribute workshop slides, exemplar portfolios, templates, and key resources referenced during the workshop.

Workshop Evaluation Completion (Critical for Feedback and Improvement)

Ensuring participants complete the workshop evaluation form is essential for gathering feedback and continuously improving mentorship. The following strategies are aimed at increasing completion rates and provide valuable feedback for continuous improvement:

- **Evaluation administered during closing segment:** During Segment 5 (Closing and Next Steps of the workshop), introduce the evaluation form while participants are still engaged and present.
- **Explain importance:** "Your feedback helps us improve this workshop for future participants. It takes 5 minutes and is invaluable."
- **QR code or direct link:** Provide QR code that links directly to evaluation form, or embed evaluation link in final slide. Make submission as easy as one click.
- **Live completion:** Request that participants complete evaluation before leaving the workshop. Allocate 10 minutes for this.
- **Incentive (optional):** Consider offering small incentive for completion (certificate of participation, mentorship resources, etc.).
- **Post-workshop reminder email:** For those who didn't complete during workshop, send follow-up email within 24 hours with evaluation link and personal request: "We value your feedback – please take 5 minutes to complete the evaluation."
- **Evaluation deadline:** Set deadline (e.g., "Please complete by [date]") to create urgency.
- **Secondary follow-up:** For low completion rates, send second reminder email at deadline-1, or make brief phone calls to key participants.
- **Data tracking:** Track evaluation completion rates by institution. If certain institutions have low completion, institutional mentors can follow up with their staff.
- **Analysis and action:** Review evaluation results within 1 week and share summary findings with mentors and institutional leaders. Demonstrate that feedback is acted upon. Example: "Based on your feedback, we will shorten the criteria section next year and add more discipline-specific examples."

Immediate Post-Workshop Follow-up (Within 1 Week)

Capitalise on workshop momentum:

- **Institutional mentor outreach:** Institutional mentor reaches out to all local workshop attendees with: (1) Personal welcome and confirmation they received recording/resources, (2) Schedule of upcoming bi-weekly mentorship groups, (3) How to register for institutional mentorship, (4) Direct contact information for questions.
- **Address barriers:** For those uncertain, ask what support would help them move forward.

Sustained Institutional Engagement (Phase 3)

Build accountability through regular contact:

- **Mentorship group attendance:** Bi-weekly meeting commitments create regular touchpoints and peer accountability.
- **Progress tracking:** Document attendance and portfolio progress. Mid-way check-in (Week 10-12) with anyone not engaging to understand barriers and problem-solve.
- **Email support:** Weekly brief emails with tips, resources, encouragement. Keep mentorship visible in participants' inboxes.
- **Peer accountability:** Small mentorship groups create natural peer relationships and motivation to attend.

Making Participation Integral

Position mentorship as expected and valued:

- **Senior leadership messaging:** Institutional leaders should emphasise that mentorship participation is encouraged and expected.
- **Mentorship documentation:** Encourage applicants to note institutional mentorship engagement when describing institutional support.
- **Institutional endorsement link:** Make clear that institutional endorsement (required by NUTA Procedures) reflects the institution's support for mentored application development.

Removing Barriers to Participation

Make participation feasible:

- **Multiple attendance options:** Mentorship groups offered in-person and virtually; recording available for those who miss sessions.
- **Scheduling flexibility:** Multiple time slots if possible (morning and late afternoon; weekday and optional weekend).
- **Technical support:** For virtual sessions, IT support available; platforms tested in advance
- **Communication:** Clear, repeated reminders of sessions with all details (date, time, link, how to register).

12. EQUITABLE PARTICIPATION: SUPPORTING HISTORICALLY DISADVANTAGED INSTITUTIONS

NUTA is committed to supporting participation from HDIs. The intentional flexibility in mentorship facilitation (allowing use of NUTA-trained mentors when institutional capacity is limited, per Section 4) is designed to address this equity imperative. The following strategies ensure equitable access across all institutional types:

Strategies to Support HDI Participation

- **National workshop fully virtual:** Ensures geographic accessibility for HDIs without travel burden or cost.
- **Recording available:** Those unable to attend live have access to workshop content asynchronously.
- **NUTA-trained mentor option:** HDI institutions can identify and utilise NUTA-trained mentors to facilitate institutional groups (Section 4, Option 2), addressing capacity constraints.
- **Flexible institutional mentorship:** Virtual options for all mentorship groups ensure participation even with limited resources.
- **Explicit affirmation:** Actively discuss during workshops and mentorship how NUTA recognises excellence in resource-constrained contexts equally with well-resourced institutions.
- **Cross-institutional networks:** Connect HDI applicants across institutions for virtual mentorship groups where institutional capacity is severely limited.
- **Leadership support:** Encourage institutional leaders to allocate teaching load reduction or dedicated time for applicants and mentors to engage in mentorship.

13. ASSESSING MENTORSHIP EFFECTIVENESS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Institutions should systematically collect data to evaluate whether mentorship is achieving its goals and to identify areas for improvement. Review data annually and refine mentorship strategies based on findings.

Data Collection

- **Workshop evaluation:** Administer evaluation form to all workshop participants. Analyse for: helpfulness of content, clarity of presentation, technical quality, suggestions for improvement, which sections were most valuable.
- **Institutional mentorship engagement:** Track and analyse: participation rates in groups/consultations, attendance patterns and drop-off points, demographic breakdown of participation (discipline, career stage, institution type), completion rates and submission status.
- **Application quality:** Compare portfolios of mentored vs. non-mentored applicants, evaluating: depth of reflection, criterion alignment, narrative coherence, evidence quality.
- **Success correlation:** Analyse correlation between mentorship participation and award success (shortlisting, award winning).
- **Participant feedback:** Conduct post-mentorship surveys asking: How valuable was mentorship? What was most helpful? What was missing? What would you improve?

Using Data for Improvement

- **Identify trends:** Where are drop-off points? Which activities are most valued? Are there demographic groups underrepresented?
- **Celebrate successes:** Highlight what is working well. Share success stories with institutional leadership and mentors.
- **Address barriers:** If certain institutions or groups have low participation, investigate barriers and adapt support.
- **Refine for next cycle:** Use findings to improve workshop content, adjust mentorship group formats, provide better support to mentors.
- **Share findings:** Report results to institutional leaders and mentors. Demonstrate that feedback is heard and acted upon.

CONCLUSION

These mentorship guidelines support advancing excellence in university teaching across South Africa. The mentorship model recognises that institutions have different capacities while ensuring that all potential applicants have access to foundational knowledge through a centralised national workshop and sustained support through institutional mentorship programmes.

This model balances national reach with institutional responsiveness. The national/regional workshop provides efficient, equitable access to foundational NUTA information. Institutional mentorship groups, consultations, peer review, and asynchronous support provide the sustained engagement needed for in-depth portfolio development and application completion. Deliberate strategies at each phase – from registration through to final submission and workshop evaluation – ensure high participation and engagement throughout the mentorship cycle.

Institutions have flexibility in how they facilitate mentorship and how they structure support, provided mentors have appropriate competencies and participants receive sustained, tracked engagement.

We encourage all institutions to adopt these guidelines, select mentorship approaches matching their capacity and context, prioritise sustained engagement through Phase 3-4, and commit to supporting equitable participation in NUTA across all disciplines, career stages, and institution types.