

School experience

Introduction to school experience year 2

Teaching assistant handbook



Forum for African Women
Educationalists in Malawi
(FAWEMA)

*"Supporting Girls and Women to
Acquire Education for
Development"*



The Open
University



Keeping Girls in School scholarship programme
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‘Keeping Girls in School’ Scholarship Programme

School Experience Year 2 Handbook

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School Experience Year 2

Introduction

Welcome back to school. We hope you have had time, during the long break from school, to think usefully about your experiences as a Teaching Assistant.

You should now organise your School Experience Handbook and any other study materials you normally use when you help in the school. In these first weeks you should ensure you have time to meet your Mentor and discuss Year 2 of School Experience with him or her.

You should also ask your Mentor to introduce you to the head teacher and other teachers in your school. Some of them will remember you from last year, but some might be new to the school, so you might need to explain to them what your role is in school, like you did last year.

This year, you will assist older learners and work with a new teacher in Standard 7 or Standard 8. As you do this, you will continue to develop:

- knowledge of different Learning Areas in the primary school curriculum
- skills in supporting learning activities
- skills in making and using learning resources
- skills as a role model
- understanding of issues in the society that affect learning – especially for girls
- understanding of teaching and assessment methods

The second year of the programme consists of three Themes. These are:

Theme 4: Working with others and learning from them

Theme 5: Social issues in education

Theme 6: Supporting learning and transitions

Each Theme will have 5 study units. Each unit is for approximately two weeks of study and work experience. The fifth unit in each Theme will give you time to complete and review your previous weeks of study and work experience, and to set yourself goals or objectives to work on in the next terms.

For each Theme you will:

- read about teaching and assessment methods
- assist learners and the teacher in specific ways
- do a small project to benefit the classroom
- investigate an issue of importance to the school and the community.

The focus of this programme is **Keeping Girls in School**. As you read and do the activities, pay attention to what girls in the classroom are doing. Offer them your help, as much as you can. Talk to your Mentor and your teacher about what you can do to support the education of girls. Present yourself as a good role model for girls in your classroom.

The 'Keeping Girls in School' (KGIS) Access to Teaching Scholarship Programme

The 4 year 'Keeping Girls in School' programme runs from 2013 to 2016 and is funded by DFID Malawi. The Open University (OU) UK is partnered in this project by FAWEMA, the Forum for African Women Educationalists-Malawi.

This project aims to help keep girls in school by recruiting more women from rural communities in Malawi into primary schools. The two year Scholarships provide pathways into teacher training whilst encouraging the women to remain in their community. The Scholarship combines a two year 'School Experience' programme as a Teaching Assistant, attached to a local primary school, with structured study to upgrade your Malawi Certificate of Secondary Education qualifications to a level where you can apply to teacher training. During the 2 year School Experience, in your role as a Teaching Assistant you act as a role model, supporting girls and girls' education in the school.

The Scholarship will increase the number and presence of women in primary schools, especially in areas where there are few women members of staff. The Scholarship is for 2000 women in 4 districts across Malawi.

Each scholarship provides:

- Placements for you as a Teaching Assistants in primary schools for 2 years, helping in Standard 1 or Standard 2 in the first year and in Standard 7 or Standard and 8 in the second year. You follow a comprehensive week by week School Experience programme for the 2 years, and you are provided with all the materials for this. In your School Experience, you are supported by a Mentor – an experienced primary teacher in or near the placement school.
- In Year 1 you were provided with distance learning materials and tutorial support for MSCE study (in the priority subjects: Maths, Physical Science, Biology and English). For your MSCE study you were supported by MSCE tutors who are qualified secondary teachers.
- Support for a Teacher Training application.

Your role as a Teaching Assistant in Year 2 as you work in Standard 7 or Standard 8

During the second year that you are in school, you will be working in a class in either Standard 7 or Standard 8. Unless you have had to move schools, you will know how the school works, the basics of how you can assist in the classroom, and you will know the learners in the school.

In Year 1 you have established yourself in your school and you should now be known and respected for your work. Remember in this year, Year 2, you will be working with much older students in Standard 7 or Standard 8 and this will be a new kind of challenge to you. So it is important in Year 2 that you develop an understanding of how to support the curriculum and learning at the upper end of the school and how to be role models to the students in the school. Your Mentor and the Head teacher will assist you in this.

Your experience of studying again for MSCE is going to be helpful to you as you support older students in the primary school as the learners move towards examination and transition to secondary school.

The School Experience Year 2 programme aims to develop your confidence and clarify your new role, identifying tasks and activities you will undertake during the School Experience days in your school. As an experienced teacher your Mentor will be crucial to help in your induction to the school and in your role as a Teaching Assistant in Standards 7 or 8 classrooms.

Your Mentor

Your Mentor is an experienced primary teacher from a primary school in Malawi. She or he is a teacher in your school, but might not be the teacher in the Standard 7 or 8 class where you do your second placement.

Your Mentor will support you in your school experience throughout your time in school. As you saw in the study calendar and the framework of school experience there are scheduled times every 2 weeks throughout the year when you should arrange to meet with your Mentor to discuss your progress. However, you will find it very useful if you can talk with your Mentor more regularly while you are in school. You might find that your Mentor comes to school a bit early or stays after the learners have left, so these might be times you can have a chat about how things are going in your School Experience. Your Mentor will also be able to help you think about what you have learned and what you need to concentrate on in the next units.

Your Mentor needs to sign each unit in your School Experience Handbook.

Do you know who your Mentor is? Is it the same teacher as last year? Try to find 10 minutes to speak with your Mentor and find out about him or her.

When you learn who your Mentor is, find some time to meet and greet this person. Maybe you can ask how long your Mentor has worked in this school and if he or she has ever worked in another school. After you have introduced yourself, write a little bit about your Mentor in the space below:

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Dialogue with Your Mentor

During the second year of the programme, you will be working with your Mentor who will be helping you to reflect on your own development as a Teaching Assistant supporting the class teacher and working with groups of learners in Standards 7 or 8. For most of you (except in cases, say, where you have changed school), you will be building on a professional relationship which began last year. This relationship between the Mentor and yourself, is a reciprocal learning experience where you can both learn from each other and help each other to develop further in your own roles.

Throughout this year you will continue with your professional dialogue with your Mentor in the regular meetings you have every two weeks. Both you and your Mentor will write your own reflections about some of these dialogues at the end of each unit. This will help you to record your own thoughts on your professional practice and how it is developing as the programme progresses through your final year as a Scholar and Teaching Assistant in the KGIS programme.

Your meeting with your Mentor

At your regular meetings with your Mentor you will be able to:

- describe what you have done so far, looking with your Mentor at the specific activity or activities in the School Experience units of study,
- talk about what has gone well,
- look together at the next activities in the following Unit,
- discuss what you need to do to prepare.

If something has not gone well, talk with your Mentor to understand why it did not go well and how you can do better.

At the end of each unit, remember to sign and date your School Experience Handbook and ask your mentor to do so also.

Scholars and Mentors as role models

During the school day, many of the girl learners in the school will be looking up to you, to female teachers in the school and to your Mentor to learn from them. All staff at the school, including you in your role as Teaching Assistants, should behave appropriately and lead by example for the girl learners to have positive attitudes to learning, cleanliness, physical presence and relationships with others, to continue attending school and participating in school life. As a Teaching Assistant and a MATS Scholar you need to keep this in mind and ensure you are a positive role model to all the learners in the school.

At your regular meetings with your Mentor, you should take some time to discuss how you think you have been a role model to girls in school, and how you can continue to be a positive example for all learners in the school.

School Experience Framework Year 2

THEME 4 Working with others and learning from them	THEME 5 Social issues in education	THEME 6 Supporting learning and transitions
Unit 1: Getting to know Standard 7 or Standard 8	Unit 1: The life-skills curriculum and cross cutting issues in education	Unit 1: Supporting girls' learning across the curriculum
Unit 2: Supporting learning in the classroom	Unit 2: Attitudes to learning	Unit 2: Extra-curricular activities: opportunities for girls to learn
Unit 3: Supporting group work	Unit 3: Supporting differentiated activities	Unit 3: Working for success in examinations
Unit 4: Supporting the individual learner	Unit 4: Contributing to assessment and record keeping	Unit 4: Making the transition to secondary school
Unit 5: Reflecting and looking ahead	Unit 5: Finish and review	Unit 5: Review your learning and update your Personal Statement

Using the study units

Each unit should not take you more than four hours each week to complete. Some of the things you will do in school, for example when you have to plan a practical activity, and at other times you will read and write at home.

At the end of each unit, we have left a space for you to think about how the unit has gone and to sign and date the unit, to confirm you have completed it. In some weeks you have a scheduled meeting with your Mentor, in which you will discuss your progress and look ahead to what you are going to work on. After the meeting, your Mentor should sign the units you have already completed.

You will come across most of the following headings in a unit:

'When you complete this unit you will have developed:'

This describes the knowledge, understanding or skills you will develop as you carry out a unit of study.

'In this unit you will read the following terms:'

We sometimes provide definitions of words which you will read in a unit, for example: "think aloud", "peer" and "observation".

'Timing'

A unit of school experience activity is spread over two weeks and will not take more than four hours each week – not four hours all at once, but at different times during the days you are in the school. In the four hours you will do some reading, some writing, and some practical activities. You will also, of course, be helping the teacher and learners in the classroom at the same time.

When you start a new unit, you should look at the whole unit first to understand what you need to plan and do. Sometimes you will need to make time for an activity or a discussion.

We all read and write at different speeds, and take different amounts of time to accomplish the same tasks. You should not compare yourself with others about how quickly or slowly you work through a unit of school experience.

'Study activity'

This is a reading to get you thinking. It may be a real life example about a Scholar, a learner or a school. It may be a reading from an academic book or a report.

'Practical activity'

This is something you will do in your school, with learners or with other adults. You will usually do some writing about this activity.

'Review'

In this part, you look again at what you did in the practical activity, and answer questions about what you did and learned.

'To finish this unit'

Here we ask you a few more questions to complete your learning, and we sometimes ask you to write a bit more.

'Scholar's signature'

At the end of each unit you will write a short report on what you have done and write about your progress. Then you sign to show that you have completed it.

'Mentor's signature'

Your Mentor signs here after you have discussed the unit with her or him. There is also a space for your Mentor to write comments about your progress.

Introducing yourself to your school

Last year you completed a page which you shared with the teachers in school to explain what your role as a Teaching Assistant was. This year your role will be slightly different because you are working with older learners and because you can use all the experiences you learned last year. Please complete the next pages, and ask your Mentor or the Head teacher whether you can put them somewhere in the school so that everyone knows what you are doing in school this year.

Moni! I am a Scholar and Teaching Assistant in the Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) Access to Teaching Scholarship Programme.

My name is.....
and I am a Teaching Assistant in Standard.....in
.....Primary School
in..... District

I am following a two-year programmes that trains me to help teachers and to support learners. Last year I was helping in the Standard 1 or 2 class, but this year I am working with the teacher and the learners in the Standard 7 or 8 class.

My Mentor.....supports and advises me. I am a member of the school team.

I am not a teacher. I help teachers and learners. I also have a special job to be a positive role model and encourage girls to stay in school.

Here are some of the kinds of support I will provide this year:

- support for the learner
- support for the teacher
- support for the curriculum
- support for the school.

In this second year, each term I wil:

- assist Standard 7/Standard 8 learners and the teacher in specific ways
- do a small project to benefit the classroom
- investigate an issue of importance to the school and the community.

During lessons, while the teacher is teaching I will;

- Interrupt learners' conversations
- Help learners form groups
- Encourage learners to pay attention
- Answer a learner's question
- Help a learner to answer the teacher's question
- Explain something to a learner
- Distribute and collect resources
- Give feedback to learners
- Correct learners as they work
- Ensure that resources are shared
- Tell the teacher of a learner's difficulty
- Prevent intimidation of girls
- Show disapproval of bad behaviour
- Set an example – show how to listen and respond
- Encourage participation by girls
- Stop a learner from bothering others
- Mark papers
- Prepare worksheets or handouts
- Prepare resources
- Organise teaching, learning and assessment resources

I will also continue to assist in other practical activities such as:

- Prepare and tidy the classroom
- Call the register
- Help the teacher to maintain discipline
- With the teacher's guidance, take learners for additional practice or revision
- Write in the sick book, the punishment book and the progress book
- Advise girls who are at risk of leaving school
- Help to prevent harassment of girls
- Be a strong role model for all learners

Study Calendar – Term 1

Date	School Term Dates	Week No.	SCHOOL EXPERIENCE Year 2		
			Theme	Unit	Mentor Meeting
	School term 1	1	Introduction and Orientation		Meeting
		2	T4: Working with others and learning from them	U1: Getting to know Standard 7 or Standard 8	
		3			Meeting
		4		U2: Supporting learning in the classroom	
		5			Meeting
		6		U3: Supporting group work	
		7			Meeting
		8		U4: Supporting the individual learner	
		9			Meeting
		10		U5: Reflecting and looking ahead	
		11			Meeting
		12		Review of Theme 4	
		13			Meeting
		14			

Study Calendar – Term 2

Date	School Term Dates	Week No.	SCHOOL EXPERIENCE Year 2		
			Theme	Unit	Mentor Meeting
	School term 2	1	T5: Social issues in education	U1: The life-skills curriculum and cross cutting issues in education	Meeting
		2			
		3		U2: Attitudes to learning Classroom project: Book making	Meeting
		4			
		5		U3: Supporting differentiated activities	Meeting
		6			
		7		U4: Contributing to assessment and record keeping	Meeting
		8			
		9		U5: Finish and review	Meeting
		10			

Study Calendar – Term 3

Date	School Term Dates	Week No.	SCHOOL EXPERIENCE Year 2		
			Theme	Unit	Mentor Meeting
	School term 3	1	T6: Supporting subject learning and preparing for secondary school	U1: Supporting girls' learning across the curriculum	Meeting
		2			
		3		U2: Extra-curricular activities: opportunities for girls to learn	Meeting
		4			
		5		U3: Working for success in examinations	Meeting
		6			
		7		U4: Making the transition to secondary school	Meeting
		8			
		9		Unit 5: Review your learning and update your Personal Statement	Meeting
		10			



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