Higher Education Academy

TRANSFORMING TEACHING INSPIRING LEARNING

Learning from best practice in peer learning and mentoring across the Cathedrals Group

Compendium of case studies

In partnership with:

THE CATHEDRALS GROUP

Leeds Trinity University

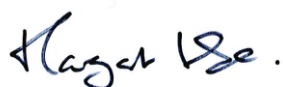# Contents

Forward

The publication of this compendium of case studies on peer learning and mentoring draws out best practice from across the Cathedrals Group of Universities. The compendium together with the report and the practice directory seeks to highlight the important and distinctive work that goes on within the mission group. Universities have evolved into complex social and academic environments where learning takes places in multiple contexts and spaces.

Access to peer learning and mentoring are part of an essential academic and social ecosystem whereby students are supported to support and learn from each other and enhance their academic performance and social development. Academic communities thrive when we are able to build positive relationships between the subject discipline, the staff and student groups.

I would like to thank all those colleagues from within the Cathedrals Group who contributed to this project and who have produced case studies of their work for others to learn from. Each case study highlights the unique and distinctive nature of practice within each University and across the mission group, showing the value and difference that peer learning and mentoring makes to successful student outcomes.

Professor Margaret A House

Chair of the Cathedrals Group

Vice-Chancellor Leeds Trinity University

Acknowledgments

1. Context

This compendium of case studies has been produced as part of the joint Higher Education Academy (HEA)/Cathedrals Group/Leeds Trinity University project 'Learning from best practice in peer learning and mentoring across the Cathedrals Group'. It is intended to showcase and illuminate the rich range of practice within the group.

Each institutional participant within the project was invited to select one of the schemes/programmes in current operation that best illustrates their current practice. Although several institutions operate more than one scheme, only one case study per institution was permitted.

A case-study format was provided (please see Appendix A) in which guidance was offered in relation to section headings, content overview and approximate word length. Within this broad standardisation, flexibility of format and presentation was acknowledged to be essential, in keeping with the variety of provision, participation and purpose of each scheme.

Readers will note considerable variation in practice and terminology between universities. Terminology is especially fluid with terms such as 'mentor', 'mentee', 'leader', 'buddy', and the range of activities undertaken being interpreted and applied differently within and between institutions. While this fluidity is both intentional and desirable, enabling innovative practice to emerge in ways that best suit participants and stakeholders, it must also be acknowledged that this can at times prove frustrating and may, on occasion, constrain comparison between schemes. Nonetheless, this is entirely in keeping with descriptions of practice from the wider international community of practice in peer-assisted learning and peer mentoring. Indeed, this inclusive approach with all its inherent frustrations is something we have learnt to value.

Further information about the project may be found at: www.heacademy.ac.uk

2. Case studies

Studio Practice, Bishop Grosseteste University

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Key words: near peer mentoring, meaningful creative project

Nature and focus of scheme

First year Drama students are allocated to third year single honours student directors as actors for their final year Studio Practice module. The project is relevant and meaningful for both final year students and first year students as part of their degree programme. Final year students are assessed on the module and first year students evaluate and analyse the process and performance as part of their assessment. The process provides new students with a mentor and helps them to integrate into the drama community.

Scheme overview

The module operates in the first semester of the academic year. Third and first year students meet in the first week and third year students lead drama activities with first year students on a 'getting to know you' basis. This also introduces new students to common activities and drama devices. First years are allocated to final year students by the tutor on a largely arbitrary basis. Final year student directors work with their actors, which frequently include additional second year actors, to their own rehearsal schedules. The third year module is overseen by the tutor, largely by tutorials and the first year actors are also overseen by the same tutor as part of one of their first year modules.

Generally, there are between 15 and 22 directors, single honours Drama students and 30-40 single and joint honours first year students. The process culminates in a festival of short drama performances, each done twice, which takes place in the final week before the Christmas break generally over three days and evenings. The performances are open to the public and the event is extremely popular with students across the campus, friends and graduates who frequently come back for the event. The mentoring aspect and peer learning occur organically from the process rather than as a deliberately manufactured situation.

Key resource implications

As this activity takes place in compulsory modules for both final year students and first year students, it is funded through the course. Currently, both modules are run by the same tutor, which provides a balanced overview, and tutorials are built into the modules. Each third year student has a small production budget for their Studio Practice, as is normal practice. Studio Practice is space-intensive in terms of rehearsal time and spaces and this can be problematical. Directors need to be organised and innovative, obviously useful transferable skills, but so does the tutor overseeing the practice particularly in terms of space and time allocation. Overall, it is a cost effective way of imparting relevant production values and practices to first year students with the added value of peer mentoring and a sense of community, which is vital in applied theatre practice.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

The tutor develops and leads the training of mentors and sessions are given on health and safety and ethical policies, including disclosure and the respect of privacy in the first three weeks of the module. Final year directors have individual tutorials with the tutor which include advice on working with others as well as drama and directing practice. First year students' preferences in terms of the sort of productions they are comfortable with are reflected in a form given to them by the tutor at the start of the process and final year directors are obliged to work to their actors' strengths and weaknesses as part of the assessment criteria. The tutor also talks to first year students about their experience in Studio Practice and their own responsibility to the process. Final year students are given access to a copy of the first year drama timetable, which enables them to talk through academic demands and time management with their first year actors and negotiate around pressure points.

How the scheme engages and supports students

The scheme is extremely popular with students who appreciate the opportunity to work with students from different years on relevant and interesting projects that include an element of creative and practical collaboration. The format of performance is relevant and satisfying for drama students and they are learning practical as well as social and creative skills. They see the point of the process and enjoy working towards a common goal. The fact that all first year students are involved in a similar process but with very varied productions is stimulating and provokes discussion and debate between themselves which can be tapped into by the tutor. First year students usually form a strong bond with their third year director and meet other second and third year students. Socialisation between the years is high and most first years settle down quickly and have a sense of loyalty to their director. Third year students are encouraged to offer advice on time management and look out for homesickness and other problems. First year students appreciate this near peer bond if only on a subject skills level.

It is interesting that the benefits are not always one way. In a number of cases first year actors have worked autonomously on their production when directors have been ill or suffered bereavement and they have been known to cover for their directors for less valid reasons!

The process is very successful and the quality of the work is generally very high.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

Feedback from both directors and actors is very positive. Many students rate it as the high point of their first year and most first year single honours students start planning their own studio practice from that point. Feedback from first years frequently mentions the sense of belonging and identity that they feel as a result of involvement and their relationship with their director. Many final year students continue to advise and mentor their 'actors' throughout the year and keep in touch after they graduate.

Quite a lot of the evidence is anecdotal but there is data emerging as the tutor has and will continue to gather feedback from short questionnaires and semi-structured case studies and interviews. Many first year actors make it clear that the studio practice scheme is what kept them at university as it provided them with a network and someone to talk to when they were vulnerable.

Critical reflections

This project has evolved from a genuine need and this is one of its greatest strengths. Students appreciate its validity and see it as useful and pertinent to their degree course. That would be my best piece of advice; create something that is valid in its own right rather than simply create a mentoring scheme. The value for these students seems to stem from a common cause and goal. The process is a rich one but the product is something to be proud of too.

This particular project has been going for 20 years plus, and it has become richer and more complex. Its mentoring value has become more and more obvious and has been articulated more specifically by academic staff, graduates and students over the years. Safety nets have to be in place in terms of safeguarding final year directors if they have actors who do not commit and staff have to be aware of personality clashes and be prepared to step in at appropriate points. It is quite surprising how infrequently the process breaks down. There is plenty of scope here for written academic analysis.

http://www.bishopg.ac.uk

Pastoral peer mentoring, Canterbury Christ Church University

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Student Engagement Officer (Peer mentoring)

key words: support, sharing, belonging, challenges, transitions

Nature and focus of scheme

Pastoral peer mentoring is an opt-in service open to all students at all levels of study. For late applicants it is an opt-out service. It is not linked to programmes. A mentor will support students with their day-to-day life at university, from enrolment throughout their period of study. A mentor is there to answer general enquiries, assist students with university systems and processes, signpost students to other services available within the university, facilitate discussions for students to talk about any challenges they may be facing and to share ideas with.

Scheme overview

The scheme is flexible and voluntary and has been running since 2014. Recruitment of mentors happens around October and January through formal application. Undergraduate applications must have successfully completed one year of study with us before applying but this is not a requirement for postgraduates. There is no interview process but students are required to attend a full days training following which the role is confirmed. Pastoral mentors are allocated up to five mentees at any one time. The mentoring can take place face-to-face or online. It provides an invaluable source of knowledge and experience from students who are willing to invest their time to support other students through their period of study. It ensures students have a link to the university at all times especially if they are not studying on campus or they are away on placement.

A pastoral mentor does not need to be studying the same programme as the student they support, as they do not provide subject specific assistance. Any student who wishes to be put in contact with a peer mentor can email a central address and make the request. They will be matched with a mentor and the two put in contact with each other. Currently, there are 70 active pastoral mentors.

All mentors have the opportunity to log on our volunteering database the hours that they spend in the role. They are invited to an annual award ceremony in recognition of their time. They can also sign up to the extracurricular Christ Church Extra Award which is then entered onto Section 6.1 of their HEAR on completion.

Key resource implications

At Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), peer mentoring is located within Learning and Teaching Enhancement and overseen by the Head of Student Engagement. Peer mentors are voluntary roles so there are no costs associated with them. The major running cost is the salary of the Student Engagement Officer (Peer Mentoring) who also runs other peer-mentoring schemes and training. In addition, marketing materials are produced for open days, Faculty events, etc.

Funding is through the Access Agreement/Office for Fair Access (OFFA). Further funding could provide administrative support and thereby enable the SEO to focus on developments.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

The Student Engagement Officer (Peer Mentoring) is responsible for the development and training of mentors. The full day's training is delivered face-to-face in a classroom setting and focuses on practical mentoring approaches and actions, underpinned by theory. Sessions are student-centred and are developed to meet the needs of the particular participants. They are interactive and include skills development alongside the knowledge. Importantly, the knowledge and awareness required to refer mentees on to appropriate specialist services is included in the training. There is no training for mentees but they do receive a handbook outlining the scheme and providing information about the role of the mentor and their obligations as a mentee. Continuing mentors are invited to refresh their training by attending again the following year.

How the scheme engages and supports students

The scheme is designed to provide benefits for both the mentor and the mentee.

It consolidates the mentor's knowledge of the university (and beyond), as they are often required to provide information for mentees and therefore need to be sure it is accurate. It provides a holistic approach to student life as it supports students' emotional and physical health and wellbeing in addition to their academic development.

Feedback from mentors identifies the benefits as building strong relationships and developing their interpersonal skills. Feedback from mentees recognises that peer mentoring it provides them with a sense of belonging, not feeling alone, having someone to talk to and ask questions about anything without feeling silly.

Unexpected benefits came from applying an opt-out rather than opt-in approach to providing late applicants with a mentor; out of the 56 students allocated a mentor, 53 were still using the service a few months later, hopefully impacting on the retention rate of this vulnerable group of students.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

Currently qualitative data is collected from mentors and mentees via a questionnaire.

Mentors said that being a mentor has:

- enhanced their personal and inter-personal skills;
- developed transferable skills for the workplace;
- improved their employability;
- improved their academic skills;
- developed their self-esteem and confidence;
- greatly increased their Christ Church experience.

Mentees said that having mentor has:

- helped them feel supported while also gaining practical advice;
- assisted their learning from the knowledge and experience of an another student;
- widened their network of friends across the University;
- increased their confidence in social and academic situations.

Future plans involve the collection of quantitative data using such characteristics as the POLAR3 Quintiles and progression, withdrawals, etc. alongside mentor recording of contacts as an indicator of mentee engagement.

Critical reflections

Key challenges are:

- personnel (financial) resources to grow the service;
- staff engagement – getting support from programme teams to promote and engage with the service;
- gathering data to show the impact of mentoring;
- removing the stigma of mentoring as used for those who are struggling or underperforming;
- student engagement in relation to mentee retention.

https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/

Peer learning mentoring, Leeds Trinity University

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Learning Hub

Key words: peer learning mentor

Nature and focus of scheme

The peer learning mentoring scheme is a university-wide programme that aims to offer support to all strands of the student body by representing all programmes. The peer learning mentors (PLMs) are recruited by subject area and offer weekly, voluntary drop in sessions and email support. The PLMs can be any level excluding level four, and a number of postgraduate students are currently taking part in the scheme.

Scheme overview

Peer learning mentors offer support on academic skills, but they are able to bring their subject specific knowledge to bear in order to offer expert advice. For example, if a user is asked to write a report for a business-related module, the advice given by a PLM with a business background will be tailored in the right direction. There are currently 35 PLMs. PLMs also undertake a number of additional roles. In order to aid the embedding of the scheme, they attend Intro week sessions with the Learning Hub team. They are invited along to Learning Hub workshops to offer support to workshop delegates and further advertise their services. A number of PLMs are also supporting lecturers in module seminars and workshops. Further, a number of PLMs have recently been involved on a voluntary basis in a peer-to-peer marking and feedback project. Most recently, the University has been working on developing a 'Digital Literacy Champion' programme, and this is currently being folded into the peer learning mentoring scheme. The 'Digital Literacy Champion' programme is a service to support students to develop and maintain the digital literacy skills necessary to work effectively as a student.

Key resource implications

The PLMs are paid an hourly rate (£10) for their regular work. They also receive payment for additional work dependent on its nature. The day-to-day organisation of the scheme falls to the Learning Hub graduate trainee. The Student Achievement Coordinator has overall authority for the scheme.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

The recruitment of PLMs is rigorous. The role is advertised throughout the university, with requests going to departmental members of staff for recommendations. Some targeted promotion then takes place. The candidates are then interview to determine their suitability.

Upon appointment, the PLMs undergo two-hour induction training and further training takes place during the year, with roughly two training sessions taking place per term. All these sessions take the form of group workshops. The PLMs 'check in' before and after their sessions, which allows them to raise issues, concerns and queries as and when necessary. The PLMs can also use the services of the Learning Hub to improve their own academic skills and, through this, develop their mentoring capabilities.

How the scheme engages and supports students

The peer learning mentoring scheme has recently entered its third academic year under the umbrella of the Learning Hub. Last year the scheme received 389 drop in visits; a 264% increase in usage.

Anecdotally, it appears the service gets used in several ways, and the user dictates this. Some students attend the PLM session for their area on a regular basis, which allows the PLM themselves to act as a more traditional mentor by supporting development over a period of time. Other users drop in as and when required, treating it more like a 'clinic'. On occasion, some PLM sessions work more as group study sessions led by the PLM. Such flexibility has been a strength as it allows for different students to access the same support in different ways. PLMs also offer online support via an email drop box. This element of the service is still in its infancy and ways of further developing this facility are still being explored.

Prior to appointment, a number of PLMs mentioned during interview that they already helped their friends on their course, and the scheme has allowed for this to be formalised and extended to a wider field of students. Academic staff engagement is seen as key to increasing student engagement, and the number of staff showing interest in marketing the peer learning mentors programme has risen year on year. It is now a fixture in many module handbooks and lecturers draw attention to the PLM programme during lectures at appropriate times in the year. This is thought to have had an impact in the success of the scheme.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

The key measure of the success of the service has been the extent of its use. The increase in usage from the academic years 2014-15 to 2015-16 is a pleasing sign, and this is a trend it is hoped will continue. It is also worth noting that, last year, semester two usage significantly outstripped semester one usage, again suggesting that, while still in its infancy, the scheme is increasing in popularity. This is illustrated in the graph below:

PLM usage: year-on-year comparision
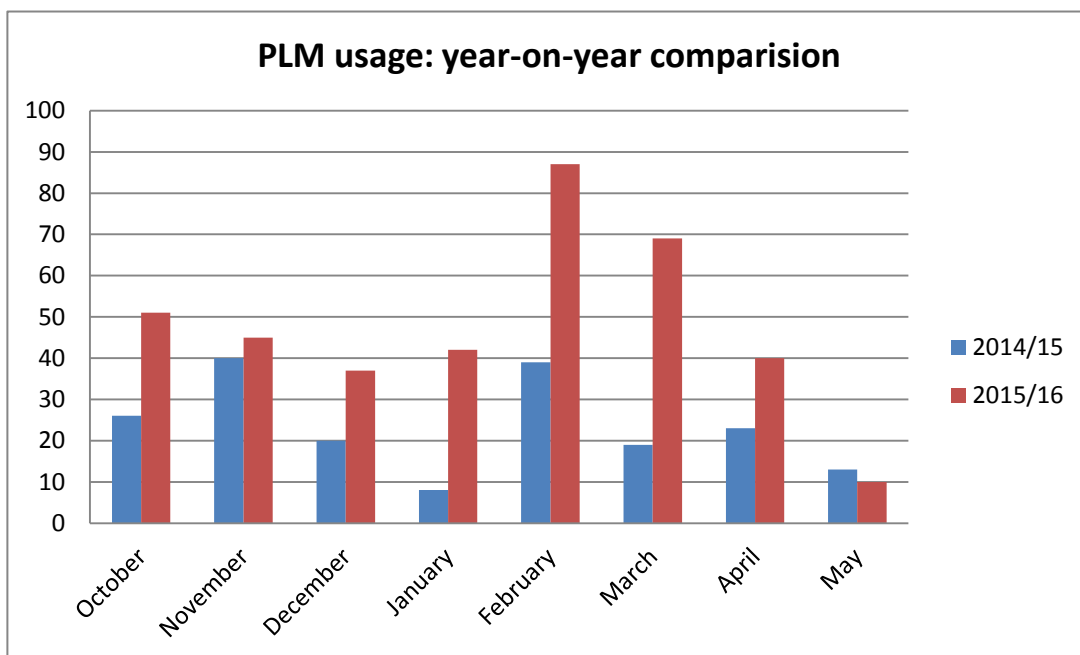
Anecdotally, the peer learning mentoring programme has received excellent feedback, with two examples included below:

It's really nice and personal service. When I know I have work that needs to be done, or when I know I need to start getting on with thinking about how to begin my work, I always drop in to see my PLMs. **(Level 5 Humanities student)**

Students attending these sessions have found them invaluable (**Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies**)

We are exploring further ways of monitoring the impact of the scheme. We are planning to collect more systematic feedback from service users, staff and the PLMs.

Critical reflections

Key challenges and strategies used to overcome: student engagement is variable across programmes and across PLMs. Attendance is good in areas such as Psychology, Theology, and Religious Studies. Student engagement in other areas has been more difficult to establish. Attendance overall at PLM sessions has increased dramatically over the last two years as a result of a sustained advertising campaign. This has included inviting PLMs in lectures to take a lead on academic skills input alongside staff from the Learning Hub.

The scheme might have been 'even better if': the PLMs had been allocated their own permanent space for supporting students.

Lessons learnt and advice to those starting such a scheme: managing in excess of 30 PLMs is challenging and requires careful monitoring. Some PLMs are able to work very independently and others require more support in order to develop their professional skills further. Advice to others starting a scheme is stated below:

1. Be patient – don't panic if engagement takes time to develop.
2. PLMs are the best advert for themselves. Give them an opportunity to promote themselves. They often promote themselves informally.
3. Promote the scheme through many different channels.

http://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/student-life/student-support/the-learning-hub

Peer academic writing mentors Liverpool Hope University

Susan Murray (murrays@hope.ac.uk)
Director of Library and Learning Spaces

Key words: peer support, mentors, skills development

Nature and focus of scheme

The mentoring scheme provided support for students to develop and enhance their academic writing skills. The service is aimed at all levels of ability ranging from students who are having difficulties with aspects of academic writing to those who have a good writing style but wish to enhance it and potentially improve their marks. The mentors are recruited from our Masters and PhD students. We try to appoint mentors from across the three Faculties, but this is not always possible. Mentors have to demonstrate a good understanding of academic writing and also the ability to share their experience and knowledge.

Scheme overview

Support is delivered through pre-booked one-to-one appointments, workshops, and drop-ins, and is available to students from all levels of study at the point(s) in their course where they need support. Some tutors will recommend students come to the service but it is the student who books the appointment. We get student referrals from colleagues in Mental Health Support and Disability Support. The mentoring scheme was set up in 2013-14 and the mentors provided 196 appointments this has grown to 501 appointments in 2015-16. Some students will have a single appointment while others may have several with either the same mentor or several mentors. We have also experienced students using the service at different stages of their studies so a student may come in the first year for help with structure and then in third year for dissertation support. Where possible, we avoid a student being mentored by a mentor who has studied the same subject. If a student has issues that are not directly related to their writing, they will be referred to other support, for example, the Faculty Librarian or subject tutor.

We also provide regular workshops, these started off focusing on exam and revision techniques. We now have a programme of sessions – for example, Structure, Critical Writing, Proof Reading, Dissertations – which students can book onto online. We have also provided tailored sessions for specific groups, for example, international students, School Direct, etc. Support is offered at both campuses with most appointments Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm, but we can be flexible and offer later times for students on placements. We have also provided email support for students who cannot attend a face-to-face session, but these are more challenging for the mentors. Drop-in sessions are used at busy times for students with quick queries – for example, referencing – and these would provide the student with up to 20 minutes of a mentor's time.

Key resource implications

The mentors are paid roles and the current rate is £8.30 an hour. This is funded centrally and we submit an annual budget request, which has a breakdown of the number of appointments, workshops, drop-ins, training and meeting hour requirements. We have been able to request additional funding mid-year if there has been a need to increase the number of appointments available. We have a dedicated space that the mentors use for their appointments which is in a prominent location off the library foyer. This is close to a collection of study-skills books.

Day-to-day management of the service sits with the Learning Skills and Spaces Co-ordinator who, as well as all of the administrative and data collection tasks, supports the mentor team, develops materials such as workshop presentations, and manages the service web page which included links to external materials as well as resources produced in-house by the mentors.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

The mentor team once appointed are provided with a group training programme which consists of the following:

- What makes a good mentor and Good mentoring skills? This session also covers the process and procedures. If there is a mentor who is continuing in the role from the previous year, then they are invited to the session to share their experience and their top tips/resources (half a day);
- academic writing support training from a senior academic who has a research interest in academic literacies. This included how to identify what type of writer they are to using free writing and other techniques (half a day);
- sessions from our Senior Learning Advisor, Mental Health Support Worker, and a Faculty Librarian so mentors are aware of these services and referral processes (1 hour each);
- running workshops: a Faculty Librarian shares their experience of running sessions including advice on interaction and engaging students (1 hour).

Throughout the year, the mentors have fortnightly meetings that provide the opportunity to reflect on workshops and appointments, share their experiences and seek advice from the rest of the team. They discuss resources and identify any new materials that need to be produced. There is also the opportunity to invite subject tutors to attend to discuss academic writing in their subject or to have additional sessions on academic literacies or anything else the mentors feel that they would benefit from. Mentors can also attend University staff training sessions, for example, producing resources for students with disabilities.

After about two to three months of mentoring, the mentors are observed by one of the Faculty Librarians in one of their one-to-one sessions and receive constructive feedback identifying the positive and suggestions of any improvements that can be made.

The Learning Skills and Spaces Co-ordinator organises the training programme and the meetings.

How the scheme engages and supports students

Students are made aware of the support that is available in a range of ways including:

- at Fresher's Fayre;
- introductions to the service as part of a subject or library lecture or seminar;
- signposting from other University staff, for example, academic staff, Student Services, course reps, residential tutors;
- Student Bulletin, webpage, Student Union webpage.

Many students indicate that they find out about the mentors from friends or colleagues who have used the service. Students will also move between the different support formats; so a student may initially attend a workshop and then follow up with a one to one appointment.

We use student feedback to identify topics for workshops and the mentors are able to focus on the issues related to that topic that they are encountering in the one to one sessions into the workshop. We have tried to make the workshops more interactive, this has mixed results and can be problematic for the mentors in small groups and also where the students are from across a wide range of subjects and different levels. Student contributions tend to work best in subject sessions. We ensure that the students have handouts of the core concepts and resources to take away so they can then try them out.

The mentors themselves have expressed how much they learn from the mentoring process and that they can see it improving their own writing styles.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

We collect and collate information from both one to one sessions and workshops to assess the reach and effectiveness of the service. Students complete a registration form, and from this data about their course, gender, level or study, if they are international, and any disability is extracted to produce annual statistics and this can be compared across the three full years the scheme has been in place. Students are also asked to complete a feedback form and again this data is collected and recorded. At the end of an academic year the data is used to produce an annual report that is considered at the University's Student Services Group.

Student feedback is overwhelmingly positive with most students rating the service "extremely helpful" or "helpful", and when asked if the session had met their needs a common response is "Yes and more". Students are also asked to indicate which topics they would attend a workshop on and these responses are used to plan the workshop programme. Students are also asked for feedback on the workshops. Again feedback has been positive and improved over time, so in 2015-16 for the 'Exam and Revision Techniques' workshops, the proportion of students rating the sessions as "extremely helpful" increased from 42% the year before to 67%, an increase of 25%.

We have also had anecdotal feedback from tutors indicating an improvement in students' performance. Some examples of student feedback include:

> Helped a lot with how to plan and structure my assignment. Gave examples of really helpful websites to use

> I feel that everything I felt worried about was covered, to assure me I can do better

> I feel I am now able to go away and make a start in applying the correct format/approach to my assignment. All really positive!

> A lot of genuine care and help from the mentor, this was a really comfortable session. Lots of useful information to take on into the future to help me.

Critical reflections

Initially we scheduled appointments for both of our campuses on the same pattern but it soon became clear that the take up at our Creative Campus was not at the same level as the main campus. This was partly due to the smaller number of students but also due to the nature of the subjects studied at the Creative campus where the students are undertaking a wider range of assessment types not wholly dependent on writing as in other subjects. We now take the approach that we schedule a mentor to go to the Creative campus when a student is wholly based there and so does not come to the main campus.

We have made adjustments across the three years of the service to learn from our experiences. Examples include the introduction of the drop-in sessions to try and enable more students to be seen by a mentor, and so students with a relatively easily solved issue, which does not require a full one-to-one session, are dealt with more efficiently. The workshops have also seen changes from subject based to sessions available to all. We are currently using the University's Online Store system to enable students to book on to sessions, we are currently reflecting on our experience of this and trying to deal with issues such as students being able to double book onto the same session on different dates and also to be able to have a waiting list when a session becomes fully booked.

Another difficulty has been finding a way to reduce the number of no-shows, which waste appointments or places on a workshop. We are currently trialing sending students an appointment for which they have to confirm their attendance using Google Calendar. There has been some improvement, and it also seems to identify any problems with an appointment time earlier in the process.

Additional comment

We are about to pilot a study skills mentors scheme in January which will be very strongly modelled on the writing mentors. The driver for this is the DSA funding changes and aims to put in place alternatives to ensure students continue to received access to study skills support. Besides filling this gap, we want to make the services we offer as inclusive as possible so all students can benefit from them. Topics to be covered will include time management and scheduling, organising work and resources, note taking, using University online systems (e.g. VLE), and presentation skills.

http://www.hope.ac.uk/gateway/library/mentoringservices/

Peer mentoring, Newman University

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Academic Development Tutor

Key words: voluntary, supportive, transition, cv-building, HEAR

Nature and focus of scheme

This scheme is pastoral, rather than an academic. All students who are new to Newman University are offered a peer mentor to help with their transition into university, though the scheme has traditionally been aimed at first year undergraduate students. The peer mentors are generally second year students (though some continue in their third year) who have completed their first year and have recent memory of what it was like to be new to the institution. Students who have previously been peer mentors can apply to be a peer mentor co-ordinator to help with matching mentees and collation of data.

Scheme overview

The second year volunteers are called *peer mentors*. When advertising, we also refer to them as buddies, to clarify their role. The students who request a peer mentor are referred to as *mentees*. The Peer Mentor Coordinator helps with the matching of new mentees to mentors and responds to queries, they also send an evaluation of the service each semester and meet with the Academic Development Tutor in order to ensure the service is continually improving.

The scheme aims to ensure the transition into university life is less daunting. Having the support of a fellow (second year) student can help new students settle in and make the most of their time here. Typically, the support may include:

- practical advice on how to get involved in the student societies;
- help to find services on campus;
- tips on shopping and budgeting;
- help in finding things to do and places of interest;
- advice on how to get a good life–study balance;
- exam or essay tips.

The peer mentor scheme is flexible, students may have face-to-face contact with or purely email based communication. Meetings can take place at mentor and mentee's convenience around the university campus. The relationship between the mentor and mentee generally lasts for up to a year, but the key times for contact are at the beginning of each semester. Often the relationships begin as face-to-face ones and move to online ones. If distance students request peer mentors, these are purely email relationships.

The peer mentors and the Peer Mentor Coordinator roles are acknowledged in the HEAR process and receive a certificate of appreciation. In addition, the Academic Development Tutor will supply references for the Peer Mentors and Coordinators, if requested.

Key resource implications

As the peer mentors and the Peer Mentor Coordinator are voluntary roles, there are no costs associated with the recruitment and retention of the team. The staff member involved spends approximately 30-40 hours training mentors at the beginning of each semester, which involves emailing, responding to enquiries and collating information. This equates to approximately 80 hours of staff time. At an estimated rate of £15 an hour, this would equate to £1,200. Following this busy time, responding to ongoing emails (5 hours per week) as the scheme settles down, and re-advertising the scheme as required equates to similar costs of £1,200 again across the semester. However, these costs are not additional and are absorbed into an established role.

The Academic Development Tutor and the Peer Mentor Coordinator advertise the scheme with a stand in a busy area of the university twice a year, the Student Union also advertise the scheme in the same way. Leaflets for mentors and mentees, mentor guides and posters have small costs involved. All costs are absorbed by the Student Support Services Department. The only staffing issue revolves around the fact that the Academic Development Tutor is not currently expanding the scheme due to time constraints. However, there are opportunities though the University Student as Academic Partners Projects to obtain small pots of money to work on particular projects around peer mentoring. The institution looks upon these projects favourably. Two such projects are currently being undertaken.

If a budget were allocated, more opportunities for the mentors to meet to discuss their experiences would be useful. A reward would also be considered (a trip perhaps).

Training and development of mentors/mentees

The Academic Development Tutor has overall responsibility for the training. However, the Peer Mentor Coordinators are asked to review the training each year, as part of their duties. This ensures the training remains appropriate to the students, is up to date and that the language and tone are appealing. Ideally the Peer Mentor Coodinators would also lead the training but as we currently recruit in July and train in September and early October, that is not possible as the Coordinators are not necessarily back at university in time. Ideally, it would be a student-led scheme.

The format for the training is face to face and takes approximately 1.5 hours. Small groups of peer mentors attend and previous mentors are involved to offer advice based on their experiences. The same training session is offered approximately 25 times across the year, both as scheduled and ad hoc sessions. The training includes example scenarios and a peer mentor guide, which was produced by previous peer mentors. Informal feedback suggests that the most important aspects of the training are speaking to a previous peer mentor and having the opportunity to discuss the scenarios.

Ongoing support is offered by the Peer Mentor Coordinator, who regularly emails the peer mentors to ask how they are getting on and whether they would like to offer feedback.

At the beginning of the third year, peer mentors are asked if they would like to remain peer mentors in their third year, apply for the position of Peer Mentor Coordinator, or stop mentoring. If they choose to remain, they are offered top-up training, but very few students request this. These students are then matched early in the new academic year as they are already trained.

How the scheme engages and supports students

As widely recognised, peer mentoring supports mentors as well as mentees. In many cases mentors have reported that they have had to learn or review something in order to pass the knowledge on or clarify something for a mentee. Typically, mentors cite referencing, using the library and accessing online resources as areas they develop to support their students, as well as aspects of essay planning and structure. While the scheme is pastoral, rather than academic in design and matches are not made according to subject area, mentors report that many of the enquiries from mentees are related to their academic work. There is a blurred divide in that it seems to be just as important to give tips about lectures and using Moodle as what to include in an essay introduction.

Much of the training for the mentors focuses on how to signpost mentees, rather than give answers to questions outside of their comfort zone but often mentors respond proactively. From feedback over the past few years, many positive comments are received from mature, part-time students who go on to become peer mentors themselves. Feedback also highlights that the students who apply for a peer mentor do not feel that they are struggling but want to take advantage of the scheme to be even more successful. 75% of comments relate to help with organisation and having a friendly face around campus. 50% of positive comments relate to increased confidence and getting information about their course/studying at university.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

The intended outcomes for the scheme are multiple:

- that mentees are welcomed into the university community;
- that mentees who have concerns, academically or socially, can obtain informal support;
- that mentors have the opportunity to volunteer and have their skills recognised;
- that mentors have a useful experience to discuss in interviews and to add to their CVs;
- that Peer Mentor Coordinators experience the formal process of application, interview and being awarded a position. Additionally, their CV contains a promotion in a post.

The following comments are representative of feedback regarding why mentees requested mentors:

just to find support from in the early days as it happens we never actually met but it was reassuring to have somebody responsive to contact by email

Just to get more confidence and to adjust to the workload

Being able to speak to someone who has had similar issues, and how to 'iron' them out"
"having somebody to contact that was familiar with the uni

An example of a recent mentor/mentee relationship is from this academic year: a mentor and mentee met face-to-face five times. The mentor also emailed the student outside of these meetings, sending exemplars of sections of essays. She dealt with some of the mentee queries by signposting to the librarians, Academic Development Tutor, and her lecturers. She also offered Newman online resources about report writing. Her mentee has asked to meet in the second semester, which the mentor feels indicates that the mentee is pleased with the support being

offered. Feedback from the mentor is that she feels relieved that the mentee is not on the same course as her as she would not have been so comfortable sharing sections of assignments. Regarding value, effectiveness and impact, the following comments are representative of student feedback:

Approachability	*a friendly face around the uni that I could talk to, who was a year above me so could give me advice. She was very approachable and easy to talk to*
Level of understanding and empathy	*speaking to someone who understands*
Tips from someone who has recent experience – and frequently mentees mention the ease of understanding of these tips, too	*tips on organising time and especially on extra place to find research information*
Timely support	*the help and support when I needed it*
Peers drawing upon own experiences.	*It was useful to talk to someone who had been through the same experience as I was going through*
Peer academic experience	*I found that the students' academic relationship was helpful. For example, my peer mentor reminded me about my decision to use the 'Sconul access' of the University of Birmingham*
Offering prioritising tips	*Pointing me in the right direction when I was side tracked by an assignment*

Critical reflections

One challenge relates to gender. Newman University has a significantly larger female cohort than male and this is reflected in the peer-mentoring scheme. The Academic Development Tutor targeted male students with peer mentor information last year. Therefore, this year the number of male peer mentors has increased, which means that we can match students according to gender, if a preference is shown.

A second challenge has been matching mentee expectation to the aims of the scheme. Each mentor and mentee receives a flyer that identifies what each person can expect of the scheme. Within the institution we have IT and writing mentors who the peer mentors signpost their students to as experts in that particular area.

When matching mentors to mentees, we try to take preferences into account. The most common request relates to age so if a mentor or mentee requests a mature student, we try to accommodate that. The mentors have a formal opportunity to identify their preferences but the mentees do not so the scheme might be improved if the mentees have this opportunity, too. Related to this, some mentees request a mentor in their subject area and we do not match according to subject. We are a small institution and could not guarantee the ability to match in this way as it is dependent upon which students volunteer.

Advice to those starting such a scheme would be to involve students as much as possible. They respond well to the responsibility. They are particularly interested in the HEAR recognition and appear to be appreciative of the certificate of appreciation. It would be useful to have identified funding for things like trips or cake and coffee mornings but if this is not forthcoming, the scheme should not be stalled, students are keen to volunteer to enhance their CVs.

Additional comment

The peer mentoring scheme has inspired or contributed to other schemes at Newman. We are currently involved with projects where peer mentors are establishing contacts with specific groups of students, such as those who are not achieving as well as expected within specific subject areas, in order to ensure they know how to access the support systems that we have in place. We are also starting a project for international students to be matched to peer mentors before they arrive at Newman. These projects will be evaluated to ascertain whether peer contact is more useful at different times of transition.

www.newman.ac.uk

Business Management peer mentoring pilot, St Mary's University Twickenham

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Key words: peer mentoring, first year transition, higher education, mentees, mentors

Nature and focus of scheme

The peer-mentoring pilot is an opt-out programme targeting both social and academic transition for Business Management undergraduate students. Mentors are second or third year Business Management students, each responsible for a group of five mentees of first year single or joint honours students. The programme is managed by two members of the Learning Development Team (LDT). The pilot began in September 2016 and runs until the end of the first semester, January 2017.

Scheme overview

To tailor the peer-mentoring pilot to the specific needs of first year students, the LDT conducted questionnaire and focus group research in 2015. The participants were first year Business Management students. Our findings supported the literature in highlighting two main areas students saw as challenging during transition: developing friendships and academic issues (managing workload and academic literacies). Participants also highlighted the need for mentors' time commitments to be kept to a minimum, emphasising the many obligations (work and family) they had in addition to their studies. A key finding identified was the significance of the intra-mentee group relationship: all the focus group participants identified this relationship as being of greater importance than that of the mentor-mentee relationship highlighted in the literature.

Our 2016-17 intervention is modelled on these findings. The pilot cohort comprises 110 first year mentees and 22 second and third year mentors in a voluntary role. The mentoring timeframe is from pre-entry in early September (to provide new entrants the opportunity to get to know fellow mentees prior to arrival, and to have their mentor as a friendly point of contact to deal with any concerns) to the end of the first semester in January (to support the mentees in adapting to the university culture and meeting the academic expectations of their new learning environment). Mentee group sizes of five were chosen to facilitate friendship-forming among mentees rather than between mentor and mentees. To limit the time commitment required from mentors, only two meetings are mandatory, the first occurring at the start of term and the second in early October to give mentees sufficient time to plan effectively to meet their Business Management assignment deadlines. Outside these two meetings contact is left to individual mentors' preferences: face to face or email.

Key resource implications

The LDT was established in 2012 under St Mary's Access Agreement. The role of the Learning Development Lecturer is to enhance learning and teaching to enable students from widening participation backgrounds to achieve their potential. To achieve this aim the LDT offers a range of services and resources, including embedded learning development work with individual programmes (curriculum planning and teaching sessions) and one-to-one tutorials. Piloting a peer-mentoring programme was one of the LDT's new projects in 2015 and, as such, its costs are covered by allocating time and resources from alternative initiatives and activities. As data analysis

will not occur till the pilot scheme finishes at the end of January 2017, it is not possible at this stage to evaluate whether the time allocated to co-ordinating a peer-mentoring programme is an efficient and sustainable use of the LDT service.

Additional expenses incurred were catering costs for buffet lunches supplied on the two training days and on the networking day. Guests at the networking event were offered payment at the hourly rate for visiting lecturers.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

The LDT devised two mentor-training days. The focus of the first session was pre-entry contact. This was a three-hour interactive workshop in which the LDT were joined by Students Services and Careers in presenting guidance to mentors and co-ordinating problem-based scenarios designed to encourage mentors to reflect on their responsibilities. Key topics explored were: boundary setting, confidentiality, communication skills, well-being, University services (to signpost mentees to other sources of support), record-keeping, and networking. Each mentor was given a mentoring handbook, created by the LDT, with details of the points covered, a timeline of mentors' responsibilities and guidance and suggestions including discussion topics and exemplars for email contact and face-to-face meetings. A condensed version of the session was repeated by the LDT at a later date for absent mentors.

The second training day, focusing on academic issues, was run by the LDT and held at the start of term in September. In the three-hour session, problem-based scenarios were used to help mentors develop an understanding of the academic support they could offer. The St Mary's pilot is not a tutoring model; mentors do not teach or offer content-based academic support. Rather, they draw on their first year experience to advise their mentees on study issues and provide practical support, for example, effective use of module guides.

Mentors receive ongoing support from the LDT via the virtual learning environment (VLE), email and phone calls.

The mentors were rewarded with a networking event. The LDT worked with St Mary's Centre for Workplace Learning to contact local employers and entrepreneurs and host a 'speed-dating' networking afternoon.

Mentees received no training. They were informed about the scheme prior to entry via information in welcome packs and online. The LDT gave further details of the programme in an introductory talk in the first week of term.

How the scheme engages and supports students

The pilot model was designed to meet the distinct needs of both mentees and mentors. For mentees, the intervention aimed to create an opportunity for the cohort to form friendships, socialise and be supported in their studies. The LDT had limited contact with mentees, only sending group messages via email and the VLE to promote the programme to any student who might not be engaging with their mentor. Anecdotal evidence from mentors concerning communication indicates, mentee contact varying between good, including meetings, to no mentee engagement. Mentees completed questionnaires prior to arrival to determine their expectations of the scheme

and any concerns about transitioning to university life. Mentees will complete a second questionnaire at the end of January 2017 and participate in a focus group interview in February 2017. Until this process is completed, it is not possible to comment meaningfully on the effectiveness of the pilot in supporting mentees.

For mentors, it was important that the scheme should offer tangible benefits in recognition of their willingness to take on a voluntary role in spite of the additional time commitment involved. Anecdotal evidence from the mentors' networking day is positive. Every student gave only positive feedback, one mentor stating that the event had helped her decide her future career. Of the 22 students originally recruited as mentors, four withdrew over the summer months and one mid-term. All five expressed the view that the perceived time commitment was too burdensome. Of the remaining 17 students, it will not be possible to comment on benefits until the completed scheme is evaluated in February 2017. The mentors also completed a questionnaire at the start of term to determine their expectations. They too will complete a second questionnaire in January and be invited to participate in a focus group interview in early February.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

In addition to questionnaire and focus group data, attrition and attainment data may be used to compare mentee retention and grades to those of the previous year's cohort. However, it is acknowledged that it will not be possible to isolate the effects of the pilot from other aspects affecting student engagement and success. Advice from colleagues on this matter will be sought.

Critical reflections

The greatest challenge faced by the LDT was implementing pre-entry tasks that had been designed to place students into well-matched mentee groups. Although the team were aware that Business Management was a programme that recruited a significant number of students via clearing the impact of frequently changing student numbers during the early weeks of term had been underestimated. Only 73 of a projected cohort size of 110 students had confirmed their place at St Mary's by the start of September. Of these, 60 had completed an online mentoring enrolment form stating their mentee group preferences. To reach this this number, the LDT had to devote significant time phoning students prompting them to complete the form. Within the first two weeks of term student numbers changed several times, with names withdrawn and new additions made, with the result that only two thirds of the final cohort of 107 students were placed into groups based on their preferences. Data analysis in February will indicate whether this attempt to match mentees according to their preferences had an impact of significance to outweigh the substantial time required to co-ordinate it.

Another challenge was the difficulty in promoting recruitment of mentors within the Business Management programme. The LDT had originally planned to follow a rigorous selection process but due to low applicant numbers had to accept all who applied to meet the threshold to run the pilot. In future, programmes wishing to adopt peer mentoring should own and promote the recruitment process. Finally, mentor-mentee communication appears to have been hindered by difficulties finding mutually convenient meeting times. Embedding the scheme within programmes, either within the personal tutoring framework or by devoting lecture or seminar periods to contact time for the two mentor–mentee meetings, could help overcome this.

http://www.stmarys.ac.uk

Peer mentoring, University Of Chester

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Project Officer

Key words: widening participation, retention, belonging, evaluation, impact

Nature and focus of scheme

The peer mentoring scheme is primarily designed to offer peer-to-peer support for level four students. The programme is institution-wide and is available pre-arrival, post A-Level results to all level four students. Mentors are current level five and six students. Mentoring support is framed by four key themes: social, money, living, and study. There are also subsets of activity including mature student mentoring, support for disabled students, and support for commuting students. We are currently launching postgraduate research mentoring.

Scheme overview

The University of Chester peer mentoring scheme operates on an annual cycle. Mentors are recruited between January and April to support the next level four intake. Mentoring is available to new students as soon as they have accepted their firm offer. This is usually August/September. There is no set end-date to a mentoring relationship.

Year	Mentors	Mentees
2015-16	69	102
2016-17*	198	162

*To date

There are no links to academic credit. Student mentors are rewarded with volunteering hours and points for Chester's employability award.

Key resource implications

The scheme is centrally co-ordinated in Student Support and Guidance by a Project Officer, and is supported by one or two administrative staff. All staff have other functions within their role that relate to other mentoring schemes, and/or wider Student Support and Guidance work. The staffing budget is OFFA committed expenditure. The approximate time spent working on the scheme is 0.5FTE. An annual activity budget of £7,000 is assigned to support the promotion and delivery of the scheme. A bespoke database has been built in-house to support administrative processes.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

Mentor training is conducted face-to-face in two-hour workshops. Workshops are scheduled and advertised when mentor recruitment opens in January of each year. For example, last year nine training sessions were arranged. The sessions are delivered by two members of staff. Mentor training covers the following topics:

- What is mentoring?;
- mentee issues;
- university support services;
- safeguarding and confidentiality;
- 'your' role as a mentor.

Training is designed to be interactive and the purpose of the workshops is to ensure that mentors feel comfortable answering a variety of questions, and addressing a variety of basic challenges facing new students. Critical to this is knowing where and when to refer a mentee for professional support.

Ongoing support is provided to mentors by the University's dedicated mentoring staff. Follow-ups are made with mentors and mentees by email, but the majority of ongoing support is ad hoc.

For 2016-17 we have just launched and piloted online training via the Moodle virtual learning environment (VLE). The online training will enable students from all campuses and remote sites to be able to be trained as mentors. It will increase the sustainability of the programme as it grows, removing the need for face-to-face training and associated resourcing costs. Online training takes approximately one hour and is split into 'mini-modules', each of which concludes with a short knowledge test. The online training platform has additional training available to students on topics including:
- commuting student mentoring;
- disabled student mentoring;
- mature student mentoring;
- postgraduate research student mentoring.

How the scheme engages and supports students

Peer mentoring aims to engage students with their first year experience, while developing resilience, wellbeing and a sense of belonging. Please see data in the section below for the observed impact.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

KPI 1: Student demographics are monitored for the purpose of access agreement reporting. The mentor/mentee demographics in 2015-16 were:
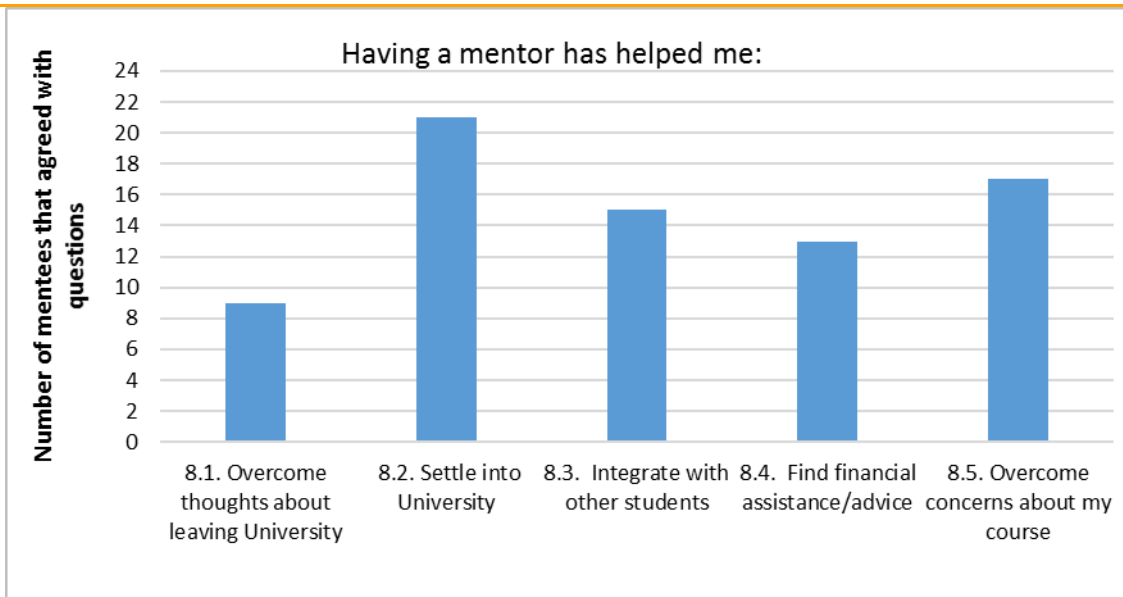
| | POLAR Quintiles | | | | | | Other factors | | | |
	POLAR 1	POLAR 2	POLAR 3	POLAR 4	POLAR 5	Unknown	Disability	BME	Commuting	Mature
No. of mentees	21	17	17	18	18	11	28	17	44	33
%	21	17	17	18	18	11	27	17	43	32
No. of mentors	11	10	11	11	9	5	10	4	20	11
%	19	18	19	19	16	9	18	7	35	19
UoC L4 Average %	18	19	18	19	18	8	10	8	36	21

KPI 2: Mentee retention and progression

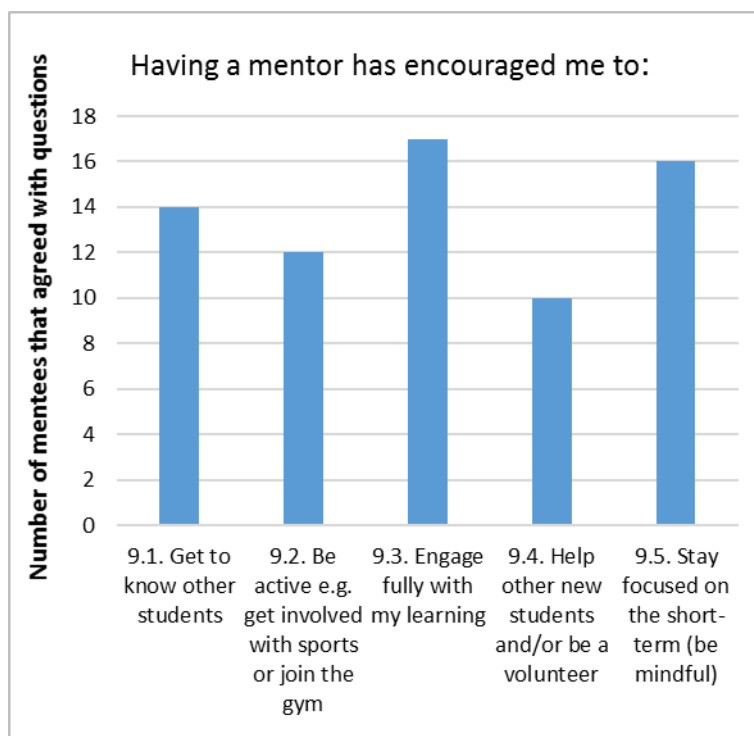|	POLAR 1	POLAR 2	POLAR 3	POLAR 4	POLAR 5	Unknown	Total
n.	22	17	17	18	18	10	102
Withdrawals	4	3	1	3	0	0	11
Termination	1	1	0	2	1	0	5
Retention	**77.3%**	**76.5%**	**94.1%**	**73.2%**	**94.5%**	**100%**	**84.3%**
Retention (Pre-Summer)	*95.5%*	*82.4%*	*100%*	*83.4%*	*100%*	*100%*	*93.1%*
1st attempt progression	$n = 10$ 45.5%	$n = 9$ 52.9%	$n = 11$ 64.7%	$n = 9$ 50%	$n = 13$ 72.2%	$n = 7$ 70%	$n = 59$ 57.8%
Total progression 2015-16	$n = 14$ 63.6%	$n = 12$ 70.6%	$n = 16$ 97.1%	$n = 11$ 61.1%	$n = 16$ 88.9%	$n = 8$ 80%	$n = 77$ 75.5%

KPI 3: Self-perception of impact

Based on a 35% response rate from 2015-16 mentees the following impact on the first year experience was recorded:

Having a mentor has helped me:

Number of mentees that agreed with questions

- 8.1. Overcome thoughts about leaving University
- 8.2. Settle into University
- 8.3. Integrate with other students
- 8.4. Find financial assistance/advice
- 8.5. Overcome concerns about my course

The area in which having a mentor was considered most helpful was settling into university. Students who did not actually have a concern in a particular area still found a mentor helpful. For example, a student may have stated that they did not feel isolated in University, yet they still found a mentor helpful in getting them to interact with other students.

KPI 4: Mentee wellbeing

Based on a 35% response rate from 2015-16 mentees the following impact on mentee wellbeing was recorded:

Having a mentor has encouraged me to:

Number of mentees that agreed with questions

- 9.1. Get to know other students
- 9.2. Be active e.g. get involved with sports or join the gym
- 9.3. Engage fully with my learning
- 9.4. Help other new students and/or be a volunteer
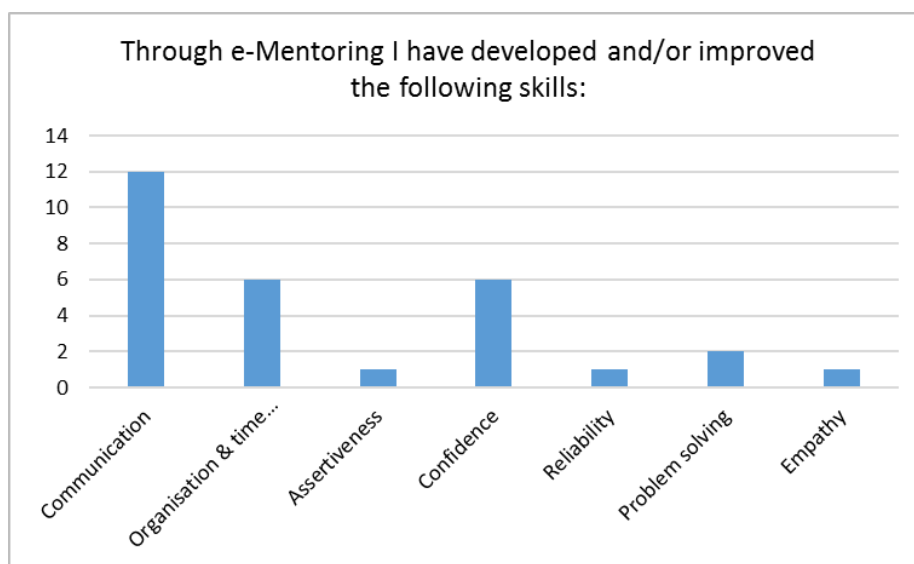- 9.5. Stay focused on the short-term (be mindful)

The questions and responses in this graph relate to the 'five steps to wellbeing' as defined in the Student Support and Guidance (University of Chester) well-being project:

1.   **Connect** with other people
2.   **Be active**
3.   **Take notice** of the world around you
4.   **Keep learning**
5.   **Give** to others

It is a promising result that a number of mentees feel that having a mentor has encouraged them to engage in activity that could impact positively on their well-being.

KPI 5: Mentor skills development

Based on a 36% response rate, the following impact on 2015-16 mentors was recorded:

Through e-Mentoring I have developed and/or improved the following skills:

Skill	Value
Communication	12
Organisation & time…	6
Assertiveness	1
Confidence	6
Reliability	1
Problem solving	2
Empathy	1

Mentors listed many skills that they felt they have developed throughout the scheme. Communication was the skill that most mentors felt had improved since starting the scheme, particularly written communication. Organisation skills were also highlighted in a number of responses, as well as self-confidence, with mentors stating that these had all improved as a result of mentoring.

Critical reflections

Key challenges

The key challenge has been the recruitment of mentees. To ensure that the scheme grows, we have worked in partnership with the University's marketing and recruitment team to embed peer mentoring in pre-application, and post-offer communications to all prospective level four students. We have also invested in an infographic video and are currently employing a student to work on promoting the scheme. To date, there has been a 60% increase in uptake from year one to year two of the scheme.

Potential improvements

We are currently exploring a number of improvements to the peer mentoring scheme. However, a key focus is the engagement of academic colleagues in terms of them promoting peer mentoring to their students and referring risk students into the scheme. The scheme will also benefit from academic staff receiving discipline specific and overall impact data from the scheme. This is currently in development.

Advice to new starters

As with any mentoring scheme, it is important to design the programme structure of operations and monitoring around the intended outcomes. Therefore, the advice to new starters would be ensure that you are clear about what you want to achieve before starting. The approach to achieve these results can then be formulated.

At the University of Chester, we have carefully considered the marketing position of this scheme – ensuring that it is seen as proactive rather than remedial. The aim has been to normalise peer mentoring among the student population.

http://www.chester.ac.uk/campus-life/support-for-students/development/peer-mentoring

Peer-assisted study sessions (PASS), University Of Cumbria

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WP Learning Enhancement and Retention Adviser

Key words: peer mentoring; PASS; peer assisted study session; peer support, student support

Nature and focus of scheme

PASS is a national scheme that provides a facilitated, group learning opportunity that uses the experience of higher year students to support the learning of lower year peers. Based on the 'supplemental instruction' approach developed at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, PASS has been adopted by a number of UK universities.

PASS complements existing course activities (e.g. lectures and seminars) enabling active learning in an informal and friendly environment. PASS sessions focus on the development of academic and learning strategies in new first year students while second and third year student leaders benefit from the development of their employability skills.

PASS fosters cross-year support between students on the same course and encourages participants to support each other and to learn collaboratively under the leadership of trained students from high years.

Each scheme is located within an undergraduate programme and is subject specific.

Scheme overview

Peer-assisted study sessions (PASS) is an established part of widening participation and retention activities at the University of Cumbria. The scheme was set up in 2008, initially piloted in the Education department, and has since grown in 2016-17 to 17 schemes across 13 different programme areas and across four campuses. In 2015-16 the PASS team trained 120 higher-year students as PASS leaders.

The scheme is co-ordinated by the Learning Enhancement and Retention Adviser and is delivered in liaison with trained supervisors from the team of Library and Academic Advisers located in Library and Student Services (LiSS). Academic Coordinators (course-based tutors) are also identified to ensure the scheme is embedded into course practice (see table below for PASS roles overview).

PASS supports incoming students through their first semester in university (although some schemes do continue into semester two); helping them make sense of academic practice at HE level and develop effective study approaches and coping strategies with the help of higher year students who have experienced the same first year of the programme. PASS Leaders deliver weekly discussion group sessions with small groups of first year students who agree the topic for discussion. Topics vary but will tend to cover issues such as managing a first assignment, academic writing and referencing, assignment planning, time management, understanding tutor feedback, and course-specific topics such as preparing for work placement, writing a lab report or reflective journals.

The PASS scheme is based on a number of key principles, including voluntary participation, collaboration and active participation, open to all abilities and, importantly, it provides a confidential and safe environment where no question is a silly question. Although PASS is a valued addition to the current academic provision, as yet, there is no link to additional academic credit.

Role	Description
PASS Scheme Coordinator (LiSS)	Co-ordination, training, monitoring and evaluation
PASS Supervisor (LiSS)	Liaison with linked programme, training of PASS Leaders
PASS Academic Coordinator (Academic programme)	Embedding with course practice, supports timetabling of sessions, recruitment and monitoring of leaders
PASS Leader	2nd, 3rd, or 4th year student volunteer – deliver weekly discussion groups
PASS attendee	New 1st year undergraduate students

Key resource implications

Originally delivered within the core staff provision within the Academic Services and Retention Team (part of LiSS), the expansion of the scheme has led to a business case being built a few years ago to secure additional staff capacity from the OFFA fund that aims to support the access, success and employability of widening participation students of which the University of Cumbria recruits a significant number. The post of WP Learning Enhancement and Retention Adviser (grade 6) was introduced in May 2014 and approximately 0.6FTE of this post is dedicated to the co-ordination of the PASS scheme. PASS targets are built into the University's annual Access Agreement.

The LiSS PASS co-ordinators carry out their responsibilities within their current job description (LiSS funded) where support for retention is identified. Overall, that work equates to another 0.5FTE at grade six to support all our existing schemes. There is no pay allocation for Academic Coordinators who carry out their PASS role within their normal academic staff role.

PASS leaders are not paid, in line with many other higher education institutions (HEIs) that offer PASS, and volunteer their time to attend the training and to run weekly one-hour sessions.

In addition, there is a small annual non-pay budget allocation that covers items such as travel, print and catering for staff meetings and leader training, scheme promotion and attendance at meetings and conferences across the peer learning community. Money is also allocated each year to support the attendance of two PASS Leaders to the annual PASS Leader conference.

Over the years, funding has also been allocated through the University's staff development budget and through OFFA to allow for one member of staff each year to attend PASS Supervisor training at a cost of approximately £800 per person.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

Students who come forward to become PASS Leaders must undertake the equivalent of two days training before they can be attached to one of our PASS schemes. The training is delivered across our campuses by the PASS Supervisors (LiSS). Leaders are trained through a combination of scheduled online and face-to-face activities.

The training framework and materials are based on those provided by the former PASS National Centre, at the University of Manchester, and have been adapted to the requirements of the institution.

- all interested PASS Leaders are signed up to the PASS Hub – a specifically designed site on Blackboard, the University's virtual learning environment (VLE). This site contains information on managing PASS sessions, useful resources, register information and importantly, the first stage of the formal training programme. This part of the training introduces the scheme, its purpose and principles on which it is based. A number of quizzes test students' understanding at each key point;
- the second phase of the training is a day of face-to-face training, an opportunity for leaders to display what they had learnt online and put into practice some key facilitation techniques. In the latter part of the training day the focus is on running mock sessions and session planning, allowing the leaders to prepare for their first session.

After the initial training has taken place, a number of monitoring mechanisms are put in place including regular debriefs of the leaders at programme level, involving supervisors and academic co-ordinators. These allow all parties to discuss student feedback, engagement levels and any other issues that may arise. This year the offer of additional, optional, training for leaders is being explored to allow further development of the PASS Leaders.

All PASS Leaders are encouraged to sign up and complete the University's Employability Award, Career Ahead, and their contribution to enhancing students' learning is recognised at an annual celebration, Bright Futures, that recognizes the various ways student volunteers in various roles support the students' experience.

How the scheme engages and supports students

Primarily, the PASS scheme offer first year students the opportunity to gain subject specific support from their peers and helps to foster cross-year engagement and relations. From a non-judgmental and impartial position, student leaders are able to share their subject knowledge and recent on-course experiences to assist first year students in understanding their course expectations. Through facilitation, the scheme enables students to develop effective learning strategies and encourages self-dependency and reflection.

Identified benefits for attendees include:
- increased levels of confidence in undertaking academic study;
- enhanced understanding of tutors' expectations;
- greater awareness and knowledge of support services available to them;

- increased sense of belonging and desire to stay on their course through socialisation with higher year students and within their PASS group;
- acquired quick-win strategies that help them cope with the demands of academic study.

Leaders self-identified:
- increased confidence in their own ability;
- a better understanding of available support services which they had not fully appreciated until they had to support others;
- an increased belief in their own employability through the development of skills such as communication, presentation, leadership, organization and time management.

At course level, tutors report the key benefit of an additional open and immediate channel for student feedback and improved cross-year relationships, in turn supporting the successful transition and retention of new first year students.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

The evaluation activity around the effectiveness and impact of the PASS scheme has been developed over time and has so far focused on measuring:

- levels of engagement through the reporting of numbers of recruited PASS Leaders and numbers of first year students who regularly attend PASS sessions;
- benefits to leaders and attendees through short Likert-scale type surveys on completion of PASS training (Leaders) and after a few months into the scheme (participants). The surveys have also provided an opportunity for qualitative statements and comments from students that have helped build rich illustrations of the way both attendees and leaders benefit from the scheme (see previous section).

More recently, the whole service has agreed to take a more consistent and systematic approach to impact measurement across all support interventions delivered by LiSS. An Intervention Logic Model combined with Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation will be used to assess the impact of PASS sessions on the adoption of effective learning strategies, changed learning behavior and impact on first year grades and retention. Similarly, the models will be used to measure the impact on PASS Leaders in relation to enhanced confidence, employability skills development and success.
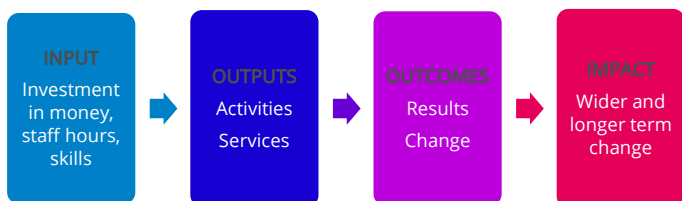

| INPUT | OUTPUTS | OUTCOMES | IMPACT |
| Investment in money, staff hours, skills | Activities Services | Results Change | Wider and longer term change |

Diagram 1: Intervention Logic Model

Level 1 Reaction   Level 2 Learning   Level 3 Behavior   Level 4 Results

Diagram 2: Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation

Critical reflections

At the start, the key challenge was raising awareness of the scheme and its potential with academic colleagues to gain buy-in. We started the scheme with our 'enthusiasts' and this helped us build awareness and evidence of the benefits of the scheme to students and their programme. Initially, there was an expectation that the scheme would be offered within the available staff capacity at the time. It took time to succeed in making the case for additional funding which eventually came through OFFA. This has been crucial for us in developing and expanding the scheme.

Also crucial is gaining buy-in from academic tutors as PASS sits within the programme and its success is very much dependent on tutors seeing it as an integral part of their course thus promoting PASS to students as an integral part of their programme. For instance, the apparent trivial issue of timetabling a room once a week for PASS meetings can be a 'make or break' issue for the scheme.

Ideally, PASS sessions need to be embedded into the course timetable. However, university timetabling systems may need to be circumvented to allow for this to happen. The task of recruiting PASS Leaders is potentially staff intensive and, again, does rely on promotion by the course team for it to be successful.

Over the years, we have ensured we promote PASS across the university through presentations at the annual Teaching and Learning Fest events where PASS Coordinators, Academic Coordinators and PASS Leaders have presented jointly on their experience and benefits of PASS. The scheme co-ordinator also works closely with the National Peer Learning Community and attends relevant events and meetings to share good practice.

Lessons and advice to those starting such a scheme include:
- start small and build the evidence base to develop a strong business case for resources;
- the success of such a scheme is dependent on strong partnership work and buy-in by the course team;
- the schemes that are truly embedded into the course are the most successful ones;
- do not underestimate the skills and staff capacity needed to demonstrate impact.

http://my.cumbria.ac.uk/StudentLife/Learning/Mentoring/Home.aspx

Peer-assisted learning and the study of Psychology, University of Roehampton

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key words: peer assisted learning, psychology, reflection, engagement, confidence

Nature and focus of scheme

The 'Peer assisted learning and the study of Psychology' module is a yearlong third year UG module that is optional for all students on a Psychology programme. All students are eligible for acceptance on the module, but it has a maximum recruitment of 30 places on a first-come-first served basis.

Students work in partnership with the teaching teams of various first and second year modules and the students they teach. This provides peer assisters with an opportunity to understand the teaching/learning process and reflect on their own particular style of learning.

Scheme overview

In recent years, there has been a notable shift in higher education from passive, didactic methods of teaching toward methods designed to encourage students to develop clearly defined competencies, engage actively in their own learning, and to take responsibility for it (such as problem-based learning and profiling). Peer evaluation and peer-assisted learning are part of this trend.

Race (1994), in particular, argues the need for 'flexible learning' that involves students "taking some control regarding how they learn". In addition, both psychologists and educators are recognising more and more the crucial role practical know-how (tacit skills) and personal style play in adult learning and skilled performance (e.g. 'apprenticeship' models of learning). All of these developments argue for the value of peer-assisted learning, both as a means by which more experienced students can help the less experienced by passing on some of their 'know-how', and as a source of learning for the peer assister in its own right.

The 'Peer assisted learning and the study of Psychology' module draws on students' knowledge of being a student and learning occurs through two teaching and learning approaches. The first approach involves students engaging in peer-assisted learning sessions in which they assist with first and second year modules, then reflect on their practice. The second approach involves a syllabus of taught sessions covering the psychology of adult learning. Students reflect on their peer-assisting practice by examining relevant literature and theory in the taught sessions. The assessment consists of a reflective report, which builds on an e-learning journal students use to record their peer-assisting experiences. Students achieve 20 credits towards their degree if the summative assessment receives a pass grade.

Key resource implications

This is funded as part of the Psychology programme (like every module). Staffing is based on usual academic workload assessment. There is one module convenor who also deals with organisation of peer assisting, as well as much of the teaching in the taught sessions. Other lecturers also contribute to teaching of the taught sessions.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

In the first peer-assisting taught session, students are briefed on what it means to be a peer assister and provided with the 'peer assisted learning mission statement', as well as 'rules and policies', which set out what is expected of them.

There is no formal training for peer assisting, but students are briefed about each session prior to commencing peer assisting. Guidance is sent to peer assisters before each session, which consists of the materials that first/second years will use. There is an opportunity to ask questions, define their role, and set ground rules and expectations.

When commencing the peer-assisting session, the staff member greets peer assisters and acts as a point of contact within the class. The staff member addresses queries from peer assisters. They also monitor their engagement and provide encouragement. Peer assisters operate autonomously.

Peer assisters are not specifically followed-up after each peer-assisting session, but they are asked to write 100 words in their learning journal reflecting on their experience. Peer assisters are expected to complete ten peer-assisting sessions in a range of modules across the year.

How the scheme engages and supports students

Peer assisting is expected to enhance learning and teaching of first and second year modules. Smaller groups mean more one-to-one support. It encourages, promotes, and fosters students' independent learning, while leading to deeper understanding of concepts and integration of ideas. As skills increase, so can students' confidence. It challenges first and second year students to take responsibility for their own learning. It provides another level of communication between teaching staff and students. It facilitates engagement with university learning and provides a perspective on the importance of learning the particular topic (e.g. research methods) in Psychology.

It also establishes a partnership between peer assisters and first and second year students. It increases third years' knowledge and confidence through peer assisting by providing them with the opportunity for rich practical learning of various topics within Psychology and communication skills. It gives them practical knowledge of the psychology of adult learning. It teaches them how to develop reflective thinking and writing skills. The idea is that 'teaching' others is the best way of developing confidence in one's own skills.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

Peer assisters complete reflective reports based on their interactions with first and second year students. Here are some examples of benefits highlighted by peer assisters:

Example 1: during one interaction, a peer assister observed that one student clearly felt more able

to share their concerns about research methods with them rather than a member of teaching staff. The peer assister empathised, and offered their own feelings about the process of studying research. Despite initially seeming an unsuccessful interaction, the peer assister observed the student working on the task with renewed motivation.

Example 2: while helping a student with research methods, a peer assister related an experience of drawing on their prior knowledge of statistical software and statistics to directly assist a student in catching up and understanding the material. This appeared to reinforce their own confidence in their understanding, as well as providing needed assistance to the student.

Example 3: while helping a student who had trouble keeping up with a step-by-step presentation due to their hearing difficulties, a peer assister drew on the step-by-step written instructions (which highlights the importance of providing these materials to peer assisters during briefing). The peer assister was able to convey how helpful these materials were to them when they were in the same position.

Critical reflections

Challenges include: role definition of the peer assister (teacher, tutor, peer?), identifying the appropriate level of support for the learner and communication skills of peer assisters. Peer assisters also possibly have insecurities about their own knowledge, anxiety about not knowing the answer to questions and concerns about the responsibility of taking on a 'tutoring' role. It is hoped that detailed briefing, availability to meet peer assisters with issues and expectation management deals with most of these challenges.

Logistically, the high amount of organisation involved in peer assisting means the scheme can only recruit a small number of students. The small numbers also have another benefit, as the students on the module can feel like a team and first and second year students can get to know them from the familiarity of seeing them regularly.

The scheme could be strengthened if the modules that included peer assisters were to form a more specific role for them. For example, there could be certain activities that peer assisters could specifically engage in (separately from what teaching staff would do) to support students.

Advice to those starting a scheme is that it is important to think about how the scheme is branded to students. Even though we only recruit small numbers of students, we have very few students sign up for the module in the first place. We have not ascertained the reason for this yet, but believe it could be due to anxiety about the perceived level of responsibility in the role. Additionally, make sure you have a clear remit for the peer assisters – think about what support they can provide and how this would be organised logistically. It is likely you will need 'buy-in' from other teaching staff who may need to supervise peer assisters and brief them.

https://www.roehampton.ac.uk/

BEd Primary Education year 2/3 peer mentoring scheme, University Of St Mark And St John

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Key words: peer-support, placements, e-mentoring, voluntary

Nature and focus of scheme

This scheme offers year two undergraduate BEd Primary Education students an opportunity to be supported and mentored during their second year teaching placements by year three students on the same programme. Mentors will have completed both their second and third year teaching placements and have a lot to offer in terms of experience and maturity to second year students. Participation in the scheme is optional, both for mentors and mentees. Mentoring is via e-mail to enable those that are geographically distant to be able to participate.

Scheme overview

The initial pilot for the scheme ran in 2013 and following an evaluation of that pilot, the scheme has been offered in subsequent years. The role of the third year mentor is to provide second year students with e-mentoring support and guidance during their teaching placements. This complements the support and guidance provided by programme tutors and school-based mentors, offering a different perspective from a peer. Although this is an e-mentoring scheme, mentors may also offer to meet up with their mentees if required. Each pairing also has a linked tutor from the programme team who is copied into emails for monitoring purposes. The tutor does not comment or provide any information or guidance, but is there to ensure that the mentor is signposting the mentee to appropriate support and not providing too much or inappropriate guidance. The tutors must not be the trainees' supervising tutor or personal tutor to ensure a distance is kept. Although initially there were concerns that this may inhibit mentees or mentors, this does not appear to have been the case and at no point seems to have caused any difficulties.

Participation in the scheme is voluntary, both for mentors and mentees. There is no academic credit attached to the scheme but mentoring is positioned as having two-way benefit: mentees are provided with an additional and valuable form of support during their placements; mentors acquire an understanding of mentoring and the associated skills which they will also be expected to demonstrate in their future teaching careers.

The number of participants varies from year to year and has ranged from six to 31 mentees in any one academic year, and six to 27 mentors in any one academic year.

Key terminology – e-mentoring refers to mentoring provided via email exchange.

Key resource implications

There are few resource implications for this scheme, currently, as training is carried out by a member of the student support/employability team in conjunction with the programme leader, and programme tutors monitor and support the mentors as required. The programme leader and placements administrator manage the scheme and there are no payments. Tutors involved provide feedback to the programme leader.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

Mentors and mentees are required to complete an application form giving details of their past placements, degree specialism subject and other interests as well as reasons for wishing to participate in the scheme. These are reviewed by the programme leader, and pairings are made based on the type or location of the school, specialist subject, age group being taught, personal circumstances (mature student, with children, etc.). It is important to ensure the mentor has not been on placement at the same school and, if possible, not had the same supervising tutor. This helps to avoid issues discussed becoming linked to personalities either in school or on the tutor team.

Training has been provided by a member of the student support/employability team who was involved in leading the University's peer-mentoring scheme in the past. This training provides guidance on the role, signposting to different services and support, and identifying key issues.

Scenarios are used to develop understanding and a short guide accompanies the training. The programme leader also discusses the role with the mentors and provides additional support if needed. As mentioned above, a linked tutor is assigned to each pair to fulfil a monitoring role and to provide any support required to the mentors.

How the scheme engages and supports students

Initial mention of the e-mentoring scheme is made to students by the programme leader during a teaching session to enable students to ask questions. This is followed up by an email providing information on the application and training process to which those that are interested are expected to respond within a given time frame. Many of those that were supported with a mentor during their second year go on to become mentors during their third year. Feedback on the scheme from past mentors and mentees is shared with second year students as part of the initial briefing. The scheme has proved popular, although interestingly, take up varies from year to year, despite the same input. One of the main benefits is summed up here from a student last year:

> *I found it very helpful – it was so reassuring to speak to someone who had been in my position and who could also answer questions from the student side of things, rather than speaking to your class teacher/mentor/UT about a problem.*

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

The project has been informally evaluated, with trainees giving positive feedback and often then wanting to become a mentor themselves. The opportunity to communicate with a student from the year above has also enabled the mentees to explore other aspects of the programme and this gives them a sense of what is to come. When mentoring the second year trainees in the spring term, the third years are working on their dissertation and so conversations often lead onto this and then onto other issues relating to coursework, etc. The mentors provide some insightful and useful advice so although the scheme is mainly linked to placement support, there have been very beneficial 'spin offs' in terms of the academic elements of the programme. Ideas for dissertations are often discussed and third years often encourage second years to work hard with their assignments, having already completed them! Sharing experiences about the specialism modules has also been useful.

The experience of third year mentors on placements has also encouraged some of the mentees to opt for other experiences that they may not otherwise have done. For example, last year a student wrote:

> *I found the peer mentoring scheme really helpful last year as it was another person to speak to about what was going on at university and at placement. It was nice to be able to get support from my mentor about lectures, assignments, placement and also this year. I spoke to her about her placement and it helped me to decide to go to Cyprus* (one of our placements abroad in a British Forces school).

When students have been placed away from home or their usual term-time address this extra support has proved really helpful and reassuring. When trainees have opted for one of our London placements, the support from third year students who have already experienced this has been very helpful as teaching approaches for EAL pupils and the range of different ethnic backgrounds is often unfamiliar and can, at first, be quite daunting.

Critical reflections

In some years the pairings have met up in person before the e-mentoring starts and this is beneficial and something that is being developed during 2016-17. Students seem to value this opportunity to connect in person before the placement starts as it enables a closer bond to be established and then perhaps a greater commitment to the process over time. Mentors also feel that a face-to-face meeting might help them to establish how best to support the mentee from the start.

Usually the pairing of the students has not been a difficult process – there has usually been something in common which links them and as the tutors know the students personally, this helps ensure an appropriate pairing. The success of the process does depend on regular communication and the onus is on the mentor to keep this going and to email once a week as a minimum. Sometimes there is an imbalance in the numbers of mentees and mentors so on occasions a mentor may take on more than one mentee.

Some students have requested that mentoring continues for the whole year and this is something to explore this year. As a programme team, we are keen to develop peer mentoring approaches across the three years of the programme – possibly working in trios (or even with a newly qualified teacher also) so benefit can be gained across the programme and mentoring skills can be developed further.

http://www.marjon.ac.uk/courses/primary-education-degree/

Smart buddies (academic skills mentors), University Of Winchester

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Academic Skills Adviser with Special Responsibility for Peer Learning

Key words: one-to-one academic skills mentoring

Nature and focus of scheme

The Smart Buddy scheme is available to first and second year home and EU undergraduate students and PGCE students. As the scheme is funded through the University's Office For Fair Access (OFFA) agreement, priority is given to mentee applications from under-represented students.

Smart Buddies are second year, third year, or Masters students who have been specially selected and trained. The scheme promotes the development of generic academic skills and is situated centrally rather than discipline-owned, which means that Buddies and mentees can come from any programme of study.

Scheme overview

Smart Buddies are academic skills student mentors. They are recruited early in semester two through a formal application and interview process and trained to begin working with mentees at the start of the new academic year. Buddies are allocated up to four students at any one time, whom they meet one-to-one for approximately 30 minutes each week. Students can apply for a Buddy at any point in the academic year and can stay on the scheme for as long as they need to. Smart Buddy sessions aim to help mentees to:
- gain confidence and engage in their studies;
- boost their academic skills;
- manage the challenges of higher education;
- gain a greater sense of belonging at the University;
- get the most out of their private study time.

The scheme began in the 2012-13 academic year and the number of mentees joining the scheme has increased year on year.

In addition to receiving an hourly rate for their Buddy work, Smart Buddies can apply to have the scheme added to their HEAR, dependent on successful completion of defined criteria, for example, mentoring a specific number of students, attending training and supervision, attending academic skills workshops.

Key resource implications

The Smart Buddy scheme is funded through the University's OFFA agreement.

Smart Buddies are currently paid an hourly rate for time spent completing mentoring activities, which includes time spent with mentees, promotional work and training.

The co-ordination of the scheme has now been incorporated into an Academic Skills Adviser post. Prior to this, the co-ordinator role was part of a 0.4FTE, 28 weeks a year post. As the scheme 're-launches' in September to new first years, it is important that staff are available at some point outside of teaching weeks to reflect on and evaluate the previous year and to plan for the next. As the number of Buddies has grown it has been important to review the staff time available and to ensure that more than one member of staff has understanding of the scheme to enable sharing of supervision, training and administration, for example, mentee allocation.

The scheme benefits from some admin support but this is not dedicated.

Training is now delivered in-house, so the other primary outgoings relate to refreshments for training and supervision sessions, attending conferences and networking events, mentor packs, (e.g. confidentiality agreements, mentee leaflets, training booklets, folders and schedulers), promotional materials (e.g. fliers, posters, pens, t-shirts) and books.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

Smart Buddy training is developed and led by members of the Academic Skills Team. Buddies attend a two-hour induction session in March/April, where they are provided with an overview of the scheme, its aims, the commitment expected and some activities to prompt their thinking about the first year experience and how they might help support their mentees in relation to this. This training also includes an opportunity to meet current Buddies so that questions can be asked in an informal way and the new team can meet any Buddies continuing on the scheme for a second year.

Buddies then attend two full days of compulsory training before the semester begins in September. These two days comprise of one day of student mentor training and one day of academic skills training. Both days are interactive and make use of role plays and activities, combining theory and the application of this to the student mentoring role.

Ongoing training is provided during the year through group supervision sessions (five times a year) and paired supervision (two or three times a year). Group supervision sessions are 1.5 hours in duration and include time for joint problem solving, as well as further training in academic skills or mentoring. Sessions are planned in response to any challenges Buddies have identified and reflect the skills needed at each stage of the academic/mentoring calendar. For example, the first supervision session in October includes input from Student Services staff on supporting students in mental distress and disability awareness; a later session after the Christmas break usually focuses on exam revision and techniques. Paired supervision allows the opportunity for more detailed problem-solving and sharing of good practice, as well enabling ongoing monitoring of the scheme. These sessions were previously individual supervision meetings, but this was changed as the scheme grew and to allow for more collaboration between Buddies.

How the scheme engages and supports students

Feedback is gathered from both Smart Buddies and mentees. Buddies are required to submit an evaluation form and attend an evaluation meeting, and mentees are encouraged to respond to an evaluation survey and are invited to attend an evaluation meeting. Main themes from feedback are as follows:

Smart Buddies:
In 2015-16, the following were identified by mentors as the main positive effects of the role:
- increased confidence;
- enhanced academic skill development and engagement with studies;
- increased organisational skills.

Informal discussion with Buddies also highlights how the scheme has impacted on employability with many using the scheme in their applications for jobs or further study.

Mentees:
In the past two years, 46 out of 47 mentees who responded to the survey rated their Buddy's support and guidance as either excellent or good. In 2015-16, the majority of the 30 mentees who responded either strongly agreed or agreed with the following statements, highlighting some key areas of value:
- the scheme helped my transition to university study;
- the scheme helped me to understand how to succeed academically;
- the scheme encouraged me to take responsibility for my own learning;
- the scheme helped me to develop key skills required for academic study;
- the scheme increased my confidence;
- the scheme helped me improve my grades.

In 2016-17, nine students who were Buddy mentees became either Buddies, Companions (Academic Skills Mentors for International Students) or PAL leaders, suggesting an increase in confidence in their academic studies and capabilities.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

At present, no formal data are collected to measure the impact on transition, retention or academic grades. We are keen to learn from other institutions that have such procedures in place.

See above for evaluation feedback.

Critical reflections

The Smart Buddy scheme is now in its fifth year at the University of Winchester. During this time, many changes have been made in response to challenges that have arisen, and to enable the continual improvement of the scheme for both Buddies and mentees.

The first of these changes relates to the timescale of Buddy recruitment and training. In the scheme's first year, Buddies were not appointed until the beginning of the new academic year, with training following in November. As a result, a key transition point for new students was missed and this was reflected in lower mentee numbers.

The following year, the calendar was amended so that Buddies were recruited in semester two and trained prior to the start of semester one, enabling them to begin working with mentees as soon as new students arrived at university. The number of mentees who joined the scheme rose by 240%.

A key area of difficulty reported by Buddies is mentees not engaging when they have been allocated or cancelling sessions at the last minute. To help alleviate this, an additional stage was added to the application process. Rather than students being allocated once they had signed up at Freshers' Fayre or an induction activity, students were contacted with a request for further details. Only those who responded were then allocated. This functioned to check commitment and also gave opportunity for students to be sent a leaflet outlining the scheme and its expectations.

Low response rates to mentee surveys is an ongoing issue and appears to be reflective of general student survey 'fatigue'. Evaluations have already been moved to an online form to assist with this and steps will be put in place to capture more feedback as students leave the scheme, rather than disseminating evaluations at the end of the year. This will be regularly reflected on to improve the evaluation process further.

Additional comment

Although schemes such as the Smart Buddy scheme are often established with the aim of supporting mentees, the mentor role has significant benefits for Buddies too. At Winchester, we continue to look for opportunities to increase Buddies' academic and employability skills through, for example, sitting on the interview panel and leading parts of supervision sessions. We are currently exploring ways to formalise this in a 'Senior Smart Buddy' role for mentors who are continuing on the scheme for a second year. As the benefits for mentors are consistently being highlighted in peer-led learning literature, this represents a key area for consideration.

http://www.winchester.ac.uk/Studyhere/studentservices/Pages/studyskills.aspx

Peer mentoring in Biomedical Sciences, University Of York St John

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Director of Biomedical Sciences, School of Health Sciences

Key words: pastoral, laboratory-mentor, students, open badges, skills

Nature and focus of scheme

Year two and three undergraduate students within all programmes in the School of Health Sciences act as mentors for year one students (mentees). The scheme in Biomedical Science is led by Sue Jones, Director of Biomedical Sciences. The mentoring scheme includes:

1. Peer-to-peer meetings to offer pastoral support
2. Specific laboratory skills mentoring using year two students as mentors and year one students as mentees

The Biomedical Science scheme was specifically developed to link to York St John graduate attributes and employability. It is anticipated that the scheme will provide a verified activity for students to include in their HEAR.

Scheme overview

Students in the Biomedical Science programme suggested at the end of their first year that they would like to participate in a mentoring scheme for the next cohort of students. This was because they were the first cohort on the brand new programme and wanted to offer help and advice to the next year group of students. In the current laboratory mentoring scheme, there are 16 mentors and 24 mentees. For the peer mentoring there are four mentors and 24 mentees.

Both pastoral and laboratory based mentoring schemes were developed as part of the key skills modules in both years. The pastoral scheme was based on a University wide mentoring programme currently in existence. The laboratory based scheme was developed *de novo* using supported open learning (labs) (SOLs) with peer tutoring and competency based assessment of skills.

Both mentors and mentees are able to earn open badges for participating in the mentoring schemes that are included in a portfolio submitted at the end of their key skills module. For the pastoral mentoring badge, each year two student must meet once a fortnight with their group of mentees (six in each group). They need to evidence this (copy of email/room booking) and then the mentors submit a reflective statement at the end of the process. For the laboratory-based scheme, the year two students are trained on the equipment to be used and advised on how to support the year one students while observing their laboratory skills during a SOLs session. The academic staff or Biomedical Science technician observe these sessions and inform the Subject Director if the badges should be awarded based on performance. The badges are then issued, stored and presented in students' electronic portfolios (Mahara) at the end of semester two.

Key resource implications

No funding is currently provided to assist the Biomedical Science students or staff with the scheme. There is a cost implication for the consumables used in the laboratory sessions, but these are generally the same as those used in practical classes, therefore the additional cost is small.

The mentors do not receive any payment for their involvement in the scheme, but have the opportunity to earn the two open badges available (from a selection of ten open badges) and all students must submit five open badges in their portfolio to receive the full marks for a complete portfolio. Open Badges are a new online standard for recognising and verifying learning, these are issued by institutions to verify students digital literacy skills or employability attributes, and teams like ours could use them to verify academic staff eLearning skills.

As the students asked to be involved in a mentoring scheme, they were willing to undertake this role without the need for any financial payment. In addition to earning badges, the year two students already understand the benefit of being able to offer advice and support and develop their own scientific knowledge, laboratory skills and communication skills by taking on these roles.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

Training is provided for the mentors. Academic and technical staff lead the training for the laboratory based mentoring sessions. These are bespoke sessions and take place immediately before the SOLs session, so that the year two mentoring students are familiar with the equipment and can ask any questions about the tasks on the day. Year two students are already familiar with the techniques demonstrated, from their own laboratory experience. Staff are available during SOLs session to offer further guidance or support if necessary.

Student Services lead the induction session and training for the peer-mentors. The training involves an initial briefing and feedback sessions during the scheme.

How the scheme engages and supports students

Mentoring fellow students on the Biomedical Science programme and demonstrating techniques in the laboratories develops knowledge, skills and understanding in both the mentor and mentee. Laboratory based experiential learning and providing pastoral support enables both sets of students to reflect on their current skills, knowledge and professional competencies. It provides opportunities to create development plans and appreciate the need for continual professional development. Thus the knowledge and understanding developed through the taught curriculum content is applied through our use of supported open learning to encourage the development of graduates who are already familiar with continual professional development and lifelong learning. These work-related learning tasks and employability skills are captured in the portfolio completed for the year one and two key skills modules. In addition, the open badges undertaken as part of these supported open learning activities and mentoring schemes reward and recognise student achievement throughout their learning journey.

As this is the first time the students have engaged in the mentoring scheme (as 2016-17 is the first time we have had year one and two cohorts), we plan to review the outcomes in more detail by discussing the mentoring schemes with both cohorts during and at the end of the academic year.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

Students have the opportunity to record and evidence their role as a peer mentor through:

- open badges;
- Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR);
- graduate attributes.

No formal data has been collected yet as the scheme has only run for semester one of 2016-17. There are plans to meet formally with the year two students at the beginning of semester two to explore feedback from semester one and make any changes for semester two for the laboratory based mentoring scheme. The Subject Director will also meet with the four peer mentors to ask about their experience and discuss what they liked and would like to change about the scheme for semester two or next year.

Critical reflections

The Biomedical Science programme aims to give opportunities throughout the programme to all students to develop their personal confidence through taught sessions and laboratory skills. There is also emphasis on independence and lifelong learning at all levels of study and on working effectively in teams. Both of the mentoring schemes that we have developed/adapted for our programme directly support this philosophy and allow both the mentees and mentors to develop new transferable and subject specific skills. All of the students also gain enhanced laboratory competency from their practical class sessions plus the supported open learning opportunities. The key challenges are time constraints – there are only two academic staff and one technician supporting two years of the degree programme. The laboratory based mentoring scheme would have been even better if we had formalised a training session at the start of semester one about how to demonstrate techniques/interact proactively as a laboratory mentor to give the year two students more confidence in approaching the year one students to offer help and advice, rather than waiting to be asked.

A key piece of advice would be to have a clear idea of the sessions that you want to incorporate in the mentoring scheme. Identify clear goals and outcomes for the mentors and mentees so that they can see the benefit of engaging with the scheme. The peer mentors have indicated that a more open format with no defined topics for the sessions has led to a lack of engagement by some mentees. It would be useful to use your own knowledge to identify areas in your curriculum where students commonly struggle (e.g. adjusting to HE, time management, meeting deadlines and subject specific skills) and make those the focus of mentoring sessions. You could also use the mentors as a source of relevant and useful topics to cover and then ask the mentees if they found things useful/relevant and what they would incorporate next time, so the mentoring scheme is constantly evolving and developing.

Additional comment

Critical thinking and problem solving skills are embedded throughout our programme and the programme has been designed with a spiral curriculum where the students revisit key topics and laboratory techniques several times. There is also clear vertical alignment of professional and transferable skills that runs through the year one and year two key skills modules and Research Project module. The ability to offer pastoral support, advice and encouragement between students plus increasing confidence in explaining or performing laboratory techniques by participating in these mentoring schemes seems to give both cohorts a deeper level of knowledge and understanding.

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PASS project, University of Wales Trinity Saint David

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PASS Coordinator

key words: peer assisted study sessions

Nature and focus of scheme

Year one and three undergraduate students together with a small number of postgraduate students are trained as PASS Leaders and deliver weekly peer-assisted study sessions (PASS) primarily for year one students. A number of academic schools are currently involved across the three campuses, Carmarthen, Lampeter and Swansea, which make up the university. PASS activity tends to be directed towards those courses that have historically been regarded as problematic. A small number of specialist support lecturers have been trained as PASS Supervisors and deliver the PASS Leader training and weekly debriefs; one member of staff co-ordinates the scheme.

Scheme overview

PASS began at the University of Wales Trinity St David (UWTSD) in 2015 as a pilot project on the Lampeter campus. 'PASS' refers to 'peer-assisted study sessions' first introduced in Manchester during the 1980s. PASS sessions are run by students, for students and their aim is to facilitate learning; no teaching is involved at all. In addition to its inherent benefits, the potential was seen for PASS to meet any gaps caused by the forthcoming inevitable reductions in Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA). As a result, seven members of staff were identified and trained as PASS supervisors including the current co-ordinator, Michèle Wright.

Taking part in PASS sessions as either a leader or participant is seen as voluntary although it is strongly encouraged. Efforts are made to timetable sessions appropriately so that students find it easy to attend – that is, *not* Friday afternoon at 4pm! Sandwiching sessions between lectures has been found to be the most effective way of timetabling PASS. Observations are carried out on a termly basis to ensure consistency of provision and to provide valuable feedback to the leaders.

As yet, there are no academic credits attached to the scheme although this is currently under review.

Key resource implications

An initial budget of £30,000 per annum was allocated from the Student Experience budget to cover the cost of PASS supervisor training, payments to supervisors for leader training and administration and for other expenses such as catering for training and the celebration event. PASS leaders are not paid, but receive an Amazon gift voucher on completion of training together with a hoody – these have proved very popular and act not only as a 'badge of belonging' but also publicise the scheme both on and off campus.

Supervisors currently undertake many unpaid hours of work in order to facilitate the scheme and this issue will be need to be addressed in the next budget meeting. At present, the scheme cannot afford to expand very much more due to budgetary constraints. The Supervisors all have other contracted posts within the university and PASS work is undertaken on a zero hours' basis. Staff are restricted regarding how many hours of work per week that they may undertake so it is proving difficult to see how any extension to the scheme can be undertaken. One possible way that has been identified is for postgraduate students (who have been leaders while undergraduates) to take over some or all of the supervisors' tasks. This would solve the time constraint but would still require an increase in funding as it is felt that postgraduate students should be paid for time they spend on PASS.

Training and development of mentors/mentees

PASS leader training is developed and led by the trained PASS supervisors. Training takes place at the beginning of the academic year and is spread over the equivalent of two full days at times to suit students and staff. The Leaders then deliver PASS sessions in pairs and attend a weekly debrief with the PASS supervisors and a member of academic staff from the module concerned. In this way, a constant feedback cycle is generated which assists the leaders to highlight any problems within their sessions swiftly and enables academic staff to constantly refine their modules.

A special PASS event is held during May to celebrate the achievements of the PASS leaders. All leaders receive a certificate and an accompanying sheet that lists the training they have undertaken together with the skills they have utilised during their time as leaders. This can then be incorporated into their CV as we do know that employers actively seek out applicants who have been PASS leaders due to their enhanced communication, facilitation and presentation skills.

How the scheme engages and supports students

Reactions to PASS vary from campus to campus and from subject to subject. Some of our most enthusiastic PASS devotees (both students and staff) are from the School of Social Justice and Inclusion. The mechanism which the PASS sessions provide for students to share their concerns and then to have their learning facilitated by PASS leaders who may have met the same problems themselves in previous years seems to suit this cohort particularly well. Many of the students are mature and lack self-confidence with regard to academic work. The PASS sessions provide a safe place for them to share any difficulties and develop their academic skills. PASS sessions do not only deal with academic issues but also exist to provide and signpost pastoral support. Many first year students are living away from home for the first time and PASS provides a way to meet other students in a relaxed atmosphere and to find out what the university and local environment has to offer.

Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact

An evaluation report was commissioned during the pilot project that clearly identified areas of success together with those requiring further attention. In addition, we are undertaking a research project based on the Lampeter campus as part of our teaching and learning enhancement theme. This project is concerned with investigating the best way to evaluate PASS as we understand the necessity of producing hard figures to prove the effectiveness of the scheme. We do have a large body of qualitative evidence that overwhelmingly supports PASS.

Critical reflections

The key challenges are:

- to continue to build on the successful PASS schemes running on the Lampeter and Carmarthen campuses and to make the scheme a success at Swansea. The fragmented nature of the Swansea campus (based on many sites across the city) is seen as one of the main reasons why it has been difficult to make any headway;
- as we have a large number of distance learners, we are investigating the ways in which PASS can support those students;

The most notable lessons learned are as follows:

- try not to do too much too quickly;
- buy-in of academic staff is critical;
- timetabling of PASS sessions is tricky but essential;
- maintaining momentum is difficult – we are exploring ways to do this;
- staffing issues are complex and proper contracts and funding are required.

http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/

Project team:

The Project Team was led by Dr Julie Baldry-Currens (HEA Associate) with support from Dr Jonathan Glazzard (Leeds Trinity University) and Hugh Mannerings (HEA Academic Consultant)

Appendix A

Case study format

Title of scheme/project
Name, university title, contact details of scheme leader/main contact for scheme
Up to five key words
Nature and focus of scheme (max 100 words) Include – who are your target student group for mentors/mentees/buddies, leaders, etc.; links to a programme, skill set, links to an 'academic' programme? Year/level of students? U/G/PG? (etc.)
Scheme overview (max 300 words) Include – explain key terminology, timeframe, numbers, links to academic credit (if any), etc.
Key resource implications (max 300 words) Running costs, funding source, costs and payment (if any), staffing issues and oversight, etc.
Training and development of mentors/mentees (max 300 words) Who develops and leads the training? Format – for example, face-to-face, online? Scheduled or ad hoc? Duration? Follow-up? Ongoing supervision? (etc.)
How the scheme engages and supports students (max 300 words) Key observations, outcomes, identified benefits (intended and unexpected), etc.
Evidence of value, effectiveness and impact (max 300 words – charts and graphs will not contribute to word count) • include any relevant formally identified KPIs and/or intended outcome measures, targets, etc.; • draw on any available data, feedback.
Critical reflections (max 300 words) • key challenges and strategies used to overcome; • the scheme might have been 'even better if … '; • lessons learned and advice to those starting such a scheme.
Additional comment (max 100 words)

Contact us