Peer Mentoring

A toolkit of effective practice for programme teams

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Student Engagement and Transition Team

Introduction

This toolkit is aimed at Academic Schools and Professional Services to provide guidance on creating a Peer Mentoring model that is adaptable to your student needs, and enhance the student experience through creating a sense of belonging.

This toolkit will:

- Demonstrate benefits for the students and the School
- Explore opportunities to create and adapt the scheme
- Provide resources to help support the scheme
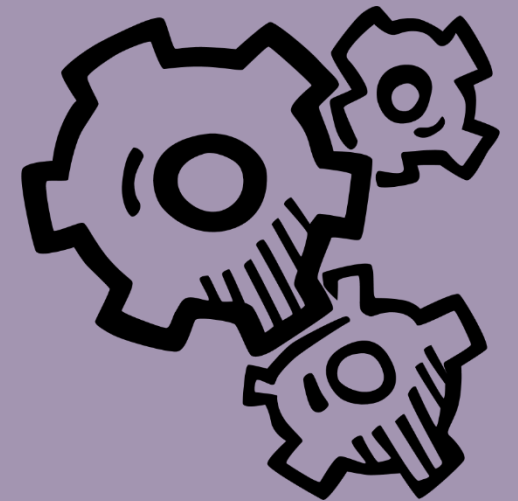
What is Peer Mentoring?

"The use of more experienced students to guide and advise newer students does much to promote independent learning; enriching the overall student experience by nurturing a sense of belonging through offering on-going support and friendship"
Andrews and Clark (2011, 10)

What is Peer Mentoring?

The **National Mentoring Network** describes mentoring as a "form of relationship in which a more experienced person offers support to another".

To assist with the transition to become an effective learner at University, the HERE Toolkit recommends creating an environment that encourages peer support (2012). This is particularly important as the research identified that students who were considering withdrawing from University decided to stay because they had the support of their family and friends (HERE Toolkit, 2012).

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Benefits of a Peer Mentoring Scheme

"Students' sense of belonging is developed through good relationships with their peers and tutors, a sense of cohort identity and a sense of belonging to their particular university campus" Foster *et al* (2012, 33)

Benefits of Peer Mentor Schemes

School

- Opportunity to gain insight into student issues within the School

- Engaging with students

- Potential influence on retention and achievement rate

- Enhancing the student experience

Benefits of Peer Mentor Schemes

Peer Mentors

- Experience the satisfaction of helping others

- Opportunities to participate in training and personal development

- Improve skills (communication, problem solving, listening)

- Additional experience to enhance their CV

- Evidence for Hull Employability Awards

- Increased awareness of social diversity

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Benefits of Peer Mentor Schemes

Mentees

- Increased self-confidence and self-esteem

- Extra encouragement from their mentor

- Learn more about progression opportunities in HE

- Improving communication skills

- Taking responsibility for determining appropriate goals within their learning

- Awareness of support available at the University

- Increased sense of belonging

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Implementing a Peer Mentor Scheme

"Mentoring as a journey encompasses both, or all, parties — implied is the notion that learning is open-ended, creative and uncertain, and as well as subject to unknowns." C.A. Mullen (2012, 7)

Implementing the Scheme

A mentoring scheme with a clearly stated purpose is more likely to attract participants than a scheme which is perceived as too general or vague (Oxford, 2013).

To implement your own Peer Mentor Scheme, you can take the following steps:

- Recruiting and Training Peer Mentors

- Identifying Mentees

- Matching Process

- Practical Considerations

- Feedback/Evaluation

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Recruiting and Training Peer Mentors

- Identify the requirements of a mentor (experience/behaviour/achievements)
- Personally contact and invite the student to attend an information session
- Use the information session to explain the scheme, its purpose and the commitment and expectations of a mentor
- Provide an opportunity for the students to reflect on the information provided and sign up to the scheme
- Hold a compulsory training session to cover:
  - The role of the mentor
  - The mentoring agreement
  - Boundaries and referrals
  - Communication
  - How to use mentor experience as evidence for the Hull Employability Awards

Identifying Mentees

Depending on how you wish to adapt the scheme to meet your School's needs, you may identify potential mentees in the following ways:

Cohort	Subject	Social
• Direct Entry • Foundation Year Students • Repeat Year	• Group study • Subjects that students are struggling with e.g. Maths • Students progressing from BTEC to HE	• New to the City/Country • Mature students

Once you have identified the potential mentees, you will need to approach them to invite them to join the scheme. Depending on how you have identified the students, you can contact them via direct email, lecture shout outs or notice boards around the School with a call to action on how to sign up for the scheme.

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Matching Process

Once you have recruited your mentors, and have identified your mentees, there are various ways to match mentors. You could do this by:

• Programme of study

• Similar progression routes

• Students' background and experience
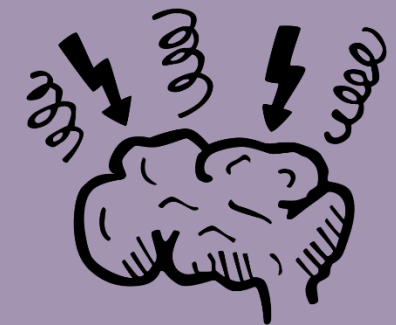
The Peer Co-ordinator will then invite the mentor and the mentee to a meeting to establish the relationship. This will also be an opportunity for the mentee to sign the Mentoring Agreement.

Practical Considerations

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- For the first meeting, the Peer Co-ordinator will meet with the mentor and mentee to establish ground rules and confirm method and frequency of contact to suit both parties.

- It will be made clear to both mentors and mentees that any issues should be escalated to the Peer Co-ordinator who will resolve the issue.

- You may wish to consider holding a regular debrief meeting with all mentors to discuss issues and ensure they are supported.

- It is also nice to consider hosting an end of year celebration to thank the mentors for their work and present them with certificates and a thorough personalised reference.

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Feedback/Evaluation

There are various ways to collect feedback and evaluation to measure the effectiveness of the scheme. These could be:

- Survey once a semester

- Debrief meetings

- Analysing data of progression and achievement for those involved in the scheme

We would recommend this is focused on both the mentors and the mentees to get a rounded perspective of the scheme.

Case Studies

"Meaning is constituted through an internal relationship between the individual and the world" Prosser & Trigwell (1999, 12)

Case Study: School of Engineering

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Aim of the Scheme

To establish a working academic relationship between struggling students and those who have experienced the course.

How it worked

- One to one support

- Informal meetings (on campus) & email contact across semester, as and when needed

- Agreements in place between mentor & mentee focusing on what they wish to achieve in the partnership

Who was involved?

Mentees - Identified by the Peer Co-ordinator and opted into the scheme

Mentors - Identified based on experience and achievements, and volunteered themselves

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Case Study: Hull Business School

Aim of the Scheme

To assist direct entry students from China to settle into the university and understand the expectations of UK Higher Education.

How it worked

- One mentor assigned to a group of mentees
- Weekly meetings with mentors and mentees
- Weekly debrief session with the Peer Co-ordinator and peer mentors.
- Email contact

Who was involved?

Mentees – Direct entry students from China

Mentors - Identified based on previously being direct entry students and successful progression

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Further Reading

Further Reading

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Further Reading

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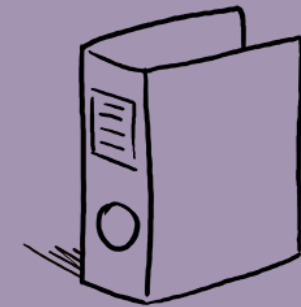
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Other Toolkits

The Student Engagement and Transition Team has created a series of toolkits to share best practice from around the university and the rest of the sector. The team are happy to discuss the content of the toolkits and advise on implementation.

Other toolkits available in the series are:

- Pre-arrival

- Induction

- Assessment Support

- Social Media

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