Undergraduate Mentoring Schemes – Principles and Standards

Background

Peer mentoring has been proved to enhance the student experience. There are strong benefits to mentees in smoothing their transition into all aspects of university life and to mentors in enhancing their graduate development and attributes, and to all students in building a strong school/subject based community. Mentoring schemes also provide a great opportunity to build effective partnerships between students and staff.

The University is committed to offering peer mentoring to all undergraduates entering their degree course by the start of the academic year in 2013. The aim of peer mentoring will be to enable all students to make a smooth transition to being successfully integrated into the university and their programme, academically, socially and culturally, through direct access to the advice and support of a more experienced peer.

As a number of schemes are already in operation in some units, existing good practice in these will be built on to ensure a minimum level of quality. In those units where they do not already exist, new locally owned schemes shall be introduced. Thus academic units are at different points on the journey. Therefore we recognise that an incremental approach will be helpful on the journey to universal high standards of practice.

All schemes shall follow a framework of principles and minimum standards set out in this document but may adapt the precise detail of operation to local contexts.

Principles

1. The prime purpose of peer mentoring schemes is to provide peer support to all new students through the social and academic transition to successful university study. This does not prevent schools running schemes with a broader remit than this.
2. All schemes should adhere to the minimum standards by 2013. They are recommended to adopt the improved practices set out here and amended from time to time. However we recognise a period of incremental transition towards these practices.
3. Schemes should be both locally owned and adapted to the context in which they operate, and the University will provide schools and units with the type of support that is appropriate for efficiencies of scale.
4. All incoming students will be part of a scheme, and all schemes should be inclusive of all students and integrate international and home students.
5. All schemes should offer mentoring from the beginning of the induction week or earlier, and continue for a major part of the first year.
6. There should be clear statements for mentors, mentees and staff about the purpose of the local scheme and what they should expect from it.
7. Clarity about the purpose of a scheme is a pre-requisite of subsequent evaluation and should form the basis of that evaluation.
8. Successful mentoring schemes require strong local staff champions who are provided with sufficient resources and support to carry out the role of scheme coordinator.
9. The role of mentor will be voluntary and not required of any particular individual.
10. Mentors should be selected through an open, fair and rigorous process of recruitment which ensures that those appointed as mentors are suitable for the role.

11. Mentors should be trained in order to ensure that they are equipped to fulfil their role successfully.

12. The normal mode of mentoring should be to a group of mentees, and in a face to face setting (this does not preclude one-to-one meetings).

13. Every attempt should be made to ensure mentor groups have a mixed demographic composition.

14. There should be a mechanism to permit mentee(s) to be reallocated to a different mentor should this be considered necessary by the scheme coordinator.

15. All parties should adhere to the University safeguarding policy and the guidance provided for peer mentoring.

16. Mentors will have access to and receive support on a regular basis from a designated member of staff.

17. All schemes should be evaluated each year with both mentees and mentors involved in the evaluation, the outcomes of which should inform the future development of the scheme. There should be some continuous feedback and monitoring, with adjustments and interventions made as soon as possible. Academic units need to agree the criteria by which they will judge success (NB Principle 7).

18. The work of mentors should be recognised and rewarded by the academic unit and the University.

Resources

Mentoring schemes need to be run efficiently but also effectively. There is a strong case that a small element of ongoing central support would make a huge difference to the staff supporting the schemes. There are also economies of scale in providing support materials etc. centrally. The main areas where this sort of support is needed include:

1. Materials to support units to run training, including guidance for those units with significant numbers of international students covering the particular issues international students might face e.g. differences in culture; differences in academic approaches; approaches to marking and feedback.

2. Providing templates for mentor handbooks and the evaluation of schemes.

3. Advice and guidance to staff co-ordinators to ensure that they are kept abreast of good practice and can come together in a forum to discuss practice and issues at least once a year.

4. Guidelines for good practice available on a university web-site that is both well informed and regularly updated.

5. A budget for thank you events, hoodies, etc; as well as the support and commitment of senior management. The work of mentors should be recognised by the academic unit and the University in appropriate ways e.g. certificates; recognition on the HEAR; academic credit both curricular and extra-curricular through the Career Development Module; small benefits such as the provision of some food for meetings, and subsidised social events.

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# Standards

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<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Improved practices</th>
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<td><strong>General</strong></td>
<td>Promotion and endorsement of the scheme by key players in the unit, e.g. DPD, Head of School, lecturing and admin staff, SSC reps. Effective marketing of the scheme</td>
<td>Mentoring is embedded into a local strategy to enhance the student experience and engagement and aligned with student representation.</td>
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<td>Observe the guidelines of safeguarding practice and that all one to one mentor meetings should be held in a public place</td>
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<td><strong>Recruitment and selection</strong></td>
<td>Recruitment is well advertised in a timely way to all eligible students. Applicants should be requested to fill in an application form detailing their experience, suitability and availability for the role.</td>
<td>Mentors should be recruited from any subsequent year of the programme. Recruitment takes place in the second term of the previous year. Provide a job and person specification. Interviews to be conducted. Existing or previous mentors to be involved in recruitment and selection.</td>
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<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
<td>A three hour core training is the minimum required, and should cover: what is expected of mentors; their responsibilities; when to refer problems to staff; understanding confidentiality and its limits; knowing safeguarding policy; understanding which behaviours and skills to deploy; and appreciating the boundaries of their role as well as cultural awareness. Training materials should also cover basic messages about student services which have been approved by those services. Materials will be provided centrally to support training, but the training itself should be contextualised and provided locally.</td>
<td>Allow more time to cover; ice-breaking and ensuring mentors work as a team; agreeing a joint agenda for transition and for running effective mentoring meetings; managing difficult situations. Involving previous mentors. Training to be completed within third term and a reminder session run just before meeting mentees.</td>
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<td>Mentee allocation</td>
<td>Schools should plan for groups to be no more than 10 in size. Groups should be integrated in so far as is practicable; a mix of gender, ethnicity, local/halls, home/international. Stage Two direct entrants should also be included in the mentoring provision</td>
<td>A maximum group size is around 6 – 8 Pairing mentors with slightly larger groups might be considered (especially useful for peer assisted learning)</td>
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<td>Mentor meetings</td>
<td>All Stage 1 students should be allocated a mentor and arrangements put in place to: Put mentors in touch with their mentee group before induction week Organise face to face meetings with mentees in induction week and a further four meetings in the first term Support the mentor across all the first term</td>
<td>Mentors should be put in touch with mentees as soon as possible after confirmation and e-mentor before start of term (e.g. through Facebook) Mentors to have direct and key role in induction week events including social opportunities Mentors to have repertoire of agendas for meetings (and to let that be driven by what the mentees desire) Promote the informal and social dimension of meeting and support Regular meetings on a weekly basis for at least first few weeks. Continued role for mentors after the first semester</td>
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<td>Staff support</td>
<td>There should be one or more staff co-ordinators in each academic unit to provide support and to oversee the recruitment and training of mentors and the running of the scheme. Staff co-ordinators should be given sufficient time to carry out the role, which may be combined with other roles. Mentors should contact the staff coordinator if they have problems or questions. There should also be formal opportunities for a team or individual debrief at least twice (after initial period of induction and at the end)</td>
<td>The mentor scheme is embedded with and fits well with other processes and policies in the unit such as student representation and subject societies Staff coordinator meets mentors regularly. Experienced mentors get the opportunity to become mentor leaders and help refine and manage the scheme.</td>
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<td>Integration with other forms of</td>
<td>Mentors have clear guidance on which staff member or university service they should refer mentees to for more</td>
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<th><strong>student advice and support</strong></th>
<th>specific support, particularly matters to refer to the personal tutor. Mentors should be clearly advised that they are not a substitute personal tutor. Mentors should observe confidentiality and be clear about when they do need to disclose personal information and that this should be to the staff coordinator.</th>
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<td><strong>Guidance</strong></td>
<td>A ‘mentor handbook’ should be provided to mentors – a basic handbook will be provided to units via central support. The mentor handbook be tailored for the local context. Local mentors to take responsibility for updating the handbook.</td>
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<td><strong>Evaluation</strong></td>
<td>Evidence should be gathered from both mentors and mentees in some systematic way (e.g. survey). Some evidence to be gathered at an interim stage from mentors so timely adjustments can be made (i.e. through the debriefing process). A range of methods is used to gather both qualitative and quantitative evidence.</td>
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<td><strong>Recognition and reward</strong></td>
<td>All mentors to be given a certificate of achievement and recognition on the HEAR. Mentors should not be given direct payment for their role unless they are undertaking roles in addition to the standard mode of mentoring. Mentors may undertake the role for academic credit – with suitable modules being provided. Subsidised social events. Awards ceremonies with awards such as ‘mentor of the year’ nominated by the first year.</td>
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Expectations

Institution
Will provide central support for locally owned mentoring schemes through the provision of templates, support materials, advice to staff co-ordinators provided through a website and through one or more graduate interns.
Will provide senior management support for the scheme through welcome and thank you events for mentors and the provision of certificates
Will provide a small budget to provide refreshments at events, T shirts or hoodies.
Will recognise the work of mentors on the HEAR

Academic Unit
Will run a mentoring scheme which meets the minimum requirements of the University. The Head of Unit should ensure this and show formal recognition of the importance of the work of mentors.
The DELT, in conjunction with the Staff Coordinator(s) should ensure that the aims of their local mentoring scheme are clear and made public
The Head should appoint one or more staff co-ordinators to run the Unit’s mentoring scheme and provide an appropriate workload allowance and administrative support to fulfil the role.
The DELT, in conjunction with the Staff Coordinator(s), should ensure that all mentors are provided with suitable training.
The DELT, in conjunction with the Staff Coordinator(s) should ensure that all schemes are evaluated each year with the feedback used to improve the scheme.
The Head of Unit should ensure the unit is represented at any central and local thank you events.

Staff Co-ordinators
Should recruit and select mentors
Should ensure mentors are properly trained with an autumn refresher event as well as the initial training
Should ensure that mentors make contact (e.g. by e-mail or social media) with mentees pre-arrival
Should ensure that there is a timetabled opportunity for mentors to meet their mentees in induction week
Should be available to support mentors, offer advice and debriefing when the scheme comes to a close
Should ensure that the scheme is evaluated each year and that the outcomes of this are used to enhance the scheme.
Should use the web materials and support provided to keep up with developments within and outside the institution, and attend the annual co-ordinators’ event.

Mentors
Are expected to apply for the role by completing an application form and going through the selection process required by the academic unit.
Are expected to undertake the training provided
Need to know who the named coordinator is and other referral contacts in University services.
Must understand confidentiality issues so they conduct themselves correctly: only meeting in public places and conducting the majority of meetings in a group setting
Are expected in their mentoring interactions to avoid placing at risk the safety and well being of themselves and others
Are expected to make ‘e-contact’ with mentees after confirmation of results in August
Are expected to set up and attend meetings in line with the requirements of the scheme
Are expected to liaise with the staff co-ordinator and to report matters of concern
Are expected to take part in the evaluation of the scheme

**Mentees**
Are expected to engage with their local mentoring scheme to the minimum level specified by the academic unit.
Are expected to understand the role of a mentor and respect the limits to that role.
Are expected to avoid placing at risk the safety and well being of themselves and others
Are expected to take part in any evaluation of the scheme