1. **Purpose**

An undertaking has been given in the 2012 Offer to provide every stage 1 undergraduate with a peer mentor by 2013. This paper addresses how that might be achieved.

2. **Background**

UTLC resolved in July 2010 to examine current peer mentoring practices at Newcastle University following a report by Mr Pallett about an event in the HASS Faculty showcasing good practice. This led to a student intern, under the supervision of Mr Bryson, being funded to collate and analyse current practices, and their costs and benefits. Included in the remit was a consideration of ways where central resources might be deployed to increase effectiveness of local schemes. Subsequently the 2012 Offer imperatives have emerged making this project particularly timely.

Sixteen schemes were evaluated across all three faculties. They are diverse in coverage (UG, PG and international students), mentor roles, staff involvement, operational detail and effectiveness of outcome. Although some schemes involve very little resource input they delivered, at best, patchy coverage and weaker outcomes. However some schemes delivered excellent outcomes.

3. **Key Issues**

There are strong benefits of effective peer mentoring that apply in all programme contexts; enhanced student engagement through social and academic integration; induction and transition; improved academic skills and personal development; virtuous role models; and better communication and participation within programmes. Only three current schemes (Combined Honours, Business School and Psychology) are effective in delivering these benefits and ensuring:

- That the scheme meets of all the desired objectives and demonstrating that they do
- A high participation rate – recruit sufficient mentors for purpose and most students take part and benefit
- Embedding - and the scheme is continuously improving because it is responsive to feedback

These schemes provide features a model on which a wider university template could be based. We recommend a template based on (see p26-30 of the Appendix for full details):

a. A strong infrastructure – with local ‘ownership but central support
b. Formal processes (e.g. in selection, training, ongoing management )
c. Regular evaluation
d. Co-ownership with students but serious staff investment (‘champion’ role)
e. Recognition and reward (but not payment) including academic credit
This entails that some existing schemes will need to be redesigned and relaunched. It is notable that several schools in HASS have already begun to emulate the successful Combined Honours model.

4. **Impact on the Student Experience**

Peer mentoring addresses the student experience in several ways as already identified. A particular virtue is the point that it is student led and very much linked to the Student Representation Policy as it is excellent method of gaining feedback and engaging in constructive dialogue (with mentors informing student reps and vice versa). Mentors (and mentees) gain employability and excellent graduate skills.

Peer assisted learning can be added and this has several additional benefits to offer (Psychology provide a good example). Provision has been made for this in the templates.

5. **Resource implications**

The Appendix details a resourcing model. The main cost is staff deployment but this in the form of just one staff member in QUILT to coordinate, and graduate interns to initiate and develop the schemes in concert with local staff. The shared provision of processes such as training and resources (such as handbooks) offer efficiency gains over the current, entirely local model.

It is proposed that one FTE in QULIT coordinates. They appoint and train: two graduate interns per faculty (two year appointments).

6. **Implementation/Communication/Monitoring Plans**

The infrastructure will need to put in place by the end of 2012 so the university scheme is fully implemented and ready for September 2013. Therefore initial appointments need to be in place for then (for October 2012).

Existing schemes should be reviewed and relaunched as required (the project already identifies those). Ongoing costs are likely to reduce as schemes become more student led. Some central oversight and evaluation will need to continue.

7. **Summary of recommendations to UTLSEC**

In order to have an appropriate and robust university wide mentoring scheme in place for 2013:

- Schemes should follow a template outlined in this paper and detailed in the Appendix.
- A minority of existing schemes are already fit for purpose. Others require redesign to fit the template.
- Investment needs to made through a small number of appointments (QUILT, and graduate interns)

Colin Bryson and Aimee Philipson (Combined Honours Centre) 2/10/11
Appendix A

Student peer mentoring schemes at Newcastle University

Aimee Philipson and Colin Bryson

June 2011
Student peer mentoring schemes at Newcastle University

Aimee Philipson and Colin Bryson

Project remit and goals
The project was undertaken for the ULTSEC, following the report in July 2010 detailing some of the peer mentoring schemes in HASS, in order to address the requirement to look at practice in other faculties and to include postgraduate schemes.

Therefore UTLSEC funded the appointment of a student intern, under the supervision of Colin Bryson. The project was undertaken in from February to June, 2011. The intended outcomes of this project are:

- To liaise with QUILT to consider the provision of generic materials (for training etc) and how these schemes can be supported, promoted and adapted for use elsewhere
- To identify and describe what types of peer mentoring schemes are running currently at Newcastle and such features as selection, training, the role and how mentoring is delivered.
- To collate any existing evaluation evidence about each scheme
- To gather some preliminary evidence from key local players – coordinators of the schemes, mentors, other informed parties – about benefits and costs of the schemes

Summary
Peer mentoring offers much to improving the student experience. The authors have sought to identify and describe all peer mentoring and buddying systems currently in operation at Newcastle University. Further evidence on top of existing evaluation has been gathered in ordered to analyse the success of the schemes.

The schemes are highly diverse. Many of the schemes are quite informal, with little supportive infrastructure and almost no staff oversight or evaluation. Although these schemes offer some opportunities and positive outcomes – and they are very low cost to run - they do not realise the full potential of peer mentoring and bear significant risks. Only three schemes (Combined Honours, Business School (international UG) and Psychology) achieve:

- Adequate and inclusive coverage of all students in the scheme
- Meeting all the desired objectives and demonstrating that they do
- High participation rate – recruit sufficient mentors for purpose and most students take part and benefit
- Scheme appears embedded and it is continuously improving because it is responsive to feedback
Good schemes enhance student engagement and make significant progress to achieving an educational community. That is particularly the case for Combined Honours where the scheme is closely linked to the SSC and the CH Society and jointly run with the students. This exemplifies the value of mentoring for helping to deliver the Student Representation Policy.

Additional benefits of good mentoring schemes include the virtue of mentors being role models to other students and providing excellent feedback on broader issues. The Psychology scheme is embedded in a module and offers peer assisted learning. There are also virtues in enabling mentors to do the role for academic credit (Combined Hons). These are good examples of how mentoring enhances employability and personal development of graduate skills.

There is strong evidence from this study, combined with all the evidence on peer mentoring in other universities, that argues for a formal system based on rigorous processes (selection and training of mentors, management and involvement of senior staff, appropriate recognition and reward, ongoing and regular evaluation). Without this there are significant risks not just of offering but not delivering mentoring but of mentors actually being detrimental to the student experience. Therefore for Newcastle to achieve the goal of offering a good system to peer mentoring to all undergraduate students some existing schemes will need to be replaced.

The authors recommend templates of core principles and practices as a basis of a universal minimum standard across the university. This is based on a mentor mentoring a group of students within their programme. Schools who choose to may build on this role so that the mentor offers additional support, such as peer assisted study support/learning.

There are also recommendations for models of staff support. It is essential to have at least some local staff coordination (at programme/school level) but the burden of this may be made practicable by the appointment of a central coordinator supported by graduate interns at faculty level. There are much efficiency to be gained by the shared provision of processes and resources.
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Introduction

Background of mentoring more broadly

Students supporting students – peer support – has been shown to be particularly effective in delivering beneficial outcomes. There is a strong conceptual basis to underpin why this is the case. A key prerequisite of student engagement is strong trust relationships and creating a discourse (Bryson and Hand, 2007) and peers are in a strong position to create such relationships and conversations of mutual understanding (Bosley, 2004). The point that learning is social constructed and interactions with others facilitate and enable that learning (Vygotsky, 1978) also puts more experienced students in a good position to influence positively the learning of their peers. Students face sharp and difficult transitions to the university setting with many alienating forces at play (Mann, 2001). Therefore it is important that they become integrated both academically and socially (Tinto, 1993) and also culturally. International students may find these aspects particularly challenging and value peer facilitation of that process although all students value a supportive, friendly climate on entry to HE (Yorke and Thomas, 2003). A sense of community and belonging has been shown to be very important in improving retention and lowering attrition (Tinto, 1995), enhancing a sense of affiliation (Kember et al, 2001) and delivering good educational outcomes (Perry, 1999; McInnis, 2005).

There is a wealth of research which demonstrates that peer support enables:

- Enhanced student engagement however diverse the student body (Kuh, 2008; Bryson, 2010).
- A form of ongoing induction (Bousted and May, 2003).
- Opportunity for social integration and assimilation into the educational community of the degree.
- Improvement in academic skills and intellectual development, e.g through self-confidence, academic and student self-concept, cognitively, moral reasoning and leadership (Pascarella and Terenzini, 2005).
• Becoming an expert student by learning from role models of more experienced students (Martin and Arendale, 1993).

Moreover Hampton and Potter (2009) demonstrate that peer support also offers an inclusive approach to widening participation challenges by targeting high risk courses rather than high risk students (Rust and Wallace, 2004) and creates opportunities for student feedback in a participatory way for a large proportion of students – to hear the student voice.

There is another outstanding benefit and that is the impact on those who undertake the peer support role. Much of the research has gathered evidence from this group and shown how doing this has developed graduate attributes such as communication and leadership (Fleming, 2009); their own academic performance (Fox and Stephenson, 2006); motivation (Allen and Edey, 2007); and engaging students to such an extent to be quite transformative in a very positive way (Bryson, 2010). This latter outcome derives from the confidence building aspect and developing the ability to reflect and self-assess - the most important of all graduate attributes (Nichol, 2010).

Our focus here is on forms of peer mentoring where a more ‘experienced’ student supports other students. This may take a number of forms. The ‘buddy’ scheme usually involves a 1:1 relationship where they interact on that basis with the buddy offering advice and support of a social nature. When this occurs in a group setting, i.e. the experienced students tending to meet a number of students together this is usually referred to as ‘mentoring’. There is a continuum of mentoring roles in HE which ranges from ‘social’ support to a more academic support role. This latter role is exemplified by ‘Peer Assisted Learning’ (PAL). The origins of PAL derive from supplemental instruction (SI) originally developed in the University of Missouri in 1973 (Martin and Arendale, ibid). This approach is now widespread in North America including at the most prestigious universities such as Cornell and Rutgers. It has been widely adopted in Australasia, where it is known as PASS, and many other countries. Kingston was the first university in the UK to adopt this in the early 1990s. It is now widespread in the UK too. The leading examples of universities where it is almost universal are Bournemouth (introduced there in 2000) and Manchester which is recognised both for peer mentoring to support social integration and PAL – which they call Peer Assisted Study Sessions – which covers more than 3000 first year students. There are many other excellent schemes of peer mentoring and PAL – good examples include UCL, Oxford Brookes, Queen Mary, Northumbria and Sheffield. These are all sources of accessible guidance and resources on this practice.

Context of Newcastle
There is a growing interest in peer mentoring in Newcastle. A number of schemes have been introduced in recent years, but almost entirely independently of each other. The catalyst seems to have been where there was an enthusiast for the idea in a particular locale. For example, in Combined Honours, where a new Director arrived in 2008 he was aware of the UK developments and familiar with the leading schemes so when the students advocated peer advice as a good idea, was in a good position to try out a scheme, modelled initially on the UCL scheme. He shared these ideas with Geography who also introduced a scheme. However
most schemes did develop entirely independently and therefore did not share resources or draw much if at all on existing expertise, for example from QUILT. A HASS FLTC event in May, 2010 sought to draw together and showcase the schemes in HASS with 6 identified. This developed into the paper and discussion at ULTC which gave rise to this project.

We note that the contexts of students and courses in Newcastle is diverse so one universal scheme may not fit all and thus we must avoid too much prescription. However the intention now of the university to provide peer mentor support for all first year undergraduate students makes this report particularly timely.

**The present study**

This study attempts to be systematic in identifying all the peer mentoring schemes or similar practices at Newcastle University. This identification was undertaken by inquiring at Faculty Teaching and Learning Committees and also contacting any individuals in the university who may hold such knowledge. However we are aware that this approach might not have captured all such schemes. This process identified 16 schemes which we then examined in more detail.

We drew on any existing information available from the HASS FTLC event, but the key role of the student intern, Ms Philipson, was to gather evidence from each of the schemes. This was done through interviewing the staff member most associated with supporting the particular scheme. The themes in the interview are apparent from the presentation of collated evidence here but focussed on:

- What the mentors do.
- Instigation of the scheme.
- Management and support including ‘HR’ processes.
- Outcomes – costs and benefits

We were particularly interested in any evaluation evidence available. However, in many cases there was no such evidence. In these cases Ms Philipson asked the staff contact for access to mentors and participants. Unfortunately very few names were provided and thus there is a paucity of evidence about such schemes. Nonetheless an overall analysis has been attempted.

The approach here was drawn from appreciative inquiry. This was intended to identify the successful features and to allow building upon what was already working well. That notion has been incorporated both into the presentation of results and the conclusions.

**The Schemes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme (name and acronym)</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Type of scheme</th>
<th>When started</th>
<th>Goals of scheme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Centre for Cultural and ICCHS students</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
<td>September 2005</td>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Studies (ICCHS)</td>
<td>All INTO students (starting in September and January)</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
<td>September 2010</td>
<td>Improve retention rates Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTO ‘Your friend in Newcastle’ (INTO)</td>
<td>First year international students studying law</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
<td>September 2008</td>
<td>Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law (LI)</td>
<td>First year law students</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
<td>3+ years ago</td>
<td>Transition Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law (run by the law school’s society ‘The Eldon Society’) (LES)</td>
<td>First year law students</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
<td>5+ years ago</td>
<td>Transition Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical/Dental (MD)</td>
<td>First year medic and dental students</td>
<td>Buddy</td>
<td>September 2007</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFRD</td>
<td>First year AFRD students</td>
<td>Peer mentoring</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>First year architecture students</td>
<td>Peer mentoring</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>First year single honours geography students</td>
<td>Peer mentoring</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>Improve student engagement with course Community-building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HASS Postgraduate (HASS PG)</td>
<td>PG research students in HASS faculty</td>
<td>Peer mentoring</td>
<td>2004/5</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>First year single honours history students and history and politics students</td>
<td>Peer mentoring</td>
<td>September 2010</td>
<td>Social Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>First year single honours</td>
<td>Peer mentoring</td>
<td>September 2006</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme</td>
<td>Mentoring Details</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle University Business School (NUBS)</td>
<td>Stage 1 international students and Stage 2 direct entry (INTO) students studying in the business school (any NUBS programme except First Start)</td>
<td>September 2008</td>
<td>Improve retention and progression rates, Improve academic skills, Improve student experience for new international UG business students, Unique selling point to international students, Skills development for Stage 2 and 3 students who become mentors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biomedical Sciences (BMS)</td>
<td>First year biomedical students</td>
<td>September 2009</td>
<td>Social, Improve engagement on course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Honours (CH)</td>
<td>First year combined honours students</td>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>Transition, Community-building, Social, Improve academic skills, Skills development for Stage 2 and 3 students who become mentors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>First year single honours psychology students</td>
<td>September 2008</td>
<td>Transition, Improve academic skills, Social</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HASS international doctoral students (HASS PhD)</td>
<td>International PhD students</td>
<td>April 2010</td>
<td>Integration, Social, Improve completion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What do the mentors do

In all but two schemes, the mentees met their mentor for the first time in an initial meeting in Induction Week but this meeting varied from a brief lunch gathering to a seven hour induction day run by the mentors involving ice-breaker games, orientation activities and information sessions about the university. In the LI scheme, the mentees are not allocated a mentor until after the initial meeting. The mentors introduce themselves to the first year cohort in a later meeting and then mentees submit their preference for which mentor they would like to the scheme co-ordinator, who allocates the mentees according to their preferences as far as is possible. In CH, the mentors are each allocated to a designated group of students (5-7 sharing at least one subject) in late August once the new cohort is confirmed. Mentors then contact their mentees by sending a profile and letter in the pack sent out by CH to students at that time. They provide their email address and mobile phone number so that their mentees are free to contact them before induction week and many mentors also set up a Facebook Group so that mentees can meet each other online and get to know their mentor more informally. AFRD also send out the mentors’ details in the Induction Week pack sent out pre-induction. Then they meet face to face at an all day induction event designed to create bonds mentee:mentee and mentor:mentee.

More than two thirds of the mentor schemes have a very informal structure, with the mentors free to continue the scheme as they see fit after the initial meeting, whether with regular meetings or with contact just when mentees get in touch about an issue. They can also choose to meet socially or in a more formal location and whether to focus on academic skills or about social or pastoral topics.

Five schemes have a more formal approach to their schemes which include timetabled sessions and in the case of Psychology, integration of the mentor scheme into a first year module. The more formal schemes tend to have a focus on academic support (often as well as pastoral) with meeting themes based on topics such as library skills, essay writing and referencing. BMS, CH and Psychology have timetabled sessions for mentoring (although CH mentors do not necessarily have to adhere precisely to this) and History are given a guide as to when to have their meetings and what the agenda could be, though mentors are free to deviate if they think it would be beneficial to their mentors to talk about something else. Psychology’s scheme is now integrated into a compulsory Stage One academic skills module called ‘Psychological Inquiry’ with mentors running their sessions within the timetabled module contact hours.

The LI scheme had a scheduled meeting time in the pilot year but due to mentee feedback, the scheme was re-designed in a more flexible and informal way for the following year so that mentors could choose where and when to meet their mentees. The BMS mentors have also suggested that their scheme be more flexible in the future.
The number of scheduled meetings varies from weekly/fortnightly in CH, Psychology, History and NUBS to twice a semester in BMS. According to feedback from mentors and mentees in the informal schemes, many participants only met once to introduce themselves in the whole year (usually in Induction Week).

The mentor role is similar in most schemes; they are expected to greet the mentees in induction week and offer their guidance and assistance during transition and throughout the mentees’ first year at university. However in Music the role is much briefer, lasting only until the end of October, where mentors help mentees with the first weeks of transition but are not expected to help after this time. Most schemes require the mentor mainly during the first semester although some schemes have scheduled meeting in semester two also. In History, BMS and CH, the mentor role was created to add another layer of support to the school’s student support network, acting as a first or alternative point of contact before students contacted their personal tutors or DPDs.

Some mentors in CH and NUBS have other tasks added to their role. Mentors in CH undertaking the Career Development Module have other responsibilities such as recruiting and selecting new mentors, training the new mentors, revising the scheme and handbook and assisting the scheme co-ordinator in a variety of ambassadorial and research/project roles (e.g. on open days and at conferences and events). This means that mentors can develop their skills even further and get more involved in their school/course and their efforts are rewarded with academic credits. CH are implementing a CH-specific Career Development Module in September 2011 which mentors can take to gain academic credit for mentoring and helping to maintain and co-ordinate the mentoring scheme in CH. Geography will also be implementing a paid senior mentor role in September 2011 who will take on extra responsibilities such as running the Geography newsletter and helping to co-ordinate the school’s ‘Community Tuesdays’.

How was the scheme set up
Over half of the schemes have been instigated by schools but seven have been initiated by students through their Staff Student Committees or amongst themselves through a society or postgraduate networks. These schemes have been born out of student experiences on the course and the aims focus more on ‘individual issues’ such as social support and transition issues and they are much more informal. Three schemes were suggested by student representatives through the schools’ Student Staff Committee.

The student-initiated schemes can be divided up into those initiated, implemented and managed by students such as Architecture, HassPhD, LES and MD and those proposed by students but then implemented by schools such as CH, HASS PG and AFRD.

The schemes implemented by schools (History, BMS, Geography, ICCHS, INTO, LI, Music, NUBS, Psychology) tend to have a stronger focus on ‘group issues’ such as improving academic skills within the school, improving community and improving retention rates of courses however many also place importance on helping students with transition.
How is the scheme run and supported

**Student initiated and student-run**

The schemes run by students (Architecture, HassPG, HassPhD, LES and MD) all follow the buddy scheme model (apart from HassPhD which is a mutual support group where all mentors are mentees and vice versa). Their aims focus on easing transition from school to university and providing informal peer support. They have little or no costs and are rarely monitored by staff or formally evaluated.

**Student initiated but school-run**

Schemes suggested by students but implemented by schools follow a mentoring structure where a more experienced student advises new students about university life. These schemes have a varying degree of staff support from weekly meetings with the staff co-ordinator to monthly ‘check-up’ emails or no support at all.

**Joint ownership**

CH is the only example of joint ownership of a scheme. It was student-initiated however there has been significant input from staff and students to design (and re-design each year) the scheme. Each year a mentor has written or edited the Mentor Handbook (usually as part of a Career Development Module), there has been a full evaluation of the scheme by mentors and mentees and there has been in-depth maintenance and analysis of the scheme this year by the Student Engagement Officer, Grace Cooper, as well as very considerable involvement from the DPD. It is also still a formal component of CH’s Student Staff Committee business and all feedback and suggestions are discussed at the meetings.

**The staff who support the schemes**

There is a range of staff roles supporting the schemes. In three of the schemes (CH, Geography and Music) the academic coordinator is the DPD. Other senior academic staff members provide main input to INTO and BMS. For AFRD and Architecture the staff coordinator is a senior administrator. A more junior academic staff coordinator supports the schemes in Psychology, History and HASS PG. In NUBS this role is undertaken by a more dedicated role, that of UG International Officer and the DPD in CH is also supported by a Student Engagement Officer.

A further dimension to this is continuity. Most schemes had the same individual as staff co-ordinator throughout. However in Geography a new DPD had been appointed who although keen to continuing the scheme, was not fully familiar with how it had previously run.

**Support**

Altogether, five of the schemes have extensive staff support, six have little support from staff and five have no support from staff or the school. Staff support varies from setting up schemes initially and allocating mentors to debriefing the mentors after each mentor group session and completing a full evaluation of the scheme each year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Type of staff support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Committee</th>
<th>12 October 2011 – Document B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INTO</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AFRD</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LI</strong></td>
<td>Staff involved in recruitment and training. Scheme co-ordinator emails mentors for regular updates throughout the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LES</strong></td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MD</strong></td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ICCHS</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Psychology</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment, training and evaluation. Staff designed the ‘Psychology Inquiry’ module of which the mentor scheme is part of and they run the sessions attended by mentors and mentees throughout the year. The scheme co-ordinator also holds a feedback and briefing session before and after each meeting with the mentees and completes and evaluation of the scheme each year using questionnaires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CH</strong></td>
<td>Scheme co-ordinator is main supervisor and meets with some mentors on a weekly basis but in 2010/11 a Student Engagement Officer was employed to co-ordinate and maintain the scheme from Sept-Feb and she also met with the other mentors on a weekly basis. Staff also involved in evaluation, management and maintenance of scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geography</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HASS PG</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment and has regular email contact with mentors throughout the year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BMS</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment and training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>History</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment and training. Scheme co-ordinator emails mentors every few weeks to check on progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Music</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Architecture</strong></td>
<td>Staff help with room bookings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NUBS</strong></td>
<td>Involved in recruitment, training and evaluation. Staff also input to the sessions which mentees attend (before and debrief).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HASS PhD</strong></td>
<td>None.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Selection and recruitment of mentors**

The methods of recruitment vary from a simple sign-up sheet to an extensive application and interview process. Over 50% of the schemes used a basic recruitment process such as inviting all stage two and three students (or PG students for relevant schemes) via shout-outs in lectures, emails, posters and utilising the society member network to sign up to be mentors on the basis that this would make it self-selecting (those who signed up were deemed to be the right sort of people for the role by the fact they had signed up). If there are too many sign-ups, the scheme leader picks the mentors themselves from the list. In Music, mentors are hand-picked by a senior staff member.
A few schemes use a more selective process. For example, those who sign up to the schemes in Psychology, Law (for international students) and BMS are asked to send in their CVs or a personal statement, those students applying to be an INTO ‘friend’ are selected by sending their CVs to SCAN, students volunteering in NUBS are asked to complete an application form and to attend an assessment day to help scheme co-ordinators to select suitable mentors and students in Combined Honours must fill in an application form and those selected from the applications are asked to attend a 20 minute interview, with some doing a further ‘role simulation’ exercise in addition.

In the majority of the schemes, recruitment and selection focuses on students who have strong academic records so that the extra role will not impair their degree. This was overwhelmingly the case in the schemes where mentors were selected from a simple sign-up sheet whereas those with extensive selection processes tended to focus more on the individual’s characteristics, experience and maturity rather than academic ability.

Training

The average amount of training given is three hours however there are schemes at either end of the scale with CH and Psychology giving 9-12 hours of training and INTO, BS and History offering 1-2 hours. Only mentors in NUBS and BMS were paid to attend their training. The training given by the ten schemes had many themes in common such as boundaries, confidentiality, cultural awareness and role plays involving potential scenarios the mentors could face. Scheme co-ordinators discuss the responsibilities of the mentors, legalities, child protection policies, how to behave as a mentor and how to keep themselves, as well as their mentees, safe. A key aspect is when to ‘refer on’. The Combined Honours training also includes a two hour orientation meeting where mentors get to know each other.
so that they can work better as a team and provide even better support for the mentees whilst improving the sense of belonging in CH amongst themselves as well as their mentees. The only scheme to have professional training was HassPhD which hired a professional facilitator to coach them in mentoring, listening and facilitating skills.

NUBS’ mentor training was reviewed by a mentor after the pilot year. Her report included recommendations for improving training for the following year such as adding more cultural awareness activities, briefing mentors on the personal development and employability skills gained on the schemes, an icebreaker quiz, activities based on listening behaviours and techniques and completing scenarios based on previous mentors’ experiences.

**Guidance to mentors whilst scheme is running**

Many schemes also suggested agendas for meetings, for example in History the mentors received a week by week guide to their meeting times and themes, in Psychology the meetings always have an academic theme and materials are provided by staff to help facilitate the meetings and in CH the themes for meetings are determined by mentees’ needs but are always arranged before the meeting so as to provide a clear agenda and therefore a motivation for students to attend.

In addition to their 9 hours of training, CH presents each new mentor with an extensive handbook written by previous mentors (revised every year) which helps them to prepare and fulfil their role. It includes information on the boundaries of their role as well as useful information they can refer to throughout the year to help their mentees such as who to refer students to in certain situations, how things like personal tutoring works and how module selection works. The guide (some of which is also replicated on Blackboard) also contains wide ranging resources to underpin topics of advice such as using the library to choosing accommodation for second year. This avoids the need for mentors to keep ‘re-inventing the wheel’ in terms of providing support and guidance to their mentor groups.

The HassPhD students created a ‘self-help pack’ so that the students could seek help between meetings and all scheme co-ordinators inferred that mentors could contact them at any time for guidance by email or in person.

Only three schemes provide direct support to, and gather feedback from, mentors as an ongoing part of their role. However the coordinators of BMS and History keep in touch from time to time by email. In Psychology mentors attend a briefing before and after each session and at the end (thus around 10 times in total). In NUBS there is a de-brief after each formal session (about 6 meetings). In CH there is a weekly meeting with the mentors of groups of about 6-8 (therefore around 8 such meetings as a minimum, with those doing mentoring for academic credit meeting the DPD over 20 times).

**Reward and recognition**

Only two schemes paid students to be mentors; BMS and NUBS. Both schools have a history of paying students to help out in the school in roles such as lab assistants or student ambassadors, and scheme co-ordinators in NUBS believe payment equates to accountability so mentors will take their roles and time commitments more seriously if they are paid.
Voluntary schemes are promoted to students based on an altruistic basis; for addition to their CV, for skill development and with the incentive of small gift vouchers or free meals and refreshments. These schemes still have sufficient numbers of students volunteering, with most schemes requiring some sort of selection process to achieve the right numbers, and they often attract ‘the right sort of student’ for the role i.e. altruistic, keen and committed. LI and Psychology did pay mentors during their schemes’ pilot years due to funding received from UTLC.

In Geography and NUBS, mentors receive a free printed hooded top to identify mentors and as a small remuneration. CH gives all mentors a formal certificate of achievement and there is an award for ‘mentor of the year’ at the annual Awards Evening voted for by the first year. The lead mentors in CH also get rewarded by having at least two subsidised ‘evenings out’ per year and also some of get free access to conferences too.

Mentoring for academic credit
In the previous two years some mentors in CH have used their role as a placement for the Career Development Module. They have undertaken a number of other tasks in order to vary their experiences and to meet the minimum hours quota (70 hours) and ‘self-initiated’ project area of the module. These have included ambassadorial work at university open days, writing the Mentor Handbook, designing and running the training events and designing and implementing the recruitment process for the following year’s mentors. In 2009/10 five mentors did this module and in 2010/11, seven.

After consultation with the students who have done this module in CH, a new specific module is being offered in CH at both stage 2 and 3 in 2010-11. The focus is more on graduate attributes developed through undertaking the mentoring role – with some emphasis on developing and leading others as well as on the self. Eighteen of those undertaking mentoring roles in 2011-12 (75%) have signed up to these new modules.

Monitoring and Review
Less than a quarter of the schemes have been formally evaluated. These schemes gathered feedback in a number of ways including asking each mentee (Psychology, CH) and mentor to fill in a questionnaire (CH), emailing them to ask for feedback and comments (HASS PHD), having weekly debriefings to gather oral feedback (NUBS, CH, LI initially), a concluding debrief (Geography, CH) or just informally (BMS). This evidence has been supplemented here by the small number of responses from students to this project.

Mentee feedback
All schemes apart from INTO received mostly positive feedback from mentees, with most saying that it helped them move from school to university more smoothly, that it helped them to make friends and that it made them feel part of their degree/school. For example;

**Psychology (over last two years)** – over 70% said it helped their transition to university; over 80% said it helped them to get to know other people on the course; over 60% said it helped them to develop their academic skills.
Combined Honours – According to the Stage One survey 2009/10: 66% of students had drawn on their mentor with 53% finding their advice ‘useful’ (with advice about academic issues top ranked). 58% found being put in a mentor group a good way to get to know other students. Therefore a total of 80% felt they had benefited from the mentor scheme. Mentees mostly felt that having a mentor made them feel part of the degree and the university (46%). 68% felt email was the best method of contacting their mentor. 40% found the Wednesday Workshops run by mentors useful (although only 20% had attended!). Further analysis showed that those students who had a mentor doing the career development module (who took a more structured approach) found the mentor scheme found much more effective and these mentors had a much higher participation rate).

*My mentor was so lovely. I felt panicked and she really helped me settle in*

According to the Stage One survey 2010/11: 91% had drawn on their mentor and all thought the mentor scheme was ‘very good’. 50% of mentees had contacted their mentor before induction week and all found their advice useful, mentees mostly saw their mentor as someone to ask about academic issues, email was still the most popular contact method (38%) although Facebook was also popular (25%) and group meetings (22%) figuring more prominently this year. 91% said the mentor-run induction day was ‘good’ or ‘very good’ and 99% rated their mentor as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. 34% had attended the Wednesday Workshops run by mentors and found them useful. They preferred mentor meetings that were relaxed and informal, where they could chat but also many liked having some sort of agenda. Again the most effective mentors were those doing the career module (although this time when all the mentors got fuller support and supervision some of the others were also very successful).

*Fantastic idea, really helped me settle in quickly, get involved with CH and make friends in my modules*

**INTO** - International students on the INTO scheme found it difficult to see the point of having a buddy. This may be a cultural issue or a lack of communication between scheme coordinators and the mentees. The mentors, however, were positive about the pilot year.

**AFRD** – mentee found it useful to ask a more experienced student about academic issues and to be able to contact somebody before arriving at university. It also helped her to feel part of the degree and university and aided her transition.

**Mentor feedback**

Mentors had positive yet constructive feedback for most schemes, which shows that the mentors are engaging in the maintenance and operation of the schemes. Here are some examples;

**BMS** – mentor made new friends and it has helped her to improve her role as a student rep on the SSC. But she thinks the first meeting should be compulsory so mentees meet their mentor at least once during the year.
CH – From 2010/11 evaluation: Of the top things they had gained, 80% commented that they knew more people in CH thanks to the scheme, 50% had improved their time management and organisational skills, 50% felt personal satisfaction at helping students with their transition to university and 30% felt better integrated into the course and school community. However 50% said they felt disheartened by lack of contact from mentees, 20% felt it had cost them money to be a mentor (‘coffees, meals, meeting biscuits etc – all adds up!’) There were many suggestions on how to improve the scheme for 2011/12 and many have been taken into consideration when designing the training, induction day and structure for next year.

NUBS – mentor felt very well supported in her role, felt that the training session was thorough and that she has become a lot more confident and tolerant. Mentor felt the scheme often only benefited students who were already outgoing as they were more likely to get involved at the start.

AFRD – mentor enjoyed helping new students feel more at home and using her own experience to help. She was disheartened that none of her mentors met up with her or contacted her all year.

Psychology – Mentor felt her communication, leadership and teamwork skills improved as well as her confidence. She felt very well supported and really enjoyed being a mentor. There was nothing she would change!

Architecture – Mentor found it a very rewarding experience to develop herself and to feel like she was giving something back to the degree. She felt there were three things necessary to best facilitate mentee participation – access to mentor, timing of first mentor/mentee meeting and the needs of the mentee (some need more help than others). She felt the training helped a lot and she used what she learnt and the materials given before every meeting. Mentor would have liked to meet her mentees more often but did not want to pester them. She advised new mentors to see the role as a ‘learning experience’ as it would help if they had to train new staff members in future jobs.

Mentors in Architecture and ICCHS have asked for more school involvement whereas those in BMS and Law (international students) have asked for less school involvement e.g. getting rid of formal, timetabled sessions. There is a fine balance between too much school involvement and not enough and this can be addressed by listening to feedback from mentors and mentees at the end of each year.

All mentors, mentees and staff agreed that experiences on the different schemes were highly individualised and dependent on mentor and mentee enthusiasm, effort and engagement.

How schemes have changed and evolved
Significant changes enacted as a result of student feedback:

- LI - Mentors and mentees asked for more flexibility and the scheme co-ordinators discontinued the timetabled Wednesday meeting time.
• LI - Mentees from the pilot scheme suggested that mentees should be allowed to choose their mentor at the initial meeting. Now mentors introduce themselves to everyone and mingle with the mentees at the first social meeting in induction week. Then the mentees email their preferred mentor choice to the scheme co-ordinator and she allocates the mentees according to their preferences (as much as possible).
• BMS - mentees suggested that the scheme was more flexible and the school is reviewing the scheme for 2011/2012.
• NUBS – A mentor completed a review of the training given to new mentors in the pilot scheme and suggested a number of changes for future training.
• CH – students who benefited from the scheme in first year suggested the scheme should be extended to second and final years and this is being implemented in 2011/2012 with the introduction of Peer Advisors.
• CH – mentors commented that many mentees didn’t get involved at the beginning but then felt it was too late to get involved further into the semester. In 2011/2012 there will be an attempt to re-engage students at several later points too so that students don’t feel excluded or that they missed out.
• CH – mentees requested that mentor groups joined together and mingled more so that students could meet more potential friends. Multi-group workshops and socials will be implemented in 2011/2012.
• CH – mentors have argued for a local variant of the Career Development module to be introduced more specific to the mentor role.

Costs of schemes - direct and indirect
The provision of refreshments and printing session materials or handbooks appears to be the only costs to schools for voluntary schemes.

For paid schemes, NUBS has a budget of £8000 each year and this covers all mentors’ wages (for around 20 mentors) as well as costs of the scheme such as refreshments, printing and materials. Mentors are paid £6.80 per hour. BMS pay their mentors £75 per semester which works out at £12.50 per hour based on a two hour training session and 2 two hour meetings per semester.

The CH scheme is estimated at a cost of £500 which includes printing, materials, refreshments, mentor social events and the annual Mentor of the year Award (£60 prize).

The cost of staff members’ time is dependent on the structure and level of staff support for each scheme. For the more comprehensive schemes (with around 20 mentors involved) it is estimated (CH) that 0.3 FTE of staff time needs to be dedicated to the scheme.
The success and effectiveness of the schemes

Those with very little evidence to go on
Ten of the schemes have little or no evaluation of their schemes which makes it extremely difficult to evaluate their level of success in relation to benefiting mentors and mentees and delivering the overall goals of the scheme. Anecdotal comments can give some indication. However these comments are subjective and representative of just a single or small number of viewpoints (and not often a student one) so must not be taken as a clear indication of the success of the scheme overall. The following comments were gathered during the research for this report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Anecdotal evidence</th>
<th>Scheme’s goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LI</td>
<td>The scheme has helped to build a stronger community between international students, even culminating in an end of year party at a mentor’s house at the end of the pilot year</td>
<td>Improve retention rates Integration ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architecture</td>
<td>Informal feedback is positive however mentors want more school involvement</td>
<td>Transition ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFRD</td>
<td>Staff do not have time to give it enough attention for it to succeed. Mentees and mentors informal feedback suggest that the scheme is a good idea but it is highly individualised depending on the mentor and mentee’s engagement and enthusiasm</td>
<td>Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Mentees comment that there are great social benefits of peer involvement during induction week. There is enthusiasm among students to become mentors each year. Mentoring has ‘dramatically improved’ retention and progression rates</td>
<td>Transition ✓ (in part) Social ✓ Improve academic attitudes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>‘Shifts burden from DPD to peer mentor’. Highly individualised experiences among students due to mentor or mentee engagement and enthusiasm</td>
<td>Social Transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HassPG</td>
<td>No feedback</td>
<td>Social</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICCHS</td>
<td>Not monitored in any way. Social relationships did develop. ICCHS Society have implemented an</td>
<td>Integration ✓ Transition</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
International Night each year where students bring food from the home country for other students to try.

INTO
International students didn’t appreciate the point of the buddy scheme. Scheme faltered in second semester as mentors and mentees were not introduced until the end of March and staff did not have enough time to monitor the scheme.

MD
No feedback

LES
The mentor/mentee social event in the second week of the first semester was good for building relationships between students and networking across the year group. No formal feedback.

From this table, we could conclude that Architecture, LES and Music are among the most successful schemes however none of them have formal evaluation, maintenance or feedback from mentees.

**Those with at least some evidence from students**
Two schemes have some oral, informal evidence from students who have participated in the schemes as mentors or mentees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Anecdotal evidence and student feedback</th>
<th>Scheme’s goals (✓ = delivery of goal based on anecdotal evidence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| BMS    | The scheme has had a mixed reception from students. Many found the meetings pointless and too structured whereas they appreciated having a designated peer contact in the school. | Social
Improve engagement on course |
Community-building ✓ |
| NUBS   | ‘Do it properly or don’t do it at all.’ Running for the third year. Commendations from Management and Accounting Internal Subject Reviews. Good feedback from mentees. Scheme co-ordinator can see improvement in confidence of mentors and friendships on course as well as improved community feeling and the mentees’ English speaking skills each week. | Improve retention and progression rates
Improve academic skills ✓
Improve student experience for new international UG business students ✓
Unique selling point to... |
Have a good cycle of mentees becoming mentors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Scheme’s goals (✓ = delivery of goal based on anecdotal evidence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| HassPhD  | Mentors had a lack of time to dedicate to the scheme due to doctoral and familial commitments and the mentors suffered a lack of mentoring and facilitation skills. However students found the scheme useful for;  
  - Sharing problems they felt they could not share with their supervisor  
  - Creating a peer support group or a ‘family’  
  - Seeing different points of view and getting diverse advice  
  - Learning about UK learning processes  
  - Speaking freely and getting honest answers from peers | Integration ✓  
  Social ✓  
  Improve completion rates ✓ |

This table shows that getting feedback from mentees is a fundamental aspect of evaluating the success of a scheme as it highlights whether the goals of the scheme have been met, how the scheme has affected mentees and how to improve the scheme for the following year.

**Those with better evidence**

Two schemes have comprehensive evaluative evidence of their schemes from mentors, mentees and the staff. Interestingly, these could also be considered to be among the most successful schemes in the university as they not only respond to feedback in order to improve the schemes, they can also clearly see whether the scheme is delivering the goals they set out to achieve through its conception.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scheme</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>Scheme’s goals (✓ = delivery of goal based on anecdotal evidence)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Psychology | Based on an online questionnaire asking students to evaluate the mentor scheme in 2009/10:  
  - 76% said the scheme had helped them make the transition from school to university  
  - 87% said the scheme had helped them to get to know other people on the course  
  - 64% said the scheme had helped them to develop their academic skills  
  - The average rating for mentor experience was 4.8 out of 5 with many commenting that they | Transition ✓  
  Improve academic skills ✓  
  Social ✓ |
appreciated the opportunity to develop communication and team-leading skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CH</th>
<th>Based on survey of Stage One students 2009/10:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 65% said they had contacted their mentor for advice at least once during the year</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 46% said the scheme made them feel more part of the degree and the university</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• 34% said their mentor helped them with settling-in issues</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 20% had attended the Wednesday Workshops to enhance academic skills</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 71% said they had made friends on the course</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Based on survey of Stage One students 2010/11:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 80% said they contacted their mentor at least once and found their advice useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 75% said their mentor was most useful for advice on academic issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 59% said the scheme made them feel part of the degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 34% had attended the Wednesday Workshops and found them useful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 47% said they made friends directly through the mentor scheme (81% making friend on the course)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Over twice as many mentor applicants as spaces
Plus considerable beneficial outcomes for mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transition ✓</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community-building ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social ✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improve academic skills ✓ (for some)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The point that schemes deliver a more diverse array of benefits and delivered them to a deeper and wider extent being delivered proves that evaluation is a key element to the success of schemes as the scheme can be re-designed or altered to maximise benefits to students.

**Contextual considerations**
Context is an important factor in the design and success of schemes. Factors such as the size of cohort, prior experience (where demography will have some impact of mentees, structure and type of course and the mentors’ and mentees’ stage in higher education require to be addressed.

Not all Stage One students in smaller single honours courses with high contact hours may benefit as much from a formal allocation of a buddy or mentor as they are in classes together every day and will use each other as informal ‘buddies’ whereas at the other extreme, students on joint or combined honours courses particularly (and those in lesser contact hours regimes even more so) may need more assistance in making friends or finding their feet in two or three schools/subjects as they are not surrounded by the same peer group and staff

22
every day. It also helps students to identify with their subjects and to feel part of that subject’s community which is a key element for engagement in higher education.

Larger cohorts which are often split into separate classes or which do not follow a course of compulsory modules will find it more difficult to identify with their degree, integrate and socialise with other students and feel individually supported. This is also the case with postgraduate students as their work is very solitary. The HASS international PhD mutual support groups worked well because it was a way to socialise, support each other and feel part of a community rather than a solitary student in new cultural setting. Music, Geography, Psychology and BMS work well because it breaks down a large cohort into smaller groups which are better for facilitating relationships and studying together.

Nonetheless mentor schemes in single honours subjects and smaller cohorts are still useful to improve academic skills, fast-track social relationships and create a strong community within the school.

The action learning sets that the HASS PhD student group provide a different model in situations where they is not a bank of ‘experienced’ students to draw on. The point that postgraduate (taught) degrees argues for a more mutual peer to peer rather than mentoring approach.

International students benefit immensely from stability, companionship, a guide in a foreign country and help with academic skills in a foreign university therefore a mentor scheme is an ideal method to improve retention, academic ability and community on courses for international students. ICCHS and NUBS match UK students with international students but INTO and HASS PhD have both UK and international student mentors mentoring international mentees. A UK guide for an international student could be more beneficial as they not only know the country and university culture better, it is also a good opportunity for foreign students to practice their English. Many foreign students did not appreciate the point of the mentor schemes (especially in INTO) which may be due to cultural reasons and the lack of such schemes in universities in their home countries. It is important to impress upon students the benefits of the scheme at the beginning to maximise engagement. Having said all that, it is important to be inclusive and no mentee should perceive themselves as a ‘problem; requiring ‘remedial’ action. That point argues for mentors for all rather than just a few students in a cohort or opt in/opt out schemes.

The Medicine, Architecture, Dental and Law schemes are all student-run and are part of the embedded culture of these vocational subjects. They have little formal structure or organisation and act mainly as social aids and alternative contacts for academic issues. Success is dependent on the individual mentors and mentees and for some it creates a course-long contact and friend but for others they never meet their ‘parent’ or mentor throughout their whole degree. The schemes tend to be a cultural and traditional part of these courses and benefit from the community within these schools, the longer length of courses, the vocational nature of the course and the length the scheme has been running for. There is a very good cycle of mentees becoming mentors and in some cases whole ‘families’ develop with
‘parents’, ‘grandparents’, ‘aunties’ and ‘uncles’, which can help students identify with their degree and foster social relationships from an early stage in their degree. These schemes are also beneficial as they split a very large cohort into smaller, more accessible groups which makes it easier for students to integrate, socialise and engage. The downside is that it is the luck of the draw about whether the new student engages with a good mentor and many students miss out.

**An assessment of success**

There are three schemes which could be considered as ‘successful’ according to the following criteria;

1. Meets objectives
2. High participation rate
3. Scheme continuity

The schemes in NUBS, CH and Psychology meet the majority of their goals each year, there is a high attendance at group meetings, at lectures (Psychology), at workshops and in evaluation surveys and each scheme has run for more than two years therefore they meet all of the success criteria. There is a good cycle of mentees becoming mentors on these schemes which highlights the fact that students feel it is beneficial to have a mentor and to be a mentor.

Many of the other schemes meet some aspects of the criteria however they lack important elements. For example, it could be concluded that the schemes in MD, LI, LES, AFRD, ICCHS, Geography, BS, Music, Architecture and Hass PhD have scheme continuity and meet the majority of their objectives however there is little evidence of participation rates and the lack of evidence from mentees and mentors makes the rate of success uncertain.

Some schemes base their success on the fact that there are always students applying to be mentors each year however this only meets one aspect of the success criteria. To illustrate that point, the reason given after the first year of the CH scheme by some mentor applicants for becoming mentors was so they could offer better support than they had received! To demonstrate this issue had been rectified, the following year they all said they wanted to ‘give something back in exchange for the excellent support they had gained’.

**Unexpected positive outcomes**

There have been some unexpected positive outcomes from peer mentoring at Newcastle University (although not unanticipated in the mentoring literature);

- **Role models**
  A slightly unforeseen but particularly valuable benefit that emerged in CH was the emergence of how mentors became role models to other students – demonstrating commitment, professionalism and other graduate qualities – as well as being perceived by all students on the course as ‘good students.’ This is particularly
important in the setting of the transition of first year student in ‘learning how to be a university student’ within the context of Newcastle.

- **Feedback**
  The mentor schemes have become an effective method of communication between staff and students, increasing the amount of positive and negative feedback reaching staff, as mentees talk to their mentors and mentors can (confidentially) pass on comments and issues about a range of topics from personal tutoring, a specific module or the overall student experience on a course. This indicates that mentoring can not only benefit students on an individual basis, it can also lead to positive changes to the degree course for the whole cohort. Mentoring has also been an unprecedented method of hearing good feedback too which is always interesting, and motivating, for staff to hear. This only emerges in schemes which have strong communication and evaluation mechanisms.

**Other features of good practice**

**Mentor leaders/student interns/senior mentors**
Geography, Combined Honours and NUBS are in the process of implementing a new tier to their mentor schemes. Combined Honours will have two Mentor Leaders (who have previously been mentors) who will help to co-ordinate and support the mentors, Geography plan to have two student paid interns who will have other responsibilities as well as helping to co-ordinate the scheme and NUBS has initiated an unofficial post of ‘Senior Mentor’ as students who are mentors for a second year act as guides for first-time mentors.

**Extending the mentor scheme beyond first year**
Stage 2 students in CH have indicated that they would like continued peer support at this stage as they still undergoing academic transitions and would benefit from peer advice. Therefore a system of peer advisors drawn from final year is being introduced in 1011/12 to coordinate advice and mutual support for stage 2 (with drop in sessions and study buddy arrangements together with e-advising)

**Virtual mentoring scheme**
Online mentoring is particularly useful for courses which are only one year long as there are no experienced students around to mentor new students. Students studying for an MA in Urban Design in the Architecture school have created a virtual mentoring system for incoming students ([http://nclurbdesign.org/](http://nclurbdesign.org/)). They share information on the course structure, MAUD ‘survival tips’, upcoming architecture events, places to visit whilst studying in Newcastle and individual’s experiences on the programme.

**Handbooks**
Stage two Architecture students made a self-help handbook for Stage one students last year with information about the school and facilities but also included advice about social and personal aspects of being an Architecture student.
Conclusions and recommendations

The key features that enable success

Taking the evidence from the schemes at Newcastle, in conjunction with the wider literature, highlights the most important features and considerations that enable peer mentoring to deliver its full potential:

- A champion – although student enthusiasts can initiate or reinvigorate schemes a longer term investment is required. Students do tend to graduate and leave! Thus a local member of staff who is enthusiastic and willing really helps, and they need to have access to the resources to deliver.

- Staff support (ongoing) – this links to the previous point but also includes staff inputs into management, maintenance and evaluation. A degree of continuity is important – it does not have to be the same people all the time but they need to pass on their expertise before they move on.

- Inclusivity – comprehensive coverage rather than just targeting a particular group of students avoids patronising or stigmatising participants. Similarly allowing mentors to self-select in applying rather than ‘handpicking’ creates a culture conducive of success and where mentors feel empowered, thus take responsibility.

- The mentor building a solid and trust relationship with mentees right from beginning – and then being in a position to maintain that for the duration of the process.

- Recruitment, selection, training and ongoing support – this needs to be taken seriously with a degree of formality and equality of opportunity. This shows the scheme is serious and has staff support. Mentors are taking on a major responsibility and will be in a position to affect the student experience – they need to be the right people to do the role, be adequately prepared for it and then supported in doing it. Therefore training needs to be sufficient – at least a full day in length – to cover all the necessary issues and development, and should really continue for the whole role duration.

- Recognition and rewards – competent and successful mentors are not attracted or retained in the role by financial reward. Arguably that might attract the wrong applicants because mentors do need intrinsic motivation to excel. An employment contract may appear to offer ‘accountability’ but this diminishes the whole peer ethos underpinning such schemes. That is not to say there are not alternatives ways to rewarding and recognising their contribution. And there are situations when a student is taking on a rather more substantial role such as mentor leader where the investment of time required argues for at least some form of honorarium to compensate (particularly if they do this in lieu of a part-time job) although this should be minor rather than primary incentive.

- Attaching to the curriculum – there is much value in the mentors being able to gain academic credit for the role – and this creates the sort of formal and strong infrastructure around the role that ensures its success. Similarly for PAL schemes, the mentees being mentored via a module also enables greater authenticity and direct benefit for all parties.
• Evaluation and feedback – this is essential to develop and embed the schemes and creates continuous improvement and a sense of joint ownership. It is difficult, if not impossible, to assess the effectiveness of schemes which are set up by staff and then left to run all year without maintenance or evaluation or those which are wholly student-led as there is no evidence that the schemes are worth the time, money or staff and student commitment. The four that have been formally evaluated since their inception are among the most successful schemes due to the fact that they have listened to student feedback and revised the schemes to improve operation and outcomes for the following year. Therefore evaluating each scheme is considered essential to its success and longevity. Evaluation can be as simple as creating a questionnaire and sending it by email for mentees and mentors to fill out at the end of each academic year, inviting all the mentors to a forum to gather oral feedback or asking mentees and mentors to fill in a feedback form after every meeting or formal session. The feedback can then be collated and analysed in order to assess the scheme’s success and to improve it for the following year.

Many of the current schemes at Newcastle lack some, or as much as nearly all, of these features. In some cases this means they are not delivering the full potential of mentoring and/or not reaching more than a fraction of the students, who should be benefiting - as participants and mentors. Although the ‘organic’ schemes – which seem to tick-over on a very informal and ‘low cost’ basis appear quite well embedded their coverage is patchy and only enhances social dimensions. While such issues are important, this neglects opportunities to achieve good outcomes such as enhanced academic skills, intellectual development and professional formation – the notion of good students who feel part of an educational community.

Some of these features appear to be expensive in terms of investment. However these can be mitigated considerably. Nearly every Newcastle scheme seems to have been started from scratch, usually without any reference to good practice from elsewhere, and operate entirely independent without any sharing of such burdens as training or even paperwork for selection. They also, by and large, underplay the key role the much greater roles that students can undertake in a supportive infrastructure (with the exception of CH, NUBS and Geography). The exemplar of such an approach is Manchester, where the structure is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coordinator in central unit (staff member)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate intern in each faculty (paid post)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff coordinator for each scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentors (second year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students (first year)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus continuity is provided. Experienced students and graduate interns take on many of the coordination roles and run training and recruitment and selection supported by an expert staff member from the centre. However there is a local element and voice from both students and staff in the unit where the scheme operates.

There are a number of areas where time commitment and costs could be reduced across all schemes if there was a central support system at Newcastle University. For example, generic training and a generic mentor handbook designed, implemented and maintained by a central support within the university would ensure mentor quality across the university and would also save schools the time and effort of creating, costing and monitoring the training and ongoing help each year. There could also be an effective method of recruitment from a central source however many programmes may wish to have some input to appoint their own mentors, and so they should – and there may be contexts in which certain selection criteria are more important.

**Recommendations**

In order to address the imperative for 2013 to provide all stage 1 students on undergraduate programmes at Newcastle with a mentor we propose a basic model in which the objectives for mentoring are to:

1. Facilitate transition and social integration into the programme school and university
2. Provide an extended induction
3. Provide peer pastoral support with referral to DPD and personal tutors

We propose that it should be an option to add the element of academic development to the mentor role and that may range from enhancing particular academic skills to full peer assisted learning (with the latter likely to firmly embedded in the formal curriculum).

Postgraduate schemes are likely to focus on integration and mutual support models.

Although we consider mentors interacting with a group of participants to provide additional benefits (such as social integration, peer to peer, in the group) we recognise that 1:1 buddying schemes may offer advantages in particular settings, such as certain postgraduate courses. We recommend group schemes in undergraduate settings – which of course does not rule out mentors having 1:1 meetings on occasion where appropriate.

We offer templates with non-negotiable elements for each of these three approaches

**Templates**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support for mentors</th>
<th>Main model</th>
<th>or</th>
<th>plus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transition/social assistance</td>
<td>Buddying (one-to-one support)</td>
<td>Academic development</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Staff support</strong></td>
<td>Access to member of staff whenever needed by email. Regular face-to-face meetings between mentors and scheme co-ordinator with clear agendas. Embedded in Induction Week e.g. mentors run some induction events.</td>
<td>ditto.</td>
<td>Ditto plus advice on debriefing on running all PAL sessions. Integrated into a Stage One compulsory module.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Incentives and reward</strong></td>
<td>Voluntary but with incentives such as subsidised mentor social events, a certificate of achievement, offer to write a reference and gain academic credit. We particularly recommend enabling mentors to undertake generic or school based modules designed for this purpose.</td>
<td>ditto</td>
<td>ditto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment and selection</strong></td>
<td>Clear job description and criteria for selection. Good equal opportunities practice. Application form and interview process.</td>
<td>ditto</td>
<td>ditto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training</strong></td>
<td>6 or more hours training. Content includes: boundaries, confidentiality, cultural awareness, the responsibilities of the mentors, legalities, child protection policies, how to behave as a mentor and how to keep themselves and mentees safe. Agreeing agendas for meetings, a Q&amp;A.</td>
<td>ditto</td>
<td>plus guidance to running facilitating learning sessions and specific advice on each session.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Guidance</strong></td>
<td>A mentor handbook or written guidelines.</td>
<td>ditto</td>
<td>ditto.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Evaluations</strong></td>
<td>Evaluation of mentors and mentees at end of academic year or midway through scheme with some continuous feedback and monitoring</td>
<td>ditto</td>
<td>ditto</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Operational guidelines (room for some local variation here without departing from the main parameters)**

**The mentor role**

- Allocated 5-8 mentees per mentor OR larger groups supervised by a pair of mentors (latter works well in a PAL setting)
- Introduction to students before induction week (through e-contact)
- Induction week event(s) involving ice-breakers and embedding relationships and mentor role
- Weekly mentor/mentee meetings during transition period (first 1-4 weeks) then fortnightly (or more) until end of semester one. Where desired, continuation of meetings into semester 2.
- Weekly or fortnightly meeting between mentors and scheme co-ordinator/mentor leaders which acts as a debriefing, a feedback session and maintenance of the scheme. It also reassures the mentors that they are valued and their roles are taken seriously by the university which will impact on how seriously they take the role themselves thus maximising the benefits for all parties.
- Where possible to do, mentors should have the opportunity to undertake the role for academic credit. This might be through the Career Development modules although though they are not a perfect vehicle for this (a better fit is the HSS2100/HSS3100 modules designed by Combined Honours which address the life cycle of the role and builds in alternative activities in semester 2). If there were a substantial number of mentors doing this there would be virtue in amalgamating provision across a school or between schools in faculties. This might mitigate considerably the burden on staff coordinators of mentor schemes.

**Agendas – for meetings run by mentors**
Having a clear agenda for meetings and the scheme as a whole, overwhelmingly improves mentor and participant engagement with the scheme, as proven by the high participation rates in NUBS, CH and Psychology and the feedback about the schemes in INTO and BMS where mentees found the group meetings pointless. Agendas give mentors a clear theme for the meeting so they can prepare adequately and they also acts as an incentive for mentees to attend as they are aware of why they are meeting and what they will get out of it.

There is virtue in encouraging mentors and participants to set the agendas for meetings. For example, in CH, the mentor groups decide themselves what the agenda for the next meeting will be so that it is tailored to each group’s needs. However it is also useful to create a possible menu to draw from. The point is the agenda should be topical and timely.

**Possible agenda topics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Library use</th>
<th>Other study skills</th>
<th>Things to do in Newcastle</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Choosing next year’s modules</td>
<td>Personal tutoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting</td>
<td>Planning and organising</td>
<td>The Careers Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settling-in/ coping with</td>
<td>Time management</td>
<td>Extra-curricular activities at University</td>
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<tr>
<td>homesickness/transition</td>
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<td>Use of Blackboard</td>
<td>House-hunting and letting agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Note-taking</td>
<td>Part-time work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Referencing skills</td>
<td>Transport in Newcastle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Writing skills</td>
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</table>

**Recruitment and selection**

**When:** Feb/March the year before (certainly before the Easter break)

**Who:** The Staff Coordinator needs to play some role but it also important that local students are involved too as selectors (either current mentors and/or SSC reps). Mentors should be more experienced than the students they will be mentoring e.g. Stage 2 or 3 students for Stage 1 mentees. Ideally they should be stage 2 enabling experienced mentors to become mentor leaders in stage 3.

**How:** Students fill in an application form and then staff/student reps/current mentors select applicants for interview. A short interview involving scenario questions tests the aptitude and experience of the applicant although CH found it useful too to create role simulation tasks in addition.

**Selection processes:** Mentors need to be empathetic, respectful, altruistic, communicative, approachable, responsible and trustworthy and have a positive attitude.
We note there is efficiency in centralising some aspects of this process i.e. designing an application form. This can be done in liaison with QUILT from good current examples.

**Training –**

6 hours minimum training split into separate sessions

Training should cover:

Basic principles of mentoring, confidentiality, expectations, other contacts and referring on, boundaries, team-building exercises, ice breaker activities, role play/scenarios, co-designing induction week and meetings (ownership), agenda ideas, mentor skills such as listening and other communication skills, leadership and facilitation (plus additional for supporting learning or developing others’ academic skills)

Training should be held before the summer exam period so that mentors are ready for Induction Week the following September.

Training resources should include a mentor handbook which contains information such as a summary of the mentor role and its boundaries, relevant policies, guidance on meeting agendas, information and sources for academic and pastoral support and useful websites and contacts as well more local, contextual information.

We propose that much of this can be designed centrally and even provided in part by a central resource. However there should some local element here - to involve and give ownership to local staff and students and to flavour the scheme within its degree locale (and this would apply to handbooks too).

**Evaluations –**

Evaluations can be as simple or as extensive as the scheme co-ordinator chooses however an evaluation of some kind is advisable.

Examples of effective evaluation:

- Mentor evaluation form (late November/early December after transition) sent by email
- First year survey after transition – CH have had great success with on-line cohort surveys
- Methods of encouraging and recording the process of self-reflection
- Regular meeting with scheme co-ordinator as a form of oral evaluation (and notes should be taken)
- Mentor forum either mid-scheme or at the end of the scheme
- Course forum with theme as ‘Mentoring’ which all mentors and mentees are invited to attend
• If attached to a module, could be incorporated into the module evaluation form (for participants)
• If the mentors are undertaking a module, the formative and summative assessments tend to provide excellent evaluation

Central support
We have alluded earlier to the effectiveness of central provision of resources to support peer mentoring. The operational guidelines refer frequently to opportunities for such provision. If the 2013 goal is to be realised there are likely to be in the order of at least 400-500 mentors being recruited and supported within each scheme across a large number of programmes. We would conservatively estimate the workload of running separate/independent schemes at 15-20 FTEs which has a massive cost.

Although in time the mentors themselves can play a larger role in running the schemes (see the earlier example of the Manchester model), there will be a considerable need for staff resource too which far exceed current capacity. Academic and administrative staff coordinators have a key role to play but creating dedicated positions will make the coordinator role work rather better and be manageable within a wider role. There are various possible models.

A single staff member working from QUILT dedicated to promoting and supporting peer mentoring (model operated by Bournemouth and Northumbria but their peer mentoring model is not nearly as extensive as envisaged here). This person could support recruitment and selection and training, give some support to staff coordinators, prepare and keep shared materials up to date and offer advice for good practice but given the demands of time because all the activity would come in peaks (e.g. recruitment, training, induction week) most of the operational work would still fall on staff coordinators for each scheme. A variant of this scheme is to appoint a staff member for each faculty to support peer mentoring in the programmes across the faculty. This offers more resource and time to support the staff coordinators and assuming these individuals worked as a team would enable them to take on more of the staff coordinator’s operational roles and deliver all the training.

At the other extreme is for each school to appoint a peer mentoring coordinator who could work full time on supporting all schemes within that school without the need for a staff coordinator on each. This staff member would liaise with relevant DPDs. Although this offers considerable local focus, schools are of rather different size making this role somewhat variable in cope and demand. This does not appear to offer much efficiency gain as we would need at least 12 appointments here

We propose a model which offers a mix of these elements and is based on the Manchester model which now operates very successfully there (Ody and Carey, 2009).

1. An appointment is made in QUILT to support peer mentoring across the university. This individual develops considerable expertise on mentoring and takes responsibility for ensuring good practice is maintained and promoted. Summaries of evaluation
evidence are collated by them. They lead on designing and updating central resources. They might also coordinate any generic mentoring module(s). They appoint and train:

2. Graduate internships who have been mentors are appointed in each faculty – at least two per faculty. These are new or recent graduates who undertake this role for a period of two years (one year offers less value because almost as soon as they learned the role they would leave). They undertake recruitment, selection and training of the mentors but working with the staff coordinators. They could also take on supervisory role in mentoring modules. They support the mentor leaders – final year students who offer direct support to current mentors. These graduate interns could also undertake additional student engagement roles and assist in delivering the 2012 offer and TLSE strategy.

This approach would need a period of transition to fully optimise the model envisaged as it only becomes fully operational two years into the cycle with mentor leaders after the first year and graduate interns after the second year. However some of the existing schemes could provide appropriately qualified candidates to initiate this.

References
http://www.reap.ac.uk/reap/public/Papers/DN_The%20foundation%20for%20Graduate%20Attributes