

CETL Briefing Papers: Student Mentoring

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Aims of the Initiative

Student to student mentoring was introduced into the University of Wolverhampton in 2006 to aid the retention and progression of the student groups that are most at risk. These are international students, students with disability and mature students. It aims to provide a stand alone service that would also link to existing support systems within the institution.

Description of the Initiative

This initiative has implemented a number of small and wide scale pilots of peer mentoring programmes for student for students. These are:

- S2S mentor – this is an e-based pre arrival mentoring service which helps new students before they come into the university through an ‘Ask the Mentor’ internet forum.
- The Schools Mentoring Programme – This is a face to face and email based mentoring scheme for students when they arrive at the University. First and second year students are matched to first year students during the induction week. Matches are made between students of the same school who are studying similar course.
- The International Mentoring Programme – This provides mentors for to support for international students during induction and throughout their first year. Mentoring is provided by second and third year students from home and International student bodies.
- The Students with Disabilities Mentoring Programme – This provides mentors for students with disabilities during induction and their first year within the University. The student mentors are able bodied or students with disability from 2nd and 3rd year students bodies, who have undergone mentor training and disability awareness training. This also includes the Deaf Students Mentoring Programme, where deaf first year students are mentored by deaf second and third year students.
- Mature Student Mentoring Programme – This is implemented in LSSC. This provides mentoring for first year mature students by second and third year students, where possible these will be mature students.

Evaluation and impact of the Initiative

The impact and evaluation of this initiative is measured in two ways. Firstly, the impact is measured through the rollout and embedding of the mentoring programmes. Secondly, impact is measured through student evaluation of the scheme. These are outlined below.

Rollout:

2006-2007: Development and rollout of the International Students Mentoring Programme. This is an intermittent programme that was piloted in 2006. The scheme was disbanded in 2007, but restarted in 2009 to be continued through 2010.

This pilot delivered:

12 Trained Mentors
7 Mentor Matches
5 Active relationships

2007-2008: The School Specific Mentoring Programme was piloted. The pilot focused on schools with high attrition rates of attrition. The programme was rolled out into HLSS for first year students who studied Social Care and Social Policy. It was also rolled out into SAD, where the scheme was open to students from all years and all courses. SSPAL also adopted the scheme and piloted for first year students studying Sports Coaching degrees.

18 Trained Mentors
12 Mentor Matches
9 Active relationships

2007-2008: The School Specific Mentoring Programme was rolled out into the SoH. The programme supported 1st year nursing students who formed Cohort 2 (Students who start their degree in February). This generated:

15 Trained Mentors
9 Mentor Matches
9 Active relationships

The 'Ask a Mentor Forum' was set up. The Deaf Mentoring Programme was also piloted. This generated:

14 Trained Mentors
10 Mentor Matches
8 Active relationships

2008-2009: Influenced through information from xxxx (Matt to advise) the focus of mentoring provision focused on support for students at risk. These are International student, students with disabilities and mature students. This large scale pilot now operating and will continue through 2010. Mentees are recruited during induction week.

- International students receive information about the scheme in welcome pack. Mentoring meetings are incorporated in to Welcome Week activities and these include a 'meet a mentor event' which provides International Students with a guided tour of the City. Three hundred and twenty international students attended the event in Welcome Week for the 2009-10 academic year. This iteration of the scheme provided:

93 Trained Mentors (19 of which were continuing from previous years)
41 Mentor Matches
41 Active relationships

- Students with disabilities and deaf students were also recruited during induction programme talks during induction sessions mentors ran students workshop – QA sessions, tours and talks with mentors. This iteration of training provided:

22 Mentor Matches

- Mature student form LSSC were also recruited during induction programmes as above.

17 Mentor Matches

Embedding:

The mentoring programme has now been moved from the Institute for Learning Enhancement to the Dean of Students' Office. This is evidence of embedding and to enable further embedding of the mentoring programme.

Impact Measurement:

The impact of S2S mentoring upon the student is evaluated in a number of ways. The quality of mentoring is over seen through the completion of mentoring report sheets that are completed by each mentor at the end of each session. These cover topics of discussion, whether the session was productive, reflection on whether the mentee will meet the relationship aims and any further actions that might be required. Focus groups with mentors and mentees will also take place at the beginning of semester 2 which will consider the impact of mentoring on retention and progression of the students from the students' perspective.

Policy Implications

- Stakeholders – University first year students should have mentoring entitlements. Mentoring provides a service and support that is not provided elsewhere in the organisation and is important to the retention and progression of students. Mentoring is a selling point for visitors to the university. It demonstrates that the university is a supportive environment. The provision of a comprehensive mentoring provision with in the university is a unique selling point and could aid recruitment.
- HE Sector – It is important to ensure that there is a good model for mentoring, which is up-scalable from pilot to role out.
- International Market –. There is a need to develop collaborative relationship to enhance the transferability of mentoring across cultures.

Business Case

- Opportunity – Mentoring needs to be centralised to ensure access for all. A shop front would be useful to encourage drop-ins. E-mentoring for pre-arrival and inter campus mentoring is essential.
- Resource Issues – Resources are crucial. Specifically the funding of a co-ordination role is essential for successful upscale and role out of the mentoring programme.
- Risk Analysis – To not continue mentoring provision would negatively on student employability. Incoming first year students will not have formalised peer support and could leave the University through lack of support. Mentoring is a UW's unique selling point; therefore loss of the scheme may lead to a loss of students at recruitment.

Expert Contacts and Links

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