



Learning Development Service

Peer Mentoring: Students Supporting Students

Information and guidance for Schools intending
to implement Peer Mentoring

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The Peer Mentoring Context

'A mentor is a more experienced person who forms a relationship with a less experienced person in order to provide that person with advice, support and encouragement.'

Meggison and Clutterbuck, 1995.

Students often advise and guide each other based on their shared experiences of settling into university and encounters with new learning and teaching methods. However, not all incoming students are fortunate enough to have this kind of informal, supportive friendship and those who do not can find themselves bewildered as they try to deal with a new and confusing environment. Formal mentoring schemes allow us to harness students' willingness to support their peers, and allow all new students access to the support of more experienced students. Peer Mentoring is not intended to replace the role of academic staff or support services, rather it aims to make the transition to university smoother and less daunting.

The Learning Development Service (LDS) has been involved in establishing Peer Mentoring in Queen's University Belfast for 3 years. Two LDS staff members, Angela McQuade and Saoirse McGrath, have explored mentoring schemes in other UK universities and have attended various peer mentoring conferences in the UK and Ireland. Angela McQuade has completed a QUB Certificate in Coaching and Mentoring in the School of Education and now contributes to teaching on the course. Saoirse, who was one of the first peer mentors in the School of English, is currently studying for the Certificate.

For Schools interested in Peer Mentoring, we suggest a basic model which has emerged from our own experience. We strongly encourage Schools to identify an academic co-ordinator for Peer Mentoring, spend a year developing the scheme before implementation, consult with students throughout the development process, and to provide ongoing support for mentors.

We are eager to hear from staff about how you see Peer Mentoring in Queen's develop. We are also open to suggestions as to how you would like us to support you in the development of Peer Mentoring in your School.

Please contact us if you have any queries:

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Timeline

LDS recommends that Schools intending to establish Peer Mentoring spend one academic year preparing for its implementation. In the table below, the relevant participants in each planning stage are indicated in brackets.

November - December	Gauge level of interest from staff and Level 1 and Level 2 students (Academic staff and interested students)
February	Information session for potential mentors (Academic staff and LDS)
March	Recruit mentors (School)
June	'Meet the Mentors' event for all new QUB mentors (LDS) Training I (LDS)
August	Include information on the Mentoring scheme in the Welcome Pack (School) Training II (LDS)
September (before Welcome Week)	Training III (LDS)
September – Welcome Week	Mentors involved in Induction and Welcome Week events (School)
Week 1	Mentors continue to promote the scheme. Mentoring begins (School)

Recruitment

All mentors must be in good academic standing. Mentors, however, do not have to be the most academically successful students and they need not have experience in mentoring roles.

The most important attribute of a mentor is attitude. They should be:

- Enthusiastic
- Committed
- Reliable
- Motivated
- Compassionate
- Friendly and approachable

As it is important that students understand the role of mentoring, an information event should be held for those who are interested in applying. The event should be widely publicised to Level 1 and Level 2 students, and is an opportunity for staff and potential mentors to share ideas. It is advisable to have mentors who are from both Level 2 and Level 3 (or Level 4 and 5 in longer undergraduate courses) so as to ensure continuity in the second year of the scheme. It is also advisable to identify one or two mentors who will take particular responsibility for overseeing the running of the scheme.

Some Schools choose to interview potential mentors, and others take all those who volunteer. Where students are interviewed but are unsuccessful, it is sometimes possible for them to participate in alternative volunteering schemes in QUB.

The number of mentors needed will depend on the number of Level 1 students in the School and on the particular format of the scheme. It is important to bear in mind, though, that not all students will want, or need, a mentor.

All peer mentoring schemes in Queen's are run on a voluntary basis with mentors working 4-6 hours per week. Mentors can gain appropriate and valuable recognition for their work through Degree Plus. For more information on Degree Plus, contact Deirdre Deery: d.deery@qub.ac.uk

Planning and Format of the Peer Mentoring Scheme

The aims of the scheme will be driven by the needs of the School and the Level 1 students. Academic co-ordinators and mentors must agree clear aims from the outset. Academic co-ordinators will have goals based on the School and University themes, such as engagement and retention.

The academic co-ordinator works with the mentors to decide on the format and delivery of the scheme. It is important that mentors are fully consulted and play a leading role in this as they are closest to the Level 1 experience. LDS can advise based on the schemes already in place in other Schools and on what we have learned about mentoring in other universities.

Questions for mentors and staff to consider:

- Is the scheme designed to provide transitional or academic support, or a combination?
- How will the scheme cater for the diversity of students within the School?
- For how long will the scheme run? One semester or two?
- How many hours per week will the mentors commit to the scheme?
- Will new students be expected to opt in to the scheme or will they be assigned a mentor from the outset and have the option of opting out?
- How often will Mentors meet with their mentees? Where will they meet?
- How many mentees per group?
- How will mentees contact their mentors?
- How often will the mentors meet as a team?
- How often will the academic co-ordinator meet with the mentors?
- How will the academic co-ordinator be contacted should the mentors have questions or need support?

Roles and Responsibilities

Lead Mentor

- Maintain contact with the mentors.
- Write meeting agendas for weekly mentor meetings.
- Chair weekly team meetings.
- Encourage mentors to engage creatively in the scheme.
- Ensure tasks and organisational duties agreed upon in meetings are completed by team members.
- Update the academic co-ordinator and LDS on the progress of the scheme.

Mentors

Mentors usually devote 4-6 hours weekly to mentoring.

- Attend training (see section on training).
- Inform students about the scheme (see section on promotion).
- Attend regular team meetings to review and plan.
- Communicate with academic staff about events and ask staff if there is anything they should promote or cover in their sessions.
- Keep a record of how many students are participating in the scheme.
- Organise and promote events and workshops if required.
- Be a friendly and welcoming face for new students.
- Attend meetings with groups of mentees and/or individual mentees.
- Encourage and motivate.
- Listen to the concerns that new students might have.
- Direct mentees to appropriate sources of support, including personal tutors, when necessary.
- Organise and attend workshops and events.
- Be a good role model.

Mentors are **not** expected to

- Teach
- Give health or financial advice
- Counsel
- Be on call at all times.

Academic co-ordinator

- Gauge the level of interest in the School
- Organise an information event for potential mentors.
- Recruit mentors.
- Help mentors establish a format for the scheme.
- Inform School staff about the scheme.
- Encourage Level 1 teaching staff to promote the scheme to new students.
- Keep in regular contact with mentors and attend some of the mentor team meetings.
- Offer advice and support as necessary to the team and to individual mentors.
- Maintain a balance between overseeing the scheme and allowing mentors to develop the scheme as they think appropriate.

Learning Development Service

- Provide the School with general advice and guidance when developing the scheme and during its implementation.
- Attend School information events for potential mentors.
- Provide opportunities for mentors from all Schools to meet and share ideas.
- Deliver training.
- Provide information sessions or further training workshops for the mentors if requested.
- Be on hand to offer guidance to the mentors as requested.
- Attend some of the mentor team meetings or arrange to meet with the mentors during the semester.
- Provide individual support to mentors, particularly lead mentors, if necessary.
- Arrange a social event for mentors at the end of each semester as a thank-you and as an opportunity for mentors from various Schools to share experiences and ideas.
- Support the School in the evaluation process.

Training

Training is delivered in the Student Guidance Centre by the Learning Development Service and runs on three consecutive days. **It is essential that mentors attend all three days.** Depending on the number of mentors, it is envisaged that in 2011 sessions will be held in June, late August and early September.

Day 1

- What is a mentor?
- Characteristics of a good mentor.
- Mentoring techniques 1-1.
- Communication skills and building rapport.
- GROW model.

Day 2

- Group mentoring.
- Group dynamics.
- Group work techniques.
- Generic study skills.

Day 3

- Fact finding and signposting.
- Meetings.
- Speakers from other services.

Promotion

It is important that the mentoring scheme is promoted to both School staff and new students. Mentors need to be aware that they are responsible for promoting the scheme, but will need support in doing so from academic and administration staff. The following are suggestions for promotion.

Before Semester 1

- Information in the Welcome Pack that is sent out before the semester starts.
- Include a Mentoring page on the School website. The page should include precise information on how a student can contact a Mentor and some information on each of the Mentors.
- Include information the School Handbook.
- Information on School notice boards. Include photographs of mentors and information on how they can be contacted.
- Posters around the School and around campus.
- Inform Queen's Elms staff.
- Where funds allow, buy promotional materials such as pens and notebooks (contact School of English mentors to see samples).

Welcome Week and Semester 1

- Mentors should introduce themselves at Welcome Week induction sessions.
- Speak briefly at lectures in week 1.
- SSCC Reps should know who the mentors are and how they can be contacted.
- Emails to all level 1 students reminding them about the scheme and telling them how to take part.
- Emails informing students about events and/or workshops.

Current Schemes 2009/2010

Maths Mentors

Aims

Transitional and academic support.

Format

- Mentors introduce themselves in all Induction lectures and attend Welcome Week Question and Answer sessions. Many Level 1 students request a mentor at this stage.
- Twelve mentors work in pairs, one male and one female, to mentor groups of 6 -12 mentees. Mentors meet with their groups twice a week. One session is a 'homework' session and the other is social.
- Mentors keep a note of common academic problems that arise in homework sessions and pass these on to staff.
- Mentors arrange social activities, such as DVD nights, throughout the year.
- The mentors meet weekly as a team.

English Mentors

Aims

Transitional support.

Format

- Mentors attend Induction lectures and Welcome Week events.
- The School Handbook and the School website outline information about mentoring
- Mentors contact all Level 1 students via email and invite them to request a mentor.
- Seven mentors hold 4 mentoring sessions weekly. There are normally 5-12 mentees per group.
- Mentors organise academic skills workshops delivered by the Learning Development Service.
- Mentors organise information sessions with, for example, staff from the Erasmus Programme and from the Students' Union Advice Centre.
- Mentors organise social events such as DVD nights and Bookfinders evenings

Learning Development Service

- Mentors meet weekly as a team.

Archaeology Mentors

Aims

Transitional and academic support

Format

- Mentoring promoted during Open Days in May.
- All Level one Single Honours Archaeology students are assigned a mentor.
- Mentors introduce themselves at the Induction lecture.
- Both the School Handbook and the School website outline information about mentoring.
- Four Mentors hold weekly sessions covering topics such as essay writing and exam tips. Mentors also organise social events.
- Mentors feed back mentees' academic concerns to staff.
- Mentors arrange for guest speakers (such as professional archaeologists) to meet with mentees. Mentors also organise the delivery of academic skills workshops by the Learning Development Service