Learning Development Service
Queen's University, Belfast

Queen's University
Belfast

Undergraduate Peer
Mentoring
Handbook for Schools

Contents

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.'

Megginson 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.

Peer mentoring was established in Queen's University in 2008/09 when the Learning Development Service supported the establishment of a pilot scheme in the School of English. The mentoring scheme in English was co-ordinated by Dr Joan Rahilly and started with just four mentors. In 2013/14 there will be mentoring schemes in 12 Schools and 20 subject areas, with approximately 225 mentors in place.

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, and spend a year developing the scheme before implementation. All LDS supported mentoring schemes are developed in close consultation with students and are tailored to suit individual schools. While there is no 'one size fits' all mentoring scheme, we believe that there are fundamental elements that must be in place if a mentoring scheme is to be a success: consultation with students; careful selection of mentors; training for mentors; student-led schemes; ongoing central and school-based support for mentors; reward for mentors.

While this handbook is intended as a guide for Schools developing peer mentoring for the first time, it also serves as a guide for current Schools to help with planning and review.

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: ldspeermentors@qub.ac.uk

Angela McQuade	Saoirse McGrath
Learning Development Tutor	Peer Mentoring Advisor
a.mcquade@qub.ac.uk	Saoirse.mcgrath@qub.ac.uk
Extension: 1440	Extension: 5253

Timeline of Tasks

LDS recommends that Schools intending to establish Peer Mentoring spend one academic year preparing for its implementation. Schools with already established schemes should begin preparing for the upcoming academic year in semester 2. In the table below, the relevant participants in each planning stage are indicated in brackets.

November – December (<u>new schemes</u>)	**Gauge level of interest from staff and Level 1 and Level 2 students. Decide which member of academic staff will be the mentoring academic co-ordinator *(Academic staff and interested students).***
February	**Information session for potential mentors *(Academic co-ordinator and LDS).***
March	**Recruit mentors - personal statements and informal interviews. *(School with help from LDS, if required).***
April/May	**School to pass names and contact details of new mentors to LDS. (Online booking system for training in development. Academic co-ordinators will be informed when it is live.)**
March – June	**New mentors to establish the structure of their scheme and plan Welcome Week events *(mentors, academic co-ordinator, LDS if required).***
June (<u>mentors who are continuing in their role for a second year do not need to attend training</u>)	**Training 1 (LDS) Training 2 (LDS)** **(Mentors must attend one training course, either in June or September)**
August (<u>new schemes</u>)	**Include information on the mentoring scheme in the Welcome Pack. Create a central email account for mentors. Add mentoring information to School website Academic co-ordinator to ensure that all staff who have contact with L1 students are aware of the mentoring scheme *(School).***
September (before Welcome Week)	**Training 3 *(LDS)* Training 4 *(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. Mentors should be:

- Enthusiastic
- Committed
- Reliable
- Motivated
- Compassionate
- Friendly
- 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 Level 3 and 4 students, where appropriate), 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 two students who are prepared to act as Lead Mentors, taking particular responsibility for overseeing the running of the scheme.

A selection process will ensure the recruitment of suitable students (shortlisting via personal statements followed by informal interviews – see appendices). Where students are interviewed but are unsuccessful, it is sometimes possible for them to participate in alternative volunteering schemes in the University.

The number of mentors required will depend on the number of Level 1 students in the School and on the particular format of the scheme

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? This is of particular importance: opt-in schemes will attract students who are keen to be mentored; however, those who are not confident about seeking help may be hard to reach. An opt-in scheme allows all students the opportunity of having a mentor, with those who feel they do not need a mentor being free to opt-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?
- How will the scheme be funded and how will funds be managed? (All mentors work voluntarily, however, money will be required for events).

Roles and Responsibilities

Mentors

Mentors usually devote 4-6 hours weekly to mentoring.

- 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 mentors should promote or cover in their sessions.
- Keep a record of how many students are participating in the scheme.
- 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.
- Remain up-to-date with sources of support and events that are being held.
- Direct mentees to appropriate sources of support including, and in particular, personal tutors.
- Organise, promote and attend workshops and events.
- Be a good role model.

Lead Mentor

All of the duties of a mentor, plus the following:

- 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.
- Attend Lead Mentor meetings with LDS.

Mentors are **not** expected to

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

Roles and Responsibilities (cont.)

Academic co-ordinator

- Gauge the level of interest in the School (when preparing to implement a scheme. See appendix 1).
- Establish a source of funding for the scheme (all mentors work voluntarily, however, money will be needed to run events and create promotional materials. It is vital that mentors do not contribute financially to the scheme. Schools provide varying amounts of money).
- Organise an information event for potential mentors.
- Recruit mentors (see appendix 2 and 3).
- Help mentors establish a format for the scheme.
- Inform all 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 mentoring team and to individual mentors.
- Ensure that mentors are carrying out their role.
- Oversee the updating of the mentor's diaries (regular signing of diaries).
- Maintain a balance between overseeing the scheme and allowing mentors to develop the scheme as they think appropriate.
- Inform LDS staff of which mentors have met the requirements for Degree Plus (see section on Degree Plus)

Learning Development Service

- Provide the School with advice and guidance when developing the scheme and during its implementation.
- Attend School information events for potential mentors.
- Support the School with the recruitment process.
- Deliver training.
- Provide opportunities for mentors from all Schools to meet and share ideas.
- Provide information sessions or further training workshops for the mentors, if requested.
- Offer guidance and individual support to mentors as requested.
- Attend some of the mentor team meetings.
- Maintain ongoing contact with mentors via Facebook and Twitter
- Meet regularly with Lead Mentors as a group.
- Liaise with Careers, Employability and Skills to ensure that mentors who have met the appropriate requirements are awarded Degree Plus.
- Disseminate good practice.

Training

Training is delivered by the Learning Development Service and runs over two consecutive days (mentors need only attend **one** two-day course). **It is essential that mentors attend <u>both</u> training days. Please note: Only those who have been through a selection process are eligible for training.**

Outline

Day 1

- What is a mentor?
- Boundaries
- Mentoring techniques 1-1 and in groups
- Group dynamics
- Communication skills and building rapport
- GROW model

Day 2

- Role play using GROW model
- Generic study skills
- Team meetings
- Fact finding and signposting
- Group presentations
- Evaluation

Training dates for 21013/14

6th and 7th June   **10am - 4.30pm**

11th and 12th June   **10am - 4.30pm**

5th and 6th September   **10am - 4.30pm**

12th and 13th September   **10am - 4.30pm**

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

- Include information in the Welcome Pack that is sent out before the semester starts.
- Include mentoring information 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 or School of Maths 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.

Sample schemes

There are currently 16 QUB undergraduate mentoring schemes throughout the following schools: Biological Sciences, English, Computer Science, GAP, History, Management, Mathematics and Physics, and Sociology.

The longest running schemes are in English, Archaeology and Maths

English Mentors, scheme established in 2008/2009

Aims

Transitional and academic support.

Format

- Mentors attend Induction lectures and Welcome Week events organised by the School and the mentors.

- The School Handbook and the School website outline information about mentoring

- Mentoring sessions are timetabled and students attend with those who are in their tutorial groups.

- Mentors work in pairs and meet with their groups weekly. There are 14 mentors.

- 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, bowling, quizzes, mature students' event, welcome event for GB/EU students.

- Mentors meet fortnightly as a team.

Academic co-ordinator: Dr Joan Rahilly

Archaeology Mentors, scheme established 2009/2010

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.

- The School Handbook and the School website outline information about mentoring.

- Mentors hold weekly sessions covering topics such as essay writing and exam tips. Mentors also organise social events.

- Mentors feedback 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

Academic Co-ordinator: Dr Eileen Murphy

Maths Mentors, scheme established 2010/11

Aims

Transitional and academic support.

Format

- A day in Welcome Week is devoted to mentoring activities and some mentors attend all Welcome week events.

- Mentors organise cinema and bowling nights during Welcome Week.

- Level 1 students are given a maths mentor goodie bag

- Mentors wear specially designed hoodies, emblazoned with their logo.

- Lead Mentors attend all induction events.

- 16 mentors work in pairs 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.

Academic co-ordinator: Dr Ariel Blanco

Appendix 1

Peer Mentoring in the School of _____

Peer mentoring schemes aim to help new students settle in to university. Mentoring provides a great opportunity for first year students to make new friends and benefit from the experience of older students. As the School of _____ is considering implementing a scheme, we would appreciate if you could take the time to answer the following questions in order that we can gauge levels of interest and develop a scheme that best meets the needs of incoming first years.

Would you have made use of a peer mentoring scheme if it had been available?

What would you have liked a peer mentor to help you with (such as finding your way around campus, learning about QUB support services, academic and course-related demands, providing opportunities to get to know other students)?

3. Would you prefer to meet with a mentor in: (please circle)   Large groups?

Small groups?

One-on-one?

4. Had it been available, would you have attended a mentoring session related to your academic work?

5. Given the opportunity, would you have attended Welcome Week events organised by peer mentors?

6. Given the opportunity, would you have attended social events organised by mentors within your School? If so, what type?

Any further comments?

Thank you!

Appendix 2

Mentor Application Form

APPLICANT DETAILS

Thank you for expressing your interest in participating in the School of _____ Peer Mentoring Scheme. To help us recruit mentors, we would like some information about you and your experiences.

Student Name: _____

Course: _____

Year Level: _____

Student email: _____

Peer mentors **must** complete a 2-day training course delivered by the Learning Development Service prior to the start of the academic year. Courses are held in June and September.

APPLICANT STATEMENT OF INTEREST

Why you are interested in becoming a peer mentor?

What personal skills and qualities can you bring to this role?

What academic skills can you bring to this role?

Student signature _____

Please return this form to _____by _____

Appendix 3

Learning Development Service

Student Guidance Centre

Queen's University Belfast

Contact us:

Telephone - 028 9097 3618

Email - ldspeermentors@qub.ac.uk

Web - www.qub.ac.uk/lds