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‘Peer Mentoring’ working at the course level

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Aims of the workshop

- To provide an overview of the experience of developing 'Peer Mentoring' practice at the programme level
- To hear from mentors and mentees their 'story' of mentoring
- To provide an opportunity to ask questions

De Montfort University

- Two campuses in Leicester
- Five faculties offering around 400 courses
- More than 18,000 students and 3000 staff
- A network of Associate Colleges
- Over 1000 research students and 500 staff

Why 'Peer Mentoring'?

University agenda:

- Supporting students in their transition to and through HE
- The development of autonomous learning
- Encouraging students to engage confidently in learning opportunities

Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2007/2012)

Programme agenda:

- Adjusting to independent learning
- Course orientation
- Opportunity to discuss specific programme topics
- 'Myth-busting'
- Increase subject cohesion

Approach

- One year pilot, ownership with the faculties, led by student volunteers, coordinated centrally
- Based in 2 faculties: Humanities and Business and Law, 4 programmes (2 joint honours Education/Law), 2 single honours (Media/Advertising)
- Reporting to the University Learning and Teaching Committee
- On-going dialogue, summative evaluation

At the programme level

- Contextualised to the programme and resources
- First year students were offered mentors who had followed the same programme
- Variety of models: paired, allocated students, random allocation, one to one, group
- Communication methods (face to face and electronic)

Why be a mentor?

'I wanted to become more involved in University life, I thought it was a great idea and it would have been helpful to me in my first year if I had had the chance of a mentor.'

'Looks good on my CV, for the experience, previous positive experience as a mentor at school, meet lots of new people.'

The role of the mentor?

'The role of the mentor is to assist and guide, but not to give answers. You can offer mentees the step in the right direction with their academic work. It is useful to have the experience of an older person who is going through the motions of University life too.'

'As I had just completed year one, my experiences and obstacles I needed to overcome were still fresh, also it can be easier to seek advice from a fellow student than from a lecturer.'

'Guidance and understanding, as we have been through what they are going through.'

'An informal channel to help them settle in to University and with any problems they are having.'

Mentor's approach

	Law (joint honours)	Education (joint honours)
Introduction	Lecture/Flyer Mentees opted in (or out) and decided on the mentor they wanted to communicate with	Lecture/mentors allocated (2:20) by same subject combination Exchange of contact details
Methods	One to one, email, face to face meetings in classrooms	Mentor's 'free' time slots shared. Group face to face and one to one, email, text, Blackboard mentoring community
Topics	What it's like to start University, referencing, style of writing, first assignment, exams, what to do if.....	Signposting to information, referencing, exam strategies, critical analysis, study skills

Response from the mentees

'It feels a relief to know there is someone to help you, who's done what you are doing.'

'It's been great to talk to a mentor, but obviously they cannot help you with your work and tell you what to do.'

'I felt very alone and isolated from my family, moving to Leicester was scary. I was very reserved and felt happier having the opportunity to have a mentor.'

Mentor's view of the benefits?

'More confident in my understanding of Law, and in the way I was able to relate back to the students.'

'A chance to develop a scheme which could make a real difference to first year students.'

'A feeling of cohesion' 'Develops a greater sense of community.'

'Confidence and just knowing that I can help people where they feel that they are struggling. I have confidence knowing that I can be a good leader as well.'

'That it's OK to ask questions, and to not know the answers fully.'

+/-

Benefits	Challenges
First year students want to to be offered a mentor	Mentee engagement <i>'what if they (mentors) laugh or make fun of me'</i> <i>'It's a bit embarrassing/childish'</i> <i>'if you've left home for the first time, the last thing you want to consider is that you want help.'</i>
Course match	Administration
Initial face to face meeting	Meeting opportunities
Timely and relevant approaches	Need for earlier introduction
Mentor's contribution to the first year experience	Academic/Pastoral approach
Development of mentors	Expectations of mentors <i>'Getting the first years to reply and keep in contact.'</i>

After today.....

- Discussion re: approach and practice in your programme/module
- Materials and resources
- Mentor Training

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