

# **Sandy Gilkes**

## **Conference Keynote Speaker at the**

### **Peer Mentoring: Opportunities and Challenges in a Diverse Student Community Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2009**

---

#### **Biography**

Sandy Gilkes is Head of the Centre for Academic Practice at the University of Northampton.

Her roles at the University have included lecturing, leading the PGCTHE, embedding governmental initiatives into the curriculum, collaborating with others in transforming a Further/Higher Education culture into an HE culture and in setting up the first student centre of its kind (1991) as a strategy for providing authentic widened access to HE.

Her work as a staff and educational developer has focused on creating innovative solutions for coping with an increased diversity of students from entry point through to post graduate levels of study.

Leading Northampton's Student Support Initiative Scheme since 1996, Sandy has developed peer mentoring into a diverse and wide ranging framework across five schools at the University.

She is an Institutional Teaching Fellow, a National Teaching Fellow and a Fellow of the Staff and Educational Association.

#### **Abstract**

##### **Mentoring: sharing experience**

Discourses around widening participation, equality and diversity, employability and student retention are familiar to all of us. The current climate of increasing workloads, competition for resources and the demand for accountability may leave many of us wondering how we can address the core issues of engaging students in learning, coping with a diverse range of skills, or a lack of them, and improve retention, progression and achievement rates.

As a result of these performance indicators many institutions are reappraising the types and levels of support opportunities given to students.

Whilst it cannot be claimed that student peer mentoring schemes are sole factors in improving student retention there is accumulating evidence that mentoring can play a significant role in improving student satisfaction and success.

This presentation will share Northampton University's experience of running a student peer mentoring scheme from 1991 to the current day, identifying changes, pitfalls and perceived benefits and outlining the philosophy and values that have sustained the scheme in an ever-changing landscape.

**Sandy Gilkes, 2009**