Integrating Peer Mentoring into the Psychology Curriculum

What did/do you do?

The School of Psychology introduced a peer mentoring scheme in 2008 in order to support students in making the transition from school to university, help them develop academic skills and facilitate social integration within the cohort. In order to improve the scheme, the peer mentoring was integrated into a new academic skills module called Psychological Enquiry, in 2010.

Who is involved?

Patrick Rosenkranz, Stage 1 Director and all Undergraduate (Stage 1) students. Stage 3 students were recruited as mentors. Rebecca McCready (LTMS) and Linda Errington (Library) also contribute to the module.

How do you do it?

The peer mentoring was integrated into a new academic skills module called Psychological Enquiry, in 2010. The module includes workshops on general IT skills, word processing, library database usage and plagiarism. These are combined with lectures on academic writing and scholarship in psychology, providing a general context for the academic skills. The lectures are paired with the peer mentoring sessions, where the skills can be discussed and practiced.

The mentor groups meet in timetabled sessions to discuss topics related to the study of psychology and that link to the previous lectures. The mentor sessions are semi-structured: Each session has a relevant academic skill (such as time management or referencing) as a core topic, supported by PowerPoint slides and handouts. The mentors themselves meet with the Stage 1 director before each session for training and briefing.

Why do you do it?

Students embarking on an undergraduate degree in psychology face a set of challenges in the first year of their studies. Like all students entering higher education, they have to navigate the transition from school to university and rapidly adapt to a new academic and social environment. The ways these challenges are addressed and resolved are crucial for continuing retention and satisfaction of the students. Peer mentoring programmes are a propitious method of supporting new students in making this transition. By integrating formal academic skills teaching with the more informal mentor sessions we provide a venue and social setting in which to develop and practise transferable academic skills.

Coherent Curriculum themes:

- Student induction
- Student engagement

Other keywords:

Progression, peer learning, retention, attendance, buddying, mentoring, student induction, peer mentoring

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Does it work?

The three deliveries of the peer mentoring (2008, 2009 and 2010) were generally well received by both students and mentors. The students especially valued the opportunity to get to know peers on their course in a small group setting. Attendance at the mentoring sessions was higher in 2010 compared with the previous years. Integrating the peer mentoring within a formal module structure allowed for greater interplay between staff-led teaching and peer-based support, and contributed to making the sessions more relevant to the students. In the most recent delivery (2014/15), evaluation questionnaires indicated that the students were satisfied with the mentoring (M=4, SD=1, N=76). Mentors also rated their experience of mentoring highly (M=4.57, SD=0.53, N=7). For further detail on the mentor programme, please see: Rosenkranz, P. (2012). Integrating Peer Mentoring into the Psychology Curriculum: from an extended induction to an academic skills course. *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, 11(2), 201–208.

Teaching and Learning Case Study

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Patrick Rosenkranz

Psychology

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