

# MENTOR'S HANDBOOK

(Guidelines for Peer Mentors)

PEER MENTORING IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN  
SERBIA

*(Adapted from Middlesex University's Peer Mentoring Programme)*



*This Mentor's Handbook provides you with guidelines for mentoring process and to facilitate you as a peer mentor. In addition, the Peer Mentoring (training) Manual should be referred to at all times.*

## **Peer Mentoring – A Helping Strategy**

For a new student, a university can be an exciting but also intimidating place. A university can also be a lonely place for a new student, especially if that student is the first in their family to go to college, an overseas student, or a member of a minority community. Even simple things that experienced students take for granted can be challenging for a new student, such as finding classrooms and offices on campus, understanding university policies for registration for classes, and learning the special language of the university such as “syllabus,” “office hours,” and “credit hours.” A small number of new students learn the answers by directly asking professors in their classes or talking to university administrative staff. But many, many students find out information by asking friends, especially more experienced students. In fact, most new students find their way to the offices of university staff and professors by first talking to more experienced students. In other words, the experienced students serve as guides for new students to help them access the storehouse of knowledge and resources at the university. Moreover, new students will continue to seek the advice of experienced students regarding decisions about classes, majors, academic difficulties, and personal problems.

A mentor is an experienced and trusted advisor or guide. On a general level, your role as a mentor is to build a relationship of mutual trust with another student (your mentee) and to act as an effective guide to them.

An effective mentor is respectful, reliable, patient, trustworthy, and a very good listener and communicator. In a university, mentors can be found among faculty and professional staff. But mentors can also be found in the ranks of students themselves. Student mentors are known as Peer Mentors. Due to their close association with other students, Peer Mentors are very important. Often new students confronted with an academic or personal problem will seek out advice first from a Peer Mentor and only with encouragement will that student contact others in the university, such as counsellors, or academic staff.

Mentor roles and responsibilities are varied and complex. Serving as a guide, facilitator, role model, and/or ally to the mentee, a mentor must be prepared to take on a range of roles and responsibilities that may change as the mentor/mentee relationship develops over time, as the needs and goals of the mentee shift, and as specific contexts and situations require different strategies. A mentor will generally enact a number of common roles and responsibilities.

#### **A mentor is . . .**

- **A knowledgeable and experienced guide who advises** (and learns) through a commitment to the mutual growth of both mentee and mentor.
- **A caring, thoughtful facilitator** who provides access to people, places, experiences, and resources outside the mentee's routine environment.
- **A role model** who exemplifies in word and deed what it means to be an ethical, responsible, and compassionate human being.
- **A trusted ally**, who works with (not for) the mentee and on behalf of the mentee's best interests and goals.

## Person Specification

- You have an awareness of difficulties facing some students
- You have the potential to develop through training the skills required to be an effective mentor
- You are able to communicate effectively with others
- You have awareness of your own strengths and limitations
- You can commit to the basic time level asked for

## Mentor's commitment throughout the academic year:

- Attend Training: 8 hours
- Meeting with Mentees: 1 hour/week for 20 weeks – you will be assigned 2 mentees and will have ½ hourly meeting each week with individual mentee
- Meeting with the Mentoring Coordinator: 1/2 an hour each month for feedback/advice on one to one meetings with the mentees
- Maintaining log book for a record of weekly meetings with the mentees
- Overall feedback of mentoring sessions at the end of the academic year to the Mentoring Project Coordinator.

**Comment [M1]:** Details to be decided

## **Ground Rules for Mentoring**

- Respect each other
- Offer a listening ear
- Set clear goals and targets and achieve them
- Keep confidentiality
- Respect time restrictions
- If we can't help you will try to refer you to someone who can
- Empathy and sensitivity
- Give advice if asked
- Value honesty in others
- Not letting each other down
- Offer encouragement
- Trust
- Give constructive feedback
- Understand differences
- Be unbiased and respect equality
- Be non-judgemental
- Be reliable
- Be realistic
- Be open and honest and value honesty
- Be patient.
- Be positive.

## **General points to keep in mind**

- You are not working alone but as part of a team. If you have difficulties, take it to your co-ordinator
- Take time to establish rapport – do not try to address all problems in the first meeting
- Recognise the limitations of the relationship. You can only advise, you are not responsible for your mentee
- Encourage them to come up with solutions and to take responsibility – empowerment
- If your own circumstances change and you have to withdraw, explain why to your mentee
- Do not be an expert – you can always gain information and advice from other sources
- Keep to the time commitment – mentoring should not take over your life
- Discussions between you and your mentee are confidential and not to be divulged to other students

## **MOST IMPORTANTLY – BE YOURSELF**

### **Practical thoughts**

- make a list of the other student's concerns – think of ways you can help
- It may take some time for everything to come together – don't expect immediate success
- If the student drops out or goes home, don't feel you have failed or see it as a reflection on you as a person. There may be many reasons why this happens. You did your best.
- Never sit alone with a problem. If you have concerns about your mentee take it to the programme co-ordinator. You are not expected to deal with everything on your own

## Recommended boundaries for the mentoring programme

As a guide the following is recommended, but common sense does need to prevail. Neither you nor your mentee should ever feel exposed, at a potential disadvantage or weakness. If you have any concerns you **must** share them with the co-ordinator.

1. Your relationship is *friendly*; you are not *friends* with your mentee.
2. You never take the relationship beyond the boundaries you have set
3. You should not take your mentee to your own home
4. You should not get emotionally involved
5. Do not give out your home telephone number or address to your mentee
6. Do not accept inappropriate gifts
7. **Never** give or loan money
8. You should not talk about personal/intimate areas of your life
9. Respect confidentiality

We are not asking you to suppress the caring and friendly parts of your personality. But it is necessary sometimes to set aside our individual responses and beliefs in the interests of retaining the boundaries.

## **Study guidelines - recommendations**

Assess concepts and themes from the course. Begin this process before your first meeting with your mentee. Use your course syllabus and other course materials as a guide (refer to course objectives, lecture topics, chapter break-downs).

Before your first meeting, evaluate your confidence in and comprehension of concepts and themes from the course. It is just as important to identify your individual strengths as it is to identify your weaknesses – it is likely that you understand something that someone else does not.

Establish clear goals for the meeting. What do you wish to accomplish? How do you plan to accomplish these goals? Consider your time frame, and mentees study needs. Design and assign responsibilities.

### **Together, you can**

- Review your syllabus and determine what material you need to concentrate on
- Explain concepts based on material from lectures, readings etc.
- Practice applying course concepts and seeing and building connections between concepts – develop study notes organized by theme or concept, or draw concept maps and diagrams, where appropriate
- Practice answering multiple choice, short answer and essay questions (develop your own, use resources from your text or refer to final exams from previous years)



## Ending the Mentoring Meeting

Towards the end of the session you will agree with your mentee what their action plan for the forthcoming week is to be and what actions, if any, you are going to take on their behalf. Finish the meeting with a short review of the key points covered and the decisions that have been made, and agree a time and place for your next meeting.

To gain commitment during the meetings make sure that you:

- **Listen actively**
- **Ask useful questions**
- **Take brief notes**
- **Summarise regularly**
- **Adopt a joint problem-solving approach**

## Do's and Don'ts of Mentoring

<b>Do</b>	<b>Don't</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agree on a framework of the discussion</li><li>• Maintain a constructive and supportive atmosphere and tone</li><li>• Be certain you have all the necessary information</li><li>• Encourage the mentee to reflect on his/her responses, performance, attitude, etc</li><li>• Encourage trust and mutual responsibility</li><li>• Be prepared to discuss and negotiate</li><li>• Be comfortable with silences.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Allow paper work to dominate discussion</li><li>• Inhibit the mentee from talking</li><li>• Be a know all</li><li>• Use inappropriate language</li><li>• Pressure the mentee to adopt your own views</li><li>• Appear rushed or pressed for time</li><li>• Allow desired outcomes to dominate the process</li></ul>