



Let's go!



University of
South Wales
Prifysgol
De Cymru



Student Mentoring Handbook

INFORMATION FOR STUDENT MENTORS



Student Development and Study Skills Service



“ We want new students to have the best possible experience when they start their studies at USW



Welcome

... which is why we have a student mentoring scheme linking new and prospective students with experienced students. Student mentors are there to offer information, support and, above all, a warm welcome.

What does a student mentor do?

There are so many things to find out and practical matters to deal with when starting a university course. It is an exciting time but it can also be quite challenging at times. It may be the first experience of living independently and coping with budgeting, shopping, cooking, etc. Studying may also present challenges, as higher education can be very

different from studying at school or college. On top of that, for many, the UK culture will be unfamiliar, and as for the weather...! Student mentors are there to help – because coping with all this is likely to be so much easier and more enjoyable with a student mentor to offer friendly advice and information.



The forecast for tomorrow and the rest of the week will be ...

What are the main aims of a student mentor?



- 1** To make the transition to university for new students as easy and problem-free as possible
- 2** To encourage new students to get to know current students from the same department or faculty
- 3** To ensure that new students know where to go for information and support and that they experience a supportive and encouraging environment
- 4** To help new students to engage rapidly with their studies
- 5** To develop or enhance the mentor’s employability skills, knowledge and experience

Mentees can ask their mentor questions about practical issues about living and studying at university

Up to **10** mentees can be allocated to each mentor

Student mentors are trained volunteers who have been through the transition process themselves and are now experienced students



Contact with the mentees

New students can be in touch with their mentors in the weeks before enrolling on to their course. The new student then will have received an email telling them about the Student Mentoring scheme.

The email also includes contact details for their allocated mentor, together with a link to the scheme Facebook page.

We do our best to allocate a mentor who is studying the same or a similar course as the mentee. The mentee can then correspond with the mentor by email, and with the whole mentor/mentee group via Facebook.

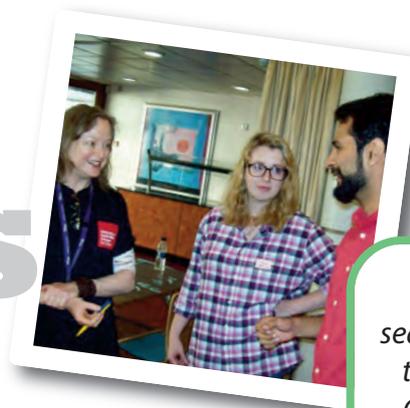
For some mentors and mentees, email may remain the only medium of

communication. Others choose to meet in person when the new student arrives at the campus, and for a while thereafter.

Most campuses hold a 'Welcome and Meet your Mentor' event following Induction Week, at which mentees may meet face-to-face for the first time, if they choose to do so.

Frequently asked questions from mentees

FAQs



"Who should I see for help in getting a part time job?"

"Where is the best place for food shopping on a budget?"

"How can I find accommodation near the University?"

"Where can I get help with referencing?"

"Where can I park if I'm studying at Newport?"

"How can I get a season ticket for train travel to and from Cardiff/Newport?"

MENTORS ARE NOT COACHES

Mentors do not re-teach course content but can give general information or tips.

They never help with coursework content or lend finished assignments

Mentees ask mainly practical questions about living in the UK or studying at the University. Mentors provide information if they can, or they sometimes refer queries to other support services or members of staff, with the mentee's consent.

The mentoring process

- 1 Brief training session – mentors confirm willingness
- 2 Email on scheme sent to prospective students who select a mentor
- 3 Mentors and mentees correspond via email & Facebook
- 4 Social event for mentors and mentees
- 5 Mentees and mentors link up for support as necessary



Benefits for student mentors

We hope that all participants in the scheme benefit: mentors as well as mentees. For mentors, taking part can be a valuable experience and they may develop and practise a range of workplace skills. These include communication, 'people skills', organisational and time management skills, exercising judgement and problem solving. Mentors can show that they have a good level of commitment and a 'can do' attitude, valued by employers. In today's competitive job market, it is important to be able to stand out from other well qualified graduates, and the experience of mentoring fellow students is one way of achieving this.

Experience as a student mentor can be included on a CV or job application form. The University also awards a certificate of appreciation to each mentor. Subject to meeting the scheme criteria, participants can also apply for GradEdge accreditation. Additional personal and professional development opportunities are available exclusively to mentors including an invitation to attend training sessions.

Above all, student mentors tell us that they particularly appreciate the opportunity to extend their networks and that they enjoy helping fellow students.

Your experience as a student mentor can be included on a CV or job application



Other opportunities for mentors

After gaining experience as a student mentor, opportunities to apply for a bursaried position may arise. One such role is that of 'Super Mentor', to assist with the administration of the scheme and training of future student mentors, and another is to become a student mentoring committee member.

Super Mentor

The Super Mentor role is an exciting opportunity for an experienced student mentor to help develop and shape the scheme further through participation in scheme decision-making and promotion, mentor recruitment and training, taking part in events and administration. Each Super Mentor will spend approximately 70 hours on the scheme over the year and receive a bursary of £250.00 and a personalised certificate of appreciation. In order to become a Super Mentor it helps to get

involved as a committee member of the scheme.

Student Mentoring Committee

The Student Mentoring committee is a chance for those students who wish to have a greater involvement in the scheme to do so. It is a group of mentors who come together to plan and deliver promotional and recruitment events for the student mentoring scheme. This is a great opportunity to: improve the scheme; enhance your CV; increase your chance of becoming a Super Mentor and receive an additional certificate of appreciation as a committee member. Please contact a scheme co-ordinator to become a committee member.

PASS

Another role you might want to consider is to become a leader for the



Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) scheme. Undertaking this role requires further training as it involves providing support with course content. There is more of a time obligation with this role, with leaders needing to commit to a minimum of two hours per week, although reported benefits are considerable. If you'd like to know more about PASS, please contact either Nicky Shelswell or Donna Waite.



How to become a student mentor

First or second year undergraduate students can apply to train as a student mentor. Students on Masters courses can also participate as long as there are two intakes to the course per year. For practical reasons, it is not possible to operate the scheme if there is only one entry point per year to a one year course.

You will need to attend a short training session. These sessions are held throughout the academic year across each campus, and are advertised by email and on our Facebook. If you are unable to attend one of the advertised sessions, no problem, get in touch for more information.

Get in touch... 

If you are interested in becoming a student mentor please contact the scheme co-ordinators:

Nicola Shelswell	01443 482964	nicola.shelswell@southwales.ac.uk
Donna Waite	01443 482990	donna.waite@southwales.ac.uk

Email: studentmentoring@southwales.ac.uk
Website: <http://studentmentoring.southwales.ac.uk>
Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/USWStudentMentoring> 

What it takes to be a good student mentor



A student mentor needs to be friendly and helpful, someone who can remember or imagine what it feels like to be a new student at university.

At the same time, it is important to approach the role in a 'professional' way,

as student mentors are representing their faculty and the university. Above all, a good mentor needs to be able to use good judgement when responding to mentee requests.

A good mentor is able to be flexible and can work with a variety of different individuals. New students come from a wide range of backgrounds and countries. Many are young, just starting their adult lives, while others may be more mature students, returning to study after a long gap.

It is essential for a mentor to be reliable and remember to check their emails and the Facebook site regularly and reply as soon as possible to any queries.

Mentors who wish to be more proactive can request a list of their mentees and university email addresses once enrolment has taken place. If they wish, student mentors can maintain contact, arrange informal get-togethers, e.g. in the coffee bar, from time to time.



Skills and knowledge needed

Communicating and advising

You will need to have good communication skills. When meeting in person, try to be an 'active listener'. This means putting the speaker at ease when they are talking about a problem or asking a question. It involves friendly, open body language and eye contact, and asking helpful questions to encourage the mentee to get their point or question across.

In this kind of advisory role, it is best to respond to queries by offering information and options to the mentee, so that the mentee can decide their own course of action, rather than by imposing one's own views or telling the mentee what he or she should do.

Being organised

Student mentoring does not need to be a particularly time consuming role, but it can help to be organised. Most mentoring activity takes place before the term starts, so it is unlikely to impact on your studies.

Being responsive and understanding

Students from many different countries and cultures come to study at the University of South Wales. Therefore in some cases, mentors may not have a thorough understanding of the cultural background of some of their mentees. It is important that mentors try to be aware of potential differences and actively demonstrate respect for their mentee's values, beliefs and cultural background.

Mentors should:

- Avoid making assumptions about their mentees
- Try to avoid using stereotypes in relation to different cultural backgrounds
- Show genuine interest in their mentees' backgrounds
- Endeavour to improve their knowledge of their mentees' cultural backgrounds by asking questions
- Obviously, be welcoming and friendly.

Becoming familiar with USW support services

Student mentors are one source of information and support within the University among many. In some instances, student mentors will need to refer queries to other support services or members of staff for specialist advice and support. When this seems to be the best way of responding to a query, the mentor should first check with the mentee that they consent to the forwarding of their query, in view of the confidentiality rule.

Sources of specialist advice and support for new students include:

- Pastoral or personal tutors
- Academic staff
- Campus administration advisors
- Student Services
- Study Skills Centres
- Chaplaincy
- Students Union



Unilife

has an alphabetically ordered directory of information on a wide range of topics relevant to new students
<http://unilife.southwales.ac.uk/pages>

If you are unsure about how to respond to a query, contact the scheme co-ordinators for advice (see 'get in touch' details on page 4)

If a student mentor is unsure of how to respond to a query, he or she can contact the scheme co-ordinator for advice, as long as the mentee agrees to this action.

Direct Referrals

If a mentee appears to be distressed or experiencing emotional or mental health issues, a student mentor should not try to support the student on his or her own. The mentor should strongly encourage the student to go to the Counselling Service in Student Services, or to the Campus Student Advisers in the first instance. This is so that the mentee receives the professional support they need and also in order to protect the mentor.

Additionally, mentors are not expected to give health or financial advice.

Record keeping and evaluation

It is suggested that mentors keep a brief record of each mentor-mentee interaction. We ask mentors to complete a reflection form towards the end of the academic year, to summarise the extent and nature of the support they have provided to mentees, and to make suggestions for the development or improvement of the scheme.



Protection for mentors and mentees

Data Protection Act compliance

When you create, send or receive information about students you have to make sure you comply with the Data Protection Act. This relates to various kinds of personal information about an individual, e.g. name, address, phone number, a person's location at a particular time, etc. If you need to hold this kind of information about your mentors, it is essential that you do so securely.

Only keep information about mentees for as long it is necessary for your student mentor role. Once you or the mentee has left the University or you discontinue in the mentoring role, destroy any personal information you have. When you think the best course of action is to refer a query from your mentee to another individual or to a university service, first check that your mentor consents to this and make sure your mentee is aware of what you are going to do with his or her personal data.

Confidentiality

The content of emails and conversations should remain confidential, except in extreme circumstances, e.g. if you suspect individuals may be at serious risk or involved in illegal activity. In these (unlikely) circumstances, the mentor indicates to the mentee that the matter cannot remain confidential and must be referred to the scheme co-ordinator or an appropriate person.

Boundaries of the Student Mentor role

- All information between mentor and mentee shall be kept confidential under normal circumstances.
- Student mentors must not teach course content or help mentees with assignments. They must not lend or show their own assignments to mentees.
- Student mentors should only meet their mentees on university premises or other public places in order to ensure

their own and their mentees' safety and wellbeing.

- Student mentors should only provide advice on areas and situations where they have the skill, experience and competence to do so. Queries on other areas should be referred to more expert individuals or services, with the consent of the mentee.
- Student mentors shall provide the best service possible and make every effort to improve and develop their own skills.
- Student mentors shall contact the scheme co-ordinators if they have concerns regarding any aspect of the scheme or regarding the safety or well-being of any participants.
- Student mentors shall demonstrate a positive commitment to the University's Equal Opportunities policy. Mentors shall provide information and advice impartially.

Safeguarding

Mentors are advised to take precautions to ensure that neither they nor mentees are put in a position of risk as a result of participating in the student mentoring scheme:

- Do not inform your mentees of your address
- Initially, it may be advisable not to give your mobile phone number to your mentees. If in time, you judge that your relationship has changed from that of mentor-mentee to one of friendship, you must use your judgement and discretion whether to share personal information such as your address and phone number.
- Use your university email address for correspondence with your mentees, and not your personal email address.
- Meet your mentees in a public place, e.g. the campus restaurant or coffee bar.
- Do not show or lend your assignments to mentees.

If you have any concerns at any time about your own safety or about the safety of any of your mentees in connection with the mentoring scheme, contact the scheme co-ordinators immediately.