

Online peer mentoring at scale: benefits and impacts from a student buddy perspective

Dr Julie Robson, Dr Chris Hutton



Background

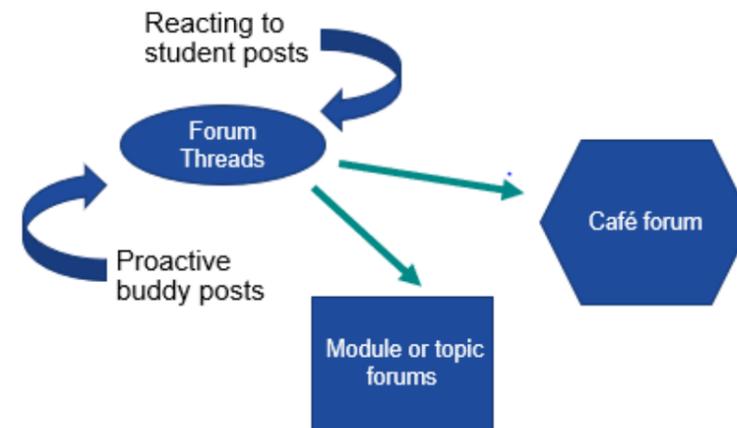
Much has been written about the value of peer mentoring schemes for students; results suggest that these are beneficial (Motzo 2016, Robson et al., 2018a Robson et al., 2018b). Less is known about the effects of being a student buddy and impacts on a buddy's own development and employability (Robson and Forbes, 2016).

The project builds on two eSTEEeM projects on peer mentoring, and an MSQ supported student buddies' pilot on S(XF) 206, and is prompted by student buddies moving from being paid on a pilot to becoming volunteers on a mainstream peer-mentoring project. The desire to extend the scheme across the School and beyond at all levels requires a sustainable model. It supports STEM Faculty retention strategy with the potential to improve student success for both mentors and mentees.

Aims and Research Questions

1. Evaluate the student buddy experience in EEES to understand the drivers behind volunteering.
2. Determine whether volunteer-based peer-mentoring schemes are sustainable.
3. Can we build a student buddy community across modules?
4. Do student buddies develop transferable skills that contribute to employability skills?

The Environmental Science buddy scheme – how it works



Methods

Invite >26 student buddies from 2017 – 2019 to participate in the project via questionnaires and focus groups.

New buddies for 2019 – 2021 presentations will be included to collect their thoughts and aspirations prior to becoming student buddies and then contacted again after their first presentation.

Additional data will be sourced and analysed from buddy applications and pre-course questionnaires.

Buddy Quotes from 2018

"It isn't that I haven't enjoyed it, I've just found being half in that module while studying new ones a bit confusing."

"It seems the student buddy support has really helped and encouraged people to book their places at the field schools. Therefore, I'd like to think we've had a positive impact on people's feelings towards the field schools. I would have appreciated this when I started S206 as I was also very apprehensive"

Anticipated outputs

- Gain insight into the expectations of students undertaking a peer mentoring role for the first time to provide a baseline for evaluating their experience
- Increase our knowledge of how students perceive their mentoring role, its challenges and benefits
- Inform plans for developing the buddy role and peer-mentoring scheme, improve training and build a strong learning community for the benefits of mentors and mentees.
- Disseminate findings at conferences and publish results as a Journal article.

References

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