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Peer Mentoring for Post-Primary Schools

Teacher Handbook





Mentoring Programmes in Higher Education



About Peer Mentoring for Post-Primary Schools

Based on our work with schools across the region, Atlantic Technological University Access and Widening Participation Service has produced this resource for schools who deliver peer mentoring programmes. This is part of our work to support individuals from underrepresented groups to access and participate in Higher Education. Mentoring plays an important role in supporting students to progress through their education journey.

This resource aims to provide general guidance to teachers/ staff and pupils in post-primary schools who are involved in peer mentoring in their school. This is provided as a guide only since any decisions concerning peer mentoring programmes in schools rests solely with school management and participating school staff members.

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Mentoring

Mentoring is a process that involves one person offering support to another person.

The person that provides the support is called a mentor and the person that receives the support is called a mentee. The type of supports offered by mentors can include advice, knowledge, skills support and guidance. Mentoring is led by the mentee who decides what goals they would like to achieve as part of the mentoring process. Mentoring is voluntary for everyone.

Mentoring in a higher education context is defined as any process that facilitates someone with lived experience to provide guidance, support and knowledge in a way that allows another person (the mentee) to thrive over time in the mentoring relationship (Brady et al, 2024).

Peer Mentoring

Peer mentoring involves one pupil who has experience in the school supporting a pupil/group of pupils who is/are new to the school. Usually, a peer mentor is a **senior cycle pupil who supports an incoming first-year pupil (mentee)**. Peer mentors provide informal guidance and information to their mentees as they become familiar with their new school. Mentors help their mentees to settle into life at post-primary school by providing them with useful information and advice about their school.

What does Peer Mentoring involve?

Mentors and mentees meet approximately three times during the school year and discuss topics that the mentee wishes to learn about. In order to make the mentoring partnership as meaningful as possible the mentee, along with their mentor, sets out clear goals that they wish to achieve. It is important that the mentee uses a **Mentoring Action Plan** to keep track of their goals and their plan for achieving these goals. The mentee's Action Plan can be used a guide for what to discuss at the mentoring sessions and it will help you both to stay on track. You will find the template for your action plan on pages 11-13 of this booklet.

Benefits

for the Mentee

- Managing a positive mentoring relationship with your mentor
- Helping you to identify your mentoring goals
- Supporting you to achieve your mentoring goals
- Supporting you with adjusting to life at your new school
- Developing knowledge and awareness of your new school
- Learning new skills and qualities

for the Mentor

- Managing a positive mentoring relationship with your mentee(s)
- Developing your leadership qualities
- Applying your skills such as: communicating, listening, instructing and critical thinking
- Enhancing your employability

The Role

of a **Mentee** is to:

- ✓ **Develop my knowledge of my new school**
- ✓ **Identify some goals that I want to achieve**
- ✓ **Fill in my Mentoring Action Plan, with the help of my mentor**
- ✓ **Respect my mentor**
- ✓ **Meet with my mentor**
- ✓ **Work to achieve my goals**

of a **Mentor** is to:

- ✓ **Offer support and guidance to my mentee**
- ✓ **Respect my mentee**
- ✓ **Meet with my mentee**
- ✓ **Help my mentee achieve their goals**

Mentoring is not:

The same as teaching

As a mentor you can help your mentee figure out how to achieve their goals. Your job is not to be their teacher.

Instant

It takes time for a mentor and a mentee to get to know each other.

Compulsory

Mentoring is voluntary for both the mentees and mentors.

The same as friendship

You do not need to become friends with your mentor/mentee. It is about sharing experiences, knowledge and skills.

About finding faults

Mentoring should be a positive experience.

Respect the mentoring boundaries

We all know that a mentoring relationship is based on respect, trust and confidentiality. Here are some boundaries that we think you should all respect:

Contact

Be very clear about how you will contact each other for mentoring purposes (e.g. in-person meetings in a public place in your school). Mentors do not need to be available for their mentees all the time.

Mentoring Sessions:

Select public places for meetings such as the school canteen or common room. Your teacher/staff member who is the leading the mentoring programme in your school will advise you on the most suitable locations for your meetings as well as your meeting schedules.

Relationships

There is always an element of power involved in mentoring. Mentors and mentees cannot enter into romantic and/or physical relationships.

Other services:

Please remember that as a mentor you cannot solve all of the mentees issues/challenges/problems. You can direct your mentee to a particular service within the school whenever appropriate.

Privacy

Respect your each other's right to privacy and confidentiality.

Support for Mentors

Avail of the supports for mentors provided by your school and by ATU.

Types of Peer Mentoring in Post-Primary Schools

Post-Primary teachers/staff members are doing valuable work in their schools leading and supporting peer mentoring for their pupils. Currently, we are aware that two of the most common types of mentoring programmes that schools offer are: one-to-one peer mentoring and group peer mentoring.

One-to-one mentoring: This type of mentoring involves a pupil from a more senior year-group being a mentor to one pupil from a junior year-group. Usually, the mentor is from senior cycle (e.g. Transition Year, Fifth Year, Sixth Year) and offers mentoring to a First-year pupil. The mentoring involves helping the First-year pupil to adjust to life in their new school. This type of mentoring can also involve senior-cycle pupils mentoring Second and Third –year pupils.

Group mentoring: This type of mentoring involves a pupil from a more senior year-group being a mentor to a group of junior pupils. The mentor, who is usually in Transition, Fifth or Sixth Year, offers support to a group of First-year pupils (approximately 3-5 pupils). The mentoring involves helping the group of First-year pupils to adjust to life in their new school. Group mentoring can also include senior cycle pupils mentoring a group of Second or Third –year pupils.

Type of mentoring offered in my school:	
Description:	

Leading Mentoring Programmes in Post-Primary Schools

1. Choose the mentoring programme
 - a. Decide what type of mentoring programme would best suit your school context and the needs of your pupils
2. Design your mentoring application form (or use the sample form included in this booklet)
3. Recruit volunteer mentors to the mentoring programme
4. Train your mentors
 - a. Our mentoring handbooks and resources offer supports for your mentoring training sessions
5. Provide a plan for supporting mentors (i.e. drop-in sessions, update workshops, handbook and resources, etc.)
6. Review the mentoring programme with mentors and mentees (in-person, focus group, survey, exit tickets, group discussion, etc.)

Contact us:

<https://www.atu.ie/student-life/student-support/access-and-widening-participation/wnw-connect>

Ethical Guidelines and Standards

The mentor and the mentee should always try to keep the mentoring relationship positive and helpful. Before the mentoring programme starts, the mentor and mentee, with their teacher(s) should agree on the format of the mentoring sessions. This includes what you will do in the mentoring sessions, how often you will meet and how long each session will last.

Confidentiality

The mentor and mentee must respect each other’s privacy. If you hear sensitive or private information about your mentor/mentee then you must keep this confidential. However, if you think that the mentor/mentee needs urgent help you can seek advice from your teacher/staff member who is leading the mentoring programme in your school.

Boundaries

Do not cross the boundaries of the mentoring relationship. This includes forming inappropriate friendships and romantic/physical relationships. Mentors, please remember that you are not expected to be teachers or counsellors to your mentees. If anything becomes too much for you to cope with please contact your teacher/ staff member who is leading the mentoring programme in your school. Filling in your mentoring journal can help you to keep boundaries in check.

Disclaimer

These guidelines are a reference only as regarding the type of dilemmas and/or issues you may come across whilst you are involved in mentoring. It is not legal advice. Always ensure adherence to school/centre policies.

Declaration

I have read the above information with my Mentor/Mentee/Teacher and I agree to uphold these Ethical standards.

Signed: (Mentor/Mentee)	Date:
Signed: (Parent/Guardian)	Date:
Signed: (Teacher/Staff Member)	Date:

Mentoring Action Plan

Details:	Meeting 1	
Name of Teacher		
Names of Mentors		
Date of Meeting		
Location of Meeting		
Action Plan		
Points to discuss	Steps to take	Timeframe
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
Date of Next meeting		
Points to discuss at next meeting		
Reflection (points you wish to note)		

* This template is a guideline for you. For example, you may have 10 smaller, short-term goals or 3 larger long-term goals you wish to focus on. You will decide on the number of goals at your first meeting with your mentor.

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Mentoring Action Plan

Details:	Meeting 2	
Name of Teacher		
Names of Mentors		
Date of Meeting		
Location of Meeting		
Action Plan		
Points to discuss	Steps to take	Timeframe
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
Date of Next meeting		
Points to discuss at next meeting		
Reflection (points you wish to note)		

Mentoring Action Plan

Details:	Meeting 3	
Name of Teacher		
Names of Mentors		
Date of Meeting		
Location of Meeting		
Action Plan		
Points to discuss	Steps to take	Timeframe
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
Date of Next meeting		
Points to discuss at next meeting		
Reflection (points you wish to note)		

Teacher self-evaluation

You can use the following headings to help you reflect on your role as a leader of mentoring in your school.

Question:	Answers
<p>What?</p> <p>Programme set up - what have I learned about the logistics?</p> <p>Areas of success - what worked well for me as a leader, other teachers, students and school?</p> <p>What was the benefit of the programme for students, staff and the school?</p> <p>Areas for improvement - what can be improved for me as a leaders, teachers, students and school?</p> <p>Skills and qualities - what skills and qualities have I developed/progressed?</p>	
<p>So What?</p> <p>What have I learned?</p> <p>What does this tell me about my role as a mentoring leader?</p> <p>What other knowledge/supports/training/networks can I bring to the mentoring programme in my school?</p> <p>What are the links with the ‘Looking at Our Schools’ framework?</p>	
<p>The best part of being involved in a peer mentoring programme is:</p> <p>What are my target areas for improving next year’s mentoring programme?</p> <p>What are my plans for implementing next year’s mentoring programme?</p> <p>What are the broader issues that need to be considered for leading a mentoring programme in my school?</p>	

Sample Peer Mentor Application Form

(Post-Primary Pupils)

Personal	
Name	
School	
Year	
Your school email (if applicable):	
Mentor or mentee?	
Why would you like to become a peer mentor?	
What do you think the role of a mentor should be?	
Further details These details will help us match the mentees and mentors. Providing these details to us is voluntary. Fill in as much or as little information as you would like.	
Age:	Gender:
Interests/hobbies:	
What skills and/or qualities do you feel that you have to fulfil this role?	



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Access and Widening Participation Services

The Access & Widening Participation Service supports individuals from marginalised backgrounds to access and participate in higher education. We work with all education providers, community and advocacy groups, and prospective and registered students. Our supports include:

Who We Support

HEAR

**Traveller
and Roma
Community**

Carers

Mature

**Single
Parent**

**People with
Convictions**

QQI/FET

**Care of
the State**

**International
Protection**

What We Support

Access Pathways

- Access Programmes
- HEAR Admissions
- Mature Entry
- Further Education Entry

Financial Support

- Student Assistance Fund
- Laptop Loan Scheme
- Scholarships
- SUSI Advice
- Financial Readiness for Life

Outreach Opportunities

- Campus Visits
- Taster Sessions
- Open Days
- Mentoring
- Application Support
- Community and Advocacy Groups

Contact us

Donegal campuses

T: +353 (0) 74 9186170
E: access.donegal@atu.ie

Sligo campus

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E: access.sligo@atu.ie

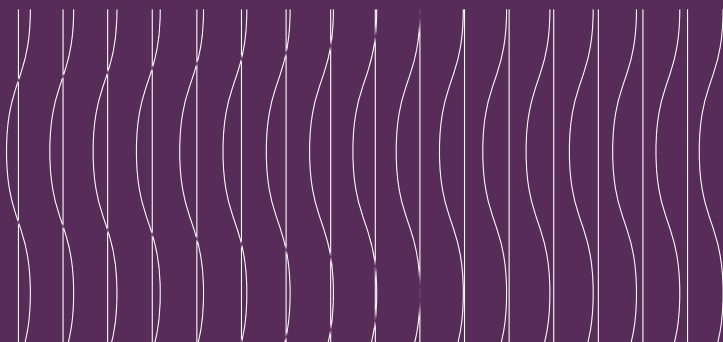
Galway and Mayo campuses

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St Angelas campus

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Mentoring for Access and Widening Participation



CREATING
PATHWAYS
TO HIGHER
EDUCATION



A joint Higher Education Cluster Access Project between
Atlantic Technological University (ATU) and University of Galway.



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