Impact Career Mentoring Scheme

Annette Baxter

A.R.Baxter@shu.ac.uk

Student and Academic Services, Careers and Employment Service

Subject group:	Open to all courses/all years
Number of students involved:	40 - 50 per year
Elements of the employability framework addressed:	• Development of autonomy; • Key skills development; • Real world activities; • Work related learning; • Reflection on use of knowledge and skills: transfer of these to work environment; • Career management skills; • Preparation for specific professional areas; • Enterprise, innovation and creativity.

Description of learning and teaching approach adopted

The Impact Career Mentoring Scheme involves matching a student to a work-based professional from a local/national organisation who has the skills and knowledge to share and who could give the student an insight into the work place or job role. The scheme lasts six months during which time mentees are expected to meet with their mentor for four one-hour appointments. At least one of these meetings should be at the employer's workplace.

The scheme aims to give the mentee appropriate knowledge, skills and insights into the work place or job role so the mentee can face their job search with confidence

Students not only get insights into a job role or organisation that interests them, but may also see the practical application of their subject knowledge within the workplace and develop their employability in terms of negotiation, planning, time management, professional networking and interpersonal skills etc.

Students are encouraged to set their own objectives and review these at the end of the scheme. They are also asked to complete an evaluative summary report of their experiences reflecting upon their experience and learning outcomes.

Initially established at SHU in 2003 as an externally funded, regional and collaborative positive action project designed to develop the competitiveness and employability of UK Black and Minority Ethnic students; the scheme was later funded by Aimhigher to work with disabled students, and non traditional entrants to university. The scheme now proactively promotes itself to attract applications from Hallam's diverse and widening participation student population but is now also open more widely to benefit any home undergraduate student.

Employability objectives and intended learning outcomes

It was intended that the mentoring scheme would be a mutually beneficial relationship for all participants. With this in mind, the benefits have been drawn for mentees, mentors and organisations as follows:

Benefits to mentees
• Based upon the insights, advice and support from a work based professional the scheme enables the student to make well informed and realistic decisions about their career choice;

• To give the mentee an 'insiders guide' to the application and job hunting process and therefore develop appropriate strategies to succeed in the industry/career role;

• To boost the mentee's confidence through greater understanding and insight into a job role or organisation;

- To give students opportunity to develop specialist skills appropriate to their career choice;

- To give the mentee an extended network of contacts;

- To give students opportunity to take responsibility for their own personal and professional development. Once the student mentee is 'matched' and introduced their mentor, the student is encouraged to take the lead in arranging meetings, setting the objectives for the partnership, negotiating outcomes, planning agendas for meetings and reviewing their progress;

- Provide an opportunity for the students to review their strengths and skills and develop key employability skills especially in communication, negotiation and interpersonal skills appropriate to professional work environment;

- To give the student opportunity to explore their own strengths and development needs and identify strategies to meet these needs.

Benefits to mentors

- Career Development - Mentoring is becoming increasingly popular in modern business. Mentors receive training and the opportunity to develop this highly regarded skill and polish their people management and relationship building skills.

- A New Perspective - Mentors get a chance to look at their own job with fresh eyes.

- Learning on a mentoring scheme can be a two-way process - the mentee may have new ideas and knowledge to share.

- Job Satisfaction - As well as the satisfaction of helping others, previous years' mentors reported an increased sense of job satisfaction.

- Increased Understanding - The scheme enables mentors to keep up to date with developments within higher education, qualification structures and the needs or experiences of students and graduates.

- Continuing Professional Development - mentoring is recognised by some professional associations as CPD activity which will help a member maintain their professional registration, practitioner or Chartership status.

- Networking - An opportunity to broaden their professional network by meeting mentors from other organisations.

Benefits to the employing organisation

- The organisation will benefit from a higher profile on campus. The students you help are potential customers and clients.

- By taking part in the mentoring scheme, mentees are more aware of an organisation as a potential employer.

- Participation demonstrates commitment to promoting diversity and equality of opportunity.

- Introductions to potential future employees.

- An opportunity for organisations that don't currently recruit graduates to see how they might benefit the company.

- To help an organisation to keep up to date with developments in higher education and develop a potentially valuable relationship with the University.

Description of and tips for good practice; lessons learned

Recruiting student mentees:
The scheme was promoted via Careers and Employment Service netWORK vacancy site. Information about the scheme was also provided at careers induction talks and leaflets were distributed around campus and to placement teams. We recommended and referred students in to the mentoring scheme via our 1-1 career guidance appointments with clients. Where work insights were diagnosed as appropriate the needs of the client mentoring activities complemented a model of career guidance, planning and coaching.

We contacted appropriate student union societies and offered a mentoring taster session via the Students Union 'Why Don't You' programme.

To proactively promote the scheme to those students who, according to much research, may face hardship in the job market we used targeted SHU email alerts to groups such as BME students, disabled students. We also sent emails via Disabled Student Support team emails system, provided information to Faculty WP Officers, and presented at WP events, CETL Diversity SIG events.

Offering a scheme open to all students of all years and courses may have serviced to 'dilute' the impact of the publicity. The more specific and well defined the student cohort to be targeted is, the more focused and tailored the publicity materials and channels of promotion can be.

Recruiting mentors:
To recruit mentors, we approached local business associations such as the Chambers of Commerce and circulated details to the local and national employers with whom the Careers and Employment Service already had an established relationship.

Publicity was posted on Hallam Alumni website to encourage SHU graduates to volunteer. Also targeted professional associations such as Chartered Institute of Marketing, British Computer Society, Law Society etc.

To attract employers with a strong commitment to addressing diversity agendas, we approached relevant local associations such as Sheffield Black Business Forum, Business in the Community and Diversity Managers within organisations.

Matching (The chicken and egg - which to recruit first?)
Finding the right mentors for the right students can be a challenge. We found it was best not to make a match at all unless it was the right mentor/mentee pairing. When mentors apply they specify the areas of their experience and what skills they can offer support with. Conversely, on their application form, mentees specify areas of career interest which are of interest and which they hope to develop. Matching is done by comparing these check lists.

Where there is doubt, we found it was preferable to ask the student to select their mentor from the choices available. We would not make a 'match' unless we were confident it was appropriate to the student's requirements. We did not make promise that all mentors would be matched therefore, since their realm of professional interest may not have matched the career interests of the students applying in a particular year.

Managing the relationship and maintaining support of unmatched mentors is therefore important and we have tried to address this by inviting mentors to be involved in other university events such as the Choices and Voices conferences, careers workshops etc.

Where we did not already have a mentor from the career focus of interest to the mentee, we proactively approached organisations to identify appropriate contacts. This may be done by contacting HR departments, heads of relevant departments, diversity champions within organisations, or people within organisations who are responsible for the Corporate Social Responsibility agenda for that organisation. Generally, organisations and people have been positive and keen to be involved.

Motivation of participants:
Students apply for the programme and are interviewed. This is not to put up barriers to participation, but to check motivation, commitment and clarify expectations are realistic and appropriate.

Preparation for mentoring for both mentees and mentors:
To ensure all participants expectations were appropriate and they were able to make the most of the experience, all mentees and mentors are invited to a preparation 'training' / induction to mentoring meeting. This is held at the beginning of the academic year and is both a training induction event but also an opportunity to introduce mentor/mentee partnerships. It is also a networking event for mentors and a mentor/mentee 'speed dating' opportunity for those present who have not been matched.

Where people join the programme after this first launch event, mentor training and preparation is organised on an individual basis or for small groups.

Mentees and mentors are given resource pack of materials to support their partnership e.g. learning styles exercises, career motivations tasks, SWOT analysis sheets and mentees are given a mentoring card sort to help them consider, clarify and prioritise their objectives from the mentoring partnership. This has proven to be much valued by students in helping expand their understanding of the potential of mentoring and prioritise their own personal expectations.

Ongoing support for mentees and mentors:
Once matches have been introduced the partnerships should be self regulating. It is useful to have someone as the link referral point for participants during the scheme however. We have also found it useful to have occasional optional informal 'get togethers' of mentees to ensure they were progressing with the partnership, to hear of any updates/issues that needed addressing and for them to compare experiences of others, share tips and ideas of what could be negotiated.

To keep in touch with mentors and reinforce 'a connection' to the programme, we found it helpful to send occasional emails to mentors (especially important as mentioned earlier, for those volunteer mentors who had not been matched). If required, mentors could also post requests for information, ideas or support via a Mentors' Email Network so (while obviously respecting the confidentiality of their mentee) they could share ideas, tips and advice with each other.

Recognition:
There are no academic credits awarded for participation on the scheme, and as such mentoring is evidence of a student's autonomy, initiative and personal motivation. It was felt however this needed to be recognised, so an award certificate is presented to all participants and in the 2007/08 academic year it was also agreed with Hallam Union that students undertaking mentoring could use this experience to achieve the Hallam Award.

Key points of any feedback gathered or evaluation undertaken with students or staff

- Feedback forms are given to both student mentees and mentors at the end of the programme;

- A 'Recognising achievement' event is held in April bringing together all participants to hear of their experiences, outcomes achieved and to evaluate the scheme;

- Students are asked to complete a reflective report on their experience summarising any learning points.

Achievements gained (summarised from discussion groups at the last Recognising Achievement event):

Mentees	Occupational awareness
	Making contacts
	A social network
	Self-development and self-esteem
	Confidence building
	Choosing a career path
	New direction
	Help with CV and applications
	Interview techniques
	Learning from others' experiences
	What disability provision I should expect at work
Mentors	Satisfaction
	Giving something back to community
	Sharing knowledge
	Insight into problems students face getting jobs
	Understanding of the motivations of students entering the job market
	Introducing students to industry
	Links to the universities
	Encouraging diversity in recruitment
	Helping someone not to make the mistakes I made

Some of the comments from evaluation forms include:

Student Quotes

'A mentor is a fantastic career resource. They have lots of useful experience and knowledge to pass onto you. If you are unsure about the next step after uni, get involved in the mentoring scheme.'

Student 1, SHU

'The mentoring programme has helped me get my foot on the ladder for my chosen career and without it I would still not really have any idea where to start'

Student 2, SHU

'I have gained more confidence to speak to and have meetings with people that I do not know, and I have discovered what a useful tool networking can be... I have also arranged some job shadowing through my mentors contacts'

Student 3, SHU

Mentor Quotes

'Gives you confidence as it makes you realise how much you know and how your soft skills have developed.'

<div align="right">

Mentor 1

</div>

'Being involved with mentoring allows you to be involved with young people and keep your mentoring skills finely 'tuned'

<div align="right">

Mentor 2

</div>

The scheme has received recognition from the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation and achieved Approved Provider Status. In addition, the scheme won the AGCAS (Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services) Diversity Award in 2005.

Resources used

Brunel University Careers Service Pro-Active Mentoring Project - Minority Ethnic Recruitment, Information, Training and Support (2002) *Mentoring Pack and Tutor Pack*

1. Bell C.R. (2002), *Managers As Mentors*, 2, San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc

2. Clutterbuck, D. (1991), *Everyone needs a Mentor*, 2, London: IPD

3. Egan, G. (1998) *The Skilled Helper*, 2, Monterey: Brooks/ Cole

4. Francis, D. (1994) *Managing Your Own Career:* Harper Collins

5. Goleman D, (1996) *Emotional Intelligence*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing

6. Klasen, N. & Clutterbuck (2002), *Implementing Mentoring Schemes*, Oxford: Butterworth – Heinemann

7. Megginson, D. & Cuttlebuck, D. et al (2005) *Mentoring in Action – A practical guide for managers*, London: Kogan Page

8. Miller, A. (2002) *Mentoring Students & Young People*, London: Kogan Page

9. Norton, B. & Tivey, J. (1995) *Mentoring*, Northants: Institute of Management

10. Nelson-Jones, R (1983) *Practical Counselling Skills*, London: Cassell

11. O'Connor, J & Seymour, J. (1993) *Introducing NLP, 2*, Great Britain: Aquarian Press

12. Parsole, E. (1995) *Coaching, Mentoring and Assessing: A practical guide to developing competence*, London: Kogan Page

13. Parsole, E. & Wray, M. (2000) *Coaching & Mentoring*, London: Kogan Page

14. Pegg, M. (1999) *The Art of Mentoring*, Guildford, GB: Management Books 2000 Ltd.

This information can be made available in other formats. Please contact us for details.