Student Peer Mentoring Policy

Introduction

Edge Hill University is committed to:

- Providing an inclusive environment, which inspires a sense of community and belonging.
- Providing outstanding learning and teaching opportunities for its students.
- Providing a firm foundation for its graduates and students.
- Enhancing student employability.
- Providing opportunities for an outstanding student experience.
- Recognising and celebrating student success.
- Enhancing the life opportunities for its students.
- Working as a cohesive whole to achieve its vision.

Commitments

The University aims to demonstrate its commitment to Student Peer Mentoring through:

- Supporting the implementation of opportunities for transferable skills, widening participation, and lifelong learning.
- Advocating best practice as recognised in the wider HE community.[1]
- Ensuring opportunities are offered to enhance students' future employability.
- Ensuring students have opportunities to participate in the Student Peer Mentoring Scheme.

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[1] For example, Student Peer Mentoring:

- [Encourages] friendship and peer support [and] has become a valuable approach in aiding student transition, benefitting both mentees and mentors.
- Is an established support system for student engagement and retention.
- [Enables individuals] to address a wide range of enquiries, which assist[s] the process of social and academic adjustment.
- May be academic, social or professional in nature; or indeed, a mixture of these. It is generally aimed at enhancing the student experience.
- Can provide […] a true 'win-win-win' situation in which new students belong, existing students develop new skills and institutions experience minimal student attrition. It offers an approach whereby students help students discover the new world of university life through the formation of safe and supportive peer relationships.
- Is a key component of the challenge to encourage student success at transition.
- Is not just reflective of the support given to new students in the first few days and weeks of university. Instead it is indicative of the longer-term reciprocal relationships made between peers in which both benefit and both succeed.
- Impacts positively on students' experiences by engendering a greater sense of belonging [….]

Andrews Jane, Clark Robin, Thomas Liz (Ed.s) (March, 2012) *What Works: Compendium of Effective Practice in Higher Education, Retention and Success*, Published Aston University, Birmingham & HEA, York. (pp.5-74)

The University will deliver these commitments by:

- Promoting respect and encouraging good relations within and between groups.
- Operationalising a Student Peer Mentoring Scheme in every department of the University, and promoting and rewarding it.

Application

The University will apply the Student Peer Mentoring Policy to:

- Inspire a sense of community and belonging.
- Support new and existing students, in terms of student experience and employability.[2]
- Afford appropriate peer support to new students in their transition and induction into the University.
- Positively enhance the student experience.
- Recognise and actively support the Student Peer Mentoring Scheme as a University retention strategy.

Implementation

The University community as a whole, shares responsibility for the successful application of this policy and to ensure leadership to make it effective. This would include those who are involved in student recruitment, support, development and supervision.

In its implementation, the Student Peer Mentoring Policy aims to uphold the University's strategic plan and mission by "building on the University's motto and our sense of values, whilst supporting, in particular, three of the six key strategic aims: the student experience (the University's key driver); our people strategy (the vital deliverers of our deliverables); and, essentially, how we will secure and enhance our sustainability as an increasingly successful university." (Dr John Cater and Michael Pinfold, March 2013, *EHU Strategic Plan 2013-2020* https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/strategic-plan-2013-2020.pdf, Foreword, accessed 29.11.16)

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[2] For Example, the University will:

- Provide an outstanding student experience […] and further develop its strong sense of community.
- Provide an exceptional, student-centred experience founded on […] best practice.
- Provide a focussed approach to student employability.
- Enhance the employability of [its] students by enabling them to develop transferable skills.

EHU, Strategic Plan 2013 – 2020, https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/files/strategic-plan-2013-2020.pdf, accessed 29.11.16.

In such a way, students are afforded opportunities to "become 'capable' in the sense outlined by Stephenson (1998):
Capable people have confidence in their ability to –

1. Take effective and appropriate action
2. Explain what they are seeking to achieve
3. Live and work effectively with others, and
4. Continue to learn from their experiences, both as individuals and in association with others, in a diverse and changing society [….]

Capability is a necessary part of specialist expertise, not separate from it. Capable people not only know about their specialisms, they also have the confidence to apply their knowledge and skills within varied and changing situations and to continue to develop their specialist knowledge and skills [….]"

Cited in Yorke, Mantz (2006) *Employability in higher education: what it is – what it is not*, York: The Higher Education Academy, p. 14.

Roles & Responsibilities (Managers)

- Ensure coordination of the Student Peer Mentoring Scheme, and consider any necessary administrative support.
- Allocate appropriate member(s) of staff to act as the Student Peer Mentor Co-ordinator(s), to manage the Student Peer Mentoring Scheme, and consider any necessary administrative support.
- Enable access to provision of suitable training for student peer mentors.
- Engage student peer mentors during recruitment events.
- Promote student peer mentor visibility and encourage their sense of identity.
- Advocate and support student peer mentor celebration and success.

Coordination should:

- Ensure suitable candidates are recruited onto the Student Peer Mentoring Scheme and that comprehensive training is provided.
- Promote individual or group support for student peer mentors.
- Consider having lead student peer mentors on the Scheme to support the Student Peer Mentor Team, if applicable.
- Provide all student peer mentors with a student peer mentor handbook.
- Ensure effective communication with, and dissemination of information to, managers, all staff, student peer mentors, and mentees.
- Advocate peer mentor celebration and success.
- Ensure review and evaluation of the Student Peer Mentoring Scheme to maintain quality assurance and best practice.

All Staff

Should:

- Promote and support the Student Peer Mentoring Policy.
- Encourage positive relations between all student peer mentors and mentees.
- Support the student peer mentors as advocates of their respective department and of the University.
- Communicate with managers on matters concerning the Student Peer Mentoring Policy and the Student Peer Mentoring Scheme.

Monitoring and Review

- The University will maintain appropriate staff information and monitoring systems to assist the effective implementation of this policy. This information will be treated sensitively and in accordance with the University's data protection and privacy policies.