The Student Learning Advisory Service is part of the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching

www.kent.ac.uk/learning
Disclaimer

This handbook has been compiled for internal use at the University of Kent only. Some of the information presented has been adapted from material produced by:

- **The Center for Academic Development** at the University of Missouri-Kansas City which runs ‘SI - Supplementary Instruction’
  [http://www.umkc.edu/cad/si/](http://www.umkc.edu/cad/si/)

- **Teaching and Learning Support Office** at the University of Manchester which runs ‘PASS- Peer Assisted Study Sessions’
  [http://www.pass.manchester.ac.uk/](http://www.pass.manchester.ac.uk/)

- **Transition Programme** at the University College London which runs ‘Transition mentoring’ and ‘PAL - Peer Assisted Learning’
  [http://www.ucl.ac.uk/transition/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/transition/)

We would like to thank the above listed institutions for their kind permission to use, and make use of, their material and ideas.

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**Employability Skills - Disks**

- **IT Skills**
- **Numeracy**
- **Reflection**
- **Problem solving**
- **Enterprise skills**
- **Leadership skills**
- **Team working**
- **Planning and organisation skills**
- **Communication skills**
- **Research skills**
Introduction

Thank you for choosing to become a mentor with the Academic Peer Mentoring (APM) scheme at the University of Kent. You will be playing an important role in helping new students to settle into their course and develop an understanding of their subject.

The Academic Peer Mentoring (APM) scheme aims to promote student-centred learning to complement the existing teacher-centred components of the degree programme. It has been designed to encourage students to learn collaboratively towards understanding and mastering the academic expectations of their course as well as to develop discussion skills, critical thinking and analytical skills.

We hope that you will enjoy being a mentor and benefit from the experience as much as your mentees will. To help you recognise the skills you will develop as a mentor we have marked pages in this handbook with the ‘employability discs’ (see appendix for details). We recommend that you record your development in MyFolio.

This handbook gives you more information about your role, some guidelines about what is expected of you and some practical advice about leading a successful mentor group.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact the APM coordinators in the Student Learning Advisory Service (SLAS):

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<th>Name</th>
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Who is who? (And what do they do?)

Mentees

Students who feel that they would benefit from additional weekly review sessions which will go over the material taught in lectures, seminars, lab sessions etc. They have elected to come and are free to stop coming if they decide that they no longer need the sessions. They may initially believe that the mentors will primarily help them with their assignments but hopefully once you have explained the set up to them, they will participate and engage in deep learning.

Mentor (you)

A student who has successfully completed the module. You do not need to be a top student but should be enthusiastic about your course as this will inspire your mentees. You need not have experience of mentoring but should have an interest in and an understanding of the difficulties that incoming students may experience. You should also be reliable, committed, motivated, patient, compassionate, friendly and sensitive to a range of cultures and abilities. As a mentor you guide your mentees and facilitate their learning (more details below).

Liaison tutor

An academic member of staff in your school who will guide you (the mentor) regarding the academic content of the sessions. You should approach them if you have any questions or need any specific material. You should also let them know how the students - as a group - are coping with the material. Depending on how your school is organising APM, the liaison tutor should give you the names of your mentees.

APM Coordinators

Staff of the Student Learning Advisory Service who will train and guide the mentors. They will teach you how to run your APM session, organise or develop activities and handle difficult students. They are your back up and happy to advise you on all aspects of the APM scheme. You will need to meet up with a coordinator at least once a term to review the effectiveness of the scheme and provide feedback.
**What is ‘mentoring’?**

A mentor is a person who acts as a role model to guide and support someone through a learning and development process. (Gravells, 2007)

A mentor is a more experienced individual willing to share their knowledge with someone less experienced in a relationship of mutual trust. (Clutterbuck, 1991)

There are a number of peer mentoring schemes in existence at universities in the UK. Many of these focus on transition mentoring or ‘buddying’ in order to help new students settle into university life.

At the **University of Kent** the focus of the peer mentoring is predominantly on academic integration. Mentors provide support to incoming students on the same academic programme by guiding them through the academic year and by helping them develop their learning.

APM@Kent:

- promotes student-centred learning to complement the existing teacher-centred components of the degree programmes
- follows the course/module syllabus
- offers regularly scheduled, out-of-class, review sessions
- encourages all students on a particular programme to get involved
What do mentors do?

Your role is not to teach or give answers but to guide your mentees in finding the answers themselves. Mentoring should be enjoyable and profitable for both, the mentor and the mentees, but since this is a formal scheme, here are some guidelines.

As a mentor you will:

- meet regularly, with your group of mentees
- facilitate group discussions and exercises
- promote understanding by re-examining course material as a group
- establish a climate of trust, support and encouragement
- promote independent learning
- maintain confidentiality
- be a good role model
- meet regularly with the relevant liaison tutor to maintain correct pace
- feed information regarding general progress back to APM coordinator

As a mentor you will not:

- fill the role of a tutor or lecturer
- give the group your own notes or assignments
- provide answers or do the homework for your mentees
- assist with an assignment
- act as a counsellor or parent
- give out information that you are not sure about
- teach seminar or lecture material
- introduce new material that is in conflict with seminar or lecture material
- introduce support material without the agreement of academics
- continue with the sessions during the exam term unless your mentees feel it is absolutely necessary (and you are happy to do so)
- ‘spy’ on students
- be expected to ‘be on call’
What’s in it for me?

A lot!

Most mentors find the experience very worthwhile and rewarding. By becoming a mentor you are given an opportunity to develop your Employability Skills (see Appendix) such as leadership and group work skills. Your improved communication skills will raise your self-confidence and benefit you in your own academic development. Going over topics will consolidate your own knowledge base of core issues and elements in your course, so you are likely to see an improvement to your own academic performance.

The Student Learning Advisory Service will officially acknowledge your valuable contribution to the schools and the student community.

Additionally your input will count towards:

- Kent Student Certificate for Volunteering
- Employability Points

Your mentoring experience will also ‘give you the edge’ over competitors when it comes to getting a job. Not only will you be able to compile a much more attractive CV but you will also be able to ‘shine’ in an interview situation. Your enhanced communication and presentation skills should definitely give you an advantage.
Confidentiality

Confidentiality is important.

When reporting back to the liaison tutor in your school regarding the general progress of your group, you should not divulge details of your discussions or say who said or knew (or didn’t know) what. Instead you should give general feedback on issues, e.g. “Most students find X very difficult”.

The actual content of the group discussions is confidential. Occasionally students may divulge very personal information to you. In this case you should point out that there are other sources of help on Campus (see Appendix) and remind the students that you are not trained in this particular area.

The only time when you may need to break confidentiality is when you suspect that a student is at risk of harming themselves or others. In that case you should contact the APM coordinator for advice on how to proceed.
Being a good peer mentor

- **Be positive**: help lift the spirits of students who may have low self-esteem or be lacking in confidence.

- **Be reliable**: set the standard in the relationship by committing to, and arranging, regular meetings.

- **Show interest**: make a conscious effort to remember previous discussions and if appropriate, take brief notes. Typically, the first part of a meeting follows up on points from the previous meeting.

- **Be relaxed**: friendly and responsive to the needs and concerns of others.

- **Be non-judgemental**: as far as possible, do not apply your own standards or experience as the sole basis for building your relationship with mentees.

- **Be realistic**: Don’t make promises you can’t keep.

- **Be a good listener**: people do not always listen carefully to each other. Showing that you listen well will encourage your mentee(s) to know that you respect their views. Developing effective listening and questioning skills (see mentor support and development) is a key part of peer mentoring training.

- **Communicate clearly**: Explain your intentions to mentees, discuss their expectations, and check your understanding and theirs.

**Inclusivity**

There is likely to be a diverse range of people within your group – ethnicity, faith, socio-economics, age, ability and learning preference. You can facilitate an inclusive atmosphere in a number of ways:

- Speak clearly for students with English as a second language (ESL)
- Avoid stereotyping and do not allow racist/sexist/inappropriate jokes or comments
- Open the conversation to the whole group, but listen to each group member
- Have some activities of topics for discussion in reserve in case you need to steer the conversation in a different direction
Time commitment

You have to be able to commit to the following:

- ½ day training (beginning of autumn term)
- Regular sessions as agreed with your student group
- Some time to prepare before the sessions
- 1-hour review meeting at the end of each term
- after each session take 10 minutes to review the session, take some notes on:
  - How many mentees attended?
  - The main issue/s discussed?
  - How did the group function?
  - Are there any matters for attention?

Note: You can record this information in MyFolio. More information on how to make the most of MyFolio can be found in the Appendix.
Running APM sessions

Here are some ideas on how to prepare for your sessions. It is very likely that you will find the first meeting quite daunting. Prepare well (yourself and your material) but keep in mind that the session is for the mentees and that you may need to ‘change course’ or adapt your plans during the session. If your mentees see immediate benefits for themselves, they will be more likely to continue, so accomplishing something definite in the first session is important. However, you may want to explain to your group that sometimes benefits do not occur until several regular sessions have taken place.

Before the very first meeting,

- contact your School for your list of mentees
- book a room through the School or arrange to meet in an open space (café/library – not a pub as it may alienate some students)
- request from lecturers guest access to the relevant modules on Moodle
- contact the mentees with information on venue, time and topic (they may want to bring resources)
- think back:
  - How did you feel at the beginning of your course?
  - Which particular difficulties did you, or your friends, encounter?
- think about layout, ice breaker or introductory activities (see below)
- prepare some exercises or activities on the material so far

During the first meeting,

- spend some time on learning names and getting to know each other (make it fun)
- clarify practicalities (rooms, email group, contact,...)
- explain the aims of APM
  - discuss expectations: the mentees’ and yours
  - make sure the mentees understand what you can/cannot do
  - set boundaries, i.e. your availability
- explain confidentiality (whatever is said in the session, stays in the session)
- establish an informal, yet productive, atmosphere
- make a long-term plan: clarify and agree upon objectives and procedures
• discuss and then establish ‘ground rules’
• agree a schedule for the sessions, this:
  • gives structure to the session
  • gives students a say in what is covered
  • encourages students to raise issues of concern or interest
  • brings the students together as a group
  • allows the students to come prepared and use their own resources
• go over course material so far
• decide on what to work on next week
• collect feedback
• end on a positive note
• end on time

After the first meeting
• reflect on how you think the meeting went (what worked what may need to be changed)
• evaluate the session by looking at the feedback you received
• record your thoughts

For all other sessions

Before

Prepare by reading over your own (old) lecture notes, looking at documents on Moodle and by researching the subject if necessary.

Think about and speak to the lecturer:

• What has been covered that week?
• What is the most difficult content (not necessarily the most important)
• What makes it so difficult?
• How can you make it more accessible?
• (break it down /different angle)
• How can you help students to develop strategies to organise content?
• What exercises are most helpful and appeal to the greater number of students?
• Which small group techniques will you use?
• What resources do you have?

Prepare activities, review material (use session planner)

During

• go over the names (until everyone knows them)
• ‘How was the week?’ (highlights & lowlights, use ice breaker)
• define the problem areas
  (a) determine what the mentees know (abilities and skills)
  (b) determine what the mentees need to know
  (c) assess the nature of any difficulties presented to you
• vary activities
• stay on track
• sum up/close the session
• decide on what to work on next week
• collect feedback
• end on time

After

Forward any important issues to the liaison tutor in your school (e.g. “All students struggled with X”)

Review the session for yourself (use MyFolio for this?), use your own impression and the feedback that you have collected from the mentees.

• went well/not well
• what will I need to go over again
• what will I need to do differently
How do we learn? Different styles

Learning at university is about gathering information, organising it, understanding it, reflecting upon it, and presenting ideas. Everyone learns differently so it is important to remember this when conducting your APM sessions.

There are numerous theories looking at the way different individuals learn and approach their work. As a mentor it is important to be aware that students learn in different ways and thus will benefit from different approaches and activities in the APM sessions. Below are two of the most popular theories on learning styles and preferences.

1. **VAK (learning preference)**

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<tr>
<th>Learning Preference</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>seeing and reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Auditory</td>
<td>listening and speaking</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kinaesthetic</td>
<td>touching and doing</td>
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**Visual Learners** prefer using images, pictures, colours & maps to organise thoughts.

Tips for study:
- Use mind-maps to see connections between ideas/theories.
- Revise by making colourful flashcards to review
- Visualise difficult concepts in your mind’s eye using pictures and events
- Use tables, diagrams and pictures

**Kinaesthetic Learners** prefer to learn by doing.

Tips for study:
- Making mind-maps and flowcharts are useful, but it is the act of making them that aids kinaesthetic learning
- Make learning productive by creating active quizzes, charts and cards
Auditory Learners learn best by listening and discussing ideas.

Tips for study
- Discuss, discuss, discuss! APM sessions are the perfect place for auditory learners!

2. **Honey and Mumford** (1992) categorised learners into 4 main groups:

**Activists** like to be involved in new experiences. They are open-minded and enthusiastic about new ideas but get bored with implementation. They enjoy doing things and tend to act first and consider the implications afterwards. They like working with others but tend to hog the limelight.

**Reflectors** like to stand back and look at a situation from different perspectives. They like to collect data and think about it carefully before coming to any conclusions. They enjoy observing others and will listen to their views before offering their own.

**Theorists** adapt and integrate observations into complex and logically sound theories. They think problems through in a step by step way. They tend to be perfectionists who like to fit things into a rational scheme. They tend to be detached and analytical rather than subjective or emotive in their thinking.

**Pragmatists** are keen to try things out. They want concepts that can be applied to their job. They tend to be impatient with lengthy discussions and are practical and down to earth.

To identify and learn more about your own learning style you can use this shorter online questionnaire:
http://www.brainboxx.co.uk/A2_LEARNSTYLES/pages/roughandready.htm
or request the full Honey and Mumford questionnaire from the APM coordinator.
Working with groups

With any group of people, independent of the size, there are always a number of personalities involved. Some groups will get along immediately, while others take longer to get to know each other and work together well. As a mentor you will be leading a group of students. Group dynamics are often complex so it is useful to have a basic awareness of some of the roles group members may adopt and an understanding of your own role within the group.

**Group leader:** Although you have the role of group leader you cannot be held solely responsible for the success or failure of the group. You should point out to your group early on that it is a joint venture and that they all have an important role to play in the success of the group. As the group leader you can help the group run smoothly by checking that everyone can see and hear everyone else, jot down or nominate another group member to jot down useful points. Facilitating group discussions and getting members to work productively with each other is a skill that you will develop further over time.

**Group members:** in order for group members to get the most from a group they should ensure that they do any suggested tasks or reading before the session. They should also be prepared to ask questions and contribute to the discussion.

**General points which help a group to be successful**

- **Be encouraging:** try to be positive about other people’s contributions and ideas
- **Listen to each other:** Make sure that the group respects each other and listens to others’ contributions
- **Help the flow:** try to keep the conversation going by asking follow up questions
- **Build on other people’s ideas:** indicate that you have valued an idea by saying ‘that’s an important point and it leads us on to....’
- **Include everyone:** some people will be naturally quiet whilst others will have something to say on everything. Try to be aware of this in your group and encourage quieter students to participate without ‘putting them on the spot’ Also if someone really dominates you may need to make them aware of this and ask them to allow others to contribute too
- **Indicate when you agree:** be encouraging and say when someone has made a good point
• **Admit mistakes:** if you don’t know something or you make a mistake admit it and suggest that someone else in the group could find out the right answer or the information that is needed.

• **Offer information:** share your knowledge but do not think that you have to tell the group answers. It may be that you just point them in the direction of the information that they need.

• **Use body language:** be aware of your body language, try not to slouch but also do not be too formal.

• **Make suggestions:** If the discussion stalls, try to suggest a new activity to get the conversation going again.

• **Sum up for the group:** try to reserve 10 minutes at the end of each session to sum up what has been covered; once the group is used to this you can nominate others to do this for you.

• **Ask for explanations:** make sure that everyone can understand what is said.

• **Explain yourself clearly:** recognise when a member may not understand what you are saying (e.g. blank stare, avoiding eye contact).

• **Always ask for feedback:** let the mentees know that this is for them and they can decide what they want to do.

**Personalities**

Depending on their personality, group members will approach (and benefit from) tasks and discussions in a very different way. While some are outgoing and enthusiastic, others may be more introvert and reflective. After studying team dynamics in the 1970s, the British psychologist Meredith Belbin identified a variety of team roles, i.e. personalities that individuals assume when working in a team (e.g. the motivator). For more details see ‘Team Role Summary Description’ in the Appendix.

For a team to be productive there should be a mixture of team personalities. Even though you cannot choose your group members, it may be helpful to be aware of the different personalities, including their strengths and weaknesses.

**Group work as an employability skill**

Working in groups is an important transferable skill; it is listed among Kent’s Employability Skills strategy. It will be useful for you to be aware of your qualities in this area and from time to time you may want to record your reflections on your development of this skill through the mentoring programme, this can be fed back to the APM coordinator via the weekly report.
How should you ‘teach’?

Even though you are not supposed to teach, you will need to think about strategies and activities to help your mentees master the module content. You may have a preference for a particular approach, e.g. questioning, but you will need to be able to adapt your ‘teaching style’ to the learning styles of your mentees. However, remember that what works for one may not work for another - so, vary activities.

Some techniques:

- questioning – see questioning techniques section below
- discovery – set up problems for mentees to solve
- drill – memory work
- application – apply learned X to new situation Y
- testing – see questioning techniques below for possibilities
- summarising – on a regular basis
- coding – illustrate/link material with the strange, unusual, funny, emotional (a memory tactic)
- looking it up (together)
- referral to other resource people – yes, this is a valid teaching strategy!
- board work – especially for kinaesthetic learners
- demonstration – especially for kinaesthetic learners
- rephrasing – especially for kinaesthetic learners
- silence - silence is especially important when questioning (we need time to think!)

Whatever strategy you use, remember the importance of relevance and reinforcement. And always encourage the mentees to participate actively in the learning process. Also, remember that feeling can be as influential to learning as thinking, so pay attention to feelings – both the mentees’ and yours.
Encouraging participation

Since your main role is to support active learning, you will need to get your mentees to participate and find answers by themselves.

Here a few ideas to get your mentees involved:

- Use students’ names
- Use small group/pair work
- Encourage students to verbalise
- Redirect questions back to the group (see below)
- Ask open-ended questions that draw on students’ experience, their reading or what they recall
- Encourage students to search in their notes or textbooks for information or clarification
- Use Socratic questioning so that students break down complex issues into smaller parts that can be more easily addressed (see next section)
- Wait long enough for students to respond rather than jumping in with the answer or another question;
- Get students to use the whiteboard or flip charts
- Use positive reinforcement
Questions and questioning

Redirecting questions

There will be times, especially during early APM sessions, when students will expect the mentor to provide answers to their questions. There may be some times when it is appropriate for the mentor to answer these questions; however, APM sessions should be about the discussion of ideas and improving students’ understanding. So students should be discouraged from taking the easy option of the mentor telling them what they need to know. Redirected questions mean the group has to answer, not the mentor.

Some useful, general redirection questions:

- "Can anyone help X answer that question?"
- “What was said in the lecture about this?”
- “What information would you need to be able to answer that?”
- “Does anyone have any hints about this in their notes?”
- “What is the first thing you would need to do …? What do you need to do next …?”
- "What is it?" (i.e. definition)
- "What is its purpose?"
- "When would you use it?"

Socratic Questioning

Socrates taught by asking questions to encourage his pupils to discover the answer themselves. Use these questioning techniques to help breakdown complex issues and help your mentees find the answers themselves.

For more information see:

http://changingminds.org/techniques/questioning/socratic_questions.htm

1 Taken from UCL’s PAL Handbook 2010/11 p.9-10
Asking Deeper Questions – Probing

Clarification

When the student’s answer is vague
- “What do you mean by...?”
- “What else?”
- “In what way?”
- “Could anyone add to this in any way?”

Critical Awareness

When you suspect the student does not understand or you want them to reflect on a response
- “How could that be so?”
- “Are you sure?”
- “What are you assuming?”
- “Could you give an example of that?”
- “What evidence do you have to support it?”
- “What do we need to know to solve it?”

Refocus

When you want the student to see a concept from another perspective by focusing on relationships
- “How is that related to...?”
- “Can you summarise the debate?”
- “How does your response tie in with?”
- “If that is true, how do you explain...?”
- “What would X say about that?”
- “How is your viewpoint different?”
The skill of Active Listening

Active listening is the ability to listen and internalise what is being said, essentially listening and understanding. You can use your whole self to convey the message of an active listener involved in the discussion, showing interest, gaining trust and respect. This can be achieved by using verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

**Non-verbal communication** has more impact than words alone, so facial expression, eye contact, non-verbal prompts (e.g. head nodding) and body posture (leaning slightly towards the speaker, showing interest) will improve discussions.

Your surroundings can also be utilised to create a climate appropriate for discussion to occur. You should try to use the same room or location every week. If you find that the sessions are too formal you may want to consider moving them to the library or a cafe. However, make sure the environment is not too noisy or distracting.

**Focus**: keeping the mentees focused on the specific discussion topic can be difficult. You should allow the conversation to flow but be prepared to rein it back to the topic if they go right off the point.

**Encourage**: Your role is to facilitate discussion, therefore you will need to encourage contributions. You can do this by asking follow up questions, linking what they have said to another point, jotting the point that they make on the board, finding a positive comment about the contribution etc.

There are of course barriers to active listening which mentors need to be aware of. Awareness of these barriers will allow the mentor to encourage, support, show interest and respect to the mentees.

**Barriers to listening include:**

**Tuning in and out** – You or the mentees may tune out of a discussion at any point. Try to be aware of yourself doing this and if you realise that mentees are losing concentration you can try to vary the activity to ‘wake them up’
The glazed look – There may be good reasons for a student glazing over (late night, other worries) do not take it as a personal insult but try to insure that the mentees are active in a session

Becoming heated – You may find a topic divides opinion in your group; this can be used to good advantage to demonstrate the emotions related to some topics and to encourage students to see things from other perspectives. If things get too heated try to diffuse the situation by pointing the academic merit of discussion.

Wait time – If you ask the group a question you should always try to pause to provide them with time to think about their response. Also try not to ask really general questions such as ‘.....so, what do you think?’ or ‘.....do you understand?’ as people find this intimidating and usually will not answer. It is better to break down a topic into specific and answerable questions.

Listening is an employability skill
Listening is an important aspect of communication which is a transferable skill (listed in Kent’s Employability Skills strategy). It will be useful for you to be aware of your qualities in this area and from time to time you may want to record your reflections on your development of this skill through the mentoring programme, this can be fed back to the APM coordinator via the weekly report.
Closure and collecting feedback

Allow enough time - about 5-10 minutes – for closure and the collection of feedback. During this time books or notes should not be used. A closure activity (see appendix for ideas) will ensure that students do not lose sight of the ‘bigger picture’. The mentees are also more likely to leave with a sense of achievement. In order to know whether you are on the right track or not, you may want to collect feedback. This does not need to be in the form of an elaborate questionnaire but can be done quite simply and can be combined with the closure activity.

Collecting Feedback

Ask your mentees to answer one or two of these questions. They can write them down on a piece of paper or post-it or just feedback orally. Written feedback is faster, private and likely to more honest. You can also look at it when you are writing up your summary or reflection on the session later on.

Here some possible questions:

- "What was the most useful thing you learned today?"
- "What was the best thing about today’s session?"
- "How could I change my input to help students to learn more in this session?"
- What was the most important point made in the session today?
- What unanswered question do you still have?
- Which aspects/parts will you need to go over again?
General tips

1. Running a successful session requires careful planning. Never go into a group intending to ‘play it by ear’ or ‘answer questions’.

2. Encourage students to attend the sessions. But do not be upset if they offer an excuse for not coming.

3. Be patient, friendly and offer lots of positive reinforcement.

4. Maintain eye contact.

5. Build flexibility into the organisation of the APM sessions.

6. Do not feel tied to keeping up with the content. You do not have to ‘do something’ with every bit of content provided by the liaison tutor and the text.

7. It is more effective to ‘model’ how successful students learn a particular subject than it is to ‘tell’ students what they need to know.

8. When working in pairs/small groups, spend time with each group but avoid answering questions at this stage.

9. Make use of the language of the particular discipline, course, and instructor.

10. Waiting for students to volunteer a well-developed answer takes time. If you are uncomfortable waiting for 30 seconds, join students in looking through notes or text.

11. If students are unable to answer the question, ask for the source of information. For example, ask for the date of the lecture that contained the information and search for the answer together. Avoid taking on the responsibility of always providing answers.

12. Encourage students to summarise the major concepts of the lectures. Let other students fine-tune the responses. If information is incorrect, ask students to find specific references in the text or notes that will clarify the correct answers.
13. Avoid interrupting student answers. APM should provide a comfortable environment for students to ask questions or attempt answers. Protect students from interruptions, laughter, or from those with louder voices.

14. Refer to the syllabus regularly. Check that students understand the requirements and dates of reading assignments, projects, and tests.

15. If your group has more than 12 students, divide into subgroups. Provide discussion topics that the groups can explore. Move from group to group, participating from time to time, reassuring the group that you are still there for them.

16. Encourage the students to summarise the content of the session – this can be taken in turns.

17. Get a student to write down the session summary which you can put onto Moodle each week.

18. Set an agenda for the following weeks’ session so that it can be student-led and resources can be prepared.

19. It is important to be honest; explicit identification of a problem may lead to a solution.

20. Be encouraging, but remember to offer practical strategies not just vague encouragement. When praise is due; give it, but do not give false praise.
What if.....? Trouble shooting

Hopefully your APM sessions will run smoothly however if things do not go according to plan here is some information which you may find useful.

1. **What if nobody turns up?**
   Firstly do not take it personally. There are many reasons why students do not attend sessions, practical considerations such as the timing is wrong either too early or too late, the room is too far away or personal reasons such as illness or competing deadlines. You should alert the school and the APM coordinator in SLAS if no-one turns up. Also you should email students to ascertain reasons why they did not attend. If the reasons are practical it may be possible to change the time or venue. You will need to inform the school of any changes you make.

2. **What if there are difficult students?**
   APM is voluntary so hopefully most people who attend will want to be there and will be grateful for the extra support; however “there’s always one”. Difficult behaviour can be hard to define; it maybe someone who just likes to argue, someone who never speaks or someone who makes you feel uncomfortable. Do not struggle alone. Tell the liaison tutor and/or the APM coordinator of the difficulty. It often helps to discuss the issue with an experienced teacher. If you can, talk to the student and ask them to modify the aspects of their behaviour that you find difficult. If all else fails you can suggest that the student finds another APM group to join, in this case the Liaison Tutor or APM co-ordination should be informed.

3. **What if I don’t feel that the school is supporting me?**
   Schools should be supportive and encouraging of your efforts as a mentor, however some members of academic staff are very busy and pressured and the APM scheme may not be at the top of their agenda. If you do not feel you are getting the support you need to make your sessions successful, please contact the APM coordinator.

4. **What if a student complains about me?**
   It is unlikely that anyone will complain about you but in the event of a personality clash and a complaint you should suggest that the dissatisfied student selects another APM group to join and inform the APM coordinator.
5. **What if I don’t have time to run the sessions?**
   It is possible that you get really busy with your own academic work or other commitments in life. This may result in you feeling that you cannot continue to act as a mentor. If this happens please make an appointment to see an APM coordinator, they can help you to look at your timetable and try to find more time for mentoring or assign your group to a different mentor.

6. **What if a student makes a complaint about a tutor?**
   You may be in a situation where a student makes a complaint about a member of academic staff. If this happens do not get caught in the middle of it. Politely tell the student that it is not your role to pass on personal complaints about staff or vice-versa. If you need further advice on how to handle this type of situation contact the APM coordinator.

7. **What if you realise that a student has plagiarised?**
   It may become obvious in the course of conversation with a student that their approach to writing is bordering on plagiarism or definitely going to result in plagiarism. In such a case, you should suggest to the student that they make an appointment with a SLAS learning adviser who can clarify the rules on referencing and help the student to follow the academic conventions of the school.

8. **What if the room is inadequate?**
   If the room is inadequate or any other practicalities such as the session time is inconvenient you should ask the school if it can be changed.

9. **What if a student discloses confidential or disturbing information about themselves?**
   It is possible that a student in your group feels vulnerable, lonely or depressed and reveals this or similar information to you. Although of course you should be sympathetic towards them you should also politely tell them that you are not qualified to discuss this with them and refer them to the student counselling service for professional support.

10. **What if you can’t get access to the right information to lead the group?**
    Liaison Tutors should give you access to the information that you need to keep up with the module. If you do not feel that you have enough information to work with, you should request access to the module on Moodle. If you still feel unprepared, contact the APM coordinator.
11. What if you feel out of your depth?
   This may be your first experience of standing in front of people and leading a group so it is natural that you may feel a little nervous. The mentor training is designed to prepare you for this but if you would like further support, contact an APM coordinator. If it’s the subject matter that overwhelms you, it may be useful to discuss this with the liaison tutor or other mentors. Also, bear in mind the longer term benefits of mentoring for you in terms of developing new skills which will be useful for your future employability such as leadership, team work, and communication skills. You can reflect on these skills and plan your own development in your weekly report.

12. What if a student is very needy?
   Some students need more support than others. You should not feel obliged to give more time than you can afford. If you feel a student is dominating your time explain that you are volunteering in this role and that you have to keep up with your own course commitments. If this remains a problem contact the APM coordinator.

13. What if you don’t know the answers to the problems your mentees is having?
   Admit it. Then try to re-direct the mentees to the lecturer or seminar leader either individually or as a team.

What if … you cannot find the answer in this handbook?
   Come and see or email one of the APM coordinators, they’ll do their best to help you.

Observation visits
   You are invited to request a visit by an APM coordinator to your session. The coordinator will observe the group dynamics and give you objective feedback on your development as a mentor. Occasionally, a coordinator will visit one of your sessions unannounced. The purpose of these observation visits is to ensure that you are provided with the right training and are supported in your work with the mentees.
Finally

Thank you for volunteering to take part in the Academic Peer Mentoring scheme. We hope that you will find this experience both enjoyable and worthwhile.

This scheme provides you with an excellent opportunity of helping your fellow students, whilst helping you to develop your employability skills such as leadership, mentoring, group work and effective communication. These skills will enhance your CV and will count towards the Kent Student Certificate for Volunteering and the Employability Points Scheme.

Enjoy!

Bibliography


SOTON (na) Leaflet: Understanding your learning style. Available at : www.studyskills.soton.ac.uk/studyguides/Learning%20Styles.doc

## Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SOURCES OF HELP</th>
<th>CANTERBURY CAMPUS</th>
<th>MEDWAY CAMPUS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation Office</td>
<td>Ext. 7625 Tanglewood, Keynes <a href="mailto:accomm@kent.ac.uk">accomm@kent.ac.uk</a></td>
<td>Liberty Quays, Blake Avenue, Medway 01634 853285</td>
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<tr>
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Employability skills development, reflection and the use of MyFolio

Being a mentor is a great way to develop some Employability Skills, below is a list of the employability skills identified by the university as important for every graduate:

1. Communication
2. Problem solving
3. Research
4. IT skills
5. Team working
6. Leadership skills
7. Planning and organising
8. Reflection
9. Project management
10. Numeracy
11. Enterprise skills

The University has an e-portfolio tool [https://myfolio.kent.ac.uk/myfolio/](https://myfolio.kent.ac.uk/myfolio/) which you can use to record and reflect on your experiences and plan how to continue to develop your employability skills.

Reflective learning is a very useful aspect of becoming an independent learner and it is a skill which is highly regarded in graduate employment where the emphasis is on Continuing Professional Development. The key to becoming an effective reflective learner is recognising that you can learn from your experiences. This is especially true of experiences which you find difficult or challenging such as leading a group or public speaking. Reflective learning is often explained as a cycle. The most well known model of reflective learning is Kolb's Reflective Learning Cycle.

During your time as a mentor try to get into the habit of using MyFolio to record new or challenging situations. See if you can tag these experiences using the employability skills list (you can add new skills to it if you want to). Use the Journal tool to think about the experience and consider whether there are other ways in which you could have acted then use the action planning tool to make a brief plan of what you will do differently next time you are in a similar situation. You can share your reflections with the APM coordinator or with other mentors to get support and ideas.
Employability Skills

1. **IT Skills**: Confidence with information technology is usually a pre-requisite for any degree programme. In addition to this there are opportunities whilst at university to further improve your skills and gain recognised qualifications such as the European Computer Driving Licence.

2. **Numeracy**: Even if your programme of study does not include numeracy skills there will be plenty of experiences whilst you are at university for which you will have to use your numeracy skills.

3. **Reflection**: Reflection is a skill which enables you to consider and understand complex issues. Skills that make up reflection are reviewing work, considering different approaches, action planning and putting ideas into practice.

4. **Problem solving**: During your time at university you will frequently face new challenges and problems. You should try to be aware of the strategies you use to resolve these challenges and work on improving these skills during your time at university.

5. **Enterprise skills**: Entrepreneurial skills encompass many employability skills such as; good communication, research, organisational and financial skills and includes an understanding of business and how to research and develop ideas into new businesses. Enterprising students need to be innovative, willing to take calculated risks and be good networkers. The University has an Enterprise and Innovation team which organise regular events for students to learn more about enterprise skills.
6. **Leadership skills:** Whist you are at university you should seek opportunities to take on leadership roles so that you have some experience of leading. The University runs some schemes which will give you leadership experience such as the Kent Ambassadors Programme run by the Partnership Development Office and the Academic Peer Mentoring scheme run by the Student Learning Advisory Service. There is more information on leadership skills on the University’s careers website.

7. **Team working:** The ability to work with others is essential in most employment. You will get opportunities whilst at university to work with other students on assignments or in social and recreational settings.

8. **Planning and organisation skills:** Study at university encourages students to be independent learners. This means that you will have to be organised to meet multiple deadlines and prioritise tasks. Success in this is invaluable in graduate employment. You can find out more about the skills of planning and organisation from KSU Stand Out training, Student Enterprise activities and the Kent Careers Advice Service.

9. **Communication skills:** Communication skills are highly valued by employers. You will get plenty of opportunities to develop skills in both written and oral communication. When you have completed a challenging communication task, such as an essay or presentation try to self-assess your performance and take note of any feedback in order to make improvements the next time you face a similar situation.

10. **Research skills:** The academic skills of identifying appropriate sources, evaluating information, applying theories, working with conceptual frameworks and submitting proposals are all highly transferable to a work situation.
Your First Session

The first session is likely to be your most daunting (*but be reassured that is perfectly normal!*). This session plan is therefore offered to provide a rather structured method to help it run smoothly. You may use it as provided, adapt parts of it to suit, or if you wish devise your own. It is worth bearing in mind that it will be useful to have some structure prepared for your first (and subsequent) sessions - even if you don’t actually follow this rigidly at the time.

Although this first session is the most structured you are likely to do, it should still be informal and friendly.

**Aims of the first APM session:**

- To get to know your students.
- To explain your role as a mentor.
- To set expectations about APM for the year.
- To give students an opportunity to ask for advice or information about the university, the library, accommodation, second-hand books etc.
- To agree some ground rules for the sessions.
- To operate like a APM session even though subject content may be minimal.

1. **Welcome**

   - Introduce yourself and explain your role as mentor.
   - Tell them the outline of the session - you may want to write it on the board (i.e.: 1. Welcome and Introductions, 2. What is APM? 3. Benefits of APM etc.).

2. **Introducing yourself**

   You will of course want to introduce yourself at the start - the main thing is to make it short and lively and with a clear sense that you are glad to be working with them, looking forward to what unfolds and that the sessions are designed to be collaborative.
3. Introductions

It will be useful to spend some time just getting to know your students.

You may want to use an icebreaker to ease people into the session or put the group into pairs to get people to find out about, and introduce each other.

4. What is APM?

Explain that as APM is not something they are likely to have come across before, it will be useful to explain the aims and features of APM.

- Ask if anyone has come across APM before or anything similar?
- Explain that APM is being introduced to help students learn more effectively and do better. APM works by using group discussion to enhance understanding of course material and by making it less risky to admit to problems and confusions.
- Talk through the features of APM.

5. General issues

- Ask if there are any issues with settling-in they might be dealing with.
- Ask if there are any issues with the course.
- Check to see if they need help with finding their way round, using library computers, form-filling etc.
- Ask whether they have settled into their hall of residence?
- Ask if they have found their way around Canterbury?
- Ask what nightlife they have discovered?

You don’t have to deal with all these issues yourself - indeed it is probably better if you don’t. Ask whether anyone else in the group knows the answer or can offer advice.

6. Write up points for discussion

- Finding your way around the place
- Using the library
- Year one lectures – how to approach them
- Clubs, societies and events
- Where to shop cheaply in Canterbury
7. Ground rules (or ‘How do we want APM to run?’)

Generally speaking, there are hidden and assumed rules about what students do and respect in lectures, seminars etc., but APM run by a fellow student will probably require a bit more openness about what is acceptable. For example:

- we agree and stick to starting and finishing times
- we are working collaboratively, not competitively
- everyone turns up regularly unless they notify you otherwise
- we encourage everyone to contribute in whatever ways they choose
- dominant and aggressive behaviour is not acceptable
- we respect each other and therefore racist and sexist comments are not acceptable
- we take confidentiality very seriously and will not repeat anything that was said in the sessions to anybody else
- anyone can point out if any of these rules are being ignored or broken

You might ask them to talk briefly in pairs to check whether these ground rules are acceptable and if they want to clarify or add any more.
Icepbreakerp&plearningpnames

It is crucial to learn the names of everybody, for you and for the mentees. Knowing your mentees' names is a sign that you are genuinely interested in each person. The following list of ice breakers can be used to learn names and to find out a little about each other. They should get people talking and ‘break the ice’. When choosing an activity, keep in mind that some students may not be competent English speakers. Please remind students to always repeat their names when contributing.

1. ‘Things in common’

Each person pairs up with a student they don’t know. They must find 3 things that they have in common (nothing obvious like eye colour or degree programme). They then need to introduce the other to the group with their findings.

2. ‘Memorising names + adjective’

Ask each student to think of an adjective that starts with the same letter as their name, e.g. lovely Lucy. To start the first person says their adjective and name, the next person in the circle has to repeat this name combination and add their own adjective and name, e.g. lovely Lucy, curious Chen. The third person repeats the two combinations and adds their own and so on.

3. ‘Truth and lies’

Each person has to say 3 things about themselves: 2 are true and 1 is made up. All three should be believable but perhaps odd enough to trick the group. The group then guesses which statement is a lie.

4. ‘The magic wand’

Imagine that you have a magic wand that allows you to change things about the University of Kent. You can change anything you want (e.g. course, facilities). Which 3 things would you change? This could be done as a large group or in small groups/clusters.
5. ‘Speed dating’

- Line participants up in two rows, facing each other
- Give each person a question to ask their opposite partner
- Give 2-3 minutes for each pair to answer each other’s question
- Stop the discussion, get one row to move one person to the left
- New partners answer each other’s question
- Continue until original partners are opposite each other once again

6. ‘Role the dice’

Bring in a handful of dice to the meeting. In small groups of 3-5, students take turns to roll and answer the question each number represents.

Possible questions (for 5. and 6.):

1. Why did you choose to come to Kent?
2. Where is your favourite holiday destination?
3. Which celebrity would you most like to meet and why?
4. What did you do during the summer break?
5. What do you hope to do after graduation?
6. What has been the unexpected thing about university?
KWL - Reflect, review and plan

KWL (Ogle, 1986) is a strategy or technique which can be used to set expectations and to plan learning objectives. Students begin by brainstorming everything they Know about a topic. This information is recorded in the K column of a KWL chart. Students then generate a list of questions about what they Want to Know about the topic. These questions are listed in the W column of the chart. During or after reading, discussing and researching students answer the questions that are in the W column. This new information that they have Learned is recorded in the L column of the KWL chart.

The KWL strategy serves several purposes:

- Elicits students’ prior knowledge of the topic of the text
- Sets objectives
- Helps students to monitor their progression and comprehension
- Provides an opportunity for students to expand ideas

**KWL example topic: Gravity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Know</th>
<th>What I Want to know</th>
<th>What I Learned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It keeps us from floating around.</td>
<td>What is gravity?</td>
<td>Gravity is the force that pulls objects towards Earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s makes things fall.</td>
<td>Why is there less gravity on the moon?</td>
<td>The amount of gravity there is depends on the masses of the objects involved. The moon is a lot less massive than the earth, so there is less gravity on the moon than there is on earth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is less gravity on the moon.</td>
<td>How did Newton discover gravity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isaac Newton discovered gravity.</td>
<td>What determines how fast something will fall to the ground?</td>
<td>Air resistance determines how fast something will fall to the ground.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students’ question about Newton in the W column was not answered. Students should be encouraged to consult other sources to find out the answer to this question.
Collaborative Learning Techniques

Since it is important that your mentees work out the answers by themselves, you may like to employ some of these techniques to encourage a maximum of participation and engagement. Remember, whoever does most of the talking also does most of the learning.

Group Discussion

A group discussion is, more or less, just like it sounds: a general discussion of an issue or topic by the group. Individual members are free to contribute or not contribute.

Hints
This is the most common form of collaborative learning. It is also the form that requires the most skill to use successfully. Ideally, everyone is actively involved in the discussion and the discussion topic is of equal interest to all group members. It is not enough to just throw out a question and wait for a response. It may be better to give some points or a quote to start the discussion of. As a mentor you have to be able to lead a discussion by encouraging shy or weaker students who may find it difficult to contribute. However, you need to be careful not to put anybody ‘on-the-spot’ or let the more vocal students take over.

Clusters

In clusters, group participants are divided into smaller groups of 3-5 students for discussion. You may allow them to self-select the small group they want to be in. At other times you may want to split up particularly quiet or vocal groups. After discussing the assigned topic the cluster will report their findings to the large group. Breaking people in smaller groups accomplishes several things: it makes them more accountable, it promotes active processing of material and it encourages participation by everyone.

Hints
If possible, provide each group with a flip chart or a space on the board to record the important points of their discussion. Allow time for each group to report back to the large group. You may have to assign someone from each group to report back.
**Pair work**

Group members work with a partner on an assignment or discussion topic. This is a good technique to get quiet students or free-riders involved.

**Hints**

This technique works best with group participants who have already been provided with enough background on a subject that they can immediately move to a discussion with their partner without previewing or reviewing concepts.

**Assigned Discussion Leader**

One person in the group is asked to present on a topic or review material for the group and then lead the discussion for the group. This person should not be the regular group leader.

**Hints**

When assigning a discussion topic to individual members of the group, you may need to be prepared to allow a little time for the person leading the discussion to prepare for it.

This technique works best when everyone or nearly everyone in the group is given an assignment to be the ‘expert’ on.

**Think / Pair / Share**

Group members work on an assignment or project individually and then share their results with a partner.

**Hints**

The goal of a Think/Pair/Share is to allow participants time to think BEFORE they discuss. Research shows that when people are given time to contemplate an answer to a question, their answers differ from those they would give if they responded immediately. When doing a Think/Pair/Share, give participants a specific amount of time (30 seconds, five minutes, etc.) for the “think” portion.
Individual Presentations

An individual presentation is an uninterrupted presentation by one person to the group. The speaker presents on a topic, question or issue to the group. Unlike an "Assigned Discussion Leader", this is a formal presentation delivered to a captive audience. After the presentation the group can question the speaker further.

Hints

*Individual presentations* should typically be used sparingly and only when independent research is required.

Jigsaw

Jigsaws, when used properly, make the group as a whole dependent upon all the of subgroups. Each group provides a *piece of the puzzle*. Group members are broken into smaller groups. Each small group works on some aspect of the same problem, question, or issue. They then share their part of the puzzle with the large group.

Hints

When using a *Jigsaw*, make sure you carefully define the limits of what each group will contribute to the topic that is being explored.

Group Survey

Each group member is surveyed to discover their position on an issue, problem or topic. This process insures that each member of the group is allowed to offer or state their point of view.

Hints

A survey works best when opinions or views are briefly stated. Be sure to keep track of the results of the survey.
Short description of some learning strategies

Matrix
A matrix is a chart with columns and rows used to compare and contrast two or more subjects.

Informal Quiz
The mentor asks students to write down their answers to questions given orally. The written answers are short but are designed to stimulate a broad discussion.

Sequencing
The mentor scrambles material and has students put it back in order (example: steps in a math problem or a biological cycle).

Reciprocal Questioning
The mentor structures time to alternate between asking the students questions and the students asking the mentor questions. S/he asks a student to track the types of questions asked (higher/lower order) and continues to redirect questions.

Note Review
Students read through their notes, taking turns from subject to subject. While one student is reading, other students are encouraged to add to the discussion by providing missing information and questioning the content of his/her notes. Frequently used at the beginning of the term.

Divide and Conquer
The mentor breaks up a large amount of material (usually a reading) into smaller segments, and then assigns a segment to a student or group. Then the students present their segment to the whole group. Students work out the sequence together.

One-Minute Paper
Students write for one minute on a question or topic given by the leader. Helpful to refocus, open, or close the session.

Board Work Model
This is a template for board work that asks the group to list prerequisite information needed to solve a problem (example: formulas), record the mathematical steps of the solution, record the steps of the solution in narrative form, and construct a similar problem.

Flowcharts and Diagrams
These are visual models that allow students to organize information in a way that is meaningful to them.
Closure Techniques

Informal Quiz
When time permits, the informal quiz will help students put all of the important ideas together.

Predict Test Questions
Divide students into groups of two or three. Get them write a test question for a specific topic, ensuring that all major topics have been covered. Ask students to write their question on the board for discussion. This technique requires more time but the benefit is that students see additional questions which focus on the specific material that has just been presented.

Identify the ‘Big idea’
Ask each person to tell what he or she thought was the most important concept, idea or new understanding they learned during the session. We call these "take homes." That is, if they could only take home one thing from the information presented what would it be? Ask each student to offer a different ‘take home’. This technique can be useful if you’re nearly out of time. If there is sufficient time, get students to organise the selected topics into more generalised concepts. We know that students frequently feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of information that they have to deal with during the term. They need practice with organising all of the information presented.

Predict the Next Lecture Topic
Get students to predict the next lecture topic. See if there are connections between the last lecture and the next one. This activity helps to prepare them for new material, especially if it can be connected to information they have just mastered in the APM session.

Summarise the Procedure/Steps
Sometimes it is more important to go over how an answer was arrived at, rather than reviewing the answer itself. Remember to give time to the process of learning.