

PMI2

International Students

Mentoring Programme

Final Project Report - NASES

January 2009

Contents

1. Executive Summary	Page 2
2. Project Overview	
2.1 Why the need for this project?	Page 3
2.2 What was involved in the project?	Page 4
2.3 Events	Page 4
2.4 Mentor – Mentee meetings	Page 4
2.5 Celebration & Networking Event	Page 4
2.6 Marketing of the Project	Pages 4-5
3. Participant Evaluation	
3.1 Student Mentee Evaluation	Page 5
3.2 Mentor Evaluation	Page 9
4. Recommendations	Page 13
5. Conclusions	Page 14
Appendices	
Appendix 1 – Evaluation form for mentees	Pages 16-17
Appendix 2 – Evaluation form for mentors	Pages 18-19

1.Executive Summary

This was a pilot project designed to help international students enhance their university experience and part- time job opportunities through mentoring relationships with employers or other experienced international students.

The project involved the University of Liverpool, Liverpool Hope University and Edge Hill University and was funded by the Prime Minister's Initiative 2 in partnership with NASES.

Almost 60 students were involved in the project who were matched with a mentor. The mentor was either from a local business, a member of university staff or another international student who has worked part- time whilst studying and who could share their experiences with the student.

Three different types of events were held; an Information & Networking Event - to promote the programme, Training Events for mentor and mentee participants providing them with all the materials and information they needed and a concluding Celebration event following the mentor/mentee meetings.

Mentors and mentees had 2 (or more) meetings over a 2- month period. Meetings were mutually arranged between the two partners. Topics covered depended on the personal goals and objectives of student mentees and also the expertise and knowledge of the mentor.

Feedback from both mentors and mentees has been very positive. Key benefits for mentees have included an enhanced CV, improved interview techniques and interpersonal skills as well as an increase in self- confidence. Mentors stated the programme was useful for their own personal and professional development and most significantly, it had given them a better understanding of cultural differences and issues facing international students.

2.Project Overview

2.1Why the need for this project?

International students often face barriers to securing part-time work due to a lack of confidence, support networks and employers' perceptions of employing international students. Many businesses are also not aware of the capabilities and skills that international students have to offer to their organisation and the UK job market.

By having a mentor, students would be helped to overcome potential barriers and develop skills and networks of support to help them successfully apply for and enter part- time employment.

2.2 What was involved in the project?

Student mentees were matched with a mentor. The mentor was either from a local business, a member of university staff or another international student who has worked part-time whilst studying and who could share their experiences with the student.

2.3 Events

Information & Networking Event - this event provided participants and potential participants with an opportunity to find out more about the programme, how they could benefit and what would be involved as well as the chance to network with other guests. Case studies and presentations on the benefits of mentoring were also included.

Training Events - for mentor and mentee participants who had been selected onto the programme. These events covered guidelines and practical information to help participants establish effective mentoring partnerships.

Subjects covered included:

- Group discussions on hopes, fears and expectations of mentoring partnerships
- Positive and negative indicators of a mentoring partnership
- Dealing with problems and issues during the mentoring
- Practical information on numbers of meetings, where to meet, specific ways mentors can assist mentees and the framework/boundaries of the programme
- Other resources and networks of support available to mentors and mentees
- Cultural issues facing international students (for mentors only)

Mentors and mentees also received a comprehensive training pack containing guidelines, practical information on the programme and useful web-sites. Mentors and mentees also met each other informally for the first time at the end of the training events.

2.4 Mentor- mentee meetings

Mentors and mentees had 2 (or more) meetings over a 2-month period. Meetings were mutually arranged between the two partners.

Topics covered depended on the personal goals and objectives of student mentees and also the expertise and knowledge of the mentor. Topics included:

- CVs and application forms
- Interview techniques
- Marketing yourself to employers
- Personal skills development
- Networking opportunities
- Work experience opportunities

2.5 Celebration & Networking Event – this event was to celebrate the participation of mentors and mentees with a certificate presentation and speeches from a mentor and mentee on their experiences.

2.6 Marketing of the project

The project was promoted to students using a number of methods:

- Publicity such as leaflets and posters were distributed across the participating HEI careers

services and international offices

- Information via International Students newsletter
- Targeted e-mail shots
- Talks in Careers Services and International Student Inductions
- Referrals from Careers Advisers and International Students Advisers

Mentors were recruited via promotion of the scheme to new and existing business contacts, university staff members and also international students who had experience of working part- time.

3.Participant Evaluation

3.1 Student Mentee Evaluation

Student mentee participants were asked to complete a survey looking at their experiences on the mentoring programme. The survey involved a series of questions relating to:

- The mentee's background
- The mentoring training
- Meetings with mentors in terms of quantity and quality
- Topics discussed with their mentor
- Issues and problems that arose during the mentoring
- Overall benefits of the programme

33 students responded to the evaluation request. The results are summarised below.

A. Background of student mentee respondents

1. Gender

53% of respondents were female; 47% were male.

2. Level of study

The majority of participants, 56%, were in Year 2 of an undergraduate degree. The remaining students were in Year 3 and postgraduate study with one student on an exchange year.

3. Degree discipline

Majority of respondents were studying Engineering or Mathematics with Finance. Other courses represented included Law, Computer Science, Business, Biomedical Science and HR Management.

4. Country of origin

41% of respondents were from China. Other countries represented included South Korea, Ghana, Nigeria, Malaysia, India and Peru.

5. Length of time in the UK

Most of the respondents were new to the UK and had only been here for 3 months at the time of completing the survey. Other students' length of time in the UK varied from 1 year- 3 years. Only 1 respondent had been in the UK for more than 5 years.

B. Experiences on the Programme

6. Status of mentor

Over 50% of respondents had an employer/business mentor. 41% had a university staff mentor and the remainder a student peer mentor.

7. Feedback on training event

Practically all the respondents found the initial training event beneficial. On the whole mentees found it prepared them for their mentor meetings, mentioned it was a good introduction to the programme and that it clearly explained what was involved and expected of participants.

Some comments from respondents included:

"It was very useful for me in terms of preparing me in advance of meeting my mentor. It gave me an overview of what to expect from the mentoring programme as well as keeping me informed with regards to the appropriate conduct that I should have."

"It gave me a general idea of what the mentoring programme is about and what I need to prepare before the meeting."

"Useful, it was a good introduction and it made me want to stay on the programme."

"It's really useful, because it acted as a bridge between me and my mentor."

8. Number of face-to-face meetings with mentor

68% of respondents had 2 or more meetings with their mentor; the remaining respondents had either one meeting with their mentor, although this was supplemented by emails.

9. Other forms of communication

In addition to face-to-face meetings, many mentees and mentors also kept in touch via e-mail. This enhanced the support the mentors were providing, for example one mentee commented that the mentor used email to send "useful tips and strategies."

10. Topics discussed during meetings

The meetings focused on more than one topic. However, the most popular topic of discussion was CV development; 69% of respondents stated this. Other topics which featured in the meetings were interview techniques, how to find jobs, career planning and job applications. Language issues and student life in Liverpool were also discussed.

11. Initiative in setting up these meetings

76% of respondents said that both they and their mentor took the initiative to set up meetings, so this highlighted that the partnerships were a two- way process.

12. Feedback on meetings

All the respondents found the meetings useful. Key benefits included learning how to create a good covering letter and CV, feeling better prepared for interviews, getting an insight into the mentor's job and organisation (including visits to their place of work) and even just having someone to talk to if there were any personal issues or problems.

The following are examples of responses:

"Yes, they [meetings] are very useful. My mentor has been very patient and helpful in helping me to write a proper CV statement. She also advises me in many other areas such as the appropriate attitude that an interviewee should have during an interview session. Her advice has indeed benefited me in the sense that I am able to at least get an overview of what is going to happen when I am applying for a job."

"Very useful. My mentor was a good listener. I have been able to talk about some problems that have been bothering me and needed someone to talk with. My mentor was very encouraging, supportive and very helpful."

"Yes. It has been very useful. We usually held meeting at my mentor's place. In the first hour or so, he usually takes me around the factory to show me the different type of jobs in industry."

13. Barriers or problems in arranging meetings or during the actual meetings

The majority of respondents did not experience any barriers or problems. Some minor issues were raised such as:

- Distance to meetings/transport
- Arranging a mutually convenient time for meetings
- Busy schedules of mentors and mentees
- Some language problems

14. Suggestions for improving the mentoring relationship or training

Most felt that more than 2 meetings would have been beneficial. Some also felt additional topics could have been included such as how to apply for a National Insurance number, although this was an issue only raised by a minority of students.

15. Benefits from involvement in the mentoring programme

Respondents were presented with a table of potential benefits from the programme and asked to tick which benefits they felt they gained. Some ticked more than one option. Responses are given in the table below. We can conclude that the key benefits gained were:

- Improved problem- solving skills
- Improved interpersonal skills
- Increased self- confidence
- Development of a new or enhanced CV

- Improved interview techniques
- Access to new contacts and networks

Benefits	Not at all	A limited extent	Moderate extent	Good extent	To a great extent	N/A
Developed skills relating to a specific subject	2	6	12	7	4	2
Developed skills relating to a job	4	5	7	9	7	1
Improved problem-solving skills	3	5	11	10	0	4
Improved interpersonal skills	2	1	8	17	3	2
Improved time management skills	3	5	8	9	2	6
Increased self confidence	2	1	7	14	7	1
Developed a new or enhanced CV	1	4	2	11	13	2
Improved interview techniques	2	4	8	11	5	3
Access to new contacts and networks	4	3	8	12	2	4

16. Benefits of particular importance from the list above or any benefits not listed

CV development and support on interview techniques were emphasised by respondents. Other benefits included development of skills relating to a particular job and networking opportunities.

Examples of responses included:

"I have improved my CV statement and widened my knowledge on interview skills. Consequently, having completed a good CV statement and equipped with the information I have so far on interview skill, I am more confident and prepared in respect of job application."

"Improved ability to make and carry out own decisions."

"Sat in on an interview and took notes, the interview process shed some light and allowed me to see the other side of the table. Also, gaining an insight into a particular aspect of their organisation."

17. Any problems with the mentoring programme.

No replies were received to this question.

18. Applying for part-time work in the UK as a result of this programme

94% of respondents said they felt better prepared to apply for part-time work after this programme.

19. Gaining any part-time work in other ways previously

The majority of respondents said they had not gained part-time work in other ways previously.

20. Additional comments on experience of the programme and suggestions about how it might be improved

No major issues were raised. One respondent felt more involvement of experienced students would have been beneficial and also assigning mentors according to whether the mentee had work experience or not.

3.2 Mentor Evaluation

Mentor participants were also asked to complete an evaluation survey. This survey looked at their experiences on the mentoring programme. Mentors were asked questions relating to:

- The mentoring training
- Meetings with student mentees in terms of quantity and quality
- Topics discussed with the student mentee
- Issues and problems that arose during the mentoring
- Benefits of the programme for the mentor and/or their organisation

26 responses were received. 50% of respondents were classed as an employer or business. Only 1 respondent was a student mentor.

The summary of responses is included below.

1. Classification of Mentors

50% of respondents were classed as an employer or business. Only 1 respondent was a student mentor.

2. Attendance at the mentor training event

72% attended the full mentor training event; the remaining respondents had an individual induction.

3. Feedback on mentor training event

Respondents were presented with a table of possible outcomes of the training and asked to tick which of these they felt they gained. Some ticked more than one option. Responses are given in the table below; from this we can conclude that the key outcomes of the training were:

- Providing participants with the basic foundation needed to be a mentor
- Developing understanding of the role of the mentor
- Enabling participants to provide practical help to the mentee

	Not at all useful	Of limited use	Of Moderate use	Quite useful	Very useful	N/A
Providing you with the basic foundation you needed to be a mentor	0	0	2	10	12	2
Developing your understanding of the role of mentor	0	0	3	6	15	2
Equipping you to deal with the issues that came up in your role as mentor	0	3	4	8	9	2
Enabling you to provide practical help	0	3	3	6	11	3

4. Additional comments about the training

Only 6 mentors provided additional comments. Typical comments included:

“It was good to have the opportunity to meet with your mentee in an informal environment, especially after they had had their training at the same time - this was useful as both parties were keyed up and ready to go.”

“A clearer overview of the resources that are available to the mentors and mentees would have been useful. In addition a quick guide on cultural, part time employment and interviews (with web-links) would also help the mentor to structure the meetings and direct the mentee to the right place.”

“More emphasis on the mentoring sessions and techniques for drawing out quiet or shy mentees.”

5. Topics discussed during meetings

Development of CVs and job applications was the most popular topic of discussion; at least 23 respondents mentioned this. Issues surrounding cultural differences and integration into the local community and UK also featured. This included the lack of contact with home students and finding opportunities to meet more English people and improve spoken English language skills.

A range of other topics were also discussed. These included:

- Interview techniques
- Time management
- Academic studies and life
- How to enhance university experience through extra- curricular activities
- Finding work experience- paid or voluntary
- Applications for summer placements

- Aspects of mentor's career and background
- Different routes into preferred career

6. Unexpected or difficult issues which came up during the meetings and any further guidance needed

Half the respondents stated there were "none" or "no difficulties." Some respondents made specific comments, though not all were to highlight difficulties. The difficulties some international students face in seeking employment and also managing their academic studies effectively was noted.

Sample comments from respondents:

"My mentee was quite stressed out and often did not complete follow up from the meetings because he had too much university work to complete - I pointed out that better Time Management and meeting with his personal tutor would help."

"I think it may have helped to have some guidance on how we should advise students to write CVs - especially when they have no work experience and very little extras above and beyond academic achievements."

"Issues of confidence around finding work experience whilst studying in the UK - lack of contacts to find local work experience."

7. Initiative in setting up these meetings

Over 60% of respondents said that both they and their mentee took the initiative to set up meetings, so this highlighted that the partnerships were a two- way process.

8. Particular challenges or problems in arranging meetings

The majority of mentors did not experience any barriers or problems. Some minor issues were raised such as:

- Distance to meetings/transport
- Arranging a mutually convenient time for meetings
- Busy schedules of mentors and mentees
- Constraints of mentee's timetable

9. Suggestions for improving the mentoring partnership or training event

Some mentors commented on the need to have more than 2 meetings as it was felt this was not sufficient to develop a rapport with mentees. It was also suggested that mentees need to give more consideration to what they want to achieve from the mentoring process; perhaps to include a personal statement on their aspirations as part of the induction pack. Mentors also gave additional suggestions indicated by the comments below:

"As well as the intro session for each group on its own I'd suggest holding a session where the mentors and mentees meet to discuss the programme together."

"Perhaps having group sessions as well as 1:1 meetings."

"I think more guidance would be beneficial on how to guide students through the process of writing a CV. Also, mentors were given a lot of flexibility to decide with the mentee what they wanted to achieve/cover in the sessions. I think this was good but I was concerned that we did not cover enough ground in our sessions so perhaps guidelines could be a little more detailed."

"More information about how mentoring skills could formally be developed. Perhaps more written guidance that is referred to at the event but could be used for example how to structure sessions, how to set boundaries, etc."

10. Benefits of programme for mentor and/or their organisation

Respondents were presented with a table of possible benefits and asked to tick which of these they felt they gained. Some ticked more than one option. Responses are given in the table below. The key benefits were:

- Mentor's personal development and development of mentoring skills
- Gaining a better understanding of issues facing international students
- Sharing personal experience

Benefits	Not at all	A limited extent	Moderate extent	Good extent	To a great extent	N/A
Personal development	1	6	9	15	3	0
Development of mentoring skills	1	4	7	18	4	0
Gaining a better understanding of issues facing international students	0	4	6	15	9	0
Helping to develop links with the three partner universities	9	7	8	4	3	3
Sharing your personal experience	0	4	4	19	7	0

11. Benefits of particular importance from the list above or any benefits not listed

Nearly all respondents commented on how useful the programme was in terms of learning about cultural differences and gaining a better understanding of international students, their background and expectations.

Typical comments from respondents included:

"Helped underline the barriers cultural differences can place on international students finding employment e.g. UK employers value initiative and communication whereas Chinese culture values deference to authority and the best academic scores."

"Much more personal insight into the cultural differences between university experience in China and the expectations of society and family and those in the UK."

"I found it useful to talk to my mentee and listen to his concerns about employment and living in the UK. Our discussion helped me to look for appropriate resources and understand what our international students are facing in their everyday activities, in an academic and personal context. I also thought that my personal experiences as a student were of use to the mentee and this allowed us to have a productive discussion about student matters, including exams, extra-curricular activities and social life."

12. Problems with any aspect of the programme

No major concerns were raised, only minor issues of students' time management and arranging meetings. One respondent suggested the programme is better geared towards students who intend to stay in the UK after university as the type of support offered by the mentors in terms of CV development would be more appropriate for the UK job market.

13. Participation in any future mentoring programmes

96% of respondents said they would be interested in participating in future programmes.

14. Additional comments on experience or suggestions for future programmes.

On the whole, respondents appeared to have enjoyed participating in the programme. Below are some typical comments from respondents:

"This was a really useful experience to get an insight into the issues facing International students and I would recommend that more of my colleagues take part in the programme if it continues to run."

"Very interesting programme - an opportunity to learn as well as hopefully help to support international students."

"I did enjoy mentoring an international student."

4. Recommendations

- This programme could be repeated for further groups of international students, with perhaps the programme running over a longer time period so that the mentoring relationship could be developed further by including further meetings.
- There were some useful suggestions for additional topics to be included in the training programme for mentors e.g. additional resources/guides
- That any such mentoring programme begins with training sessions for both students and mentors in order that all participants fully understand the aims and objectives of the programme
- That any further programmes aim to recruit further student mentors as it would be very useful to conduct further research on the outcomes of such a programme

5. Conclusions

It appears from the evaluation evidence that this programme has been very successful. It has been of benefit and value to the students who participated in that all participants identified benefits from their participation that matched the programme's original stated outcomes. It is also interesting to note that many of the mentors also highlighted benefits from their participation in the programme, with nearly all mentors offering to participate in any future programmes. Mentors specifically mentioned that participation in the programme had given them a better understanding of cultural differences and issues facing international students.

Appendices

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Evaluation form for mentees

1. Are you?
 - Male
 - Female

2. What is your study level? (e.g. undergraduate Year 1, 2 or 3, or postgraduate)

3. What is your degree discipline?

4. Which country do you come from?

5. How much time have you spent in the UK?

6. Is your mentor:
 - An employer
 - A University staff member
 - A student

7. How useful did you find the training event? Please give details.

8. How many face-to-face meetings have you had with your mentor?
 - 0
 - 1
 - 2

More? How many?

9. Have you had any other form of communication? (e.g. mobile phone, email etc.) Please explain.

10. Please state what topics you and your mentor discussed during your meetings?

11. Who took the initiative in setting up this meeting/these meetings?
 - Your mentor
 - You
 - Both

12. Were the meetings useful? Please give details.

13. Did you experience any particular barriers or problems in arranging your meetings or during the actual meetings?

14. From your experience, please suggest any ways in which you think the mentoring relationship or training could be improved

15. To what extent did you gain the following benefits from your involvement in the mentoring programme?

Benefits	Not at all	A limited extent	Moderate extent	Good extent	To a great extent	N/A
Developed skills relating to a specific subject						
Developed skills relating to a job						
Improved problem-solving skills						
Improved interpersonal skills						
Improved time management skills						
Increased self confidence						
Developed a new or enhanced CV						
Improved interview techniques						
Access to new contacts and networks						

16. Please describe any benefits of particular importance from the list above or state any benefits not listed

17. If you had any problems with the mentoring programme please tell us about them.

18. Do you feel better prepared to apply for part-time work in the UK as a result of this programme?

- Yes
 No

19. Have you gained any part-time work in other ways previously?

- Yes
 No

20. Please add below any additional comments on your experience of the programme and suggestions about how it might be improved

Appendix 2 – Evaluation form for mentors

1. Are you:
- an employer?
 - a university staff member?
 - a student?
2. Did you attend the mentor training event?
- Yes (If Yes please go to Q 3)
 - No (if No please go to Q 5)

3. How useful was this event in terms of the following?

	Not at all useful	Of limited use	Of Moderate use	Quite useful	Very useful	N/A
Providing you with the basic foundation you needed to be a mentor						
Developing your understanding of the role of mentor						
Equipping you to deal with the issues that came up in your role as mentor						
Enabling you to provide practical help						

4. If you have any additional comments about the training event please tell us
5. Please state what topics you and your student mentee discussed during your meetings? (General categories are required here. Please do not give personal details)
6. Were there any unexpected or difficult issues which came up during the meetings? Would you have benefited from further guidance? Please give details.
7. Who took the initiative in setting up these meetings?
- You
 - The student
 - Both
8. Did you experience any particular challenges or problems in arranging your meetings?

9. From your experience, please suggest any ways in which you think the mentoring partnership or training event could be improved

10. To what extent did you and/or your organisation gain the following benefits from your involvement in the mentoring programme?

Benefits	Not at all	A limited extent	Moderate extent	Good extent	To a great extent	N/A
Personal development						
Development of mentoring skills						
Gaining a better understanding of issues facing international students						
Helping to develop links with the three partner universities						
Sharing your personal experience						

11. Please describe any benefits of particular importance from the list on the previous question or state any benefits not listed

12. If you had any problems with any aspect of the programme, please tell us about them

13. Would you be interested in participating in any future mentoring programme?

14. Please add below any additional comments on your experience or suggestions for future programmes