

Cumbria Mentor Scheme – engaging  
mentors and mentees for enhanced  
transition, retention and employability

Melanie Bakey - Widening Participation  
Retention Officer  
Library and Student Services

# Session Outline

- University Context
- Targeting key student groups
- Engagement of mentors
- Engagement of mentees
- Benefits and impact
- Lessons learned

# Our University

- The University of Cumbria was set up in 2007.
- We are dispersed across five campuses ranging from Carlisle to London... with Ambleside and Lancaster in between!
- We are a Widening Participation University - over 60% of our students have a WP profile.



# Targeting Key Student Groups

- Initially QTS students were recruited
- The scheme then expanded into programmes where retention was low
- *Specific Widening Participation students are supported too such as:-  
Young Care Leaver students  
Students with Specific Learning Difficulties and Disabilities*
- International Student mentoring commenced in September 2015
- Prospective students can request mentors
- Access work - students from a local college have also been offered the opportunity of liaising with present student mentors

# Engaging mentors in support of transition, retention and employability

Recruitment of mentors by:

- Face to face promotion
- Posters
- Leaflets
- Web page
- Liaison with Academic staff to encourage participation
- Numerous training sessions offered



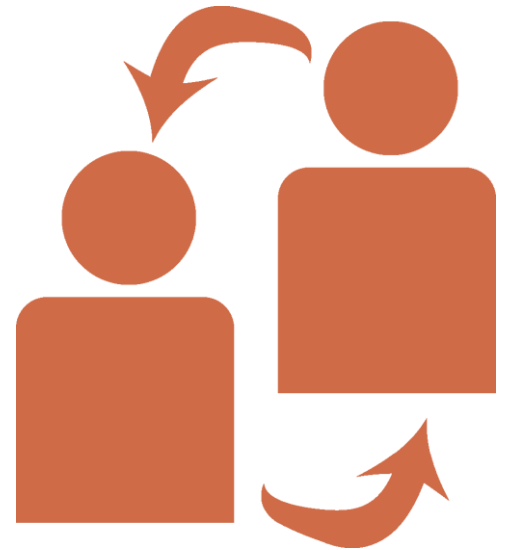
# Training mentors to support transition, retention and employability



- Training follows the GROWTH model of mentoring and coaching
- Activities to support transition and retention
- Mentors are encouraged to sign up to the university employability award
- Guest speakers from areas around the university talk about specific resources and support available
- Attendance at various events is encouraged

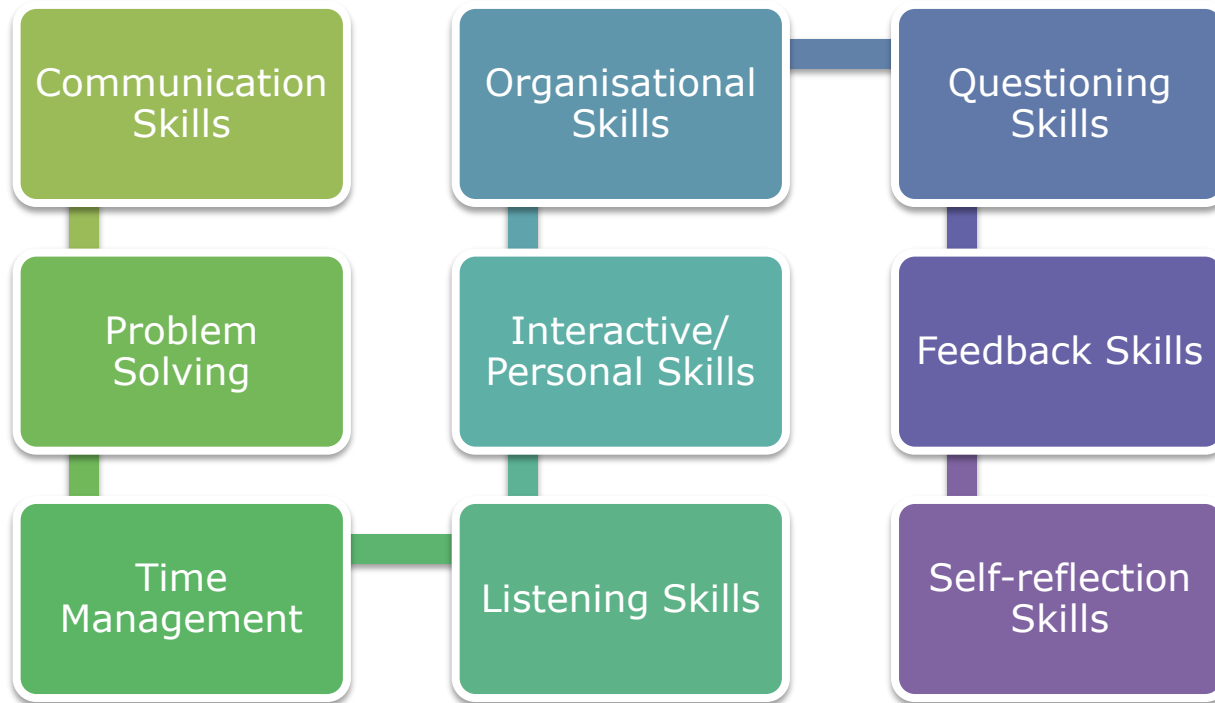
# Engagement of Mentees

- Mentees don't always engage for a variety of reasons
- Research project was undertaken to look into lack of engagement
- Evaluation and feedback has informed development
- Promoting the scheme to raise awareness



# Benefits of skills learned for mentors

Numerous skills are learned and utilised – perfect for future employability





# Impact of engagement for mentors

- Deeper learning of services they themselves can use, as well as for signposting
- Increased Confidence
- Career Ahead Award
- Employability skills
- Bright Futures Awards
- Supporting others – self worth



# Impact of engagement for mentees

- Improved grades
- Support with issues such as homesickness
- Increased Confidence
- Becoming part of the University community
- Articulating and translating University “speak”
- Liaising with a senior member of their learning community is positive



# Lessons learned so far

- Face to face promotion in start of year lectures, encouraged some mentees to respond to their mentors
- Mentees reported that their mentor had been able to answer their queries and signpost them to the relevant support service
- Some mentees reported that having a mentor helped them to settle in to university
- Anecdotal evidence only – it would be beneficial to have data to show whether students who engage with the scheme are more successfully retained
- Ideally a system will be available in future to track all interventions for each student
- Within the student experience the scheme is likely to contribute towards a happier experience for our students



# Feedback from some of our mentors

I have definitely developed my time management skills as this is my first experience of involving myself with activities outside of my normal academic workload. I learnt to set time aside once a week to make sure I had answered any queries or to follow up on any previous communication.

I have learned to be more empathetic and organised and I'm hoping I will carry on to develop more professional skills throughout the duration of this scheme.

It has helped me to be more responsible for more than just myself which will help when I start teaching.

Learning about Safeguarding will come in very useful in future careers as well as talking to and dealing with people who are upset or nervous about their social situations.

One mentee wanted to quit the course, I convinced her to take time to think etc. and consult with friends, staff, placement staff and she saw the placement out and is enjoying the course again.

# And from some of our mentees

I was lucky to have a Cumbria Mentor who took my grades from floating around 40% and 50%, right up to 70%. Although I've still a long way to go, my Cumbria Mentor has put me on the right track to hopefully come out with a 2:1 degree classification. Without the service, I wouldn't have come close to anything near a 2:1. Therefore, I only have positive things to say!

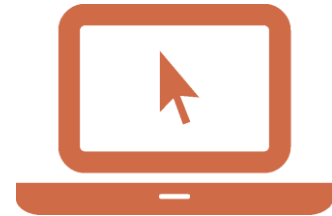
I have spoken to my mentor via email on a couple of occasions about general university life. She has been a lovely support and offered help and guidance, especially at the start of university.

Initially I had help with feeling homesick and it was nice to hear from second year students who had felt the same and they assured me that it gets a lot better and it has!

It has given me confidence to continue studying at university as I was having a lot of doubts to begin with. It was really nice to hear from another student and get reassurance from her about this matter.

# Moving forward

- A succession of emails will be used at strategic times in Semester 1 and 2
- Mentors are asked to promote the scheme to first year lectures
- Meet and greets set up after welcome week for mentors to meet with mentees where possible
- For academic year 2016 – 2017 every first year undergraduate will be allocated a Cumbria Mentor



# Value Added...

Quote from the University's Careers Team Manager:

It's the "extras" that give students a competitive edge when it comes to getting graduate jobs. Employers want to see that students have both taken part in activities outside of their degree and that they understand the skills they have gained. Being a student mentor helps develop important interpersonal skills that employers really value. Many graduate employers focus on competencies and values in the recruitment process and students who take part in the mentoring programme are able to evidence these. Examples of skills include dealing with difficult situations, problem-solving, rapport-building and listening.

# The Last word....

Goes to Hannah Fawdrey, one of our present Cumbria Mentors...

<https://youtu.be/v4pbBbDS0qM>





Thank you for listening

Any questions?

# Bibliography

Andreanoff, J. (2013) 'Supporting your peers.' *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning*. 15 (2), pp. 43-55.

Hill, R. and Reddy, P. (2007) 'Undergraduate Peer mentoring: an investigation into processes, activities and outcomes.' *Psychology Learning and Teaching*, 6 (2), pp. 98-103

Hierdsfield, A. M., Walker, S., Walsh, K. and Wilss, L. (2008) 'Peer mentoring for first year teacher education students: the mentors' experience'. *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 16 (2) pp. 109-124

Hierdsfield, A. M., Walker, S., Walsh, K. and Wilss, L. (2008) 'Enhancing the first year experience – Longitudinal perspectives on a peer mentoring scheme.' *Australian Association for Research in Education. Research impacts: Proving or improving*, 25 – 29 November 2007, Freemantle Australia. Available at: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/12150> (Accessed: 15 October 2015)

Office of Fair Access OFFA *About OFFA*. Available at:  
<https://www.offa.org.uk/> (Accessed 15 October 2015)

Tinto, V. (2008) *Access Without Support is not opportunity*. Available at:  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2008/06/09/access-without-support-not-opportunity>  
(Accessed: 15 October 2015)