

How students can support teaching through the Student Mentor Scheme at NTU

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The Student Mentor scheme, now in its fourth year at Nottingham Trent University, was set up in response to research which suggested that students who considered leaving university often did so because they lacked confidence in their studies (Foster et al., 2009). Further research found that one of the main reasons that students decided to stay, if they had considered leaving, was because of the support they received from family and the newfound friends they had made at university. The powerful influences of student to student relationships form the ethos of the Student Mentor scheme, and it would seem that encouraging students to participate in 'educationally purposeful activities' (Kuh et al. 2008) such as engaging in discussion with a Student Mentor may lead to students' increased confidence and thus persistence at university.

Since its inception in 2009, in the five Schools where there was previously no other form of one-to-one academic writing support, the scheme has seen an increase in numbers of students accessing the Student Mentors each year. We are now operating in 7 of the 9 Schools at NTU, having recently been joined by the Nottingham Law School and the School of Art and Design. However, a pattern is emerging in terms of numbers of students accessing the Student Mentors by School. The School of Education persistently sees more students in drop-in and booked sessions than any other School and given the suggestion that Student Mentors can make the difference between students persisting or leaving university, what we seek is to replicate the practices of the Student Mentors in the School of Education in other Schools.

In this session we aimed to offer an overview of the workings of the scheme within a particular context and outline how embedding a Student Mentor scheme into the culture of a School could help to increase retention, enhance the student experience, improve confidence and help develop understanding. The scheme serves to reinforce the learning taking place in taught sessions and other less formal situations, giving students

opportunities to reflect; experience deeper learning and develop independent and critical thought ■



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