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WELCOME FROM THE PEER MENTORING TEAM

Welcome to the University of Leicester Peer Mentoring Scheme! We are glad to have you with us, and for the many of you who have joined us again- welcome back.

As outlined in your training, the scheme exists to support the transition to university for our incoming first years and be a friendly face to welcome them when they first join, as well as answering any queries for them throughout the year. You will be sending your Mentees 4 core emails which will take you up to around February and after that point we will leave you to contact your Mentees as much or as little as you wish.

This handbook should provide you with the information to assist you in your role professionally and personally, as well as being a useful reference point for referring to your mentoring role when applying for jobs in the future.

Although we are confident you are prepared for the role with assistance from our training and this handbook, in the background will always be your Lead Mentors on hand for support within your department and the full-time staff within the SU. The Peer Mentoring team can be contacted through peermentoring@le.ac.uk and we aim to get back to you within 2-3 working days. For any more urgent or serious queries, please see the 'General Information for the Role' section of this handbook.

Any further updates from the team can be found in our monthly newsletters which will be emailed to all registered Peer Mentors, or on our social media channels including [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

PEER MENTORING SKILLS

What skills will I *bring* to the role? What skills can I *gain* from the role?

Communications

Written

- Provide info that is practical, helpful and supportive
 - Not patronising, not vague, preferably based on your own experiences
- Professional but friendly

- you may say “Hi !” but try not to swear for example
- Accessible
 - Short paragraphs, text that is easy to read in size, font choice and colour

Example for CV: In my role as a Peer Mentor, I adapted my communication style to be approachable yet professional for my Mentees. It was important to be approachable in order for my Mentees to feel they could come to me for support, whilst professionalism was vital as I was representing the established University Peer Mentoring scheme.

Online video call

- Body language
 - Open, don't cross arms, lean back from the camera, give full attention
- Respecting boundaries
 - If your Mentee does not want to tell you information about themselves then don't push them
- Patience
 - If you are feeling stressed and are finding yourself irritated by a Mentee, take a moment to breathe, sip some water and ask them to explain further what they require from you
- Flexibility
 - If a Mentee does not wish to have their camera on but others do wish to share cameras then allow them the flexibility to do so, this might also mean allowing some Mentees to turn up later than others, or turning on talking-to-text to be more accessible for those with specific needs
- Tone and Language
 - The lack of social cues such as pauses, eye contact etc. can make online communications more awkward, by adjusting tone and language, you can still come across as friendly and appropriate

Example for CV: Adapting my communications to a digital format was key in maintaining my relationship with my Mentees, as due to the COVID restrictions it was unpredictable as to when we would be able to meet in person. Within my video calls with my Mentees I developed patience, due to internet issues and communications barriers through online communication, but also overcame the lack of social cues, by adapting my tone and language to be appropriate for the interaction.

Support skills

- Develop questioning techniques
 - Focus on open questions to find out information e.g. why? How? Closed questions for confirming (answer yes/no) e.g. is this the case? Are you sure?
- Non-judgemental, Empathy
 - We are all human and make mistakes, we will all ask a silly question now and then, remember what it felt like to be a first year student, empathise with any

aspects you do share and try to put yourself in their shoes if you don't have anything in common

- Open-minded
 - Others may have different backgrounds, identities, sexualities to you, but that does not make anyone better than anyone else, try your best to respect everyone equally and remember as a Peer Mentor that we uphold this as an important value (if unsure, please refer back to the training)
- Active listening

Example for CV: As a Peer Mentor, it was important to uphold relevant legislation such as the Equality Act 2010 as within the role we worked with people across all 9 protected characteristics. As a support role, it was vital we were open minded to ensure we could provide a space for support for our Mentees, no matter their background and know that they could come to us with any questions. The Peer Mentoring Scheme also incorporated an element called Liberation matching where people could choose to be matched based on protected characteristics, making respect a core value of the scheme.

Problem Solving

- Identify what the problem is that the Mentee or Mentor are coming to you with
 - Do they need support
 - Do they need a specific service
 - What type of problem is it; e.g. academic, mental health, general wellbeing, sexual health, LGBT+ needs, discrimination, course issues, drug and alcohol etc.
- Do your research- see the links in the "General Information" section of this document for the service or person to contact
- Prepare your actions, this might include (but not limited to):
 1. Emailing the person back to let them know you received their email
 2. Either sending them the information/ referral form for a service or contacting the service for the student
 3. Offering advice from your personal experience and/ or, check in on them to ensure they received the support or information that they required

Example for CV: A key part of the Peer Mentoring role involved acting using my initiative and independently solving problems in order to support the incoming first year students. An example of this was when my Mentee came to me feeling isolated, low and struggling with their studies. Whilst I was able to support them in a friendly way, it was important to identify and prioritise which issues I could help with and which ones needed to be signposted to another service. After contacting the relevant parties and talking to my Mentee, they reported feeling much better and I felt more confident in my ability to problem solve practical issues.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

Looking after yourself

- Manage your time
- Surround yourself with positive and supportive people
- Do something that makes you feel good; [link to Action for happiness](#)
- Eating healthy; make sure this is individually tailored as everyone has different bodies, metabolism, genetics etc.
See the NHS page on [food and diet](#), [recipes](#), [digestive health](#)
- Focussing on your personal priorities
- Meet your individual needs to make sure you are working to the best of your abilities: make this individual to you

Develop your Skills in the Peer Mentoring Accreditation Scheme

Accreditation levels

The bronze level is the base level PM scheme, where they send 4 core emails, respond to queries from Mentees, attend their Meet Your Mentor event and fill in the evaluation at the end. These responsibilities begin around the start of term in August/September and end around February.

If you choose to aim towards Silver or Gold accreditation, you can start working towards these levels as soon as you complete the Peer Mentor training and continue building this until the March of the year you are completing the Mentor role, meaning you could have up to a year to build this.

Note: You will receive information before the start of Term 1 outlining the training available to earn points towards your accreditation. This will include many of the Transferable Skills Workshop available at www.leicesterunion.com/training.

Helpful Information on Accreditation

- Each programme generally is assigned between 1-3 points for completion and is listed in an Accreditation document which is updated throughout the year, some training is assigned higher point totals due to their relevance to the PM role
- If a Mentor completes a training that is not included in the Accreditation doc, they can still have it added, they must simply email us with:
 1. The reasons for it being useful as a Peer Mentor
 2. How it will benefit their career
- We will honour training programme completion from previous years but we will not automatically add it, you **must** email the PM team to notify us which years or which training completions you wish to include
- We have stipulated that 15 points equals Silver and 30 points equals Gold
- Everyone who achieves Silver or Gold will receive an accreditation certificate

GENERAL INFORMATION FOR THE ROLE

Students' Union based Services

Link to Peer Mentoring webpages, which are updated regularly

- General Peer Mentoring information: [Peer Mentoring pages](#), [Mentee FAQs](#), [Mentor FAQs](#)
- Mentor Training links: [Module 1](#), [Module 2](#), [Returning Mentor Training](#)
- Contact the team: peermentoring@le.ac.uk

[Advice Service](#)

- Can assist with any questions or support, including appeals for plagiarism and other academic queries, housing queries and signposting and wellbeing
- Can [book an appointment](#) and have 1:1 support
- Can access [clinics](#); these are currently under review and will be sent out through the newsletter at the start of the 2021-22 academic year
- Contact through: advice@le.ac.uk

Students' Union [Societies Hub](#)

Academic Representation: [Course Reps](#) – these sit under the Students' Union, even though there are some misconceptions that they sit under the University

University Services

Student Support Services Overview

- [AccessAbility](#): support for learning difficulties, disabilities, long term conditions
- [Counselling and Wellbeing](#): mental health and wellbeing, free counselling but will be a waiting list and assessment
- [Student Welfare Service](#): Visas, finance, accommodation, International Student information

[University Support Services](#) summary page with links.

[Welcome Pages](#)- hub for September 2021

Ignite- [Benefits of Ignite and FAQs](#), [Specific Info on Ignite Teaching, Learning and Assessment](#)

[Mental Health Hub](#)

General Student Tips

How to Student: [Starting University](#), [Kitchen tips](#), [Study Skills](#)

Budgeting: [Booklet and webpages](#)

Things to do in Leicester

10 top Attractions in Leicester- [TripAdvisor link](#)

Student Top 10 Attractions in Leicester- [WhatUni link](#)

Exciting Activities in Leicester- [TripAdvisor link](#)

EMAIL CONTENTS AND DEADLINES

Note: These deadlines are the **latest** these emails should be sent, and are in place to make sure Mentees receive the appropriate information at certain times in the semester. They do not have to be sent on the day of the deadline itself; you are welcome to send the emails before the deadlines to fit them around your academic and other commitments. We recommend creating drafts of each email well in advance of each deadline so that you only need to make some edits and updates as each deadline approaches.

Welcome Email

Email ONE – Welcome Email - Deadline: 8th October 2021

Note: The deadline of 8 October is when you should have sent your welcome email to all Mentees you have been matched with. It is important to note that we will begin the first round of matching in mid-late August, so you should keep an eye on your inbox for the initial matches and get welcome emails sent to these Mentees as soon as you can.

Since there is a delay in some students getting enrolled through clearing, you may be assigned further Mentees after this deadline. Please continue to send the welcome email to these students as you are matched with them.

This is a welcome email, building your relationship and introducing them to university life.

Paragraph 1

Introducing yourself

This is the bit when you can talk all about yourself. Be as creative as you want with it, you can style it however you want. The idea is allowing them to know a little about you and really build that rapport.

- Say who you are
- Your role as a Mentor
- Be encouraging and supportive of their progression and helping them settle into the university
- Tell them the sort of things you are here to help them with

e.g.

Hi! My name is Bliss Warland-Edge

I am the Peer Mentoring and Training Co-ordinator and I really enjoy doing this role, it is fun to see how students support their Mentees and to read the communication that is going on between them.

3 facts to know about Bliss

- 1. I am originally from Brighton, which is so far south, that my family calls Leicester “up north” (it is literally called “the Midlands”)**
- 2. I have three cats**
- 3. My hair has been dyed longer than I have had it as my natural colour!**

Paragraph 2

General information about the University of Leicester

You may want to include some history and culture of the University. This can be in different forms e.g.

- Top ten fun facts
- A poem
- Information about your course that is relevant
- Information about the Union (who are they? What do they do?)
- FAQ style e-mail (Questions and answers)
- Just general bit of information (fun information)
Did you know David Attenborough grew up in a building on campus that is now used for seminars?

Paragraph 3

What I wish I knew in my first year

In this part you get to share all the hints and tips about information that would have really helped you settle in

Suggestions (these are only ideas - please do not copy and paste this information):

- Residential information about halls?
- Academic skills?
- Blackboard and accessing information?
- Where would they find information/ support for your course?
- Shortcuts to get around?
- Any interesting places around Leicester that are worth going to?
- Pubs? Restaurants? Dessert cafes? Food? Shopping? Cinema?
- Best place to buy groceries/ home shopping?
- Laundry and washing your clothes?
- Look after your wellbeing during fresher's

This is a section where you can let your personality come through and help build the rapport with your Mentees.

Support And Getting Involved

Email TWO- Support and Getting Involved – Deadline: 5th November 2021

We have evidence that many undergraduates may have a little lull in and around the end of October and early November. It is important that they understand that they can ask for help and you as a mentor can signpost mentees to the correct place. Furthermore, encouraging Mentees to get involved in activities that can help them develop their employability further.

Start off by reflecting on the last few weeks of term. Like a general catch up, how are they? Are there any issues they would like to discuss? How are they settling in to university life?

On campus the things you can get involved in are (try give a couple options here):

- What is happening around Leicester? (Fireworks, parks, Christmas light switch on?)
- Societies
- Volunteering schemes e.g. union council, course reps, local charities
- Department activities
- Training
- Trips/year's abroad/placements
- Sports

E.g. The benefits of getting involved means you will really **develop your skills** and show to employers that whilst at university you have been a **proactive and skilled learner**. Not only are society's fun and a brilliant way of making friends, they can **boost your employability skills**.

Hint! As a Mentor we need to show that we are supporting and creating an environment of positive vibes and really boosting your mentees confidence. You need to explain what support services are used for and where to find them.

Your University and Students' Union have loads of support services in place, this support link must be included in your second email:

<https://www.leicesterunion.com/support/leicstalk>

If your Mentee would like to speak to someone in person, advise them to pop into the Advice Service. Finish off by reminding them that Mentors are always happy to help.

Revision Hints And Tips

Email THREE – Revision Hints and Tips - Deadline: 3rd December 2021

This e-mail is about encouraging your mentees the best way to revise and consolidate their learning. Around this time in the year it would be great to schedule a face to face meeting (but this is not compulsory).

Start off by reflecting on the last few weeks of term. Ask how they are, general catch up, are there any issues they would like to discuss?

Time to share those excellent hints and tips for revision!

You could share:

- videos
- Ted talks (motivational things etc.)
- helpful websites (journals/ scholarly articles/ academic websites)
- Top study and revision skills

You could share some personal reflections on what was helpful this time last year.

Helping with organisation and time-management:

- What did you use to help you prioritise your time?
- Suggest any apps or alternative technology that may have helped you
- How can your mentees make the best of study workshops or time?
- Using a diary or planner?
- Discuss having breaks and keeping hydrated
- Different types of revision methods and what worked for you
- Study buddies? Study groups?
- Planning what you are going to study?

During the long winter months, people's moods can be affected. You may want to meet for a coffee with your Mentees. Boost their confidence or just catch up.

It's a lovely time with lots happening around Leicester and campus. However, it might be nice to highlight about personal safety and how to keep yourself safe in the cold, dark winter months.

Finish off with positive information about what to see and do around Christmas time in Leicester. If they don't celebrate Christmas, acknowledge that and wish them a happy new year!

We saw really creative emails last year which included You Tube videos, Ted Talks videos and sign posting to interesting websites.

Post- Christmas Check In And Farewell

Email FOUR – Post-Christmas Check in and Farewell- Deadline: 7th January 2022

This is a nice time to end Peer Mentoring, summarise what is available for mentees and let them know that you are still there to help if needed.

‘Reflection and take care’

Congratulate the Mentees for getting so far and let them know that getting through their first semester at university is admirable.

This should be a summary e-mail and really a place for Mentees to ask you any questions.

- Leave on a positive note
- Wish them luck in the future!
- Remind the students to never give up hope and to continue to work on their skills and academic development
- Don’t forget to offer contact details to keep in touch if you want to
- Would your mentees be interested in being Peer Mentors for 2022/23?

FINAL NOTES ON CORE EMAILS

1. **Remember to Bcc the Peer Mentoring team into each of your core emails** at peermentoring@le.ac.uk. This is so that we know you are up to date and can keep track of your progress. You do not need to copy us into any other conversations with Mentees.
2. **You must include a disclaimer at the end of each core email** to give Mentees the opportunity to opt-out of the Peer Mentoring scheme. This should include the opt-out link in the example below:

“If for any reason you would no longer like to participate in the Peer Mentoring scheme, you may opt-out at any time: <https://peermentoring.su.le.ac.uk/apply/opt-out>”