

ABERDEEN 2040

Socio-Cultural Coaching to Enhance Careers and Employability: Supporting Success

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Pedagogical Inquiry Network
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Background

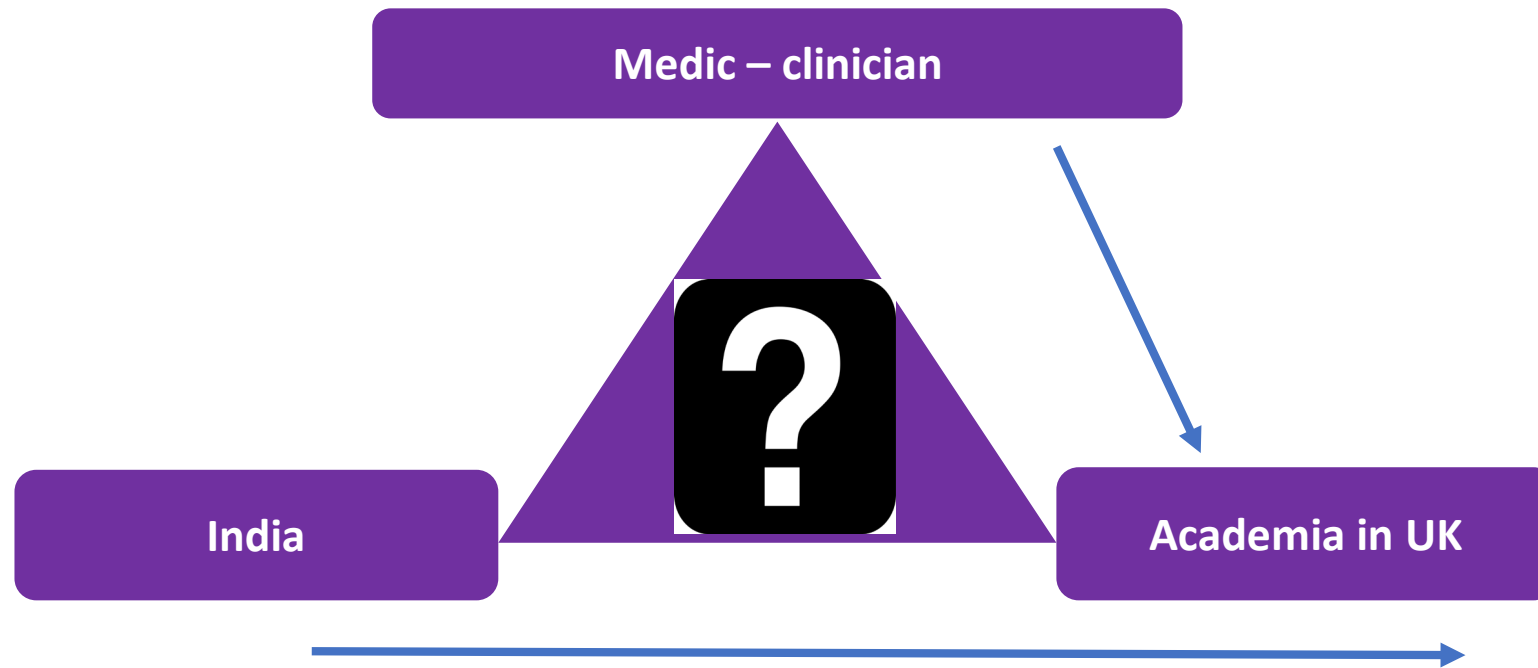
- Transitioning to and through higher education is challenging: academic and social adjustment; and integration
- Several strategies to facilitate the successful transition to university (*Baik et al, 2015*); substantially less research relating to transitions within higher education (*Jevons et al 2018*)
- Postgraduate transition: Assumption that students transitioning into PG studies do not need intensive support (*O'Donnell 2009*)
- Assumptions: Mature; Experience with studying....done it all; Real world experience so will cope

Background

- Transitioning from UG to PG studies can be daunting (*McMillan 2014; Bunney et al 2017*)
- 64% of students find transitioning into PG studies difficult (*West 2012*)
- Reasons: Many have had time away from studies; feel out of their comfort zone; are in a different discipline and/or education system (*Bennett and Turner 2012*)
- Universities failed to provide adequate support services for PG students (*Kinesh and Crane 2016*) ...most pronounced around the taught postgraduate (PGT) population (*MacPherson et al 2017*)

How can PG students be supported?

Theory: Autoethnography



Auto-ethnography: Issues

- Rote learning vs critical thinking
- Challenging your teachers
- Interactive seminars/oral presentations

Teaching in a HEI:

- Diverse disciplines *(Pharmacy in Bangladesh → PH consultant; Engineering → work with NGO → PH)*
- Diverse social and cultural backgrounds *(relationships)*
- Different education systems *(Only exams; no essay writing; IT skills)*



Pathways for

Life

Underpinning

S U C C E S S *uccess*

Socio-cultural Coaching for Careers and Employability to Support Success

Socio-cultural Coaching for Careers and Employability to Support Success: Pathways for Life Underpinning Success

- How can we support them beyond academic skills??
- Using the pathways we have travelled..... (*Bamber et al 2017; Gbadamosi 2018*)

Pathways travelled...e.g.

Medicine in Nigeria – trained as PH consultant

Sociology in UK – PH academic in UK

Law in UK – PH and HSR academic in UK

Psychology in Malta – PhD in UoA - City council

Retired Prof in PH – leads programmes in WHO

SIGN UP at the beginning of the start of Masters (2 programmes in IAHS)

- **Stage 1: Questionnaire – demographics, UG degree, work experience, PG expectations, career aspirations, graduate attributes**
- **Stage 2: Matched with appropriate mentors (coaches?) with diverse career pathways; provided basic guidelines**
- **Stage 3: Evaluation after a year**

Aim:

To assess the feasibility and acceptability of the SUCCESS PLUS programme using qualitative methods

Objectives:

- To assess the student satisfaction on the support received through the programme
- To assess mentor experiences and views of the programme
- To assess if the programme improved learning support and experience for students

Evaluation: Methodology

Qualitative Study



² Ethical Approval
CERB (UoA SMMSN)

Students – Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Mentors – Individual Telephone Interviews

Participant Eligibility



Invitation to Participate

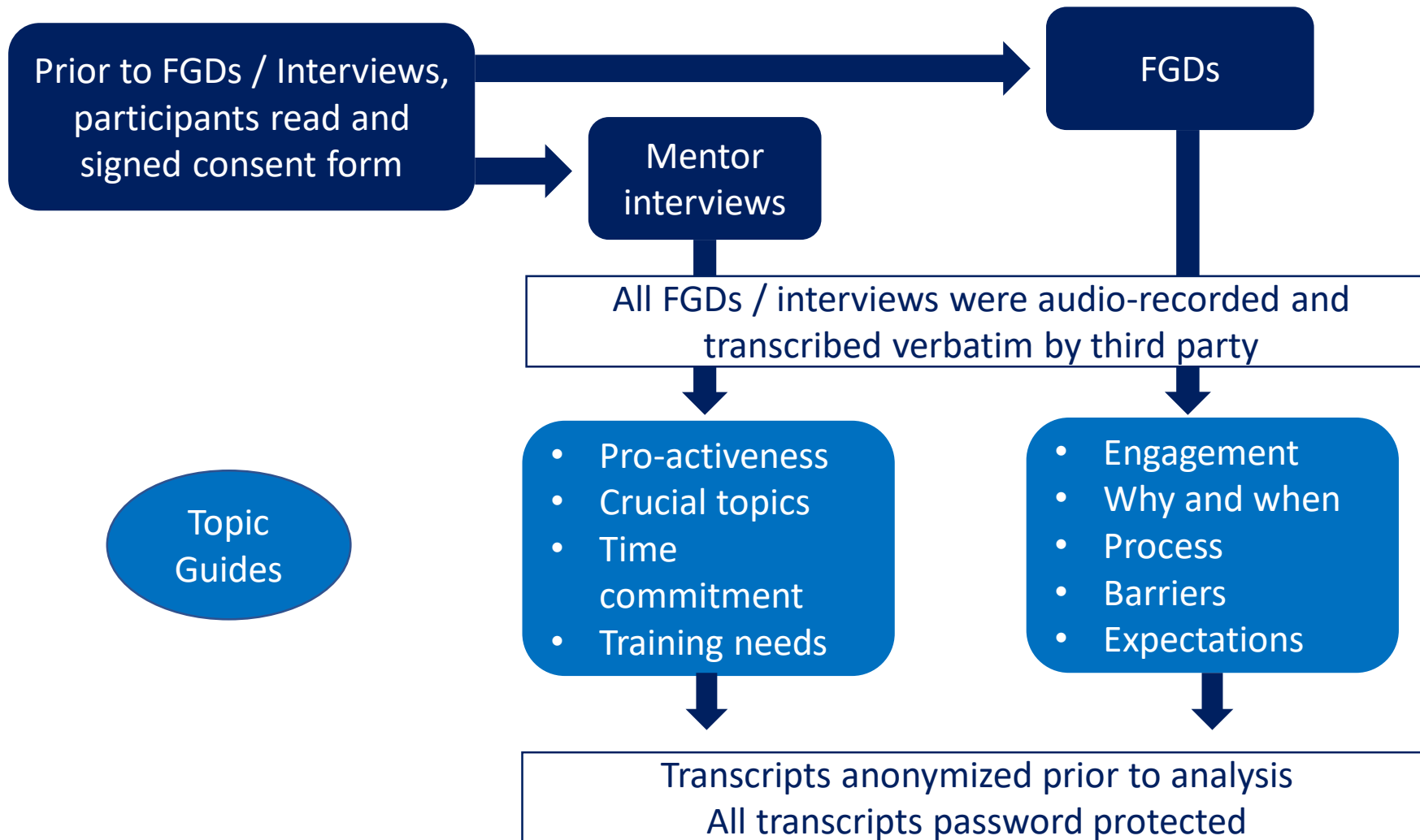


+ Information Sheet

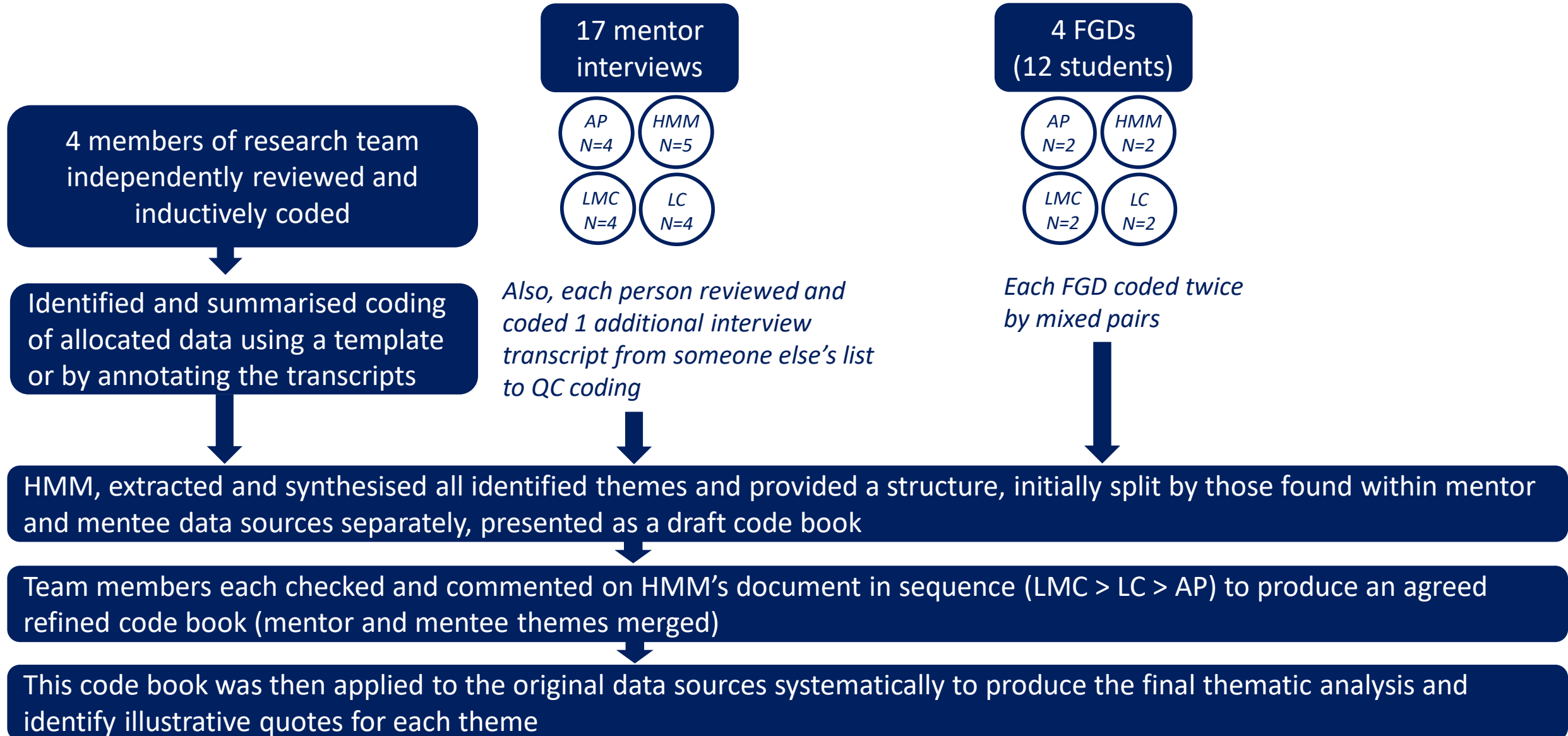
Recruitment & Data Collection

Conducted by independent researcher

Evaluation: Methodology



Data Analysis - Coding



“Maybe this will be somebody who just wants to meet up and **have a coffee** with somebody’s who’s got a **sympathetic ear.**”

“Probably because **Amudha** asked me.”

“I have a self-vested interest in that I want people to go on and do [area of medicine] and it’s **succession planning.**”

“Because I liked the idea of **supporting international students** while they are here, and having been an international student myself before I know it is sometimes daunting to come to a new place and new city, so I thought I can provide whatever support that is needed.”

Motivations for Participation *Mentors*

“Well, I suppose I felt as part of the public health system in the north-east... I kind of felt it was a **responsibility** to...”

“It will be good to help them or separate... about their life in general... thought it would be good to **help them settle as quickly as possible.**”

“Seemed a **worthwhile** thing and quite an **interesting** thing.”

“I was actually one of the people involved in sort of setting it up and finding some of the mentors to take part, but obviously we set it up because we felt there was a **need for this support** for the students that you know, we see coming through our programmes. So I guess we saw that there is a need for this to help support the students.”

“I mean we didn’t really know what it would be about, but I thought ‘well, if there is any help to **get more confident** or like for jobs or whatever,’ so well kind of as well use it.”

“I think it’s a **good opportunity** and it should be used if offered.”

“**Timely advices**, give us you know, **just basic mentorship.**”

“So when I got here I had a few doubts because coming from a medical background I had doubts if I wanted to continue in clinical practice or I wanted to go into public health completely, and I really **wanted to talk to somebody in the field** and somebody to kind of guide me and help in decision making.”

Motivations for Participation *Mentees*

“I think it was a good opportunity to have someone to speak to, like outside of academics, sometimes you can’t approach a professor regarding your personal life without it being awkward, so I thought it would be nice to have someone who does need a mentor and you can actually **go to them outside from class**, yeah.”

“And it seemed like a great opportunity to **understand the prospects** that are available after public health because sometimes we just come into some of these programmes because we just, like they sound **catchy** and all that. So in order to be able to understand what actually public health is about and kind of career progression that is available for someone that has studied public health.”

“Similar background to myself.”

Matchmaking is Key *Mentors*

“Both my mentees were either medical students or had a **clinical background**. So that’s kind of worked out, although I didn’t specifically ask for that.”

“I think the matching could probably be better. I think a little bit more objective matching, we did very subjective because we thought this is the background, this is the **country** where the student is from and this person will be a good match...”

“**Age is a big factor** in [our native] culture. It might be a personality thing... it’s just she was a bit shy.”



“... because when we first were told to you know, we were given a form to fill and our needs and we sent in our CV, so I feel this should be kind of looked at in detail. When I first got the mentor I just did a Google search of who she is and everything I saw about her online was quite different from me and I was like ... and then I found out oh, she worked in WHO okay, so that’s basically ... so it was more like the person who reviewed our CVs just saw WHO and WHO and matched us. That’s no good. It should be – “I would need someone who is already working, somebody who works in public health maybe the NHS or something who could actually guide me in line of what I want to do after education.”

“Considering the fact that we are not the same background, she did her best to put me through some stuff, yes.”

Matchmaking is Key *Mentees*

“From the beginning I expected to be matched with someone who was currently in line with what I wanted to do, or what I was doing. We were kind of like worlds apart, yeah.”

“I guess like one of the courses I didn’t enjoy first semester was one of the courses that my mentor taught on, so I felt like I couldn’t speak to my mentor about that specific course. Yeah, I think that was the only kind of challenge, like aside from that course, like I’ve been happy to speak to my mentor about anything.”

“Everything she knows about is what she learned from the Master’s in Public Health because she was, she attended the same programme, a few years ago. She does understand what – she might not understand what I mean by moving on ... she is still in the land of [area], that’s what she is trying to do, PhD, work for, basically work (inaudible), but for me, I’m trying to move into emergency response and disaster management and she can’t understand the concepts I’m trying to look for in a mentor. Which is obviously not expected, you know.”

“I think the first one I did. In that email I did say, “I know you were supposed to get in touch, but you’re new to this, the whole thing is new so that’s why I’m making this contact.” I **did get in touch with them, but then I said, “This is completely optional. All you need to know is that we are there for you.** So then it’s up to you entirely. If you don’t want, it’s okay.” But I did make the first contact explaining that to them.”

Making the First Move *Mentors*

“I then emailed the students and said ‘Hi, I’m your **Success Plus mentor**, let’s meet up some time,’ or, ‘If you’ve got anything you need, let me know and we can sort it out,’ kind of thing.”

“I contacted them because I did... I sort of waited and waited to see if they would contact me, and I heard nothing and, so I think it was sort of January, I think it was after Christmas I thought, ‘**Right, they’re obviously not going to contact me so I better in contact with them.**’ I mean waiting for the students to contact the mentors probably isn’t working, and therefore, just saying from the start you know, the mentors should make the contact with the students.”

“I think they made the first contact.”

“I did, I contacted my mentor.”

Making the First Move
Mentees

“I think in my own case I contacted him, yeah, I think so.”

"It wasn't very much... I couldn't have done a lot more since I **wasn't around** a great deal."

"So for me, out of the four it was all **different**, I didn't have strict criteria about, "Yes, it's time we meet." I kept in touch, but they picked the way."

"I would probably have felt better if there was a **little bit more contact**, but at the end of the day if it's not needed, I don't see the point, she was fine."

"Chat over **coffee**, so yeah, it was quite informal really."

"I tried to encourage them to get out and about in **Scotland** [students not keen]... so instead suggested **May Festival**: 'it's outside academia'".

"I guess it wasn't like other mentoring experiences that I'd had, **it was better because I think it was much more two-way, much more two-sided**, them speaking and me speaking back. It was more of a genuine conversation rather than me just delivering a spiel about all the things that they should be doing."

"I met her maybe on **social occasions** maybe three times specifically, and then because we had sort of common friends, which that occasionally we met, but not specifically to speak about this scheme and I just text with her and then she had nothing to ask me ask again, we left it there."

Experience and Models of Engagement Differed *Mentors*

"Well I met them not in the office but **outwith the office**, so we just met, I think it was KFC, so I kind of just met with them for lunch and they said they wanted to go, so I asked them again... this was the other thing, they're not used to all this sort of food, at the beginning they were not used to it so they were quite happy with getting fish... **chicken and chips so we decided to go to KFC**. I kind of offered them... I kind of asked them where would be good so that we could just... I mean so they could have lunch and all that, and they didn't think the canteen the sort of food that they want to eat, so yeah, so we chose KFC, yeah."

“Basically we met four times but we **spoke by emails** because she also travels.”

“Yeah, the original em... the face to face to get to know each other, and then after that it was more career based, she just wanted to **check up on how I was doing with my job search**, offered to look at my resume and if I need any assistance with that. So they were mainly about career and what's next after postgrad, yeah.”

Experiences and Models of Engagement Differed *Mentees*

“She doesn't live in the UK currently so the first time we had a Skype discussion and after that we had another Skype – I think it was about weekly, yeah, **we had Skype discussions. After that we just exchanged contacts and then we spoke more on WhatsApp, phone calls and messages.** For a while it was kind of, it kind of took a – we aren't talking frequently any more for weeks, but once in a while I do reach out to her just to ask a few questions, you know, about the Uni, about working, about stuff. Yeah, she was always coming through.”

“Yeah, mine were quite similar to everyone else's I think, so getting to know each other at the beginning and then a lot of career stuff. I will say my supervisor and I also talked about slightly more personal things, not like personal, personal, like work/life balance and things like that and **how she dealt with her relationship as well as her career at the same time**, that sort of helped me. She also talked to me about PhD stuff as well and offered to look at my CV and everything.”

“My meetings were quite informal, basically like the first meeting to just talk and was seeing where it was going, **sometimes we were just speaking about holidays or something.**”

“Well I guess I was **expecting maybe that the students would seek more help and advice**, but I guess the two I was allocated didn’t wish or want... either they felt I... well the first one either felt after that initial meeting that I couldn’t help her the way she wanted or as I say, didn’t feel that she needed that type of support, I’m not sure.”

“I think probably not, because I think I... I don’t remember expressing who I would take or want. I probably said, ‘Well, anybody’ but in my own mind, I thought it was focused on **international students.**”

Expectations Varied *Mentors*

“Well I think my expectation was just basically to ensure that the students were **equipped to deal with the new environment** that they were in, and also to deal with the culture, the educational culture, and to improve their communication between their tutors and supervisors and themselves basically. Again, it was socially overall, the opportunity for them to practice speech you know, and get feedback, the sort of thing that would help to enhance their learning during their prescribed period.”

“Yeah, also I feel, because personally when I approach mentors, I approach people who are in my field and I feel they could also be you know, like sponsors in future, they could also write some good recommendation letters, stuff like that. I expected such stuff from the mentorship programme. It wasn’t really met because **I was matched with someone who wasn’t kind of what I needed.** Yeah, that’s what I’m going to say. What I was expecting was not what I got, basically, yeah.”

Expectations Varied
Mentees

“I think one of the things I expected when I heard about the programme, yes, **I got I would say 80% of it because I got somebody that understands where I’m coming from.**”

“I think I was **expecting it more to be like personal support for like struggles** throughout those courses and it was quite separate to that, it was more like what are you thinking of doing after you leave or whatever.”

Improvements / Sustainability

Based on initial themes / experiences (pre-analysis) – Changes for second run: 2019-20

Started earlier

- Students advised at induction

- Quicker matching

Still asked mentees to make first contact but mentors to follow up if not heard

- Quicker first meeting

Mentee form sent to mentor to give background information



“They fill in a questionnaire at the beginning, I wonder if there’s some way of asking them a bit more about their expectations of what they want to get out of it so we’re not necessarily just matching on background, it might be situations...working parents and their challenges.”

“I mean, I think it would have been useful to have a meeting of all the people who are going to be mentors, so we could have discussed what it was about and how are we going to approach it and what we thought mentoring was.”

Improvements and Sustainability *Mentors*

“Maybe then we will have the ones signing up that do really want it. But I guess the problem there then is that maybe the ones who don’t, don’t realise and they’re maybe the ones who do really need it and then at a crisis point they would actually need it and maybe you know, getting them to sign up at one point at the beginning of the year when they’re not sure, maybe having the option later on as well when as I say, they may be seeking this and maybe they would prefer it for the next stage rather than while they’re here. So I guess I’m not giving a straight answer here, I’m kind of saying, ‘Well maybe this or maybe that’...”

“So I feel the future mentors should be well tailored to the needs of the student. Some students just want to go to a PhD, even after working for years so you tailor then with someone who is in line of academia, not someone who is in the field. I feel it is something like that and for those (inaudible) when I first came in I already made my decision I’m not doing a PhD, when I’m done with my Master’s I’m going back to work. I would need someone who is already working, somebody who works in public health maybe the NHS or something who could actually guide me in line of what I want to do after education.”

Improvements and Sustainability
Mentees

“Yeah okay. And then I guess whoever matches the people would be more informed of what you're looking for.”



Changes to implement for third run: 2020-21

TRAINING / INTRODUCTORY SESSION

Mentors & Mentees

Expectations

Online?

MATCHING PROCESS

Fine tuning of how to match

Questionnaire design / Mentor profiles

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