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STUDENT SERVICES



**QMConnect Peer Mentoring Project
Evaluation Report 2005/06**



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1 Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of the experience of mentees and mentors who took part in the **QMConnect Student Mentoring Project** during academic year 2005-06. Mentees and mentors came from all academic schools, although there was also a specific pilot project running within the School of Business and Enterprise. The findings from this pilot are included within this evaluation report. The views and experiences of 'non-participants' (both those who had chosen not to opt in and those for whom a mentor could not be found) and of academic staff members were also sought.

In addition to summarising the findings of the evaluation activities, this report makes recommendations for the future and also offers insights which will be useful for those developing similar schemes in other Higher Education institutions.

The main findings are summarised below:

Mentees

- The vast majority of mentees had a positive experience and all would recommend the project to future students.
- Mentees felt well supported and appreciated having someone to 'turn to'.
- A total of 95 mentoring meetings took place between the pairs who responded to the survey.
- The vast majority of respondents felt that they had integrated '*well*' or '*quite well*' into the student community and just under half believed that mentoring had contributed to this.
- 4 out of 23 respondents said that they had considered leaving or changing course at some stage.
- 65% would now like to become mentors.
- The *total* demand for mentors from new students, once again exceeded the supply of available mentors. However in some Schools, it does appear that the project may have reached its maximum participation level.

Mentors

- Many mentors had been mentees initially and once they became involved with the project students tended to stay involved.
- The majority of mentors had had a '*very*' or '*moderately*' successful mentoring experience.
- Those partnerships where mentors and mentees had met on at least 3 occasions tended to be rated most highly. Those where they met less often or where the mentee appeared to be uninterested often left mentors feeling disappointed.

- Mentors recognise the valuable personal and employability skills they are developing and also enjoy the sense of fulfilment that they get from helping someone else.
- The majority of mentors felt the training and on-going support they received was '*about right*'.

Non-Participants, Group A (did not express an interest in joining the project)

- All 50 respondents indicated that their 1st year was going '*very*' (58%) or '*quite*' (42%) well. Indicates that these students feel well settled and since this sample is likely to be fairly representative it paints a positive picture of 1st year experience at QMUC.
- 10 out of 50 felt that on reflection they would have benefited from having a mentor. However these respondents also indicated that there may not have been anything further the project staff could have done to have encouraged them to have opted-in.
- Our findings back-up earlier research, which indicates that although students are generally very supportive of mentoring schemes, the majority don't feel that they themselves would need to take part. Indicates that demand and participation is always likely to be limited.
- 18% would consider becoming a mentor the following academic year.

Non-Participants, Group B (keen to join but no match available)

- Small sample (7) – but just under half indicated that on reflection they probably did *not* need a mentor anyway and had coped well.
- 2 indicated that they really felt they would have benefited – both were 1st generation mature students.
- This does raise questions about how we can best prioritise those most likely to benefit.

Academic staff

- Staff at QMUC as a whole who had heard about the project were very supportive and commented on the likely benefits to both parties, in terms of improved student experience/retention and skills development.
- Staff in the School of Business and Enterprise were much better informed about the project and were more likely to have recommended it to students and to have witnessed perceived benefits to mentees and mentors.

2 Project Overview

The QMConnect Mentoring Project was established in 2002 and is managed centrally by the Transition & Pre-entry Guidance Adviser, Jenni Murray, in Student Services. The scheme is primarily funded from the Widening Access Premium Fund and is one of a number of student support activities/projects run by Student Services staff.

The project supports new undergraduate students (including direct entrants), during the important transition period by matching them with another more experienced student who has volunteered to offer peer support.

All new undergraduate students receive initial information within their joining packs a month or so prior to the start of their first semester. However, the scheme is also marketed to specific groups, who have been identified as likely to benefit from the scheme. These include; school pupils from non-traditional backgrounds (those involved with the Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS) summer school), access course students (studying on one of the Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP), local access courses) and QMAvance participants (annual 3-day pre-induction course for new QMUC mature students, aged 21+). These students get an opportunity to sign-up before the scheme is opened up to all new students. This approach enables the project staff to target specific priority groups while ensuring other students are not excluded.

The project aims:

To make a positive contribution to the transition experience of new students by providing a supportive and enabling learning environment, through which peer mentoring can assist students to successfully adapt to, and gain the most from, university college life.

QMUC has a very good retention rate, and has a good track record in attracting students from non-traditional groups. Hence this project, along with other student support activities, primarily aims to ensure that each student's transition experience is as good as possible, and that the University College offers students a range of means through which they can seek assistance and develop their skills.

In its first year of operation, 5 students were matched with mentors. This grew to 12 in 2003/04, 26 in 2004/05 and to 40 in academic year 2005/06. Since it covers all four of QMUC's academic schools the total number of students involved from each school in any given year has always been quite low.

At the end of academic year 2004/05 the Transition & Pre-entry Guidance Adviser was able to secure some additional funding from the FE/HE Articulation Grant. This enabled a part-time Project Assistant to be appointed for the period May – December 2005. It was decided that the Project Assistant, Sandra Fox, would co-ordinate a pilot branch of the scheme specifically within the School of Business & Enterprise (SBE). Although this school had been included within the main programme in previous years, it was felt that it would be easier for the Project Assistant to concentrate her efforts within one School and that it was likely that there was scope for more students from

this school to become involved. In addition, this school had piloted a limited term 'buddy' scheme the previous year and had expressed enthusiasm for further involvement.

The additional aim of the SBE pilot was:

To increase participation of SBE students in the project and to improve communication between SBE staff, students and student services

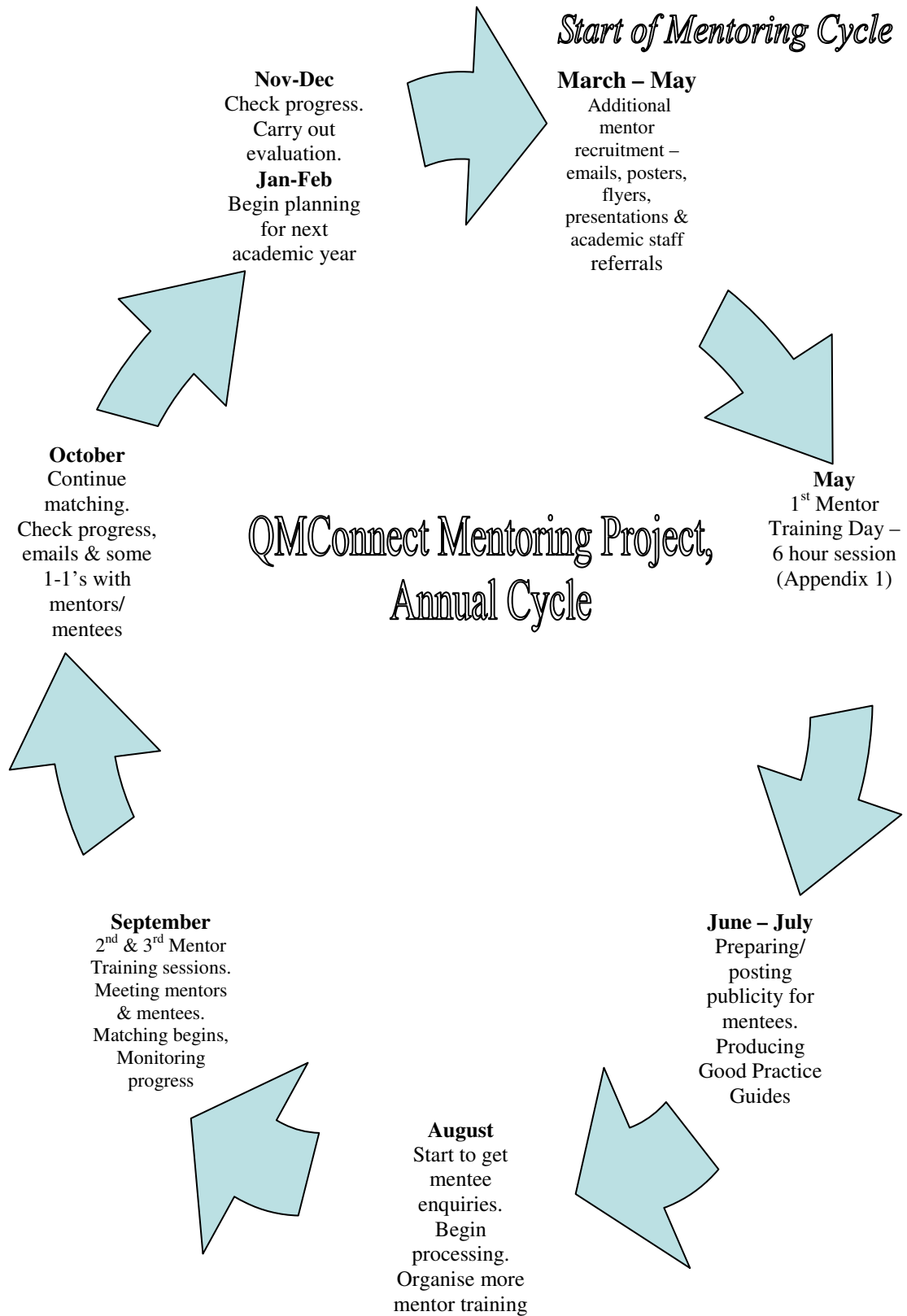
In addition the Project Assistant was to assist with the development of the scheme more generally by working closely with the Transition & Pre-entry Adviser and was:

To help inform and shape the future development of the mentoring project

2.1 The Mentoring Year 2005/06 – a breakdown

As in previous years the mentoring year for 2005/06 began in March. Diagram 1 below gives an overview of the scheme's operation over the academic year.

Diagram 1: The Annual Mentoring Cycle



2.2 Students Involved 2005/06

It had originally been the intention to try to recruit and match approximately 60 pairs in total, 30 pairs from the SBE and approximately 30 from the other schools combined. In the end 14 SBE pairs were matched and 26 from the other schools – giving a total of 40 active pairs.

The Project Assistant was not in post until mid May and hence mentor recruitment, including within the SBE was required to be underway before she started. Once in post the Project Assistant did liaise with school staff to try to increase the number of new SBE mentors. Staff were asked to indicate the names of students that they thought might be interested in taking part. These 70 students were then written to and 4 subsequently signed-up. However it should also be noted that in the end 2 mentors from this school remained unmatched since mentee demand was not as high as had been expected.

Table 1 (below) shows the numbers of students involved and a basic breakdown of their educational backgrounds.

Table 1: 2005/06 Mentors/Mentees

School	No. of Mentees	No. of Mentors	Mentees background	Mentors background
Business & Enterprise (SBE)	14	16 (2 unmatched)	7 School leavers 0 School leaver (LEAPS*) 1 school leaver (international) 2 Mature students 1 Mature (SWAP*) 2 Direct entrant (UK) 1 Direct entrant (International)	9 School leavers 1 School leaver (LEAPS) 4 Mature students 0 Mature (SWAP) 2 Direct Entrant (UK)
Health Sciences (SHS)	19	19	9 School leavers 0 School leaver (LEAPS) 6 Mature students 4 Mature (SWAP)	8 School leavers 0 School leaver (LEAPS) 6 Mature students 5 Mature (SWAP)
Social Sciences, Media & Communication (SSSMC)	7*	6	2 School leavers 1 School leaver (Leaps) 1 School leaver (EU*) 2 Mature students 0 Mature (SWAP) 1 Direct entrant (A' Levels)	3 School leavers 0 School leaver (Leaps) 1 Mature students 1 Mature (SWAP) 1 Direct entrant (HNC*)
Drama & Creative Industries (SDCA)	0	0 matched 1 unmatched – injured at start of academic year and decided to opt out before being matched	n/a	1 mature (unmatched)
Totals:	40	43	40 Mentees 18 School leavers 1 School leaver (LEAPS) 1 School leaver (EU) 1 school leaver (international) 10 Mature students 5 Mature (SWAP) 3 Direct entrant 1 Direct entrant (International)	43 Mentors 21 School leavers 1 School leaver (LEAPS) 12 Mature students 6 Mature (SWAP) 3 Direct entrant

*one mentee in the School of Social Sciences, Media & Communication was matched with an experienced mentor from SBE who had initially studied a joint degree
 LEAPS – Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (see www.leapsonline.org)
 SWAP - Scottish Wider Access Programme (see www.swap2highereducation.co.uk)
 EU – European Union
 HNC – Higher National Certificate

40 new students were matched with a mentor. At least another 20 students asked for mentors but were unable to be matched, usually because all suitable available mentors had already been allocated or because the student was studying one of the few subjects from which no mentors had been recruited. Feedback from previous evaluations has shown that both mentees and mentors prefer to be matched with a student studying the same (or similar) subject, hence 2 SBE mentors remained unmatched (Murray, 2003 and McConnell, 2005).

As Table 1 shows, just over 50% of mentees were young school leavers and the remainder mature students (21+). In the vast majority of cases younger students were matched with more experienced students of a similar age and background and mature students were generally matched with other mature students. Where possible those who had come to QM via an Access course were matched with ex-Access course students although getting a 'personality' and/or subject match was regarded as more important than the specific educational backgrounds of the mentees and mentors. Matches took place within subject areas wherever possible. For a number of reasons numbers coming forward from the School of Drama & Creative Industries have always been low and this year no new mentors signed-up. This may be largely due to the nature and intensity of the courses within this school, which through group projects already encourage peer support. The majority of the School's courses are also taught at the Gateway Theatre, a separate campus.

2.3 1st Generation Status

Mentees were asked to indicate on their initial mentee application form if they were the '*1st in their family to go to university*'. 7 SBE mentees, 6 SSMC and 4 SHS mentees indicated that they were. On reflection we ought to have asked the question 'did your parents go to university' as those who have an older brother or sister (and who we could still class as 1st generation) are likely to answer 'no' to the question we posed. Hence the figure of 17 out of 40 is likely to be an under-representation of 1st generation status within our group of 40 mentees.

Section 3: Evaluation Methodology

QMConnect has been internally evaluated each year of its operation. While these studies gave participants the opportunity to feedback their views and experiences and enabled the co-ordinator to make some changes to the delivery and management of the scheme, their impact was fairly limited. In academic year 2005/06 it was decided to conduct a fuller evaluation which would also include non-participants and which would gather more detailed data than had previously been the case.

The following evaluation activities took place between weeks 9-11 of Semester 1, 2005.

Mentees & Mentors

Both mentees (40) and mentors (40 active in 2005) were sent evaluation questionnaires to complete (Appendices 2 & 3). As an incentive the first 10 returned received a £10 voucher. A 60% (24) response rate from mentors and a 58% (23) response rate from mentees was achieved (further questionnaires were returned after the initial deadline but these were not included since analysis had already begun). These return rates are relatively high and although impossible to know, it is thought that they may be representative of the total sample since they do include pairs who had no or few meetings as well as those who reported a substantial number of meetings and also include those who reported a less successful experience as well as those who rated it very successful.

Non Participants

A group of 52 School of Business and Enterprise students were asked to complete a questionnaire at the end of one of their lectures (Appendix 4). This cohort included 50 non-participants and 2 mentees. This provided a rich source of data from those who would not normally be asked to contribute. Since everyone who attended the lecture was asked to complete a brief questionnaire the group was not self-selecting and therefore possibly representative of new students as a whole. Quite a large proportion of this report summarises the responses of this group since they offer us a valuable insight into why many students choose *not* to participate and also more generally into the 1st year experience of new QM students.

The contact details of 20 new students who had requested a mentor but who could not be matched up provided another small sample. These students were sent a questionnaire through the post and 7 responded (Appendix 5). Although a very small sample it does offer some insight into the views and progress of this group.

Academic staff

All academic staff from the School of Business & Enterprise and the School of Social Sciences, Media and Communication were emailed a questionnaire to gather their

views on the project (Appendix 6). The SBE was chosen since it was part of the pilot and the SSSMC staff were approached to provide a level of comparison and to gain a general insight into staff awareness of the scheme in a school where there had not been much face-to-face contact between project staff and academic staff. A total of 13 forms were returned, 9 from SBE and 5 from SSSMC.

Measuring Impact - a note of caution

It should be noted that this report primarily offers an insight into the *experiences* of those taking part and into the 1st year experience of non-participants. It is notoriously difficult to measure the actual 'impact' of a mentoring scheme scientifically (Phillips, Swanson & Morgan-Klein, 2005). There are a number of reasons for this, including; often small sample size, lack of control group and the presence of a number of variables that could have influenced the changes being measured. The majority of the mentoring research currently available therefore relies on the qualitative feedback received from those taking part, rather than on external measures of impact.

Section 4: Evaluation Feedback - Mentees

Of the 40 mentees involved with the project this year, 23 completed evaluation forms.

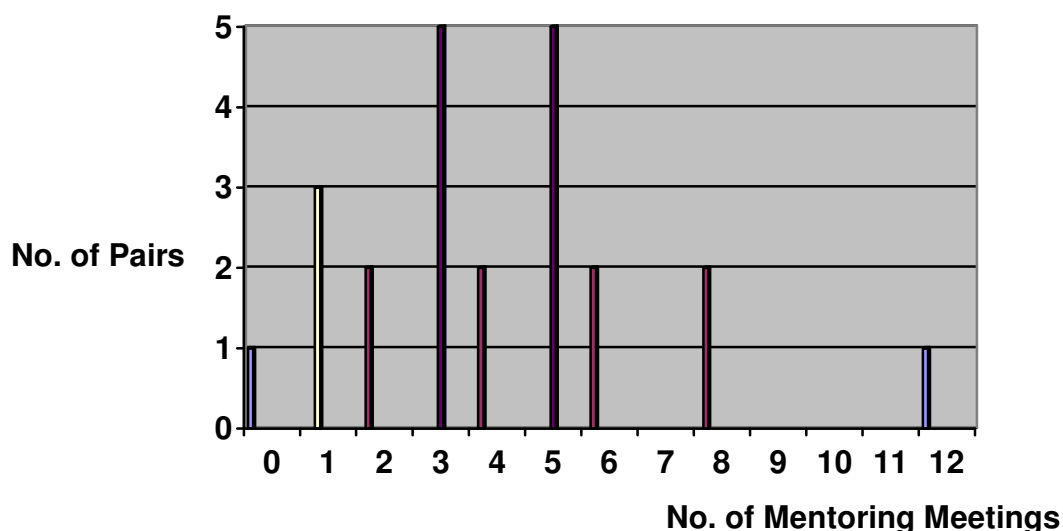
4.1 When do students get involved?

11 of the respondents signed up for the project *prior* to term starting, 10 during induction/matriculation week and 2 in the weeks following. Hence nearly half of the respondents were attracted to the scheme at an early stage before they had any direct experience of QMUC. For these students it would seem that they are choosing to proactively seek out support that they think they will require/benefit from.

4.2 How often did pairs meet and for what duration?

Mentees were asked to quantify the approximate number of meetings they had had with their mentor. Results are shown in Graph 2.

Graph 2: Number of Mentoring Meetings



From the 23 mentees who responded we know that a total of **95** mentoring meetings occurred, giving an average of just over 4 meetings per pair.

What was the duration of each meeting, on average?

Table 3: Duration of Meetings

Duration of Meeting	No. of pairs meeting
0	1
15 minutes	1
20- 55 minutes	12
1 hour	8
1 hour+	1

7 pairs regularly kept in touch by phone or email between meetings and 15 occasionally.

7 mentees had had a meeting and 13 had had some phone or email contact with their mentor within the last week. At the point of evaluation, 13 stated that they were still meeting their mentor regularly.

4.3 How did mentees rate their mentoring experience?

Mentees were asked to rate their mentoring experience. 12 rated it very successful, 9 moderately successful and 2 unsuccessful. Below are some of the reasons given by respondents for their rating.

Very successful (12):

“It has helped me to adapt to uni life a lot more quickly than I had expected”

“It has helped me greatly in organising my 1st few months at QM” (3 meetings)

“Gave me confidence with this new situation” (4 meetings)

“I get on well with my mentor and look forward to our weekly meetings – even if I have no issues to speak about” (5 meetings)

“Thoroughly enjoyed talking with my mentor, finding out how she managed and getting pointers from her” (8 meetings)

“I have met a nice person who has been able to help me and guide me in a lot of important matters concerning my subject” (issues discussed with mentor included; taking lecture notes, planning an essay/report & revision/exam strategies) (6 meetings)

“I feel as if I understand more of what the course is about and what is expected of me” (direct entrant, 4 meetings)

“It is assurance, support and generally helpful” (6 meetings)

Moderately successful (9):

“we never met but I knew there was help if I needed it” (0 meetings, some email contact)

“It was nice to know that there was someone there to talk to...however, because I have 4 other people on my course direct entry, the need for the mentor was perhaps less...I did not know this at the time of joining” (3 meetings)

“we did not get to meet up as often as we would have liked” (3 meetings)

Unsuccessful (2):

“we didn’t meet like we should have but I know I can get in touch if I need help” (1 meeting)

“because I didn’t make the effort enough. I needed to ask more questions” (3 meetings)

What has emerged from the evaluation is that the more meetings a pair have the more likely they are to rate their mentoring partnership as ‘*moderately*’ or ‘*very successful*’ (probably as you would expect, since those who have been ‘mis-matched’ are more likely to stop meeting at an early stage).

What also emerges from both the evaluations and from informal feedback the project staff have received is that personality and how people ‘click’ with one another are two of the key factors in determining whether a mentoring pairing will be successful. This is something that a few of the *mentors* who did not feel their mentoring experience was particularly successful commented on:

“I didn’t feel like we had much in common, although to be fair we only met once & on paper we probably looked like a good match” what was were the most difficult aspects? “not really clicking with each other”

“maybe we just didn’t really click”

It could be argued that by only having one meeting these mentors and mentees have not given their partnership enough time to develop and that they may be basing their decisions about incompatibility on initial judgements which may (or may not) have proven to be the case were they to have had at least one further meeting. Obviously if a mentee is not keen to have further meetings then neither the project co-ordinator nor the mentor can, or should, try to encourage them to do so. However in some cases it did seem to the project staff that one or both parties have allowed the relationship to end before they had given it sufficient opportunity to develop. A 2002 guide for mentoring practitioners produced by the Universities of the North East makes reference to this dilemma:

“Do you establish a scheme with regular meetings...or establish a system here the mentoring only takes place when the mentee requires it or regular meetings enable close relationships and contacts to be formed but can be demanding of time but irregular meetings could result in bad habits forming in such a way that mentees do not contact mentors when they need help because they do not know them as if there were regular meetings”
(2002, p. 4)

We plan to attempt to address this in future training sessions, by encouraging mentors/mentees to commit, wherever possible, to have at least 3 meetings initially.

Other factors which seem to be important are; common course, similar age/life stage (although if other factors were right this didn't always matter), shared career interests, shared interests generally, similar educational route to QMUC etc.

Interestingly, some of the mentees who only met their mentors on 1 or 2 occasions (or in one case never!) still sometimes rated their partnership as moderately successful. For these mentees, knowing someone was available should they need them, seemed to be a comfort in itself. From a project management perspective however such matchings are less desirable. They require the same level of staff input and support but generally generate less 'real' outcomes and could mean that others who could have benefited more miss out on this valuable opportunity.

It is impossible for project staff to always accurately match pairs and for mentees themselves to know how they will settle and how mentoring will 'fit' with their 1st year experience and their needs. It seems likely therefore, that we have to accept the probability that at least some pairs will decide not to meet regularly.

4.4 Mentoring Conversations – what's being discussed?

Mentees were asked to indicate from a list of possible topics which had featured in their discussions. Table 4 below summarises these findings:

Table 4: Topics for Mentoring Meetings

Topic	No. of pairs discussing
Adjusting to the academic environment & what is expected	16
Juggling study/work	12
Finding your way around campus	12
Balancing study & leisure time	11
Living away from home	4
Juggling study/family responsibility	4
Student Finance	3
Disability	1
Health & wellbeing	1
Other?	1

Mentees were also asked to rate their level of skill and confidence in relation to certain key areas – both at the start of term and at the time of the evaluation. As would be expected many noted an increase. However we also asked the mentees to state whether they believed mentoring had contributed. Results are summarised below and show the breadth of support that mentoring can offer:

Table 5: Areas where mentoring had helped

	No's. saying mentoring had helped
Library skills	11
Essay writing	9
Self-confidence	8
Research skills	7
IT Skills	6
Problem solving	5
Time management	5
Managing deadlines	5
Presentation skills	5
Self motivation	4
Assertiveness	2

It is apparent that for a number of the mentees, academic skills such as essay writing and research skills were something that they were discussing with their mentors. See text under Figure 2 below, for further discussion of how mentoring may contribute to academic progress.

4.5 Most important benefits to mentees

Mentees were also asked to comment on the ‘most important benefits from mentoring’. Below is a selection of their comments:

“having a person who knows the uni to help me”
“having someone there to ask questions if I needed it”.
“knowing I had someone to turn to”
“someone to ‘check-in’ with”

A number of mentees referred to the fact that having someone there gave them confidence that QM was a supportive place and that they had people to turn to if required. This links with comments about feeling a sense of belonging or attachment as the next set of responses highlights:

“helped me to feel ‘included’ – part of QM and that I belonged here”
“forming another friendship”
“someone to talk to”
outside of people in class. Support behind me”
“someone being there specifically for me to go to with problems if I needed to”

“the help with essays, referencing, presentations , self-confidence and gaining a very useful & caring friend”

“finding out about my course and what to expect e.g. in exams”

“academic support and a friendly face”

“being able to talk to another direct entrant and her being able to understand what I’m going through now”

“positive feedback and encouragement”

4.6 Withdrawal/Course Change

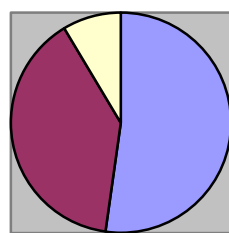
Since one of overarching aims of the project is to contribute to retention we asked all mentees whether they had considered ‘*changing course or withdrawing at any point*’. 4 mentees indicated that they had and of these one had chosen to discuss the matter with their mentor:

“she helped me to decide to continue with my course”

4.7 Academic & Social Integration

We asked a series of three questions (see Figures 1 - 3 below) to gauge how mentees felt they were settling in. These questions enabled us to look at their perceived social and academic integration and also at their feelings about moving into the 2nd semester.

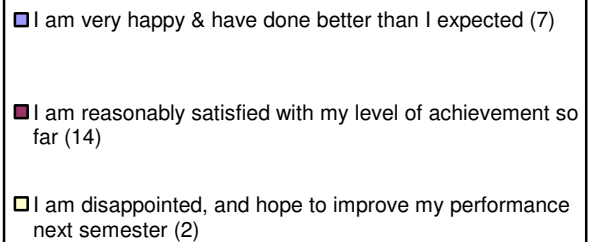
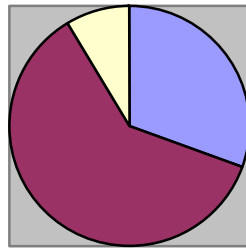
Figure 1: In general, how do you feel that your first semester is working out?



- Very well; I feel happy and well integrated into the student community (12)
- Quite well; On the whole things are going ok (9)
- Not very well; I still have lots of questions & uncertainties (2)

48% of the 23 respondents believed mentoring had contributed to the above.

Figure 2: How would you rate your academic performance so far (based on your own expectations at the start, and any assessment feedback that you have had)?



30% believed mentoring had contributed. Interestingly a few respondents added qualifying statements under their answer such as:

“I don’t necessarily feel like my individual work is good due to my mentor. I feel she has helped me structure essays but it is my individual abilities that are marked”

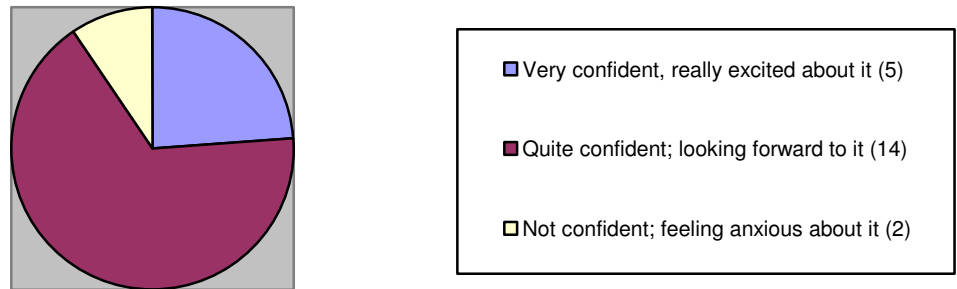
I did not discuss to any depth academic issues/assignments. This was deliberate”

It should be noted that during mentor training sessions the Student Learning Adviser delivers a 1 hour interactive input designed to assist mentors to recognise and deal appropriately with the boundaries in relation to academic support. Both the mentors and mentees Good Practice Guides also clearly explain these boundaries and give examples of acceptable and unacceptable practice. One of the mentor respondents also commented on this issue:

“much more challenging than I expected – assessing how much help to give. If like me, you want to help ...it’s difficult to say no...but you have to think about whether the information they want (e.g. looking at an essay, asking details) would be inappropriate”

When asked about their feelings with regard to semester 2, the vast majority of the sample seemed to be feeling ‘quite confident’ (Figure 3).

Figure 3: How are you feeling about progressing into semester 2?



Again, 30% felt that mentoring had contributed to the above.

4.8 Future Commitment to the Project

When asked whether they would recommend the mentoring project to a new student all 23 respondents indicated that they would. Even the 2 mentees who had rated their own mentoring experience as unsuccessful felt that the project was likely to have something valuable to offer to another new student.

15 of the 23 respondents indicated that they would consider becoming a mentor for Sept. 2006's intake, 6 were unsure and 2 stated that they would not be interested. Those who have taken part themselves are more likely than those in the general student population to want to volunteer as mentors themselves (see 6.3 below). The experience of the project over the last 3 years has shown that mentees who go on to become mentors often become the most committed and enthusiastic volunteers and ambassadors for the project. The quotes below give some flavour of this:

“I really benefited from the project and think it is very useful so I wanted to be a help and to put back into the project what I gained from it” (2nd year student who was a mentee initially)

“I found it helpful – so I wanted to contribute...I also just like the idea of mentoring & helping others – even in a small way” (3rd year student who has mentored 2 mentees and was initially a mentee)

Section 5: Evaluation Feedback - Mentors

A 60% response rate was achieved (24 out of 40 forms returned), included 8 mentors from SBE, 14 from SHS and 2 from SSSMC. See Appendix 3 for a copy of the mentor evaluation form.

8 of the respondents had also mentored the previous year and 9 had initially been mentees.

5.1 How did mentors rate their mentoring experience?

Mentors were also asked to rate their mentoring experience. Of the 24 respondents 10 rated it very successful, 12 moderately successful and 2 unsuccessful. Below are some of the explanations given by respondents for their rating.

Very successful (10):

“Although there were some aspects I’d imagined going differently. I think my mentee took from it what he needed and wanted”

“We hit it off so well and became good friends”

“I’m available if required which does not put pressure on me or mentee to be available at specific times when timetables may clash”

“I have been very fortunate to get on very well with both my mentees. The main factor being of similar age & life stage and studying the same course”

“I feel my mentee was put at ease. Confidence boosted to see that a mature student could succeed. Also on the same wavelength”.

Moderately successful (12):

“Could have planned arrangements every week, but was difficult to have scheduled time every week”

“I would have liked to have supported her more. Because I was away so much (placements) I think she did not want to ‘bother’ me. I made most of the phone calls”

“It has went well, but commitments on both sides means we can’t meet up as often as we would like”

“I think she needed to have someone initially who knew their way around and now that she is well integrated she is more comfortable with her new environment”

“I feel we got on well but she was very confident and I wasn’t sure how to be of most help as I thought she was doing fine - and so did she”

“In the one meeting that we had I felt I spent a lot of time with her and we covered quite a lot”.

Unsuccessful (2):

“I gave him both my email and mobile number but he was not interested in meeting up it seems. He did not tell me this - the last email was along the lines that he was busy and we would meet the following week”

“I don’t think my mentee felt as if they could approach me, I’m not that scary – honest!!...I got the feeling that they didn’t really want or need to be part of the project. I really wanted to help, but he always declined my offers, so it was quite disappointing”

5.2 Number/Frequency of Meetings and Success Ratings

Mentors were also asked about the number of meetings they had had with their mentees. What emerges is that the partnerships which have been rated ‘*successful*’ or ‘*very successful*’ by mentors seem to have had a least 3 meetings and then often it has been agreed that mentees will get in touch if and when they wish to meet. On the whole this seems to have worked for the mentors, although there is a certain degree of disappointment for some if the mentee then does not seem to need to meet up:

“I would have liked to have met more often & felt more useful in practical ways like library skills & approaching to exams & assignments. This advice/help wasn’t really wanted by my mentee”.

Also maintaining good contact, even if not meeting regularly seems to be a feature. 19 of the 22 who rated their relationship successful or very successful had had some form of contact with their mentee within the last three weeks. Hence ‘being available if needed’ features strongly even if meetings are not happening.

Hampton, in a summary of her experience of establishing and running mentoring schemes within Higher Education institutions in London, warns readers to be aware of ‘safety net mentees’. She states that these are:

“students who are skilled users of the education system...they have enrolled for everything that could help them if it becomes necessary, as a kind of insurance policy, but they rarely, if ever, actually use them after the first meeting”

It would seem that the best way to ensure that a scheme is not overwhelmed by such students will be to build-in frank and open discussions between project co-ordinators and prospective mentees prior to any matching and that the commitment to meeting their mentor regularly is emphasised.

5.3 What do mentors get from taking part?

Mentors gave the following insights into what they believe they get from their role as mentors and the ways that they feel that their involvement with the project has contributed to their personal development.

“Feeling I have being able to help someone and giving me confidence that I have actually taken on what I have been taught as I can discuss it with my mentee”

“Demonstrates my commitment to my profession” (OT student)

“Realising how much knowledge of OT that I really have! Developing my communication skills”

“Helps me to think of others and know that we all have different issues, fears, priorities in life. I’m going to be a podiatrist and will always work closely with people”

“I think it’s helped me look outside my own wants a little bit. I really had to focus on what my mentee wanted and what was best for him”

“reflection and being able to help someone else”

“learning to listen to other people & communication skills”

“using my skills & experience in a different way, advising rather than for my own academic purposes”

“1st time I’ve had responsibility for over a year – its good to keep you in check – students can become very lazy and carefree. Mentors must be on time – I was late a couple of times and felt really bad”

“learning to be more open-minded about situations”

The above comments show the mentors have been able to reflect on their involvement and that they value the skills and experiences they are developing. To assist mentors to recognise and make the most of these skills they were all invited to a ‘Mentors Evening’ in December 05. In addition to being a chance for mentors to catch-up and to meet informally with the project staff it also gave them the opportunity to take part in an informal session ‘Using your mentoring experience to impress employers’ run by a Careers Adviser. Only 7 of the 40 mentors attended but feedback suggested that those who did found it to be a useful event. Project staff plan to repeat this event in the future.

5.4 Mentor Training and Support

Feedback on the mentor training sessions indicated that overall mentors felt that the session they attended covered all of the key aspects in the right amount of detail. However one possible area for development did get highlighted by a number of mentors – what to do if it doesn't work out as you expect e.g. if your mentee is unreliable, if they don't respond to your calls/emails, if the mentee seems very confident and you aren't sure you can be of help etc. Future training sessions will be adapted to take account of this feedback.

We also checked whether mentors would be interested in any of the following:

Table 6:

	No. expressing an interest
Opportunities to meet with other mentors	6
Web-based mentors' discussion forum	8
Individual mid semester review meeting with Co-ordinator	11
Follow-up training/skills development sessions	1

It does not appear that there is enough support for any of the options to suggest that they ought to be made a priority or compulsory element of the process. However the co-ordinator will consider piloting the optional offer of mid or end of semester reviews to mentors.

5.5 Future Involvement

One of the most encouraging findings was that all 24 respondents were positive about the scheme in general. 16 still want to be involved in academic year 2006/07, a further 4 said they would like to but will be away on placement all or most of the year and a further 4 are due to graduate.

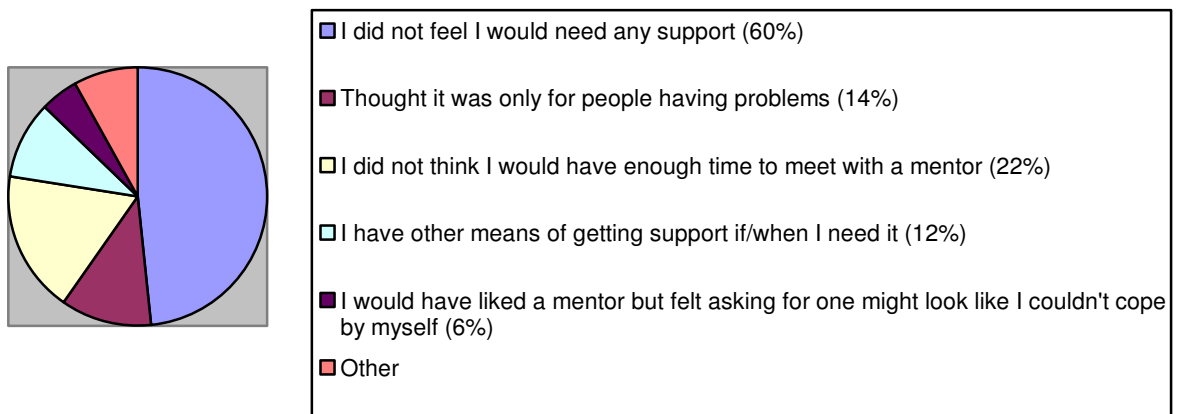
Section 6 Feedback from Non-Participants, Group A

It was decided to seek feedback from SBE non-participants who had not expressed an interest in joining the project. A group of 52 students (studying a range of degree programmes) were asked at the end of a lecture to complete a brief survey (Appendix 4). Of this group, 2 were currently mentees and 50 had chosen not to opt in.

6.1 Reasons for non-participation

Figure 4 below summaries the main reasons sighted for non-participation. Although we strive to market the scheme as a positive option, 14% of respondents indicated that they believed it was for those “having problems”. Another 6% (3 students) said they would have liked to have signed-up but did not because they didn’t want it to look like they couldn’t cope alone. Of these, 2 said that on reflection, they now wished they had signed-up.

Figure 4: Non Participants – Reasons for not signing-up



In total **20%** of the respondents indicated that on reflection they now felt that they might have benefited from having had a mentor. However, when asked “is there anything we could have done that might have encouraged you to participate?” only one respondent made a further comment:

“make it less of a ‘not done’ thing”

Overall feedback however, seems to indicate that we are getting the tone of the marketing right.

Most respondents did not believe we could have done anything to have encouraged them to sign-up. They simply didn’t want to or didn’t think it was relevant at the stage it was being offered. It might be possible to make use of this ‘20% later wished that they had got involved’ statistic during our future efforts to recruit new mentees.

Our results are similar to those obtained by a 2004 study of the mentoring scheme at Manchester Metropolitan University produced by their Educational Liaison Office. This study found that although surveyed students support the idea of a mentoring scheme and can see its benefits, “when it comes to the issue of actually having a mentor the majority of students are quite clear that they do not wish or need one” (p. 29). Hence they conclude;

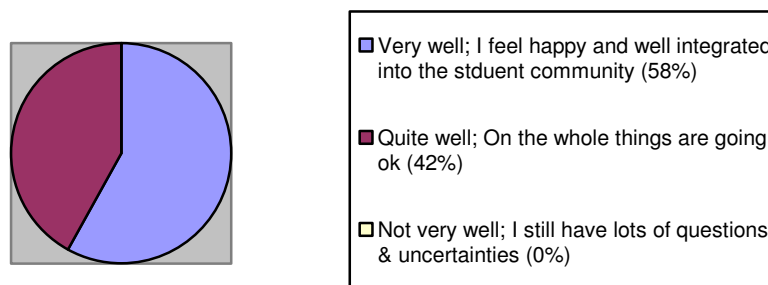
“whilst in principle it looks as though mentor schemes should be popular, our data suggests that in practice take up will often be poor. It follows that although mentoring schemes can be extremely helpful to the individuals who take part, it is perhaps optimistic to anticipate high impact across an institution” (p. 29).

This research with non-participant students has been extremely helpful in clarifying that the scheme may already be reaching the majority of those wanting to take part and that future developments should focus on improving certain elements of the current scheme rather than trying to expand it to include significantly higher numbers of mentors and mentees. This is especially the case in some subject areas where numbers involved are already quite high (SBE and SHS). In other subject areas however, number involved are still relatively low and there could still be some scope for expansion (although manpower/funding constraints may make this impractical).

6.2 Academic & Social Integration of Non-Participants

We asked non-participants the same three questions about academic and social integration (see Figures 4 - 6 below) to see if responses were similar to those of mentees. Figure 4 indicates that all of the 50 respondents believe that things are going ‘quite’ or ‘very’ well. This is an encouraging response and indicates that this sample of 50 students have settled in well. This survey was carried out during week 11 of semester 1. What is not known is whether any students had already left (this could provide an interesting area for further study), but certainly this representative sample paints a positive picture of 1st year experience at QMUC and there do not appear to be any significant differences between the mentee and non-participant group, although obviously it is possible that mentee responses may have been less positive had they not been part of this project.

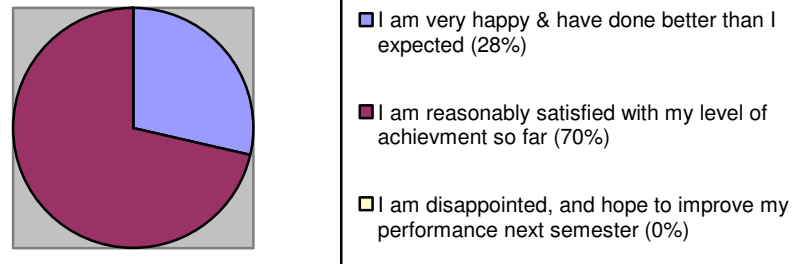
Figure 4: In general, how do you feel that your first semester is working out?



When asked specifically about their academic performance (Figure 5), all respondents indicated that they were either ‘reasonably’ or ‘very satisfied’ with their progress to

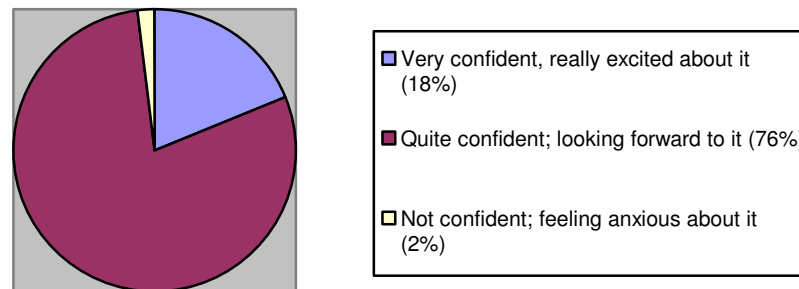
date (should be noted that this would have been prior to the start of any Semester 1 examinations).

Figure 5: How would you rate your academic performance so far (based on your own expectations at the start, and any assessment feedback that you have had)?



When asked about their feelings with regard to semester 2, Figure 6 indicates that the vast majority of the sample seemed to be feeling *'quite confident'*.

Figure 6: How are you feeling about progressing into semester 2?



The survey of non-participants indicates that overall the vast majority of those sampled were settling well and that hopefully the mentoring project is reaching most of those who feel that they would benefit from it. Ensuring that it continues to be widely advertised in a positive and proactive should help to ensure that those who want to have adequate opportunity to opt in.

6.3 Non Participants Future Involvement as Mentors

When asked to indicate whether they would consider becoming mentors the following year, 18% of this non-participant group responded Yes, 68% No and a further 8% were Unsure.

Section 7: Feedback from non-participants, Group B

20 students who had requested a mentor but for whom one could not be found were written to and asked to complete a questionnaire, 7 responded (Appendix 5).

We asked this group which of the following statements they most agreed with:

Table 7: Did I need a mentor?

	No. agreeing
I really feel I would have benefited from a mentor	2
I have managed ok without a mentor	2
On reflection, I probably didn't really need a mentor anyway	3

Both of those who felt they would have benefited were 1st generation mature students.

If we had had a higher response rate to this questionnaire it would have been interesting to see if this pattern was replicated. It would seem to fit with our findings from mentees and mentors which suggest that a certain number of those who sign-up as mentees seem to settle in very quickly and don't actually go on to require much (if any) assistance, from their mentor.

It does suggest that if we can find ways to differentiate which prospective mentees will benefit most we may be able to ensure that more of those we accept as mentees will really need and benefit from being part of the scheme. The project co-ordinator will look at the information requested from mentees when they complete the mentee application form and when they have their introductory meeting. However it is also likely, as stated earlier in the report that we need to accept that a small number will always need the project less than they expected.

Section 8: Feedback from Academic Staff

One aim of the SBE pilot was to improve communication between SBE staff, students and student support services. In order to assess the impact of the Project Assistants work with academic staff in this school and also from the School of Social Sciences, Communication & Media (SSSMC) were asked to respond to a brief email questionnaire (see Appendix 4). A total of 13 forms were returned, 9 from SBE staff and 5 from SSSCM. Obviously with such a small sample it is hard to generalise however a few key points did emerge:

Key points:

- SBE staff were more likely to state that they had a good understanding of the project and that the communication between project staff and SBE was ‘good enough’ or ‘excellent’.
- SBE were also much more likely to say that they had recommended the project to students.
- SBE staff were more likely to know students involved with the project (mentors and mentees).
- SBE staff were more able to comment on the perceived benefits of the mentoring scheme.

Staff comments on perceived benefits of the scheme:

“For the benefit of new students in order to adjust to the new system/culture/country and to socialise”.

“It has the potential to help in our efforts in relation to student progression and retention”.

“Perhaps better retention of students”

“Greater degree of student support / greater variety of student support / fewer students dropping out of courses”.

“Adds to the student experience, especially helping direct entrants orient themselves to QMUC way of doing things”.

“Gives all students participating better chance to make friends, become accustomed to culture, get on right track from the beginning”.

“Gives some students the opportunity to speak on an informal basis to someone of similar age, similar interests. Similarly for the mentor it can help give them new confidence and responsibilities that can only help them in their later careers”.

Perceived Benefits to Mentees

“PAT students have mentioned that they planned to discuss a particular problem with their mentors. It is clearly useful for them to be able to bounce off more experienced students problems that might be inappropriate to bring to the PAT or other member of staff”

“Seem well adjusted and confident”

“I know of one student who is a mentee and have noticed a great improvement in his confidence over the last few weeks”

Perceived Benefits to Mentors

“Not this year, but past years have shown huge development in responsibility and awareness”.

“Typically good students who work hard and have a clear sense of direction”

“I know one mentor who has seemingly matured a great deal from last year both in his attitude and his work in tutorials”

All but one respondent indicated that they believed that *‘peer mentoring is a good initiative, worth investing in’*. Overall staff seemed to be highly supportive of the scheme and those who had had some direct knowledge of students who had been involved commented positively on the schemes impact.

The pilot within the SBE has shown that when given more opportunity to become aware of the scheme subject staff are generally very supportive. While staff were accommodating and keen to assist, the impact on the project, of this closer relationship was not as great as had been expected. It appears that students who are interested and motivated to become mentors (and mentees) will respond fairly early to direct approaches from project staff. Although it is most helpful for academic staff to make reference to the project and to encourage participation it did not in this case mean that the numbers of mentors (or mentees) rose significantly. We conclude that this is because a mentoring project will generally be welcomed by most students as a valuable option, but that the majority will not decide to avail themselves to this opportunity. Additionally, few mentees seem to be being referred to the project via their Personal Academic Tutors. Most are signing up right at the start of semester as a result of publicity in their joining packs or via moderator emails or because they have been in contact with Student Services staff who have mentioned the scheme.

Hence good communication between project and academic staff does assist with the smooth running of the project, however it is probably best viewed as an ‘added bonus’ rather than as an essential component of a centrally managed mentoring scheme, when staff time and funding are limited. Unless the management and funding of the project changes significantly it is unlikely that more than minimal liaison with academic staff can be sustained now that the Project Assistant’s post has come to an end.

Section 9: Conclusions

9.1 Overview

The QMConnect Mentoring Project seeks to contribute to QMUC's activities to ensure student success and retention by offering all new students, the opportunity to opt into this peer support scheme. Participants include those from often under represented groups including mature students, students with children, disabled students and those from lower socio-economic groups (as defined by their Leaps eligibility status). We do therefore know that the scheme is reaching some of those students who are generally thought to be at most risk from withdrawing and those who may experience particular hurdles during their 1st year and the 1st semester in particular.

Obviously we can not know what the mentees experience would have been like had they not been part of this project. However what we do know is that the qualitative feedback gathered indicates that participating students believe that the mentoring project has contributed significantly to their 1st year experience at QMUC. Students cite a number of factors as being of importance, including; having someone to turn to, friendship, feeling connected, insight into academic requirements/hidden curriculum, having a role model and early support and encouragement to develop learning skills/strategies.

Since the majority of the mentoring takes place in Semester 1 and since a student's overall experience is affected by a large number of factors it is hard to assess the projects impact on student retention. What we can conclude however, is that the contribution mentees say mentoring makes to their 1st year experience means that the project is likely to have a positive *impact* on retention. Students who get off to a positive start in higher education and who feel well connected to and supported by an institution will hopefully be in a strong position to handle any difficulties they may face as they continue to progress through their studies.

The research we carried out with non-participants indicates that these students have also had a good 1st semester and that QMUC therefore seems to be providing a welcoming and supportive environment for all of its new students.

Volunteer mentors have also been shown to gain a lot through their participation and the pattern is one of well supported mentees deciding to stay involved and going on to become committed and enthusiastic mentors. Hence we are now seeing the emergence of a supportive 'mentoring community', where a student's bond with the project can be seen to develop and strengthen over time. For those in the initial stages of setting up a similar peer support mentoring project it is worth bearing in mind that this 'mentoring community' does not develop over night. A time lag of at least one academic year may need to be allowed, before such a picture emerges. Once it does however, the strength and impact of the scheme becomes more obvious and you are likely to find that its inherent success means that it does begin to market itself much more so than is the case in the initial stages when you may really have to 'sell' it to both prospective mentors and mentees.

9.2 The SBE Pilot

The number of SBE students involved as mentees and mentors did increase (from 8 to 14) but the research we undertook with non-participants seems to indicate that we should not expect substantially more SBE students to want to get involved in the future. Even if we had sufficient funding and staffing to increase our recruitment activities to persuade those non-participants who thought it 'might' be helpful to sign-up to do so in future, overall the percentage of students involved would still be likely to remain quite low (our research indicated that 20% of non-participants later regretted not taking part). There is also the obvious danger that if more 'unsure' students are encouraged to sign-up their level of commitment to the project is likely to be lower and we know already that the most successful partnerships are those where both parties are highly motivated and willing to commit to regular meetings.

The Project Assistants work within the SBE did successfully raise the profile of the project with academic staff within this school. Staff assisted the Project Assistant to identify possible mentors and were also keen to help publicise the scheme to new students during induction talks. Their on-going willingness to support the project also made it possible for the non-participant questionnaires to be distributed and this has added an interesting new dimension to the information that project staff have about why students do and don't opt into the scheme. The SBE pilot has also been helpful in clarifying that building strong links between academic staff and the project is useful but that it does not necessarily have a major impact on the numbers of mentees and mentors coming forward.

9.3 Future direction and operation of the project

By undertaking a more detailed evaluation of the project than had been conducted in previous years the project staff can now make use of this information to fully inform the future development of the project.

As a result of this evaluation work the following decisions have been taken:

- Unless further additional funds are sourced then the project will now revert back to one member of staff. In order to maintain the current level of training and support, the project should be able to sustain the support of approximately 30 active pairs at one time.
- Current experienced mentors will be offered the opportunity to assist the co-ordinator to deliver the mentor training sessions and also to help recruit and inform prospective mentors and mentees about the project. However it would not seem appropriate to use mentors for the matching stage which means that numbers involved in 2006/07 academic year will need to be capped as the project co-ordinator needs to meet all mentees and mentors prior to matching and these meetings usually take place in the first weeks of the new semester. Additionally, all pairs need on-going support and supervision and to maintain a quality support structure numbers do need to be manageable.
- Evidence suggests that those pairs who meet regularly and who spend time building their relationship in the early stages, are more likely to report positive results. All mentoring pairs will be encouraged to have at least 3 meetings

within the 1st 6 weeks of semester and the issue of nurturing and developing the relationship will feature more strongly within the mentors training session. This may assist pairs to form a stronger bond initially and from here they can then decide how best to proceed with their meetings. This change will need to be monitored and evaluated to see if it has any significant impact on both the number of meetings and on the mentoring 'success' as rated by mentees/mentors.

- The Project Co-ordinator will investigate whether it is possible to obtain more information from prospective mentees at the initial stages. This may enable us to further develop the recruitment and matching stages of the process to try to select those mentees who will benefit most from being involved.

9.4 New Resources

A number of new resources have also been developed during the course of the last semester and these will now be fully utilised in future years and can be developed further as required.

- Mentor and Mentee Good Practice Guides
- Training Day Resources & Handouts
- Fuller evaluation schedules

**Appendix 1 QMConnect Training Programme
Thursday 19th May 2005**

9.45	Coffee
10.0	Welcome and icebreaker
10.10	Introduction to QMConnect
10.20	Transition issues for new students
10.30	What is mentoring?
11.15	Developing our mentoring skills
11.35	Break
11.45	Study mentoring – key skills, boundaries and support, Virginia Bell, Student Learning Adviser
12.45	Lunch
1.15	Sarah Watson, President Elect. The Advice Centre and the SU
1.30	Bill Stronach, Student Finance Adviser
1.45	Frances Kelly, Student Counsellor
2.15	Disability Issues
2.30	Coffee Break
2.40	Thinking about your 1 st mentoring meeting
3.00	Current mentors experiences
3.20	Final Summary, info. on next stage, any questions
3.30	End of session

Appendix 2: QMConnect Evaluation Questionnaire 2005 – Mentees

The information you provide will be treated in confidence and used only for the purposes of project evaluation. It will **not** be shared with your mentor. An evaluation report will be prepared and may be circulated within and outside of QMUC. The evaluation report will **not** identify individual project participants. If there is any information that prefer not to disclose, please skip the relevant question(s) and continue with the rest.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return it to Student Services in the envelope provided, and by **Tuesday 29th November at the latest**. *Remember that there is a £10 HMV voucher for each of the first 10 mentees to return their form!*

Name:

Current level of study: 1 / 2 / 3
/ 40-49 / 50+

Subject:

Age group: 17-20 / 21-29 / 30-39

Please tick any statements that apply to you:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a part time student | <input type="checkbox"/> I am an international student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a mature student (over 21) | <input type="checkbox"/> My parents did not go to university |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a direct entry student | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a disability |

Before coming to QMUC:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a LEAPS student | <input type="checkbox"/> I completed an HNC or HND course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a GOALS student | <input type="checkbox"/> I had other qualifications (<i>please state which</i>) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I did highers or A levels | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I completed an Access course | |

How did you hear about the mentoring project:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joining pack | <input type="checkbox"/> Moderator email |
| <input type="checkbox"/> QMAvance | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At matriculation | <input type="checkbox"/> Course tutor/lecturer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At subject induction | <input type="checkbox"/> QM website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notice boards | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please state</i>) |

When did you apply to join the project:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> during the summer | <input type="checkbox"/> during the first 6 weeks of teaching |
| <input type="checkbox"/> during matriculation week | <input type="checkbox"/> after the first 6 weeks of teaching |

Approximately how many times have you met with your mentor this semester?

What was the duration of each meeting, on average?

Have you kept in touch by e-mail, phone or text? often occasionally
 not at all

Apart from making arrangements to meet, did any actual mentoring conversations take place:

via email? often sometimes never
by phone? often sometimes never

Approximately how long ago did you last meet with your mentor?

1 week 2 weeks 3 weeks longer

Approximately how long ago did you last have phone or email contact with your mentor?

1 week 2 weeks 3 weeks longer

Are you still meeting regularly with your mentor? Yes/No

If yes: Are you intending to continue meeting into semester 2? Yes/No

If no: Are you still in regular phone or email contact? Yes/No

Do you feel the relationship came to a satisfactory and mutually agreed conclusion? Yes/No Please state the reasons for the relationship ending:

Was your mentor following:

- The same degree programme as you
- A different programme but in the same broad subject area as you
- A completely different course to you

Was your mentor in the same age group as you? Yes/No

Did you feel you were matched with someone you could relate to? Yes/No

Why?

Please describe generally how your mentoring relationship has developed and what have been the main features of it?

Please indicate ONE statement that best describes the structure of your mentoring relationship:

- We had regular, planned meetings and discussed a range of topics
- We planned a meeting only when I had a specific issue I wanted to discuss
- We did not plan meetings in advance, just had chats if we saw each other around the campus
- We met once and had no further meetings after that
- We did not meet up at all

If none of these fits, please use your own words:

Did you feel satisfied with this level of structure? Yes/No

If no: What would have worked better for you?

What were your reasons for wanting to have a mentor?

What were your biggest concerns before starting at QM?

Did mentoring help you in these areas? Yes/No *(Please comment further if you wish)*

What other issues/challenges/surprises came up that you had not anticipated?

Was mentoring helpful with these additional issues? Yes/No *(Please comment further if you wish)*

Study mentoring: which of the following did you discuss with your mentor:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library & research skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Group work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time management | <input type="checkbox"/> Revision & exam strategies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Taking lecture notes | <input type="checkbox"/> Subject-related matters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Planning an essay or report | <i>(ie about specific lectures or modules)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structuring an essay or report | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(please state)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Referencing | |

More generally: which of the following issues were discussed?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting to the academic environment & what is expected | <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling study/family responsibility |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finding your way around the campus | <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling study/work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living away from home | <input type="checkbox"/> Student finance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing study & leisure time | <input type="checkbox"/> Disability |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Health & wellbeing |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(please state)</i> |

Did you consider changing courses or withdrawing from your course at any point? Yes/No

If yes: did you discuss this with your mentor? Yes/No Someone else? Yes/No

Can you say whether mentoring helped in your decision to continue (or change courses)? Yes/No

Please comment further if you wish:

Rate your level of skills & confidence in the following areas (1= low, 5 = high) before starting at QM, and now, and indicate if you feel that mentoring has contributed to any improvement:

	Score at start	Score now	Did mentoring help? Yes/No/not sure
Time management			
IT skills			
Library skills			
Research skills			
Presentation skills			
Essay writing			
Managing deadlines			
Self-confidence			
Assertiveness			
Self-motivation			
Problem solving			

Please indicate how you feel about your mentoring experience. Has it been:

- very successful moderately successful unsuccessful

Please state why?

What have been the most important benefits of mentoring for you?

What aspects of the mentoring relationship were most difficult for you? Why?

In general, how do you feel that your first Semester at QM has worked out?

- Very well; I feel happy and well integrated into the student community
 Quite well; On the whole things are going OK
 Not very well; I still have lots of questions and uncertainties

Do you feel that mentoring has been a factor in this? Yes/No/not sure Why?

How would you rate your academic performance so far (based on your own expectations at the start, and any assessment feedback that you have had):

- I am very happy, and have done better than I expected
 I am reasonably satisfied with my level of achievement so far
 I am disappointed, and hope to improve my performance next semester

Do you feel that mentoring has been a factor in this? Yes/No/not sure Why?

How are you feeling about progressing into semester 2?

- Very confident; really excited about it
 Quite confident; looking forward to it
 Not confident; feeling anxious about it

Do you feel that mentoring has been a factor in this? Yes/No/not sure Why?

Please rate the induction meeting that you had with your Project Coordinator during which the Good Practice Guidelines were explained to you. Did you find it:

- Very helpful; I felt that I really understood what I had signed up for
- Quite helpful; I had a reasonable idea of what to expect from mentoring
- Not helpful; I didn't really know what to expect from mentoring

How would you rate the level of contact and support from the Project Coordinator?

- Too much
- About right
- Not enough

Please comment further if you wish:

Would you recommend QMConnect mentoring to a new student? Yes/No

Do you think you would consider being a mentor for a new student in September 2006? Yes/No

As part of the evaluation and review we are considering some alternative models which could be offered either instead of or in addition to mentoring as it is presently organised at QMUC. Please assist us by indicating which (if any) of the following options you feel would be useful for new students:

- Student-led "buddy groups" meeting weekly for the first six weeks of semester 1
- One-to-one mentoring via e-mail only
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on subject-specific academic issues
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on general study skills

Please comment further or add suggestions of your own if you wish

Are there any other comments you wish to make?

Appendix 3: QMConnect Evaluation Questionnaire 2005 – Mentors

The information you provide on this form will be treated in confidence and used only for the purposes of project evaluation. It will **not** be shared with your mentee. An evaluation report will be prepared and may be circulated within and outside of QMUC. The evaluation report will **not** identify individual project participants. If there is any information that you prefer not to disclose, please skip the relevant question(s) and continue with the rest.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return it to Student Services in the envelope provided, and by **Tuesday 29th November** at the latest. *Remember that there is a £10 HMV voucher for each of the first 10 mentors to return their forms!*

Name:

Current level of study: 2 / 3 / 4

Subject:

Age group: 17-20 / 21-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50+

Please tick any statements that apply to you:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a part time student | <input type="checkbox"/> I am an international student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a mature student (over 21) | <input type="checkbox"/> My parents did not go to university |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a direct entry student | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a disability |

Before coming to QMUC:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a LEAPS student | <input type="checkbox"/> I completed an HNC or HND course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a GOALS student | <input type="checkbox"/> I had other qualifications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I did highers or A levels | <i>(please state which)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I completed an Access course | |

Have you participated previously in the QMConnect project as a mentor? Yes/No

Did you participate in the project as a mentee? Yes/No

If no: how were you made aware of the opportunity to volunteer as a mentor?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notice boards | <input type="checkbox"/> Approached by Project Coordinator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moderator email | <input type="checkbox"/> Course tutor/lecturer recommendation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth | <input type="checkbox"/> QM website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation in class | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(please state)</i> |

Approximately how many times have you met with your mentee this semester?

What was the duration of each meeting, on average?

Have you kept in touch by e-mail, phone or text? often occasionally not at all

Apart from making arrangements to meet, did any actual mentoring conversations take place:

- | | | | |
|------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| via email? | <input type="checkbox"/> often | <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> never |
| by phone? | <input type="checkbox"/> often | <input type="checkbox"/> sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> never |

What was your average time input per week, including meetings, phone calls and email contact?

- less than ½ hour ½ - 1 hour more than 1 hour

Approximately how long ago did you last meet with your mentee?

- 1 week 2 weeks 3 weeks longer

Approximately how long ago did you last have phone or email contact with your mentee?

- 1 week 2 weeks 3 weeks longer

Are you still meeting regularly with your mentee? Yes/No

If yes: Are you intending to continue meeting into semester 2? Yes/No

If no: Are you still in regular phone or email contact? Yes/No

Do you feel your mentoring relationship came to a satisfactory and mutually agreed conclusion?
Yes/No

Please state reasons for the relationship ending, if known:

Was your mentee following:

- The same degree programme as you
- A different programme but in the same broad subject area as you
- A completely different course to you

Was your mentee in the same age group as you? Yes/No

Did you feel you were matched with someone you could relate to? Yes/No

Why?

Please describe generally how your mentoring relationship has developed and what have been the main features of it?

Study mentoring: which of the following did you discuss with your mentee:

- Library & research skills
- IT skills
- Time management
- Taking lecture notes
- Planning an essay or report
- Structuring an essay or report
- Referencing
- Presentations
- Group work
- Revision & exam strategies
- Subject-related matters
(ie about specific lectures or modules)
- Other *(please state)*

More generally: which of the following issues were discussed?

- Adjusting to the academic environment & what is expected
- Finding your way around the campus
- Living away from home
- Balancing study & leisure time
- Juggling study/family responsibility
- Juggling study/work
- Student finance
- Disability
- Health & wellbeing
- Other *(please state)*

Please indicate ONE statement that best describes the structure of your mentoring relationship:

- We had regular, planned meetings and discussed a range of topics
- We arranged to meet only when my mentee had a specific issue s/he wanted to discuss
- We did not plan any meetings in advance, just had chats if we met around the campus
- We met once and had no further meetings after that
- We did not meet up at all

If none of these fits, please use your own words:

Did you feel satisfied with this level of structure? Yes/No

If no: What would have worked better for you?

Would you rate your mentoring relationship as:

- Very successful
- Moderately successful
- Unsuccessful

Please state why?

What were the most positive aspects of your mentoring relationship? Why?

What were the most difficult? Why?

What do you feel your mentee has gained from the mentoring experience?

What were your own reasons for wanting to become a mentor?

What have been the most important benefits of the mentoring experience for your own personal development?

Which training session did you participate in:

- May session
- September daytime session
- September evening session

Thinking back to the training session, and relating it to your actual mentoring experience, please indicate whether you feel the emphasis placed on each area was appropriate:

	too much	about right	not enough
Transition issues for new students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Skills & qualities for mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rights & responsibilities of mentors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stages in the mentoring relationship	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communication & listening skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Signposting and referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Study mentoring & boundaries	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Input from experienced mentor/mentee	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Reflecting on your mentoring experience, are there any issues you feel were not covered in the training that would have better equipped you for the mentoring role? What are they?

How would you rate the Good Practice Guide for Mentors:

- Very useful; I referred to it a lot
- Quite useful; it was good to have the information in case I needed it
- Not useful; I don't think it was necessary

How would you rate the level of contact and support from the Project Coordinator?

- Too much
- About right
- Not enough

Please comment further if you wish:

Would you have been interested in any of the following:

- More opportunities to meet with other mentors
- A web-based mentors' discussion forum
- Individual mid-semester review meeting with the Project Coordinator
- Follow-up training/skills development (*please state which areas would have been useful*)

Based on your experiences so far, do you think you will be likely to mentor another student in September 2006? Yes/No

As part of the evaluation and review we are considering some alternative models which could be offered either instead of or in addition to mentoring as it is presently organised at QMUC. Please assist us by indicating which (if any) of the following options you feel would be useful for new students:

- Student-led "buddy groups" meeting weekly for the first six weeks of semester 1
- One-to-one mentoring via e-mail only
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on subject-specific academic issues
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on general study skills

Please comment further or add suggestions of your own if you wish

Are there any other comments you wish to make?

MENTORS EVENING EVENT: TUESDAY 29TH NOVEMBER, 5 – 7pm

I **will / will not** be able to attend this event *(please delete as applicable)*

I will be coming from Leith Campus and require assistance with transport to Corstorphine: **Yes/No**

Vegetarian options will be provided. Please give details if you have any other dietary needs:

Name:

Date:

Appendix 4: QMConnect Evaluation Questionnaire 2005 – Non-participants (A)

This year we are undertaking a thorough evaluation process and review of the QMConnect mentoring project. As part of this we would like to gather as much information as possible, including information from students who decided *not* to participate in the mentoring project. The information you provide will be treated in confidence and used only for the purposes of project evaluation. If there is any information that prefer not to disclose, please skip the relevant question(s) and continue with the rest.

Which degree programme are you studying:

Current level of study: 1 / 2 / 3

Age group: 17-20 / 21-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50+

Please tick any statements that apply to you:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a part time student | <input type="checkbox"/> I am an international student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a mature student (over 21) | <input type="checkbox"/> My parents did not go to university |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a direct entry student | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a disability |

Before coming to QMUC:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a LEAPS student | <input type="checkbox"/> I completed an Access course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a GOALS student | <input type="checkbox"/> I completed an HNC or HND course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I did highers or A levels | <input type="checkbox"/> I had other qualifications (<i>please state which</i>) |

Did you receive information about the mentoring project by any of the following means:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joining pack | <input type="checkbox"/> Class presentation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> QMAdvance | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At matriculation | <input type="checkbox"/> Course tutor/lecturer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At subject induction | <input type="checkbox"/> QM website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notice boards | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please state</i>) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moderator email | |

What were your reasons for choosing not to join the project:

- I did not feel that I would need any support
- I thought it was only for people who were having problems
- I did not think I would have enough time to meet with a mentor
- I have other means of getting support if/when I need it
- I would have liked a mentor but felt that asking for one might look like I couldn't cope by myself
- Other (*please state*)

Which (if any) of the following have presented the concerns or worries for you in the first few weeks of the semester: (*you can tick as many boxes as you wish*)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting to the academic environment & what is expected | <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling study/work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finding your way around the campus | <input type="checkbox"/> Disability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living away from home | <input type="checkbox"/> Health & wellbeing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Library & research skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing study & leisure time | <input type="checkbox"/> IT skills |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling study/family responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Time management |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking lecture notes |

- Planning an essay or report
- Structuring an essay or report
- Referencing
- Presentations
- Group work

- Revision & exam strategies
- Subject-related matters
(ie about specific lectures or modules)
- Other (please state)

Please indicate which statement you agree with the most:

- I think mentoring is a really good idea and a great thing to offer to all new students
- I think mentoring could be useful for some people but not everyone
- I don't really understand what mentoring is

Looking back, do you now feel that you might have benefited from having a mentor? Yes/No
Is there anything we could have done that might have encouraged you to participate?
(please state)

In general, how do you feel that your first Semester at QM is working out?

- Very well; I feel happy and well integrated into the student community
- Quite well; On the whole things are going OK
- Not very well; I still have lots of questions and uncertainties

How would you rate your academic performance so far (based on your own expectations at the start, and any assessment feedback that you have had):

- I am very happy, and have done better than I expected
- I am reasonably satisfied with my level of achievement so far
- I am disappointed, and hope to improve my performance next Semester

How are you feeling about progressing into semester 2?

- Very confident; really excited about it
- Quite confident; looking forward to it
- Not confident; feeling anxious about it

Do you think you would consider being a mentor for a new student in September 2006? Yes/No

As part of the evaluation and review we are considering some alternative models which could be offered either instead of or in addition to mentoring as it is presently organised at QMUC. Please assist us by indicating which (if any) of the following options you feel would be useful for new students:

- Student-led "buddy groups" meeting weekly for the first six weeks of semester 1
- One-to-one mentoring via e-mail only
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on subject-specific academic issues
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on general study skills

Please comment further or add any suggestions of your own if you wish

Are there any other comments you wish to make?

Thank you for your assistance!

Appendix 5: QMConnect Evaluation Questionnaire 2005 – Non-participants (b)

This year we are undertaking a thorough evaluation process and review of the QMConnect mentoring project. As part of this we would like to gather as much information as possible, including information from applicants who we were not able to match with a mentor. The information you provide will be treated in confidence and used only for the purposes of project evaluation. If there is any information that prefer not to disclose, please skip the relevant question(s) and continue with the rest.

Thank you for your assistance!

Which degree programme are you studying:

Current level of study: 1 / 2 / 3

Age group: 17-20 / 21-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50+

Please tick any statements that apply to you:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a part time student | <input type="checkbox"/> I am an international student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am a mature student (over 21) | <input type="checkbox"/> My parents did not go to university |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a direct entry student | <input type="checkbox"/> I have a disability |

Before coming to QMUC:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a LEAPS student | <input type="checkbox"/> I completed an Access course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I was a GOALS student | <input type="checkbox"/> I completed an HNC or HND course |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I did highers or A levels | <input type="checkbox"/> I had other qualifications (<i>please state which</i>) |

How did you hear about the mentoring project?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Joining pack | <input type="checkbox"/> Class presentation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> QMAvance | <input type="checkbox"/> Word of mouth |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At matriculation | <input type="checkbox"/> Course tutor/lecturer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> At subject induction | <input type="checkbox"/> QM website |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Notice boards | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please state</i>) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moderator email | |

What were your reasons for wanting to have a mentor?

Looking back, which (if any) of the following have presented concerns or worries for you in the first few weeks of the semester: (*you can tick as many boxes as you wish*)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting to the academic environment & what is expected | <input type="checkbox"/> Time management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finding your way around the campus | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking lecture notes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living away from home | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning an essay or report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Structuring an essay or report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing study & leisure time | <input type="checkbox"/> Referencing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling study/family responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling study/work | <input type="checkbox"/> Group work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Revision & exam strategies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health & wellbeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Subject-related matters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library & research skills | <i>(ie about specific lectures or modules)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>please state</i>) |

Please indicate which statement you agree with the most:

- I really feel I would have benefited from having a mentor
- I have managed OK without a mentor
- On reflection, I probably didn't really need a mentor anyway

If none of these fits, please use your own words:

Rate your level of skills & confidence in the following areas (1= low, 5 = high) before starting at QM, and now:

	Score at start	Score now
Time management		
IT skills		
Library skills		
Research skills		
Presentation skills		
Essay writing		
Managing deadlines		
Self-confidence		
Assertiveness		
Self-motivation		
Problem solving		

In general, how do you feel that your first Semester at QM is working out?

- Very well; I feel happy and well integrated into the student community
- Quite well; On the whole things are going OK
- Not very well; I still have lots of questions and uncertainties

How would you rate your academic performance so far (based on your own expectations at the start, and any assessment feedback that you have had):

- I am very happy, and have done better than I expected
- I am reasonably satisfied with my level of achievement so far
- I am disappointed, and hope to improve my performance next Semester

How are you feeling about progressing into semester 2?

- Very confident; really excited about it
- Quite confident; looking forward to it
- Not confident; feeling anxious about it

Do you think you would consider being a mentor for a new student in September 2006? Yes/No

As part of the evaluation and review we are considering some alternative models which could be offered either instead of or in addition to mentoring as it is presently organised at QMUC. Please assist us by indicating which (if any) of the following options you feel would be useful for new students:

- Student-led "buddy groups" meeting weekly for the first six weeks of semester 1
- One-to-one mentoring via e-mail only
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on subject-specific academic issues
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on general study skills

Are there any other comments you wish to make?

Appendix 6: QMConnect Evaluation Questionnaire 2005 – Academic Staff

This year we are undertaking a thorough evaluation process and review of the QMConnect student mentoring project. As part of this we would like to gather as much information as possible, including information from academic staff, to help us assess the impact and cost-effectiveness of the mentoring project in its present form. The information you provide will be treated in confidence and used only for the purposes of project evaluation.

If you are completing this form electronically, please highlight your responses using **bold**, underline or a **colour**.

Which School are you based in?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business and Enterprise | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Sciences |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drama & Creative Industries | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Sciences, Media & Communication |

Indicate which statement best reflects your level of understanding of the QMConnect project:

- I am confident that I know and fully understand the project's aims and implementation
- I have a reasonable grasp of the project's aims and implementation
- I know very little about the project

Please comment further if you wish

In your experience, is the level of communication and cooperation between mentoring project staff and academic staff currently:

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> good enough | <input type="checkbox"/> in need of improvement |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|

Have you recommended the mentoring programme to students this semester?

- | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> on several occasions | <input type="checkbox"/> once or twice | <input type="checkbox"/> not at all |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|

What do you feel are the strengths of the QMConnect Mentoring Project?

What are the weaknesses ?

Are you currently aware of any students who are participating in the project as mentees? Yes/No
If yes, what benefits, if any, do you observe for mentees?

Are you currently aware of any students who are participating in the project as mentors? Yes/No
If yes, what benefits, if any, do you observe for mentors?

What do you perceive to be the benefits of the mentoring project for QMUC?

Below is a list of topics which typically are discussed by mentors & mentees. Please indicate up to 5 topics which you consider should be priorities for mentoring to address:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Adjusting to the academic environment & what is expected | <input type="checkbox"/> Time management |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Finding your way around the campus | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking lecture notes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Living away from home | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning an essay or report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student finance | <input type="checkbox"/> Structuring an essay or report |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Balancing study & leisure time | <input type="checkbox"/> Referencing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling study/family responsibilities | <input type="checkbox"/> Presentations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Juggling study/work | <input type="checkbox"/> Group work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disability | <input type="checkbox"/> Revision & exam strategies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health & wellbeing | <input type="checkbox"/> Subject-related matters
<i>(ie about specific lectures or modules)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Library & research skills | <input type="checkbox"/> Other <i>(please state)</i> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> IT skills | |

Indicate which statement in each pair you agree with the most:

Undergraduate peer mentoring is most appropriate as:

- A general strategy that contributes to student experience, retention and success
- An intervention to address a known problem, eg attrition rate or low academic performance

Comment further if you wish

Undergraduate peer mentoring should be aimed at:

- Any student who wants to opt-in
- Selected students who are known to be at risk of withdrawal

Comment further if you wish

Undergraduate peer mentoring is:

- A good initiative, worth investing in
- Unlikely to produce results that justify the input

Comment further if you wish

As part of the evaluation and review we are researching some alternative models of undergraduate peer support. Please assist us by indicating which (if any) of the following options you feel would be useful for new students:

- Student-led “buddy groups” meeting weekly for the first six weeks of semester 1
- One-to-one peer mentoring via e-mail (“e-mentoring”)
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on subject-specific academic issues
- Student-led tutor groups focussing on general study skills

Please comment further or add suggestions of your own if you wish

Are there any further comments you wish to make?

If you would be willing to take part in a short interview to follow up your responses, please give your name:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return it by email to sfox@qmuc.ac.uk or by internal mail to Sandra Fox, QMConnect Mentoring Project, Student Services.

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**For further information about the QMConnect Mentoring Project,
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