Peer Support

Partnerships in Learning

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Outline

• Peer Education

• Peer Support at the University of Manchester
  – Peer Mentoring
  – Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS)

• Benefits

• Structures

• Practicalities

• Strategic considerations
The Higher Education challenge...
“The student’s peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years”

(Astin, 1993, p.398)

“Students’ interactions with their peers also have a strong influence on many aspects of change during college, including intellectual development and orientation; political, social and religious values, academic and social concept; interpersonal skills; moral development; general maturity and personal development”

(Pascarella and Terenzini, 1991, pp. 620-621)
Journey back to the past...

- 1970’s Supplemental Instruction developed as a model of academic Peer Education
- Why?
  - Didn’t want to lose students
  - Didn’t want to lower academic standards
  - Didn’t want to inflate grades
  - Didn’t want to spend a lot of money
- Goals
  - Improve learning
Peer Educator/Mentor/Leader: A Definition

“Students who have been selected and trained to offer educational services to their peers. These services are intentionally designed to assist in the adjustment, satisfaction and persistence of students towards attainment of their educational goals. Students performing in these paraprofessional roles are usually compensated in some manner for their services and are supervised by qualified professionals”.

Ender and Newton, (2010)
Why does Manchester do it?

- Personalises the ‘Student Experience’
- Supportive environment to assist transition
- Enables enhanced interaction with peers across years
- Students become more engaged in course
  - Enhance their learning experience
  - Student Engagement
  - Student Partnerships
- Improve academic performance and achievement
- Provide an additional feedback mechanism
- Development of intellectual and professional competencies
Delivering Peer Support

- Induction
- Transition
- Socialisation
- Academic development
Delivering Peer Support

• Two complementary schemes of Peer Support operate at The University of Manchester:
  PASS and Peer Mentoring

• PASS (28 discipline areas, 700+ PASS Leaders)
• Peer Mentoring (38 discipline areas, 800+ Peer Mentors)

• Central Coordinated
• Discipline Owned
• Student Led

• Voluntary
• Group based
The Peer Mentor Approach

• Peer Mentoring provides pastoral and social support
• Trained student mentors work in pairs with assigned groups (12 – 15 students)
• Peer Mentors are engaged in:
  – sharing their experience
  – Signposting students
  – Structured activity
The Peer Mentor Approach

- Pre-induction Welcome
- Production of guides to Manchester, School, Discipline & study skills guide
- Orientation
- Social and cultural activity
- Skills and learning strategy development
- Transition events
- Sessions are informal and can be attached to tutorial groups or run independently
The PASS Approach – supplementing the core

- **Trained** student leaders **facilitate** study sessions in pairs
  - Quality assured comprehensive, interactive, practical training
  - Not teaching
  - Small group collaborative learning
- **PASS** is voluntary and confidential
  - Timetabled sessions
  - Safe place to admit not understanding
- **Content** is based on course materials
  - Students set the session agenda
The PASS Approach – supplementing the core

• PASS leaders are engaged in:
  – sharing their experience
  – facilitating discussion rather than re-teaching the subject
• PASS encourages fun interaction between year groups
• PASS benefits all students regardless of academic performance
  – Focus on historically challenging concepts
• Students compare notes, clarify what they read and hear, analyse, criticise, question and seek verification of ideas
The PASS Approach – supplementing the core
Manchester Scheme

Where is it?
1995 – 1 discipline and 10 student leaders
2005 – 11 disciplines and 250 student leaders
2013 – 28 disciplines and 700+ student leaders (approx. 3500 attendees)

not just focussing on Year 1

Aerospace Engineering
Arabic Studies
Chemical Engineering
Chemistry
Civil Engineering
Computer Science
Econometrics
Economics (Mathematics)
Electronic and Electrical Engineering
Environmental Science

Hebrew
Life Sciences
Mathematics
Mechanical Engineering
Middle Eastern Studies
Music
Optometry
Pharmacy
Psychology
Religions and Theology
Russian
PASS Leader Support

- Comprehensive training
- On going training
  - Advanced Facilitation Skills
  - Learning Theory
  - Group Dynamics
  - PricewaterhouseCoopers Personal Development and Effectiveness Training
- Observations
- Debrief
- Student and Staff Coordinators
Benefits of PASS
PASS in FLS?

Impact of PASS on BL1521 results (genes and evolution)

- Mean mark %: n=158, PASS not offered: 42, n=178, PASS <4: 45, n=54, PASS >=4: 53
- % of students with mark <40% (fail): n=158, PASS not offered: 47, n=178, PASS <4: 42, n=54, PASS >=4: 22
- % of students with mark >=70%: n=158, PASS not offered: 6, n=178, PASS <4: 7, n=54, PASS >=4: 22

HEA Centre for Bioscience – Science Learning & Teaching Conference 2007
http://www.sltc.heacademy.ac.uk/proceedings.htm
PASS in FLS?

Impact of PASS on BL1521 mark distribution (genes and evolution)

- n=158, PASS not offered, mean = 42
- n=178, PASS <4, mean = 45
- n=54, PASS >=4 , mean = 53

0-9%, 10-19%, 20-29%, 30-39%, 40-49%, 50-59%, 60-69%, 70-79%, 80-89%, 90-100%
Benefits gained by regular attendants

These benefits were perceived very similarly by the semester 1 and semester 2 cohorts and indicate that PASS has promoted amongst its regular participants a meaning-oriented approach well above a strategic-oriented approach.

Structure – how is it set up?

Students

PASS Leaders/Peer Mentors

Administrative Staff Coordinator

Academic Staff Coordinator

Student Coordinators

Sabbatical Interns

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Quality Assurance, Training, Specialist Advice

Trained SI Supervisors
Practicalities

• Levels of implementation
  – Consultation with staff & students
• Approval, awareness & value of Peer Support by course teaching team
• Identify Academic and Administrative support
• Timetabling and room bookings
• Recruitment of Leaders/Mentors
• Training
• Co-ordination & on going support
• Student engagement
• Recognition and reward
• Monitoring & evaluation
Strategic consideration

- What are the objectives?
- Organic growth or Strategic expansion?
- Who will own responsibility?
- Who will quality assure?
- How will you motivate Staff and Students?
- How will you fund?
- How will you sustain development?

- Be prepared for an engaged Student body!
Thank you!

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Passing on a Year's Experience

Aiden Potts, Guardian