Examples of transition work at Queen Margaret University

Title: *Employer mentoring programme*

Developing confidence and boosting graduate job prospects

Transition(s) the practice supports: Transition from college to university, transition from study to employment

Abstract: The Queen Margaret University employer mentoring programme links third- and fourth-year students with mentors who are professionals in their field in a year-long partnership to assist students in career planning and enhance their employability. Because the programme is primarily aimed at widening participation students, it also helps to develop self-confidence, confirming their chosen study path and career direction, and hence enhance the process of transition from college into university.

Description: This programme, now in its second year of operation, aims to pair third and fourth year students with mentors in the professional workplace. The target student group in the pilot year was students entering the university through widening participation schemes, and hence included a number of students making the transition from college to university. In the first, pilot year, 20 students took the opportunity to increase their employability skills by joining up to the programme. This year, the programme has been extended to Rest of UK students and international students as well, and there are over 40 students registered to participate. To increase student involvement further, a Queen Margaret University student paid internship is used to facilitate the administration work involved in providing and maintaining the programme and its profile in the institution.

Mentees meet with their mentors at least three times in the year and together they work out a plan for what they want to achieve. Aims may vary from developing self-confidence in the students' knowledge and skills, confirmation that the move from college to university is the right one and support to progress, job-shadowing, developing an understanding of the full range of potential jobs in a particular field, networking, gaining experience and support in developing a CV and applying for jobs.

Both mentors and mentees receive training to help them get the most out of the mentoring experience. Mentors are provided with a training session covering mentoring skills, an understanding of what students' expectations are, and opportunities to role-play mentoring scenarios. Students are provided with a training session focusing on how to prepare for the meetings, how to make the most of the time they spend with their mentors and how to use reflection to help them progress. This year, mentors will be offered a second session to allow them to share experiences and successful strategies. Both parties are required to complete a written summary of their first meeting. QMU provides support for both parties as and when required.

The project benefits both mentors and students, as illustrated by the following quotes:

"The mentor programme is a great way to get honest advice and ask questions about the industry you are currently studying to get into. It really has been a valuable and worthwhile experience for me and I got much more out of it than I had anticipated….

The whole experience allowed me to rediscover my own strengths and boost my confidence in my own capacities. "

<div align="right">Maria, QMU student</div>

"The mentor experience has been very fulfilling….We were quickly able to develop a good working relationship. This meant the experience was very rewarding and I'll certainly be happy to help out again. "

<div align="right">Martin, account director and mentor</div>

One of the main challenges for the scheme is finding mentors. However, this challenge has resulted in a strengthening of communications across the institution and beyond, as mentors are sourced through discussions with academic staff, relevant university groups, such as WISER and marketing, social media such as LinkedIn and most importantly alumni. Of current mentors, almost 60% are alumni of Queen Margaret University.

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