



## Student Transitions: Example of transitions practice

**Title:** Students 4 Students: a transitional mentoring scheme for first year undergraduates

**Transition(s) the practice supports:** Transitions at the start of a programme of higher education

**Abstract:** Students 4 Students is a transitional mentoring scheme for incoming undergraduates. The scheme aims to help all first year undergraduates settle into student life through the offer of a student mentor who is studying within a similar or related discipline to them. All S4S mentors are fully trained in university practices and regulations, as well as active listening skills and group management skills so they are fully prepared for liaising with their allocated mentees. From the initial pilot to the scheme being fully integrated into the first year experience has taken five years and future developments include allocation of mentors to all direct entry and visiting students.

**Description:** Students 4 Students has been developed over a four year period, from a pilot with several students involved, to a university-wide initiative to help first year undergraduates settle into university life and make the transition from secondary and/or tertiary education to the higher education setting.

Starting out at university is often a daunting prospect for many students and with first year intake ever increasing this will only become more of an issue as we move forward. Born out of the retention and progression agenda at the University of Aberdeen, a pilot for a voluntary peer mentoring scheme was initiated within the School of Medical Sciences as a way of integrating first year students into university life. This scheme was successful for both mentors and mentees and it was expanded the following year to include the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy. This also proved successful, so the scheme was extended to cover all subject areas within the institution whilst remaining voluntary for both mentors and mentees. For academic year 2014-15 the scheme expanded further as all first year undergraduates from across the institution were enrolled, with the aim of offering a comprehensive and substantial support network for all incoming first years. This changed the scheme from a small scale initiative to one that required substantial administrative support and coordination to ensure a faultless service for first years and their mentors.

Mentors are fully trained by various university support networks, such as Student Support Services and the University Counselling Service. Training covers a diverse range of topics including knowledge of university procedures, practical information on university support services, active listening skills and confidentiality. This training is delivered face



enhancement  
themes

to face and also via a newly developed online training resource.

Planned future developments of the scheme involve expansion to cover direct entry and possibly postgraduate students – this will present specific challenges for each specific cohort as they will require different stage-specific guidance.

At every stage during the development of Students 4 Students we have had positive feedback from those involved and now the scheme involves all first years, it has grown into an integral part of the first year undergraduate experience at the University of Aberdeen.

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