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Peer Mentoring Works!

Institutional Manual



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What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme

This Institutional Manual is a project output as part of the What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme. This three year evaluative programme has been initiated and funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The seven projects in the programme, involving 22 Higher Education Institutions, have been evaluating effective strategies and interventions to ensure high continuation and completion rates. The projects have been working to generate practical outputs including reports that enhance practice and associated toolkits and resources to assist other institutions to learn from their work and improve student retention and success. It is anticipated that the outputs of this programme will be particularly significant in the context of the current changes facing Higher Education.

The Purpose of this Manual

Based on empirical research findings, the Peer Mentoring Works Institutional Manual provides those working in Higher Education with the knowledge and tools necessary to set up a Peer Mentoring Programme. Written in a Question & Answer (Q & A) format, the Manual comprises a list of useful guidelines. Additionally, it contains the tools needed to recruit and train peer mentors. These tools, which are included as Appendices within this document, are also available separately in *Word* format in order that they can be adapted and adopted by different Higher Education Institutions in accordance with organizational requirements.

In addition to this document, other tools and outputs may be found at:

<http://www1.aston.ac.uk/eas/research/groups/eerg/>

1. Introduction: What is Peer Mentoring in Higher Education?

Within the UK higher education context, peer mentoring relates to the concept of reciprocal peer support and learning whereby a peer mentor helps to enhance and promote the overall university experience of either an individual student, or group of fellow students. Peer mentors are generally slightly more advanced in their studies than peer mentees, and by using their own experiences and insights, they help newer students settle into university, building a relationship which often lasts through the first year – and in many cases beyond. For students and universities alike, the most important aspect of peer mentoring is that it provides the ideal means by which new students can develop a sense of belonging. It also acts as a ‘safety net’ with mentors adopting a variety of roles ranging from friend and confidante, learning facilitator or ‘study buddy’.

Depending upon the individual Institution, Peer Mentors may be known by a range of titles including: Peer Guides: Peer Coaches: Peer Supporters: Peer Leaders: and Student Guides or Student Leaders.

2. Developing a Peer Mentoring Programme: Institutional Considerations: FAQs

Q. Why develop a Peer Mentoring Programme?

Making the decision to attend university to embark on a course of study is a significant step in a person's life, whatever their background or age. The conflicting emotions of apprehension and excitement that accompany this decision indicate that for many, the transition into university life is far from easy. As we enter a new era in UK higher education, the demands on institutions to support student success are likely to increase. Much is at stake for all of the parties involved. As such, mechanisms that can aid student transition and promote student success are going to become ever more important in the higher education landscape. It is important however that any interventions put into place are underpinned by evidence with regards to the impact that they can have on the student experience both at transition and beyond.

The Peer Mentoring Works Project has shown that by using the sector's best assets, the students, individual HEIs can do much to enhance student transition. Indeed, through the instigation of peer mentoring programmes, Higher Education Institutions have the opportunity to create of a true 'win-win-win' situation in which new students belong, existing students develop new skills, and HEIs experience minimal student attrition. Peer mentoring offers an approach whereby students help students discover the new world of university life through the formation of safe and supportive peer relationships. For a small investment, the benefits realised in terms of student success at transition are considerable. Participation in student mentoring allows new students to quickly gain a sense of belonging, not only to the individual School or Faculty but also to their University. By providing a visible support mechanism at transition and beyond peer mentors promotes and enhances the student experience.

Q. Which Type of Peer Mentoring Programme is most suitable?

The nature and type of Peer Mentoring Programme selected depends on institutional needs and requirements.

Different Universities, Faculties and Schools may wish to prioritise one or more of the following areas in developing and establishing peer mentoring:

- ❖ Pre-entry support
- ❖ Befriending at the key first year transition point
- ❖ Peer support at other transition points (example, second years seeking placements, final years in preparation for graduation)
- ❖ Targeted peer-support for specific groups of students (for example, international students, care-leavers, or disabled students etc.)
- ❖ Informal academic peer support offered within subjects
- ❖ Social integration on a longer term basis
- ❖ A mixture of the above
- ❖ Post-graduate peer mentoring.

Having decided where the focus of peer mentoring should be, it is then necessary to decide which type of programme is most suitable.

In order to assist HEIs decide which *type* of peer mentoring programme is most suitable, two diagrams are provided. The first of these is a Typology of Peer Mentoring programmes offered within Higher Education (Figure 1, page7). The features of the Typology are then discussed.

The second diagram represents the **recommended approach to peer mentoring developed out of the findings of the Peer Mentoring Works Project**. The constituents of this approach, which has been termed, **Transition+ Peer Mentoring** are described in an accessible and transferable manner.

Typology of Peer Mentoring

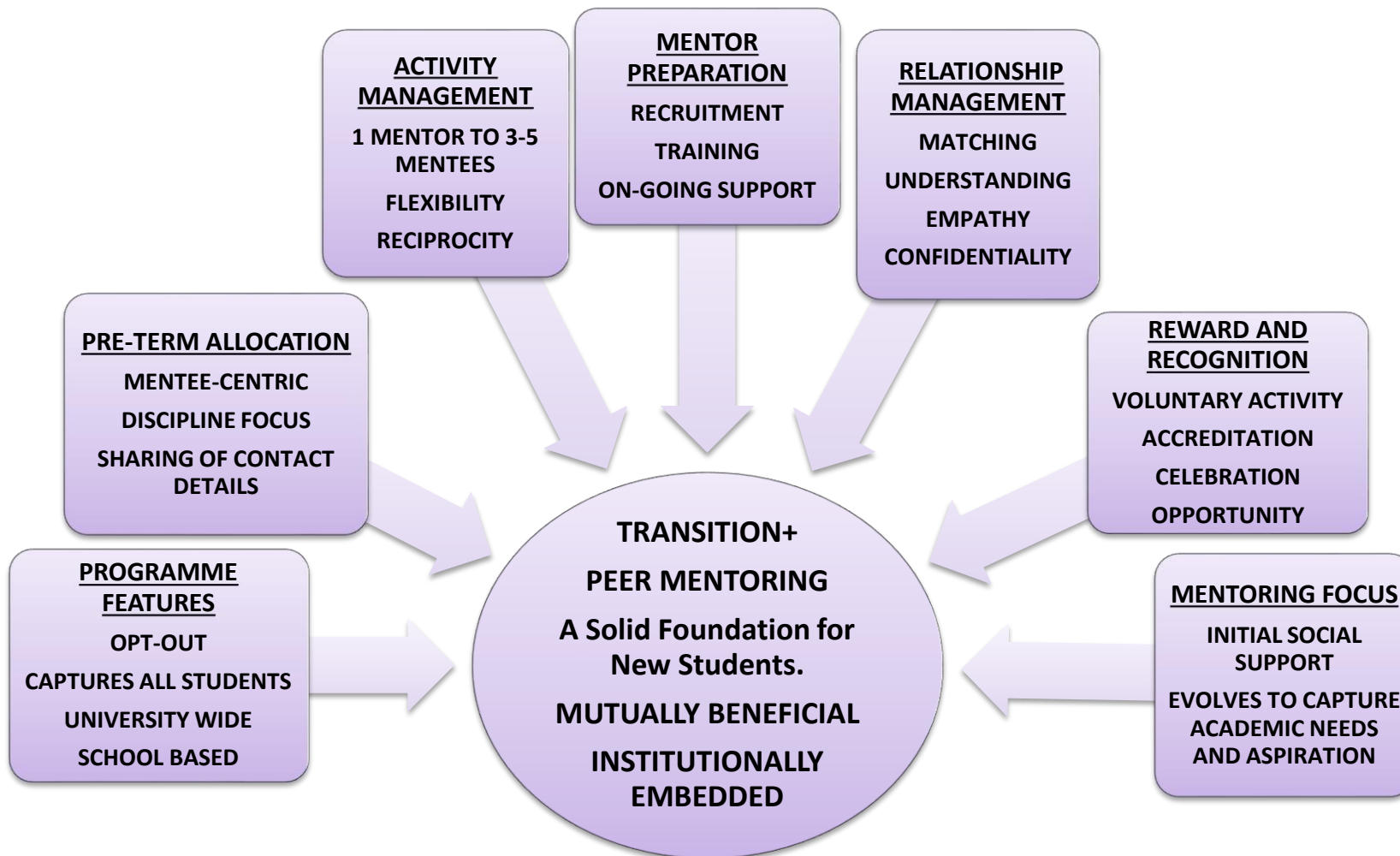
Type of Peer Mentoring	Form of Mentoring	Constituents
Pre-entry peer mentoring	Generally offered via social network sites or e-mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Targeted or generic [all first years] - Offered on an opt-in or opt-out basis
One-to-one Peer Mentoring at transition	Generally offered to particular individuals or groups depending on individual and institutional needs and norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource intensive in terms of organisation and administration - Requires careful 'matching' in terms of cultural and, if appropriate, academic requirements. - Usually offered on an opt-in basis
One-to-group Peer Mentoring at transition	Often known as 'Peer Guiding' this form of Peer Mentoring has the advantage of providing a 'friendly face' upon arrival, making transition positive for students (and in many cases their parents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Often offered on an 'opt-out' basis whereby all new students are allocated a mentor - Institutional, School or Departmental - Can be 'targeted' depending on institutional and student needs - Some matching may be possible - Generally one mentor to four or five mentees (in some cases this is higher)
One-to-group <u>Transition+ Peer Mentoring</u>	A synthesis of transition and longer term peer mentoring. This form of mentoring has the advantage of enhancing transition whilst then continuing to provide on-going support thereby helping deal with issues around retention.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Offered on an opt-out basis as above - Centrally organised and managed but operated at a school level. - Allows for 'targeting' of specific groups if required. - One mentor to around five mentees. - Social focus at the beginning but evolves into providing study skills support
One-to-one longer term Peer Mentoring	Pastoral in nature this form of peer mentoring tends to be carefully managed. It can involve an element of informal peer counselling.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resource intensive - Needs close allocation / supervision of student pairings - Student peer mentors may additional support - Usually involves students from a 'higher' year mentoring those in years below - Can be cross-university or school / subject focused - Relationships often last throughout the mentees university career and beyond.
One-to-group longer term Peer Mentoring	Pastoral in nature this form of peer mentoring tends to be less formal than one-to-one longer term mentoring. Often School or subject focused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less resource intensive than one-to-one peer mentoring - Mentors may need support with group dynamics - Usually put in place within [across] a year group
'Partnership-led' Peer Mentoring	Two nominated 'peer mentors' lead a small group of between four and ten (possibly more). Can be long or short term. In some cases, it is appropriate to appoint two mentors for one mentee.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be offered on an inter or intra year basis - Offered on a long or short term basis - Particular useful at transition into university - Particularly useful for international students who may require a mentor from their own country and a UK mentor.
Group Peer Mentoring	A group of students specifically placed together with the purpose of mutual support. This form of mentoring relies on group cohesion and reciprocity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can be resource intensive as management of peer support groups may be problematic - Generally School or subject focused. - Usually offered on a short term basis [one term or less]

The Typology: Important Points

- ❖ In all of the Programmes covered by the Typology, peer mentors are employed on a voluntary basis irrespective of type of peer mentoring programme¹. Good peer mentoring programmes depend on high levels of student input and engagement and peer mentors are usually recruited on merit. Exemplar application forms and information leaflets for peer mentors are given in the Appendix and additionally may be downloaded from: <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/eas/research/groups/eerg/>
- ❖ There is much 'hybridity' / crossover between and across different 'types' of programme. One-to-one peer mentoring can be highly resource intensive.
- ❖ **Transition+ Peer Mentoring** represents a synthesis of transition and longer-term mentoring. The model was developed out of the Peer Mentoring Works study findings and reflects what often occurs informally with transitional peer mentoring whereby the peer mentors go on to offer continuing support well into the first term and in many cases beyond. A model depicting the constituents of **Transition+ Peer Mentoring** is provided overleaf together with further explanation
- ❖ In the 'opt-out' types of peer mentoring, student input is essential with many students contributing programme organisation.
- ❖ In order to maintain the viability and relevance of peer mentoring to the student experience, it is recommended that institutions evaluate the programme on a regular basis. An evaluation tool kit can be found at <http://www1.aston.ac.uk/eas/research/groups/eerg/>

¹ The Typology does not cover Writing Peer Mentors, or those Programmes in which students are paid and employed to work with their peers on an 'appointment' basis.

Figure 2: Transition+ Model of Peer Mentoring



The Constituents of Transition+ Mentoring

- ❖ **Programme Features:** The recommended model for those institutions wishing to address transition and retention together is **Transition+** Peer Mentoring. This approach captures all new students on an *opt-out* university-wide basis. It is generally centrally managed, but with identified 'Peer Mentoring Coordinators' provided within individual Schools or Faculties.

- ❖ **Pre-Term Allocation of Peer Mentees to Peer Mentors:** Selection and training of peer mentors in the previous academic year enables matching to occur once the students have accepted a place. Early matching enables students to exchange contact details and to communicate electronically. Matching is generally done within disciplines. Early communication between peer mentee and peer mentor helps alleviate some of the concerns new students have before starting university about 'fitting in' and 'belonging'.

- ❖ **Activity Management:** Small group mentoring is recommended whereby one student peer mentor is allocated between three and five peer mentees. Flexibility needs to be built into the system so that, if required, mentees can 'swap' mentors. The reciprocal nature of the relationship needs to be made known to both parties right from the onset.

- ❖ **Mentor Preparation:** Recruitment should occur in term 2 and training in term 3. This will allow **Transition+** Peer Mentoring to 'kick off' just before term 1. By recruiting and training the following year's mentors from the current year's mentees, institutions can use existing peer mentors to help train and guide the next cohort. In this way, peer mentoring becomes self-sustaining. Both peer mentors and peer mentees should be offered on-going support, with a member of staff identified as being the individual responsible for the overall management of the programme.

- ❖ **Relationship Management:** Matching students on a large scale is difficult; however, it is important to take account of certain cultural or other requirements when matching peer mentor to peer mentees. Peer mentees need to be asked if they have any preference in terms of gender, ethnicity, home-country and religion. Peer mentors can be expected to be more flexible, although exceptions should be made if a prospective peer mentor indicates that they would prefer not to be matched with individuals from a different gender or religious background.

The need for the mentoring relationship to be confidential in nature needs to be stressed to both parties. Peer mentor training should discuss ethics and confidentiality in some depth. In some HEIs students may be asked to sign an 'agreement of understanding' that can cover confidentiality and other relevant issues.

- ❖ **Reward and Recognition:** Peer mentoring should always be a voluntary activity for both peer mentors and peer mentees. The contribution to peer mentoring made by peer mentors can be recognised in a variety of ways including: formal accreditation of activities (as part of an 'employability module' or 'university certificate'); the awarding of certificates of participation outlining skills gained and activities undertaken: and, celebration events which may include awards for peer mentors nominated by their mentees.

Having been accepted as a peer mentor, many students find that the experience enables them to develop transferable employability skills – which they then go onto to use in gaining employment. Within the university itself, peer mentors are often used as University Ambassadors or Guides on open days and during other events.

- ❖ **Mentoring Focus: In Transition+** Peer Mentoring, the mentoring focus is initially on the ‘settling in’ period. However, within a few weeks the onus switches to more academic matters – such as using the library or accessing electronic resources. Mentoring training needs to encapsulate both social and academic aspects of the role with peer mentors being made aware of the boundaries placed upon them.

Q. Who should peer mentoring be aimed at?

In determining *which type* of mentoring is appropriate for a particular Institution, Faculty, School or Department, it is first necessary to identify *which students* the mentoring programme is aimed at.

Peer mentoring represents the formalisation of informal relationships that occur naturally between and amongst many students. The formalisation of peer mentoring provides the means by which institutions can promote transition and inclusion. **We recommend that, through the use of the Transition+ approach to peer mentoring, all new students should be provided with the opportunity to access a peer mentor.**

For those HEIs adopted a different approach to peer mentoring, and depending on the type of programme(s) adopted, peer mentoring can be aimed at:

- ❖ Select group of first year students: depending on institutional requirements and individual needs: *targeted* mentoring offered on a *demographic or academic* basis.
 - Demographic targeting may include: Students from a non-traditional background; students in a particular ‘group’ (for example, mature, minority, overseas or disabled students).
 - Academic targeting tends to focus on ‘high risk’ courses (those programmes with a high drop-out rate).

- ❖ Students at key 'transition' points: Possibilities include students entering university; those preparing for placement; final year students seeking employment.
- ❖ All students on an 'opt in' basis: Offering peer mentoring to all students (as opposed to just first-years) on an 'opt-out' basis would be impractical for most institutions. However, it is important to note, peer mentoring is not simply beneficial for new students – it can offer high quality support and enrich the student experience across the whole student lifecycle.

Q. How much does Peer Mentoring cost?

The costs of running a peer mentoring programme vary depending on institutional requirements. Many of the institutions offering the larger programmes employ at least one dedicated person, with individuals within Schools helping manage programmes on a local basis. Additionally, the use of student volunteers to plan and oversee the programmes provides an ideal opportunity for individual students to gain employability skills whilst helping allay some of the costs. In all cases the benefits in terms of retention far outweigh the costs.

Q. What about Accreditation and Recognition?

In some institutions, accreditation is given to peer mentors as part of wider extra-curriculum activities. In a few cases, accreditation for mentoring forms part of an individual's degree programme. Depending on institutional requirements and practices accreditation can be given as part of:

- ❖ Employability Awards or Modules
- ❖ University or Departmental 'Citizenship' Awards
- ❖ Work-based / active learning [depending on discipline]

Whilst accreditation is the exception, the majority of institutions offering mentoring do offer a formal recognition of the contribution made by peer mentors, and in some cases peer mentees, to the university. Such recognition is generally in the form of a certificate.

Reflective of institutional requirements, recognition is given to:

- ❖ All peer mentors participating in the programme
- ❖ All mentors and mentees participating in the programme [usually in the case of longer term, one-to-one mentoring where the 'peer' support element is key to the success of the programme from both perspectives].

- **Celebratory Events**

In many institutions, celebratory events form an important part of the peer mentoring calendar year. Peer mentees and in some cases, university staff, are asked to nominate peer mentors for special recognition. Celebration events provide the opportunity to showcase peer mentoring and the achievements and contribution of the students.

Q. What are the potential 'pitfalls' of Peer Mentoring?

Peer mentoring can provide a cost-effective high quality way of providing student support on an individual basis. However, the Peer Mentoring Works Project did identify some organisational issues which need to be taken into account by those developing new programmes. In summary these are:

1. Joint Honours: Where peer mentoring is organised on a School or Subject basis, Joint or Combined Honours Programmes can cause several and organisation logistic problems. In some cases students are

provided with two mentors – although this in itself can be difficult as the demands on students to be ‘in two places at once’ can prove awkward.

2. Peer Mentor Commitment: Whilst the majority of peer mentors are extremely committed, inevitably there are usually a small minority who, having volunteered for the role, are less than committed. Unfortunately, this can have a substantially negative impact on those peer mentees allocated to such individuals. Institutions generally have in place strategies to contemporaneously monitor and continually evaluate mentors and mentoring activities. Such strategies include the use of ‘senior peer mentors’ (fellow students) who take responsibility for managing a group of mentors, to more formal recording of activity and input.
3. Mentee Expectations: In discussing organisational management of peer mentoring programmes one of the issues mentioned related to the need to manage mentee expectations. In the case of ‘transition opt-out’ mentoring, the onus for this falls very much on the peer mentor who needs to explain her or his role to the mentee upon first meeting. For longer term, opt-in mentoring, the responsibility falls on the programme manager to make sure both peer mentors and mentees are aware of the ‘boundaries’ and remit of mentoring.
4. Mentor ‘Dynamics’: In partnership-led or group mentoring issues around interpersonal ‘dynamics’ may arise between peer mentors. Difficulties identified during the study related to mentor’s perceptions of others’ contributions and approach to mentoring. This issue may be dealt with by putting into place visible organisational structures such as: active record keeping; the keeping of reflective logs; monthly or fortnightly supervision sessions.
5. Mentor-mentee relationship issues: Although rarely reported in smaller, ‘opt-in’ programmes, on occasion with larger university-wide ‘opt-out’ programmes the occasional personality clash between peer mentor

and mentee is inevitable. In such cases, there needs to be a degree of flexibility to allow the mentee to 'swap' mentors should they wish.

6. Training: **Training was identified as crucial in preparing peer mentors for the role.** However, this is not the case for peer mentees. Those peer mentees who had undertaken training failed to identify, or understand, its value. Indeed the suggestion was made that the requirement to attend training could act as a deterrent for some students who otherwise would apply for a mentor. Consequently, training is not recommended for peer mentees.

Q. How can students' help in the management and administration of Peer Mentoring?

- Appointment of Senior Peer Mentors

Institutions with large Peer Mentoring Programmes tend to encourage students to become mentors in both their second and final year. In such cases, final year students are often in an ideal position to act as 'Senior Peer Mentors'. Senior Peer Mentors take responsibility for a small group of first time peer mentors, providing advice and guidance (generally mentoring the new mentors). Senior Peer Mentors are then responsible for reporting directly back to the Peer Mentoring Manager.

- Peer Mentoring Committees

In the larger Institutions, where Peer Mentoring Programmes are run year-upon-year, Student Peer Mentoring Committees play a vital part in keeping the programme active and relevant to the student body. Appointed in the final academic term, Peer Mentoring Committees are made up of Senior Peer Mentors. If required, one or two students can be appointed to take overall responsibility for the Peer Mentoring Programme.

- Internships and Work-Experience

Successful Peer Mentoring Programmes take a lot of organising! By providing summer internships and work-experience to current students, Peer Mentoring Programmes maintain a link with the student body whilst providing individual students with valuable hands-on project management experience.

Q. What are the benefits for Students?

The benefits for peer mentors vary in nature ranging from enhanced, transferable employability skills (including communication and presentation skills) to the opportunity to put something back into university life. For peer mentees the benefits tend to be more bespoke. Individual students are provided with a 'key friend' who will both help them settle in, and continue providing advice and guidance throughout the first term or year.

Peer Mentoring is an ideal way for students to help students succeed! Both parties benefit academically and socially – gaining much from what is ostensibly a 'managed' relationship in which reciprocity is key.

Appendix 1: Peer Mentoring Recruitment Pack

Introduction

This Peer Mentoring Recruitment Package is intended for use alongside the Institutional Manual, Training and Evaluation Toolkits that have been developed as part of the Peer Mentoring Works Project led by Aston University.

This Recruitment Package has been uploaded onto the internet in *Word* format to enable other HEIs to adopt and adapt it for their own use. It comprises two application forms and two information sheets. The first application form and information sheet is aimed at those institutions wishing to develop 'opt-in' peer mentoring programmes and is for use by *peer mentees*.

The second application form and information sheet is aimed at those HEIs wishing to develop any form of 'opt-out' Peer Mentoring Programmes and is aimed at *peer mentors*. Additionally, HEIs selecting 'opt-in' peer mentoring programmes will also be able to adapt the peer mentor application form for their own purposes.

Peer Mentee Application Form [Opt-in Mentoring Programmes]

First Name _____ Surname _____

Title: Mr Miss Ms Mrs Dr

Male Female

Date of Birth: _____ University Email: _____

Phone Number _____ Home Email _____

Ethnicity _____ Course _____

Are you: UK Student EU student International Student

Are you: Mature Student Local / Day Student Disabled student

Academic School _____

Do you have any preferences with regards to your peer mentor in terms of ethnicity or religion: yes / no. If yes, please state what ethnic group or religion you would prefer your mentees to come from: _____

If this is not possible would you still like to participate: yes / no

Would you prefer your mentor to be: male / female / don't mind

Would you prefer to be matched with someone of a similar age: yes / no

What would you like to get out of the mentoring programme?

Please give your student ID number: _____

Please send this form to: _____

Peer Mentee Information Sheet [Opt-in Peer Mentoring]

Peer Mentoring is an optional programme which matches first year students with more experienced second and final year peer mentors. Peer mentors are specifically selected for this role and also to represent the university in a range of other activities such as open days. They work through academic schools to help and support first year students throughout the academic year.

Participating in the programme will provide you with the ideal opportunity to work closely with another student.

At the end of the academic year all peer mentors and mentees are invited to attend a celebratory event. Many peer mentees volunteer to become peer mentors during their second and final years.

What do Peer Mentors do?

This varies between Schools. However, in general terms Peer Mentors are asked to...

- Offer continuing support and friendship to their mentees throughout the academic year.
 - Offer on-going friendship and support
 - Share experiences and insights
 - Refer their mentees to an appropriate professional should any problems arise that cannot be dealt with
 - Offer advice with generic study issues such as using the library, accessing the computers, working in the labs etc.
 - Offer someone to talk to in confidence when appropriate
- Be available to help at Open Days / Interview Days within the academic school if asked
- Represent their Academic Schools and the University in a positive manner.

What can I expect my peer mentor to be like?

Our peer mentors work hard to be...

- Enthusiastic
- Friendly
- Reliable
- Responsible
- Good communicators
- Empathetic listeners
- Informative
- A good role model.

All students wishing to be take part in the Peer Mentoring Programme need to contact:

You will be asked to fill out an application form. This is for matching purposes only, all those requesting a peer mentor are allocated someone to work with as soon as possible.

Please detach and retain this sheet.

Peer Mentor Application Form: Transition+ Mentoring

First Name _____ Surname _____

Title: Mr Miss Ms Mrs Dr

Male Female

Date of Birth _____ University Email: _____

Phone Number _____

Ethnicity _____ Course _____

Are you: UK Student EU student International Student

Are you: Mature Student Local / Day Student Disabled student

Academic School in which you wish to Peer Mentor _____

Do you have any preferences with regards to your mentee in terms of ethnicity: yes / no. If yes, please state what ethnic group you would prefer your mentees to come from _____

If this is not possible are you still able to participate: yes / no

Would you prefer to be matched with: males / females / both / don't mind

Would you prefer to be matched with someone of a similar age: yes / no

Safety Check: We are sure you understand that it is in everyone's interest to ensure that the Peer Mentoring Scheme is run safely. For this reason we must ask you to answer the questions below.

Have you ever been convicted of any of the following criminal offences that might preclude you from working with vulnerable people?

Sex offence	yes / no
Abuse	yes / no
Violent crime such as GBH	yes / no

We also check your disciplinary record. If you have a disciplinary record you are not automatically precluded from being a Peer Mentor; each case will be looked at individually and a decision reached in conjunction with your academic school.

Please give your student ID number: _____

Referees: we need **FULL DETAILS** of two external referees whom we can contact. This reference will solely relate to your suitability to be a Peer Mentor.

A referee **may not** be a member of your family. Referees **must** have known you for at least 2 years and **must** be over 25

First Referee

Second Referee

Name of referee: _____

Name of referee _____

Occupation of referee _____

Occupation of referee _____

Full postal address of referee
(including post code):

Full postal address of referee
(including post code):

Telephone _____

Telephone _____

In what capacity do you know your referee? (e.g. was your teacher etc.)

Referee 1: _____

Referee 2: _____

Please explain what you have to offer as a peer mentor:

**All information is confidential to staff who work on the Peer Guide Scheme.
I have read the attached information about the role of a Peer Guide.
I also certify that the information given on this form is correct.**

Signed _____

Date _____

Please return this form to:

Date trained:

1st ref sent

Rec'd

2nd ref sent

Rec'd

Peer Mentor Information Sheet: Transition+ Mentoring

Peer mentors represent the university and work through academic schools. They help and support new students as they settle in to university. Acting as a peer mentor provides you with the opportunity to gain valuable transferable employability skills which will be of interest to future employers. All peer mentors are invited to attend a celebratory event where every volunteer is presented with a certificate marking their contribution.

The tasks given to peer mentors vary between Schools. However, in general terms Peer Mentors are asked to...

- Attend a short training programme to prepare them for the role.
- Meet and greet new students over the arrival weekend
- Help plan Welcome Week if asked
- Help during Welcome Week as requested eg with Induction Sessions, Registration, Fresher's Fair
- Continue to support new students into the first year of their studies.
- Offer academic support as appropriate
- Refer peer mentees with particular problems to an appropriate professional
- Be available to help at Open Days / Interview Days within Academic Schools
- Represent the University in a positive manner

In order to do this Peer Mentors need to be:

- Enthusiastic
- Friendly
- Reliable
- Responsible
- Good communicators
- Empathetic listeners
- Informative
- Supportive of those who find it difficult to settle
- Able to refer on to an appropriate professional if necessary
- Able to keep confidentiality when appropriate
- A good role model

We are **NOT** looking for people who:

- Are only interested in the social events connected with Peer Mentoring
- Will coerce new students into drinking games or drinking excessively
- Encourage new students to break rules and regulations
- Are not willing to make a commitment to the programme.

Peer Mentors who act inappropriately will be dismissed from the scheme and not receive a certificate.

All students wishing to be a Peer Mentor must attend a centrally held training session, following which references will be called in and disciplinary records will be checked. A student with, or facing, a disciplinary record, will not necessarily be barred from being a Peer Mentor. Each case will be looked at individually, but normally one minor offence would not stop someone from being a Peer Mentor; repeated minor offences or single offences deemed to be serious would.

If you are willing to commit yourself to being a reliable Peer Mentor please complete the attached form and return it to: _____

Please detach and retain this sheet.

APPENDIX 2: Peer Mentoring Training Package

1. Introduction

This training package has been developed out of the findings of the Peer Mentoring Works Project. It represents a synthesis of peer mentoring programmes offered at a number of different institutions. In addition to the ‘formal’ fieldwork (comprising the survey and interviews discussed in the project findings) the project team undertook non-participatory observations. A qualitative observation framework was developed and observations of various groups of participants undertaken at two institutions over ‘welcome weekend’ at the beginning of the academic year [2010]². Additionally, training was observed at three of the partner institutions. Whilst the findings from the observations did not ‘feed into’ the main project report, they have proved particularly useful in developing some of the tools and exercises provided in this training package.

Peer mentoring works because it provides students with the means by which they can quickly gain a sense of belonging. The key to the success of all of the peer mentoring programmes analysed as part of the project was the enthusiasm and commitment of the student peer mentors who devote their time and energy to making the programme work. By offering high quality training, institutions can equip peer mentors with the necessary high quality skills and competencies need to undertake the role. In HEIs where peer mentoring is offered on an institutional-wide ‘opt-out’ basis, peer mentoring training can act as the institutional glue holding the various mentoring programmes together. For those institutions offering smaller, ‘opt-in’ peer mentoring programmes, training can act as the foundation for the programme – providing the means by peer mentors can form supportive relationships with each other and staff.

² Observations of the interactions and activities of the following groups were made: mentor-mentee, staff-mentor-mentee, family-mentee-mentor interactions

2. Setting up a Peer Mentoring Training Programme

FAQs

Q. Why offer training to peer mentors?

In putting together peer mentoring training programmes institutions have a responsibility to make sure peer mentors are fully aware of the requirements of the role. This involves making sure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to undertake the role in a responsible manner.

Q. Who should be trained?

Peer mentoring training should be compulsory for all peer mentors: Irrespective of type of peer mentoring offered, all prospective peer mentors need to be fully trained and prepared for their role.

In Institutions where students are encouraged to act as peer mentors for more than one year, it is suggested that a 'refresher' training session should be offered in the second or third year of mentoring.

Training is not recommended for peer mentees.

Q. When should peer mentoring training be offered?

For HEIs offering institution-wide 'opt-out' programmes, training is generally offered in the final term of the academic year. This means recruiting the following year's peer mentors in term two. By offering training in term three, peer mentors can be allocated to mentees over the summer period meaning that by 'welcome week' all the necessary steps for the programme to succeed are in place.

For institutions offering longer term opt-in peer mentoring, training also occurs in term three with recruitment in term two. This means that those students

indicating on their application forms that they would like a peer mentor can be 'paired' as soon as they accept a place. This is particularly useful as it allows students to communicate prior to the academic year beginning.

Additional provision can be made for those students who, having initially declined a peer mentor, decide to take part in the programme once they arrive at university. In such cases, additional peer mentors are recruited and trained in the first few weeks of term one.

Q. What format should peer mentoring training take?

A basic 'format' for peer mentoring training needs to include:

- An introduction to peer mentoring – *what is peer mentoring*
- Peer mentors' responsibilities - *do's and don'ts*
- Empathy & understanding – *remember when...*
- Communication skills – *listening and sharing...*
- Dealing with problems – *what happens if...*
- Recording and evaluating mentoring – *keeping a record...*

Training works best when it is interactive and participative in nature. The information and exercises contained within the following pages paragraphs offer a range of exercises and strategies that can be adapted for use by institutions in offering peer mentoring training. Additionally, 'exemplar' slides are provided for use in peer mentoring training.

3. Training Tools: Slides & Activities

a. An Introduction to Peer Mentoring

[SLIDE 1] **What is Peer Mentoring?**

Peer mentoring involves students helping other students succeed at university. From helping new students settle in, to acting as an informal link between the university and peer mentees, peer mentors represent a vital part of university life.

Peer Mentoring Training: Break-Out Activity [1]
What is a 'good' peer mentor?

Break into groups of two or three and discuss ...

- 1. What skills a 'good' peer mentor should have.***
- 2. How a 'good' peer mentor should conduct themselves during mentoring.***
- 3. What makes a 'poor' peer mentor***

This activity works best if students feedback as a single group with the trainer facilitating the answers. The following slide provides a summary of the synthesized answers provided to the first question by mentors and trainers at the HEIs included in the study.

In facilitating the training and using the below slide, it is suggested that trainers use each of the points to highlight:

- 1. What makes a good mentor: discuss how each of the points contributes to 'good mentoring'*
- 2. How a good mentor should conduct themselves: discuss examples of good practice in mentoring based around each of the points.*
- 3. What makes a poor mentor: The antonym of the points given – use the points to spark off conversations about how mentors should not behave*

[ie. Discuss examples of poor communication – not making contact, not listening to the mentee, playing on the phone when meeting etc]

[SLIDE 2]

What Makes a Good Peer Mentor? Skills, Competencies and Behaviours

- **Good communication skills**
- **Reliable – willing to give time to help other students**
- **Friendly & Approachable**
- **Knowledgeable – about the University & student life**
- **Willing to act as an ambassador for the school / university**
- **Positive attitude – towards studying and student life**
- **Enthusiasm & Energy**
- **Trustworthy – know when to refer problems onwards, when to ask for help & when to keep a confidence**
- **Responsible attitude – able to make decisions and put others 'first'**

b. Peer mentors' responsibilities - do's and don'ts

Discussion should be interactive – the slides used to 'spark' conversation...

[SLIDE 3]

What Makes a Good Peer Mentor: *What Peer Mentors do...*

- **Make new students feel at home – welcoming / friendship**
- **Listen and talk – knowing when to maintain 'confidentiality'**
- **Share experiences and insights whilst helping new students navigate around the campus**
 - Finding classrooms
 - Using the library
 - Accessing labs and other areas
- **Provide advice using their own experience – But know when a problem needs to be shared with a staff member**
- **Act as a friend - Accompany peer mentees to social events & to see academic tutors if needed**
- **Point peer mentees in the 'right direction' if needed**
 - Student services
 - Academic tutors
- **Help at enrolment & open days – Ambassador**

Depending on Institutional needs, trainers may need to emphasize different aspects of what the role does and does not entail...

[SLIDE 4] **What Makes a Good Peer Mentor:
What Peer Mentors DO NOT DO**

- **Miss appointments with peer mentees**
- **Mislead or misinform peer mentees**
- **Encourage new students to drink too heavily**
- **Help with academic content**
 - **Encourage plagiarism**
 - **Collusion**
 - **Show mentees work previously undertaken by themselves**
- **Act inappropriately**

Breakout Activities:

Depending on the number of students, divide the students into small 'buzz' groups to undertake the following activities.

As time and the number of students permit, allow 10-20 minutes for discussion in small groups and 10-20 minutes for feedback

c. Empathy & understanding – *remember when...*

[SLIDE 5] Peer Mentoring Training: Breakout Activity [ii]

Empathy & Understanding

Working in small groups ...

1. Remember what it felt like to be a 'new student'
 - What were you most worried about?
 - What were you least worried about
 - How did you feel at the beginning of welcome week?
 - o How did you feel at the end?
 - What was the most difficult part of the first few weeks?
 - How did it feel walking into a lecture theatre for the first time?
 - What was the most difficult part of the first few weeks?
 - What did you miss the most from home?

What would have made the experience 'better?'

d. Communication skills – *listening and sharing...*

[SLIDE 6] Peer Mentoring Training: Breakout Activity [iii]

Listening & Sharing

Working in pairs ...

1. **Sit back-to-back:** decide who is going to talk first and who is going to listen. One person should talk for five minutes about how an important event in your life affected you... *for example*
 - Sitting important exams: Leaving school: Starting work
2. **Person [2] listen carefully**
3. **Face each other & discuss the conversation**
4. **Exchange roles**
5. **Consider how it felt to have a conversation without any eye contact or body language? What worked? What didn't?**

What makes good communication?

e. Dealing with problems – *what happens if...*

[SLIDE 7] **Peer Mentoring Training: Breakout Activity [iv]**

What happens if...

Working in small groups ...

1. Discuss what how you would deal with one of the following situations... *Your Peer Mentee...*

- Wants to quit and go home because of home sickness
- Has failed the first piece of coursework and is distraught having always achieved highly before
- Tells you she thinks she might be pregnant
- Tells you he has a disability that he has not told the university about
- Dislikes their accommodation as they don't get on with their flatmates
- Tells you they feel depressed

Feedback your thoughts on the scenario to the group

The above list reflects scenarios peer mentors and trainers discussed with the researchers during the observations.

The following responses were given by the trainers:

- ***Peer mentee wanting to go home because of home sickness:*** *The answer to this is complicated. Peer mentors need to be encouraged to think of why a peer mentee might be feeling homesick and how they could help. Peer mentors could help mentees by: talking over the issues: helping their mentee keep busy: encouraging their mentee to get involved in student activities and groups. If the peer mentee is insistent that they want to go home, the peer mentor needs to know what to do in terms of trying to prevent the individual from simply leaving. The trainer should direct peer mentors, that should their mentee insist on leaving, they should try to persuade them to meet with a member of staff in either student services or their particular School. The peer mentor should accompany the mentee to such meetings and offer the necessary support. It is important to stress that if someone does decide to leave, their experiences of making that choice, may*

influence whether they go onto study elsewhere. Peer mentors need to be able to discuss all of the options.

- ***The peer mentee has failed a piece of coursework:*** *Peer mentoring is not directly about academic tutoring – however, it does encompass academic support. Peer mentors need to be aware of what is, and is not, acceptable in terms of offering their mentee academic support. Such support can vary from signposting the mentee in the direction of learner develop provision [academic writing, maths, study skills etc], to showing the mentee how to use the library or electronic resources, or accompanying the mentee to visit a lecturer or tutor.*
- ***A mentee tells you she thinks she is pregnant:*** *Peer mentors need to be encouraged to refer any such issues on to the university medical services, in that the mentee should be strongly advised to see the University Nurse or Doctor. In such circumstances, the peer mentor need's to establish whether the mentee would like to be accompanied to the appointment [or to the surgery if not to the appointment].*
- ***Reveals a disability:*** *This scenario provides the opportunity to discuss the help available to disabled students. Peer mentors need to be aware of the existence of support for students with disabilities and be able to refer their mentees to the relevant department. The issue of confidentiality should be raised with peer mentors being asked if there are any 'health related issues' they feel would be sufficiently serious so as to merit a breach of confidence. Examples where the peer mentor should be encouraged to breach a mentee confidence and discuss the mentee with a member of staff would include if the peer mentee disclosed that they had a serious mental or physical health condition that could potentially be a danger to themselves or others.*
- ***Reveals they feel depressed:*** *Peer mentors need to be fully aware of the availability of the student counselling services and refer their mentees to these if appropriate. Additionally, the training should identify other sources of help [for example: University Health Services: Samaritans: University Student-Support Telephone Services: Student Union Services etc]. If the peer mentor is seriously concerned about*

the peer mentee's health they should be strongly encouraged to notify a member of staff [as above].

- **Dislikes their accommodation / flatmates:** *The peer mentor needs to be encouraged to find out why the mentee dislikes their accommodation. As University Halls are notoriously fully occupied, and the mentee 'locked' into a contract, the solution is often to address causes of the problem by speaking with the Accommodation Officer.*

f. Recording and evaluating mentoring – keeping a record...

[SLIDE 8] **Peer Mentoring Training: Breakout Activity [v]**

Keeping A Record

Working in small groups ...

- 1. Discuss why it is important that you keep a record of your mentoring sessions**
- 2. Think about *what* you might record ... *why...* and *when...***

Why is reflection important? How can we use reflection to improve and inform future actions and activities?

This topic depends very much on institutional requirements. Students may particularly need to keep accurate records of activities if peer mentoring forms part of an accredited programme. In the institutions included in the study, records kept by students varied in nature from a reflective on-line diary, to a formal document which was filled out by both parties once a month.

For peer mentors, one of the key benefits of keeping a record is that contemporaneous notes can act as a useful aide-memoir when filling out application forms for jobs or placements.

For both peer mentors and peer mentees, records of meetings and activities can be used to highlight an individual's personal development within a Personal Development Portfolio.

Communication Exercise.

This communication activity is suitable for use at any point in the training and may be adapted for other purposes. It is intended to prompt students' memories with regards to what it felt like to be in a strange place, where everyone else spoke using strange terms – and, as a new student, they felt completely 'out of the loop'.

The activity is deliberately 'light hearted' with the intention of putting prospective peer mentors in a position whereby they can empathise with the new students.

[SLIDE 9] **Remember When?**

Communication Exercise: Peer Mentoring Training

- ▶ When we talk in English, do we all speak the same language?
- ▶ A university is a partial institution. It has its own rules, cultures, norms and intangible character.
- ▶ For first year students it can seem as if they've landed on a different planet.
- ▶ This exercise is designed to provide you with some idea of what it feels like to comprehend the words – but not understand the meaning! Taking you out of your comfort zone into a reality you probably didn't know ever existed...

Using the language of the RAF from the 1980's and before, students are asked to 'fill in the gaps' and translate the meaning of each sentence. To help, the following three words fit into each sentence. For the purposes of this guide, the words are placed chronologically [in the order they are used in each sentence – and alphabetically].

1. **BOWSER - JANKERS – OILY**
2. **BLANKET-STACKER – GEN – KITE**
3. **APESHIT - KIT – ROCKAPE**
4. **ERK – BLANKET-STACKER – U.S**
5. **BURTON – N.B.C. - SHREDDIES**
6. **BIG-ZOB – BULL – SCRAMBLED-EGG**
7. **BEANIE – BABY ZOBS – MESS**
8. **GREMLINS – OILY – SWO**
9. **DUFF-GEN – SHOT-UP – SNOWDROP**
10. **BUMPF – GENNED – TRIP**
11. **BLOCK – CRUD – M.U.**

Answers / translations provided following the activity

Communication Activity:

- a. Using list of words overleaf – fill in the gaps to make a sentence.
- b. Following this, translate the sentence into English!
- c. Think about what the implications of this exercise in terms of how we communicate with each other and the language we use.

1. I WAS ON _____ FOR TWO WEEKS WITH AN OLD _____ WHO'D CRASHED THE _____ IN FRONT OF THE *SWO*
2. I SHARED A TENT WITH A _____, SO HE HADN'T GOT THE _____ ABOUT THE _____.
3. I COULD TELL HE WAS A _____ BECAUSE HE WENT _____ ABOUT THE STATE OF THE _____
4. THE _____ SAID IT WAS _____ BUT THE _____ SAID THEY COULDN'T GET ANY MORE
5. WHEN THE ALARM WENT I PUT MY _____ ON FIRST THEN MY _____ SUIT JUST IN CASE WE WENT FOR A _____
6. SAW HIS _____ AND KNEW HE WAS A _____ SO I GAVE HIM SOME _____
7. HE WAS A _____ SO HIS _____ BILL WAS MUCH CHEAPER THAN THE OTHER _____
8. THE _____ WAS UNIMPRESSED THAT THE _____ BLAMED THE _____ FOR THE BREAKDOWN.
9. I WAS _____ SO I GAVE THE _____ / _____
10. THE *NOBBY* WAS QUITE _____ ABOUT THE _____ AND DID THE NECESSARY _____
11. I WORKED IN THE _____ AND LIVED IN _____ IT WAS _____

TRANSLATIONS – FOR HAND-OUT AFTER THE ACTIVITY

1. I WAS ON **JANKERS** FOR TWO WEEKS WITH AN OLD **OILY** WHO'D CRASHED THE **BOWSER** IN FRONT OF THE SWO

I was on extra-duties for two weeks with an experienced mechanic who'd crashed a petrol tanker in front of the Station Warrant Officer

2. I SHARED A TENT WITH A **BLANKET STACKER**. SO HE HADN'T GOT THE **GEN** ABOUT THE **KITE**.

I shared a tent with someone who worked in the stores. He didn't have any understanding of the aircraft.

3. I COULD TELL HE WAS A **ROCKAPE** BECAUSE HE WENT **APESHIT** ABOUT THE STATE OF THE **KIT**

I could tell he was a member of the RAF Regiment when he went mad about the state of the weapons.

4. THE **ERK** SAID IT WAS **U.S.** BUT THE **BLANKET-STACKER** SAID THEY COULD GET ANY MORE

The aircraft fitter said it had broken, but the storeman said they could get anymore.

5. WHEN THE ALARM WENT I PUT MY **SHREDDIES**, ON FIRST THEN MY **NBC** SUIT JUST IN CASE WE WENT FOR A **BURTON**

When the alarm sounded I put on my underwear first, then my protective suit – just in case we got killed or badly injured.

6. I SAW HIS **SCRAMBLED EGG** AND KNEW HE WAS A **BIG-ZOB** SO I GAVE HIM SOME **BULL**

I saw his hat, realised he was a senior officer, so I told him what he wanted to hear.

7. HE WAS A **BEANIE** SO HIS **MESS** BILL WAS MUCH CHEAPER THAN THE OTHER **BABY-ZOBS**

He was married so his food and drink bill was much cheaper than the other young officers.

8. THE **SWO** WAS UNIMPRESSED THAT THE **OILY** BLAMED THE **GREMLINS** FOR THE BREAKDOWN.

The Station Warrant Officer was unimpressed that the mechanic didn't know what caused the breakdown.

9. I WAS **SHOT UP** SO I GAVE THE **SNOWDROP DUFF-GEN**

I was drunk so I gave the Policeman misinformation.

10. THE **NOBBY** WAS QUITE **GENNED-UP** ABOUT THE **TRIP** AND DID THE NECESSARY **BUMPF**

The clerk was quite knowledgeable about the mission and so did the necessary paperwork.

11. I WORKED IN THE **MU** AND LIVED IN **BLOCK** IT WAS **CRUD**

I worked in the maintenance unit and lived in the barracks. It was horrendous.

Glossary of Terms

Slang word - Translation

1. APE-SHIT - MAD
2. BEANIE – MARRIED MAN
3. BLANKET STACKER – [STOREMAN]
4. BLOCK - BARRACKS
5. BOWSER – AIRCRAFT REFUELLER
6. BUMPF – PAPERWORK
7. BULL – POLISH / CLEAN / TELL SOMEONE WHAT THEY WANT TO HEAR
8. BURTON – GOING FOR A 'BURTON' – GETTING KILLED OR SERIOUSLY INJURED
9. CRUD - RUBBISH
10. DUFF-GEN – MISINFORMATION
11. ERK – AIRCRAFTMAN
12. GREMLINS – CAUSE OF AIRCRAFT / VEHICULAR BREAKDOWN
13. GEN - INFORMATION
14. GENNED UP – KNOWLEDGEABLE
15. JANKERS – EXTRA DUTIES AS A RESULT OF BEING PLACED ON A CHARGE
16. KIT – ANY ASPECT OF UNIFORM, OR EQUIPMENT
17. KITE – AIRCRAFT
18. MESS – PLACE TO EAT [LOWER RANKS RANKS] – PLACE TO LIVE AND EAT [SNCO'S / OFFICERS]
19. M.U. – MAINTENANCE UNIT
20. NOBBY – CLERK
21. OILY - MECHANIC
22. ROCK-APE – RAF REGIMENT
23. SCRAMBLED EGG – GOLD BRAID ON AN OFFICERS UNIFORM
24. SHREDDIES - UNDERCLOTHES
25. SNOWDROP – POLICE OFFICER
26. SWO – STATION WARRANT OFFICER [IN CHARGE OF DISCIPLINE]
27. SHOT-UP – DRUNK
28. TRIP – OPERATION
29. U.S. – UNSERVICEABLE
30. ZOB – OFFICER
 - [BIG ZOB] – SENIOR OFFICER
 - [BABY ZOB] – JUNIOR OFFICER

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