



Swansea University
Prifysgol Abertawe

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Buddy Scheme Handbook

-Designed for **Staff**-

Swansea Academy of Inclusivity and Learner Success

swansea.ac.uk/inclusivity-academy

Addysg Uwch **Academi**  Higher Education **Academy**



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Introduction

Use this handbook to **introduce peer mentoring effectively into your Faculty or School.**

It includes key information and details about peer mentoring schemes, and how best to set one up depending on the needs of each individual department and its students.

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What is Buddy Scheme?

Buddy Scheme helps new students settle into university life by enabling small groups to meet up with a mentor on a flexible basis to address basic concerns about student life and learn from the experiences of an already established student. **Mentors must be in their second year of study or above.**

Provides the means by which students can:

- Make friends
- Acclimatise to university life
- Accept their new student identity

Complements:

- Induction Activities
- Academic Mentoring, Advising or Tutoring
- Student Services

Benefits for the:

- Student Mentees
- Buddies
- Department



Why Do We Need Buddy Scheme?

Changes to the Education System:

- **The massification of Higher Education** (HE) has led to a:
 1. Growth in “non-traditional” students with a wider range of entry qualifications.
 2. Reversion to “Traditional Lectures” (large scale) and less focus on small group/tutorial teaching.
- **Increase in tuition fees** has led to greater expectancy and increased pressure for Universities to provide a service that is seen to offer ‘value for money’.



Types of Schemes

The type of buddy scheme is subjective to each department. However, we recommend an **Opt-out, Group Mentoring** based scheme for efficiency and effectiveness.

Opt-out

New students have an allocated buddy and an initial meeting, and choose whether to continue the mentoring process

Resource heavy - requires a large recruitment of buddies

Opt-in

Students are informed of the mentoring scheme and choose whether to make contact

Students in most need might not make contact

Group Mentoring (1:5 ratio, buddies to student mentees)

Student mentees interact with each other and can discuss issues together

Buddies will need support/training in group dynamics

One-to-one Mentoring

Enables more hesitant student mentees to open up and convey issues

Requires many more buddies and matching which may be challenging to achieve



Benefits and Rewards

Buddies

- A sense of fulfilment and personal growth
- Being part of/creating a sense of community
- Enhanced employability skills such as: communication, teamwork, time management and interpersonal skills
- Improved CV
- Meeting new people and creating a wider friend circle
- Satisfaction of making a fellow student more welcome and improving their welfare and happiness
- Enables Swansea University students to obtain the SAILS Buddy Scheme HEAR Award

Student Mentee

- Will feel less vulnerable and uncertain
- Gain greater social and academic confidence
- Make more friends and settle in more quickly
- Become aware of other student services and support

Faculty/School

- Stronger community amongst students
- Enhanced student engagement and performance
- Development of student/staff networks
- Higher student satisfaction levels
- Academic/personal/employability development for students
- Contributes to effective learning and teaching and widening participation



Roles and Responsibilities

Buddies	Lead Buddies (if applicable)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Complete the training course.✓ Buddy X hours per week.✓ Be a friendly and welcoming face.✓ Attend meetings and maintain contact with your student mentees.✓ Listen to the concerns of student mentees and signpost relevant support.✓ Remain up to date with events.✓ Respond to emails from Scheme Co-ordinators.	<p>As for buddies, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Contact point for mentors and student mentees with queries/concerns.✓ Running buddy team meetings.✓ Updating Scheme Co-ordinator on the progress of the scheme.✓ Attending Lead Buddy meetings.
Staff Co-ordinator	Swansea SAILS Team
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Engage with colleagues and students to assess interest.✓ Identify costs and source of funding.✓ Manage recruitment and selection process.✓ Keep colleagues informed about the programme.✓ Maintain contact with Lead Buddies, buddies and student mentees.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Provide advice and guidance to staff.✓ Provide opportunities for staff and students to meet.✓ Encourage sense of community e.g. celebration events.✓ Liaise with SEA and SALT where relevant.✓ Disseminate good practice.

Staff Co-ordinator	Swansea SAILS Team
✓ Contact point for those with concern.	



Guidelines and Advice

1. Buddies should not give student mentees their **phone number** until they have met them, and student mentees are comfortable receiving it.
2. Buddies and student mentees must always **meet in a public place**.
3. Buddies should use a **university email account** when first making contact with their student mentees.
4. Buddies should be **polite** and use appropriate language.
5. Conversations between buddies and student mentees are **confidential** (except in special cases).
6. Look at the **mentoring guidelines** (from the SAILS website) for information on relationship boundaries.
7. Buddies must only give **general academic advice**.

Topics for buddies to talk to student mentees about:

- Where to find things on campus.
- How to get involved with student societies.
- University procedures and where to find information.
- Departmental issues – the nature of coursework and information about particular courses or exams etc.
- How to deal with the shock of arrival!
- How to achieve a balance between life and study.
- How to manage on a limited budget.
- How to get around Swansea.
- What to do in Swansea.

- Who their student rep is.



Best Practice

Checklist for a Successful Buddy Scheme:

- ✓ Work in partnership with students
- ✓ Have committed staff and organisers
- ✓ Recruit and select buddies effectively
- ✓ Train the buddies
- ✓ Suitably match buddies and student mentees
- ✓ Give on-going support to buddies
- ✓ Reward and recognise buddies
- ✓ Evaluate your scheme and act on feedback
- ✓ Market and advertise effectively
- ✓ Structured timeline in place

1. Staff-Student Partnership

Working with students is central to creating a student focused Buddy Scheme:

- Partner with student societies.
- Consult them in shaping the scheme.
- Take advice on marketing and organised events.
- Consult students on training.
- Involve them in reviews.
- Work with student Faculty or School reps.

2. Staff Commitment

A staff co-ordinator - whether academic or professional services - has to be in place to:

- Act as a contact point.
- Provide continuity and stability.
- Manage the scheme day to day.
- Maintain ethical standards.
- Deal with buddies' problems.
- Oversee evaluation.

3. Recruitment and Selection of Mentors

Please liaise with the Faculty HR Business Partner to agree a process for **Right to Work checks** and the **monitoring / reporting of working hours** required for some students including those on **Student Route (formerly Tier 4) Visas**.

Personal Qualities

- Responsible and reliable
- Able to show initiative
- Willing to learn
- Approachable
- Committed
- Listening skills

Academic Ability

- Do not need to be high achiever but must be coping with academic work
- Be able to provide informal general academic support (e.g. on deadlines)

Information Event

- Explain the role, responsibilities and commitment
- Outline benefits and opportunities
- Talk from current mentors

Selection Process

- Completed application form with personal statement
- Interviews
- Offer other opportunities to unsuccessful candidates
- Observe students during training process

4. Training

Mentors need to be **prepared** and **supported** to give them confidence and practical information, which will enable them to provide effective support to mentees and avoid any pitfalls.

[Buddy Scheme training resources for Swansea University staff are available in the SAILS SharePoint folder.](#)

Suggested Topics for Training

- What is a buddy?
- Boundaries and confidentiality
- Self-awareness
- Diversity awareness
- Communication skills
- Meetings with student mentees
- What to do if in difficulty
- Awareness of Uni services
- Awareness of study skills
- Group dynamics
- Discussion of buddy meetings

Who will Deliver the Training?

- Internal staff
- Involve current mentors to obtain an understanding of particular scenarios that could be encountered

Mentee training - not necessary but you must manage the expectations of student mentees in the relationship.

5. Matching Buddy with Student Mentees

It is essential that a student mentee has a suitable buddy that they can interact with and learn from effectively.

Check whether any of the student mentees on your scheme are under 18.

If so, consult with your **Faculty Safeguarding Officer** and look at the Government guidance on **DBS checks**:

[DBS checks: detailed guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Methods to match buddies with student mentees

1. Student mentees choose who their mentor is and can have multiple buddies (non-structured).
2. Student mentee/buddy can state preferences on application (e.g. female, international).
3. Buddies will have a rota for drop-in sessions where student mentees can be mentored without arranging beforehand.
4. Matched using specified criteria (from information collected on application forms) e.g.
 - Academic - by discipline
 - Personal – hobbies
 - Demographics - gender, international, minority ethnic

6. Ongoing Buddy Support

Training should enable mentors to be independent and to manage their mentoring relationships, but they will also need ongoing support with the scheme.

Types of Support

Staff Co-ordinator (and lead buddies):

Act as named contacts for mentor queries

Team Meetings:

To discuss issues and queries

Online Support Network (e.g. Yammer):

Input from mentors and monitored by staff

Feedback Form:

Agreed with student mentee after each meeting

7. Reward and Recognition

Financial Reward

✗ Not appropriate or sustainable according to Swansea University guidance

Personal motivation is the key factor

Personal Satisfaction

- ✓ Developing personal and professional skills
- ✓ Recognised by award ceremonies/social media
- ✓ Swansea SAILS Buddy Scheme **HEAR** Award

Accreditation

- ✓ E.g. Newcastle University included mentoring as role that can be undertaken as part of a Graduate Development module
- ✓ Module provides a formal structure that sustains a scheme and recognises staff input

8. Evaluation and Feedback

Evaluation is essential to the success and longevity of a scheme. It provides evidence of success, areas for improvement and a sense of joint ownership by acting on the views of the mentors.

Methods

- Buddies' focus group at the end of the programme
- Feedback from mentor team meetings
- Individual self-evaluation for buddies
- Online surveys of student mentees and buddies
- Staff feedback e.g. academic buddies or personal tutors

9. Marketing and Advertising

- **Talk** about mentoring experience
- **Contact student mentees** to encourage participation
- **Student placements** to help develop marketing plan and social media
- Promote scheme to ensure **commitment**
- Attend **induction events**
- Make ALL staff aware especially **academic buddies or personal tutors**
- Include scheme in **student recruitment activities**
- **Involve buddies** in promotion

Methods to achieve this:

- ✓ Pre-arrival information
- ✓ Mentor emails during pre-arrival
- ✓ Faculty/School sites
- ✓ Mentoring noticeboard
- ✓ General noticeboard
- ✓ Welcome Week - "Meet your Buddy"
- ✓ Emails in week 1-4
- ✓ Information provided by Academic Buddy

10. Timeline

Follow this timeline as a guide for what to do and when, for setting up a new/planning the continuation of an existing scheme.

Month	Activities
Sept / Oct / Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get a sense of level of interest from staff and potential mentors (email, surveys and staff meetings). • Start publicity for next year's scheme (e.g. via academic mentor meetings, employability publicity events). • Make available information for next year's scheme available on: Open Days, departmental website.
Dec / Jan	Evaluation and feedback of current year scheme (if appropriate)
Feb	Information session for potential buddies
March	Recruit mentors - by personal statements, interviews
Apr/May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training sessions for buddies • Final interviews to guarantee buddy suitability • Set up social media group for new buddies
May / June / July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning Welcome Week events with buddies and final briefing session • Evaluation and feedback of current year scheme (if appropriate)
Aug	Prepare information on mentoring scheme in Welcome Pack for new students beginning in September onwards
Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Match up buddies / student mentees, notify staff about scheme • “Meet Your Buddy” event in Welcome Week • Formal start to Buddy Scheme



Key Questions

Consider these questions before you start buddy scheme in your Faculty/School:

1. **Purpose and aims** of your scheme?
2. **Timings** - what needs to happen when?
3. Who will be **eligible** to be a buddy/student mentee?
4. How will you **advertise** the scheme?
5. **Form** of mentoring? (e.g. group mentoring)
6. **Resources** for training?
7. How will mentors be **trained**?
8. Will you **match** buddies and mentees?
9. How will you cater for **diversity**?
10. **Monitoring** and **evaluating** the scheme?



Sample Documents

The templates provided on the SAILS web page pull together elements of practice from other institutions and can be adapted to suit local schemes.

To view, download and print these templates, go to:

swansea.ac.uk/inclusivity-academy/peer-mentoring

- ✓ **Sample buddies application form** for students who wish to apply to become a mentor
- ✓ **Signed agreement by buddies** can help to establish commitment to the mentoring role. The agreement can be used as part of training, so that mentors understand and feel ownership of the contents.
- ✓ **Signed agreement by student mentees** can help them understand the expectations and limits of the mentoring relationship
- ✓ **Sample evaluation questionnaires** for buddies and student mentees to obtain feedback and advice on the scheme



Find out more

[Scottish Further Education Unit: Sample peer mentoring handbook](#)

[Essex University peer mentor guide](#)



Swansea University Policies

Consider these university policies - especially if you will be working with mentees who are under 18.

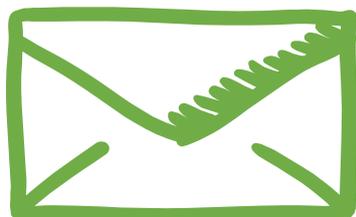
[DBS Checks](#)

[Safeguarding under - 18s](#)

[Equality and Diversity](#)

[Dignity at Work](#)

Any questions?



Contact

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