# Appendix 2: Student online mentoring

This document offers a proposal for establishing a student online mentoring process to support new recruits. It describes the key process for enabling this and outlines the roles and responsibilities for mentors, mentees and those supporting student mentors.

Many areas of the institution have well established student mentor schemes and it is envisaged that online mentoring may supplement existing activity to support new students thrive in online learning.  In addition, those programmes without a mentoring scheme may consider adopting this model. The main focus of activity would be around the point of enrolment, offering pre-enrolment advice and early course engagement.

## Overview

Composition of mentor groups.

- Groups align with personal tutor groups or blended learning seminar groups. An advantage of this is connections forged in initial contacts will transition into formal learning, encouraging confidence and engagement
- Groups differ from personal tutor groups or blended learning seminar groups. This will expose students to more of their peers and could help establish wider bonds within the cohort.
- It is envisaged that the peer mentoring will be vertical (i.e. Level 5 students mentoring Level 3 or Level 4.

Identification of good practice

- Recruitment – should emphasise selection from a wide cross-section of the cohort.  It is better to select on the basis of positive attitude, optimism, genuine desire to be helpful and empathy than focus on academic achievement.
- Marketing – using relevant social media as well as conventional email and announcements to raise awareness of the scheme
- Training – mentors will need training in order to undertake the role.  This will orient students to the role and support skill development.  See below for more details.
- Supervision – mentors will need a point of contact to refer to if they are unsure of responses or face unexpected challenges.
- Learning from others - Identifying and sharing good practice from existing mentor programmes

## Reward and recognition

It is also recognised that students will engage with the process out of altruism and a willingness to support others.  In addition, there are undoubted opportunities for skill development and employability.  However, there should be a process of reward and recognition for students who undertake the role.  At its most basic, that can take the form of a University Certificate and associated notification in the Higher Education Achievement Record.  More sophisticated models could see online mentoring as a

'work-based learning' activity that could support any existing curriculum requirements in this area

### Student mentor training
Centralised materials for student mentor training will ensure that students:

- Get enrolled on the relevant institutional technology
- Are supported in the use of that technology
- Have clarity over roles and responsibilities
- understand how they can collaborate with and get support from those staff who are guiding them
- Be given a range of activities and ideas to engage mentees
- Have insight into the basics of student welfare and signs of stress or social anxiety.
- Understand the need for and process of onward referral
- Address issues of accessibility and inclusion
- Discuss and develop and share their own ideas
- Understand safe use of social media

Where this complements existing provision, it is anticipated that such training will supplement current practice.

### Student mentor support
Local level support is needed to ensure that mentorship is effective in context.  This will be complemented with institutional support to facilitate communication and networks between mentors.  Identified staff would offer advice, guidance and support. This would also enable the institution to gather useful information about what works well and why to inform developments in the scheme.

### Key technology
Existing institutional technology can facilitate webinars, virtual meetings and online chat.  It is also recognised that mentors and mentees may opt to use familiar social media platforms.  Whilst this is not without risk, the potential for these engender social cohesion is recognised.

### Key activities for mentors
In addition to offering a range of prescribed activities, a key aspect of this process work will be the creativeness that mentors bring to student engagement efforts. Refining these will require collaboration between staff and the mentors in order to develop safe, effective and fun tasks for students. A key part of the process is that students make meaningful relationships with each other and start to develop the confidence in online activities.  This will make them more likely to engage in active online learning activities. There is also an opportunity for competitions and challenges to support a sense of community within programmes and across LJMU which would require funding and organisation.