Peer Mentoring Programme (P2P) (South East Technological University)

Key Features

1. Was the initiative established specifically to promote progression and retention and/or to address non-progression rates?

   Yes

2. Please state the institutional commitments or national priorities with which this initiative is aligned — for example, an institutional policy or strategic plan, an indicator in the institution's Performance Agreement under the System Performance Framework, and/or the National Access Plan?

   - SETU Strategic Plan (Strategic Objective 6)
   - SETU Performance Agreement

3. Title of lead or section responsible for the initiative/measure

Head of Student Life and Learning

4. Focus

- First-year students
- New entrants
- Transition focus
- Institution-wide initiative

5. Theme

- First-year experience

Overview of Initiative

6. Briefly describe the initiative, with reference to

- Why, and when introduced
- Overview of activities/intervention
- Success to date & next steps.

The Peer Mentoring Programme (P2P) was established in 2015/16 as a pilot in one academic department, chosen because of their interest in improving progression and retention. Significant research was conducted into best practice on transition and peer mentoring. The Transition+ model of peer mentoring (Andrews and Clark, 2011) was chosen as the model for implementation. Following a successful application to the HEA Innovation and Transformation Fund, the further development and implementation of the programme was possible.

Mentees and mentors are matched in accordance with their degree programme, with no other criteria considered, in small groups of 5/6 mentees. Students from year 2 and above act as mentors, meeting first-year students regularly and attending P2P activities with them (teambuilding games and events, coffee mornings etc.). Mentors help new students to get to know one another and to make connections whilst sharing insights about their course, university life and other useful tips.

The number of participants continues to increase, with 231 mentors in 2025/26 across 10 academic departments. Thirty-seven senior mentors completed a 10-credit special purpose award in peer mentoring this year.

Student Supports and Services are responsible for developing and delivering student transition and first-year experience initiatives in SETU. The programmes and initiatives take a broader view of the student experience to encompass academic, social and service domains. Evidence indicates the importance of both the social and academic domains in promoting opportunities to develop a sense of belonging and social connectedness, which is an important aspect of supporting students to develop their student identity during transition into higher education. Developing a sense of belonging is a critical part of a successful first-year experience. Palmer et al. (2009) found that the likelihood of remaining at university was higher for students who developed a sense of belonging to the institution. There are times and contexts where a sense of belonging increases in importance for the individual. Transition into higher education is a time when this may occur. Therefore, providing opportunities to meet other students and to form social connections is important. Social networks have value and have been linked to social adjustment and integration and shown to be vital for a successful transition (Mackie 2001; Wilcox et al. 2005; Harley et al. 2007; Thomas 2012).

SETU recognises and acknowledges the role of peers and peer-led activity and has therefore focused on the expansion and further development of its peer mentoring programme. A key strength of peer mentoring is that it can help create a sense of belonging right from the beginning of a student starting in their new HEI. Peer mentoring programmes can allow students to get to know their peers in their class group outside of a classroom setting and can also allow them to connect to older students in their programme. In addition to providing a mechanism whereby new students are supported and offered the opportunity to make friends, peer mentoring programmes can also allow new students to gain academic insights into their course.

Organised social events like coffee mornings, team-building activities and informal lunches, along with academic workshops and events that provide information about college life, are held throughout the year by P2P. Some of these are led and delivered by peer mentors and others are delivered by staff.

Mentors who have completed at least one year mentoring have the opportunity to become a senior mentor and undertake a 10-credit special purpose award in peer mentoring. A key component of this award is to develop and deliver a workshop to first-year mentees in the same programme. The mentors must tailor the workshop to meet the needs of the first-year group and can focus on supporting academic, social or general aspects of university life.

Aims and Objectives

7. Aim of the initiative

The aim of the initiative is to provide support for students during transition to university, help them to form social connections with peers, develop social capital, and to support progression.

8. Objective 1

To provide opportunities to develop social connections with peers.

Actions

- Small groups: 1 mentor assigned to 5/6 mentees.
- Initial introduction takes place as part of the on-campus orientation day.
- Teambuilding activity sessions take place within the first three weeks**.**
- Ongoing activities and communication between the mentors and mentees.
- Mentors are required to arrange meetings/activities with mentors on a weekly basis for the first four weeks.

Expected Outcome

Because of the importance of social factors (friendships, social involvement, social networks etc.) and psychological factors (fitting in, belonging) to successful integration, transition and progression, students are provided with supported opportunities to get to know their peers throughout the first semester and become members of social networks.

9. Objective 2

To promote meaningful interactions between staff and students.

Actions

- Delivery of on-campus events, activities and workshops which involve staff and students.
- Collaboration with academic departments to facilitate early activities as part of the academic timetable to maximise engagement.
- Transition activity fund offers staff the opportunity to organise activities for first-year class groups that promote social engagement and interaction.
- Delivery of workshops to first-year class groups by senior mentors undertaking the SPA in Peer Mentoring on topics relevant to academic or social integration.

Expected Outcome

- Increased opportunities for interaction inside and outside the classroom
- First-year students have the opportunity to get to know their lecturers and increase their awareness of academic expectation of their programme
- Developing awareness of academic and student supports and services and how to seek help.

Resourcing

10. How is the initiative resourced?

There are four staff positions within student support services dedicated to co-ordinating all aspects of the P2P programme (Transition+) and the Special Purpose Award (SPA). Two of these are Graduate Ambassador roles, which are similar to internships. Students that have completed their programme and have the required experience are eligible to apply. These roles bring innovation and ideas to the programme, and the positions are for two years. The other two staff roles are equivalent to a grade IV and V and are responsible for the co-ordination and ongoing development of the programme. In addition, an academic lead is identified in each department to work closely with the P2P team to support the programme and to support senior mentors participating in the SPA.

Monitoring & Oversight

11. How is the initiative monitored — is there a reporting structure in place or a committee where there is a monitoring of and reporting on progress and the achievement of objectives (e.g. academic council, university executive team)?

An activities and evaluation report for the programme is submitted annually to the VP for Student Experience. Presentations are made on an ad-hoc basis to the Student Experience subcommittee of Academic Council, the Executive Management Team and Governing Body. The programme is reviewed annually by the Head of Student Life and Learning, the Student Engagement officer and the peer mentoring team. P2P is expanded to additional students each year in collaboration with academic departments.

In addition to developing and delivering presentations to first-year students as part of the requirements for the SPA, senior mentors also present to the P2P team and academic leads on

their reflections and feedback on the programme. Academic leads are appointed in each academic department, and they meet with the P2P throughout the year to review progress.

Data & Evidence of Impact

12. How do you know that the initiative is working as planned, i.e.

- Are data gathered (ongoing monitoring and evaluation of achievement of objectives)?
- Have the objectives been achieved? What data and evidence are there to support this?

An annual survey of mentors and mentees is conducted along with feedback from the academic leads.

The most recent data indicates that 68% of mentees had been anxious about making new friends before starting at SETU, and 90% now felt more confident that they would complete their course.

Feedback from academic leads suggests that P2P is impacting positively on progression.

In 2024/25, 81 peer mentors and 95 mentees (first years) responded to the survey and in general first years believed they had benefitted from participating in the mentoring programme. As well as making friends and supporting transition, 86% of first-year respondents stated that their knowledge of student supports and services had increased.

It is planned to conduct an analysis of progression rates for programmes implementing the Transition+ model.

13. Has impact been established, and how? If not at present, how do you plan to gather data and evidence to establish impact?

Feedback indicates that peer mentoring resulted in students developing meaningful connections, providing them with role models for successful transition through sharing of experiences and helped them to overcome difficulties they encountered.

"My Peer Mentors were great. They were so welcoming and I would honestly go to them if I ever had a problem at all in the college" (2025).

88% of first-year respondents said that participating in P2P helped them to get to know their classmates. Further qualitative feedback on the impact of participating in P2P includes:

"I thought the team building was really good. One of the girls I met at the team building I became best friends with, so I think everything went really well for me." (2025).

"Seeing how my peer mentors like to help and make a difference inspired me to stay. I hope to become a mentor someday." (2026).

In addition, 90% of mentors found that becoming a mentor had increased their confidence and 94% felt they had developed new skills.

Future Plans

14. How do you intend to further develop or expand the initiative?

The programme continues to grow and evolve. The number of programmes and departments involved has expanded from 4 programmes in one department to 36 programmes in 10 academic departments. The number of mentors has increased from 37 to 231, with just under 1100 mentees in this academic year (2025/26). The special purpose award was developed and introduced in the 2018/2019 academic year, and 202 senior mentors have received this award to date. It is hoped to continue to grow the numbers participating each year and further embed the SPA, which requires working closely with academic departments. In addition, SETU intends to further develop peer-led initiatives because of their role in supporting the development of student identity, nurturing a sense of belonging and helping students to meet people and fit in.

Additional Information

15. Additional information including relevant URLs

SETU | Peer mentoring programme marks 10 years with awards ceremony

https://www.setu.ie/news/peer-to-peer-awards-highlight-dedication-of-392-mentors

SETU | Peer Mentoring