# **Academic Peer Mentoring:**

**A guide for staff**

## What is APM?

Academic Peer Mentoring (APM) partners experienced students with newer students to support their learning and transition to university study. APM is a Student Success strategy which helps students to make the most of their studies and has a positive impact on developing a sense of belonging, attainment and retention. The scheme is co-ordinated by the Student Learning Advisory Service (SLAS) and, historically, was operated in participating academic schools. With the 2020/2021 transition to the divisional structure, it is now expected that all subject areas and departments will offer APM to their students, which will be operated by the corresponding division’s Student Success and Attainment team.

Academic Peer Mentoring is a voluntary scheme[[1]](#footnote-1) which is flexible, confidential, and fits around the availability and preferences of the students involved. Full training is provided online by SLAS and is compulsory for all mentors. Mentor participation is reflected on the student’s [Higher Education Achievement Record](http://www.hear.ac.uk) (HEAR), they are able to log their hours towards the [Kent Volunteering Scheme](http://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/volunteering.html) (operated by the Careers and Employability Service), and they receive [Employability Points](http://www.kent.ac.uk/employabilitypoints) and a Kent certificate from SLAS.

Mentors are usually from the same course as the mentees and are trained to ensure they can handle the range of questions and emotions which students may go through as they experience university life.

## Benefits for departments:

* Improves student retention and achievement
* Strengthens the student voice and promotes students as partners
* Encourages independent learning and engagement
* Builds a community of learning between year groups
* Develops a sense of student belonging
* Supports transition into university study and provides informal induction
* APM can help strengthen the Academic Adviser Scheme (AAS):
	+ Mentors can contribute to AAS programme design and support facilitation, during and between AA sessions
	+ Mentors can help to close the staff student feedback loop in real time, allowing for adjustments in responsive to cohort needs

## Benefits for mentors:

* Develop employability skills such as problem solving, communication and leadership
* Practice of teamwork and organisation skills
* Consolidation of course learning
* Opportunity to shape/influence teaching and learning
* Demonstrable transferrable skills and CV experience
* Involvement in a community of learning
* 45 Employability Points (plus additional 25 for Lead Mentors)
* Can log hours towards Kent Volunteering Scheme (run by the Careers and Employability Service)
* Kent certificate of mentoring provided by SLAS
* Participation recognised on Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)

## Benefits for mentees:

* Gain confidence in academic skills
* Develop a sense of belonging
* Opportunity to feedback on course material and delivery
* Become an independent learner
* Discuss and apply knowledge
* Get help with practical aspects of university study

## How can mentors support mentees?

* Informal induction information
* Help with time management and organisation
* Subject-specific study skills support
* Sign-posting support services

## How does it work?

APM is currently offered predominantly at undergraduate level, although a Masters pilot is currently (2020-2021) underway in the Centre for Child Protection and this may be considered for some PGT programmes in the future.

Mentors are recruited by academic departments in the Spring term for the following academic year and trained by SLAS over the Summer via the Moodle mentor training and induction module. This ensures that there are mentors ready to support new students when they arrive in September. There is then a second round of mentor recruitment, if necessary, at the beginning of the Autumn term. Mentees are recruited at the beginning of the academic year and are matched to their mentors primarily based on program of study, although pre-registration promotion and registration is encouraged if supported by the division. Further information on this is provided later in this guide.

Academic departments run the scheme slightly differently depending on their needs and cohorts. Most departments operate on a 1:1 or small group basis, with mentees self-enrolling by contacting the department. Some departments assign every new student to a mentor, who can be assigned **up to 6 mentees**. Some departments also work on an ‘on-call’ basis with a smaller pool of mentors who run drop-in clinics or answer individual enquiries from new students, rather than developing an on-going mentoring relationship.

## Who is who?

**Mentors:** Mentors are stage 2 or 3 students who offer their experience and expertise to new students in order to support their transition to university study and improve their learning experience.

**Mentees:** Mentees are new stage 1 students who are supported by mentors.

**Student Learning Advisory Service (SLAS):** APM is coordinated centrally by members of SLAS, who create the training, induction, and resources, support the mentors and departments, and coordinate the logistics and reporting of the scheme. They can be contacted at slasapm@kent.ac.uk.

**Liaison Tutors:** APM is currently run slightly differently in each academic department. Most departments have one academic and one professional service colleague working together to promote and coordinate the scheme. In 2020-2021, the new divisional structure may well change the way APM is supported at department/division level, with strategic overview sitting with the new Student Success and Attainment Manager role, and operational tasks delegated within their team. Divisions may still choose to have a subject/department-level colleague advising on or supporting the scheme. In any case, division or department based APM colleagues are referred to as *Liaison Tutors*.

All APM colleagues (central and division) are added to the apm-liaison-tutors sympa mailing list so that SLAS can provide updates and colleagues can share ideas or concerns with one another.

## Timeline

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Week(s)** | **Month(s)** |
| Mentor recruitment (phase 1) | Week 22 through Spring vacation | March/April |
| Mentors selected | Weeks 25 – 30  | May/June |
| Mentors training (1) (Moodle) | Summer vacation | July/August |
| Mentor induction | Weeks 0-2 | September |
| Mentor recruitment (phase 2) | Summer vacation/Weeks 0-2 | September/October |
| Mentor training (2) (Moodle) | Weeks 0-4 | September/October |
| Mentor induction (phase 2) | Week 3/4 | October |
| Mentee recruitment | Summer vacation/Weeks 0-2 | August/September |
| Mentee induction | Week 1/2 | September/October |
| Matching  | Summer vacation/Weeks 0-4 | August/September/October |
| Mentor forum | Week 11/12 | December |
| Mentee survey | Winter vacation | December/January |
| Mentee forum | Week 23 | March |
| Mentor survey | Spring vacation | March/April |
| APM ceremony | Week 22/23/24 | March/April |

## Mentor recruitment and application process

## In a departure from previous years, mentor recruitment for the 2021-2022 academic year will see two phases; the first (main) phase will be in the Spring term, allowing mentors to be selected and trained over the summer term and vacation so that they are in place for week 0; the second phase will catch any ‘stragglers’ or enable departments to do a further recruitment push if mentee demand appears to be higher than the existing mentor cohort can handle. As such, the second phase does not include a specific deadline or selection period as it is assumed that there will be significantly fewer applicants and therefore selection and training may be conducted ad hoc as applications come in.

Divisions are requested to point potential mentors to the Moodle APM mentor module, where they will find information about the role and the scheme, and where they will submit their application. The module is open and students will need to self-enrol to access the materials.

Criteria may vary between divisions but, generally, it is expected that mentors will be stage 2 or 3 students and able to evidence:

* 80%+ attendance rate
* 2:1 or above average attainment

Some departments ask for recommendations from first-year module convenors/lecturers, or recruit based on personal attributes, such as students who have overcome significant barriers, or are from specific backgrounds (i.e. low income, mature, commuting, international, BME).

Division personnel will be given non-editing teacher permissions to access the Moodle mentor module so that they can download applications and complete selection (training on this will be provided by SLAS). Once a mentor is selected, they should be informed by division personnel and requested to complete the compulsory training package also hosted on the Moodle mentor module. Mentors must also attend one of the compulsory induction sessions hosted by SLAS.

Recruitment blurb for both mentors and mentees, as well as wording for congratulating selected mentors and informing them of the next steps, can be found in the Appendices.

Departments/divisions should also include mentors from previous years and email them to confirm whether they intend to continue in their role. If so, the Liaison Tutor will need to inform SLAS so that records are up to date, and the returning mentors will need to enrol on the Moodle mentor module so that they can keep abreast of any developments or announcements. They will not be required to complete the training again, unless there have been significant developments.

## Mentor training

## Mentor training is created by the SLAS team and is completed by mentors on Moodle. Compulsory training covers three topics:

## The mentoring role and principles (covering confidentiality, role boundaries and expectations)

* Communication and relationship building (covering listening skills, rapport building and problem solving)
* Supporting academic peer learning (covering learning styles, learning resources and facilitation skills)

A compulsory ‘live’ induction (facilitated by SLAS) is also scheduled to ensure mentors have all the information they need for the next steps, are aware of their responsibilities, and have the opportunity to ask questions. SLAS recommends that divisions also hold an induction to introduce key personnel within the division/department and to ensure mentors have any division/departmental specific information. All divisions/departments are required to submit a PowerPoint slide with information about how APM is run in the division/department, including contact information, to SLAS. This will be displayed on the mentor training module on Moodle so that students know what to expect. A template for this can be obtained from the APM team at SLAS.

There are 3 additional topics of training provided to give mentors further skill development to support their role, although these are not compulsory elements:

* Professional skills and employability (covering the transferable skills mentors will acquire during their time on the scheme and how they can be articulated in interviews etc)
* Virtual mentoring (offering tips for engaging mentees on virtual platforms)
* Resilience and wellbeing (signposting to services and support for mentors and mentees, as well as suggesting tips to improve wellbeing)

Mentors can earn a Moodle badge for completing both the compulsory and the additional training (one for each).

Divisions/departments will be able to view which of their students have completed the compulsory elements of training by logging in to the Moodle mentor module (training on this will be provided by SLAS).

Note: Mentors who have been trained in previous years do not need to complete the training again, unless any fundamental areas have been changed. In this case, SLAS will contact returning mentors directly.

## Support for mentors

SLAS provides a range of resources to help mentors support their mentees including study guides that can be used to prompt conversations about academic skills, as well as study planners and links to other support services within the University. SLAS hosts weekly drop-ins online during term-time for mentors to share ideas or raise issues, and there is a tips board and problem-solving forum on the Moodle mentor module so that mentors may share their experiences.

In 2020-2021 a pilot was carried out to introduce Lead Mentors - experienced mentors trained to support new mentors and facilitate liaison between departments, SLAS and mentors. This is under review for 2021-2022.

Mentors can share ideas or concerns via the Moodle mentor module forum or by attending the mentor drop-ins organised by SLAS during term time. These are weekly, half-hour open meetings (currently on MS Teams) where mentors can drop in with questions or just to meet other mentors and share and hear ideas. There is no agenda and no need to book in advance.

## Mentee recruitment

Divisions are encouraged to promote APM to incoming students during the Summer vacation (or earlier) and to start to pre-register them so that they can be matched to a mentor as soon as they arrive on campus.

New for 2021-2022, SLAS will create a Moodle mentee module where new/incoming students can find out about the scheme, register their interest, and access resources to support their mentoring relationship and learning journey.

SLAS hosts mentee inductions at the beginning of the academic year to illustrate the role of the mentor and how the scheme works. It is highly advisable that mentees attend these sessions to ensure that they are aware of the key principles of the scheme, such as confidentiality, data protection and communication. The sessions will also give mentees the opportunity to ask questions about the scheme, and will reiterate the importance of mentees maintaining engagement with their mentor throughout the academic year.

## Mentor/mentee matching

Divisions/departments are responsible for the matching of mentors and mentees depending on their own criteria (primarily subject-related but can also be based on demographic or personal interests/skills). Where possible, matching will be based firstly on programme, then subject, then department, then division. If there is a surplus of either mentees or mentors, divisions are welcome to work with the cohorts of other divisions if the corresponding division is in agreement. Please contact SLAS for further support in this.

Most divisions/departments aim for a 1:1 ratio between mentor and mentee. Some may operate a drop-in service and therefore will not require mentors to establish a long-term relationship with mentees. Others (particularly those that assign every incoming student a mentor) may have a higher mentee to mentor ratio where mentors may choose to run group or groups rather than individual mentoring sessions. In such cases, **mentors should never be assigned more than 6 mentees** at a time so that their mentoring responsibilities do not overly impeach on their time or academic study.

Feedback
SLAS organises an in-person (currently virtual) Mentor Forum at the end of the Autumn term and an online mentee survey (conducted over the Winter vacation) to garner feedback from students about recruitment, induction and training, as well as general feedback on their experiences of the scheme so far. In the Spring this is reversed; a Mentee Forum is conducted in person and a mentor survey is sent out to be completed over the Spring vacation, to gather feedback about their mentoring relationships. All feedback gathered at sessions or surveys is anonymous and departmental staff are not invited in order to facilitate an open conversation.

Divisions are welcome to do their own feedback surveys/reports for their students. However, it is strongly recommended that they work with SLAS to determine what data is already held or will be captured by other means to avoid duplication and over-surveying participants.

SLAS invites all APM colleagues to an annual round table meeting during the Summer vacation to get feedback from departments/divisions on their experience of the scheme and the support and resources provided by SLAS, as well as to share best practice and ideas, and receive updates on plans for the coming academic year.

## Reporting

## Mentors are asked to complete a short online survey when they interact with mentees so that we can track level of engagement and topics and support covered. The link for the survey is on the APM Moodle mentor training and induction module.

At the end of each academic year, divisions/departments will be asked to provide data for the APM annual report which covers general engagement data and student feedback.

## Key information summary (including changes from previous years)

* Mentor recruitment will primarily be conducted in the Spring rather than over the Summer
* Mentors and mentees will use their respective Moodle modules to find out about and apply for the scheme, share best practice with peers, and access resources and training. They will need to self-enrol on the module in order to access the material
* Mentor applications and training records will be accessed by division/department personnel through the Moodle mentor module, and will be given access and training by SLAS
* Mentors can support a **maximum of 6 mentees** at a time

# **APPENDICES**

## Appendix 1: Mentor recruitment blurb

**N.B This is just sample text and can be amended as appropriate**

Dear student,

**Help new students and improve your leadership and communication skills by becoming a mentor!**

The Academic Peer Mentoring Scheme (APM) partners experienced students with new students to support their transition to University and help them develop their learning.

APM is a voluntary scheme which is flexible, confidential, and fits around your availability and preferences. Full training is provided, and you will receive a Kent certificate and [Employability Points](https://www.kent.ac.uk/employabilitypoints/). You can also claim volunteering hours as part of the [Kent Volunteering Scheme](https://www.kent.ac.uk/ces/volunteering.html), and your participation will be reflected on your [Higher Education Achievement Record](http://www.hear.ac.uk) (HEAR), and will be valuable for any future placement or job applications.

Applications to be a mentor are open now and will close on [insert date]. Enrol on the [Academic Peer Mentoring Scheme module](https://moodle.kent.ac.uk/2019/course/view.php?id=6734) on Moodle to find out more and submit your application.

If you have any questions, please email the Student Learning Advisory Service at slasapm@kent.ac.uk.

Kind regards,

## Appendix 2: Mentor congratulations blurb**N.B This is just sample text and can be amended as appropriate.**

Dear ,

Congratulations! You have been selected as an Academic Peer Mentor for 2020-21. Thank you for volunteering to support incoming students. This year in particular may be challenging for new students and having a peer mentor will be such a help.

Here are the next steps:

* Sign up for one of the 1-hr virtual induction sessions, where you can ask any questions you might have and e-meet some of your fellow mentors
	+ [xxxxxxxx](https://teams.microsoft.com/dl/launcher/launcher.html?type=meetup-join&deeplinkId=0b209c8b-9c66-49ed-9392-ab5faa588936&directDl=true&msLaunch=true&enableMobilePage=true&url=%2F_%23%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%3Ameeting_MjgxNzExOTEtYmI3NC00Y2E0LWIxYmYtNmU4ZjVlNDRjMmRj@thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257B%2522Tid%2522%253A%252251a9fa56-3f32-449a-a721-3e3f49aa5e9a%2522%252C%2522Oid%2522%253A%2522fe74b2b6-b3fb-4043-91e6-d13696ca2615%2522%257D%26anon%3Dtrue&suppressPrompt=true)
	+ [xxxxxxxx](https://teams.microsoft.com/dl/launcher/launcher.html?type=meetup-join&deeplinkId=070ea8c8-7e10-4e0e-a792-0bcb4e998d94&directDl=true&msLaunch=true&enableMobilePage=true&url=%2F_%23%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%3Ameeting_NTRhNWI2YzgtOTk4My00ZDIwLWJiMWYtYjNkZjQ0MjQ1YTUx@thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257B%2522Tid%2522%253A%252251a9fa56-3f32-449a-a721-3e3f49aa5e9a%2522%252C%2522Oid%2522%253A%2522fe74b2b6-b3fb-4043-91e6-d13696ca2615%2522%257D%26anon%3Dtrue&suppressPrompt=true)
	+ [xxxxxxxx](https://teams.microsoft.com/dl/launcher/launcher.html?type=meetup-join&deeplinkId=070ea8c8-7e10-4e0e-a792-0bcb4e998d94&directDl=true&msLaunch=true&enableMobilePage=true&url=%2F_%23%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%3Ameeting_NTRhNWI2YzgtOTk4My00ZDIwLWJiMWYtYjNkZjQ0MjQ1YTUx@thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257B%2522Tid%2522%253A%252251a9fa56-3f32-449a-a721-3e3f49aa5e9a%2522%252C%2522Oid%2522%253A%2522fe74b2b6-b3fb-4043-91e6-d13696ca2615%2522%257D%26anon%3Dtrue&suppressPrompt=true)
	+ [xxxxxxxx](https://teams.microsoft.com/dl/launcher/launcher.html?type=meetup-join&deeplinkId=070ea8c8-7e10-4e0e-a792-0bcb4e998d94&directDl=true&msLaunch=true&enableMobilePage=true&url=%2F_%23%2Fl%2Fmeetup-join%2F19%3Ameeting_NTRhNWI2YzgtOTk4My00ZDIwLWJiMWYtYjNkZjQ0MjQ1YTUx@thread.v2%2F0%3Fcontext%3D%257B%2522Tid%2522%253A%252251a9fa56-3f32-449a-a721-3e3f49aa5e9a%2522%252C%2522Oid%2522%253A%2522fe74b2b6-b3fb-4043-91e6-d13696ca2615%2522%257D%26anon%3Dtrue&suppressPrompt=true)
* Complete the compulsory training elements on the [APM training and development module on Moodle](https://moodle.kent.ac.uk/2020/course/view.php?id=269). The deadline for this is **xxxxxxxx.** If you haven’t already, you will need to self-enrol on the course to see the content. You only need to complete the compulsory sections (‘Skills’, ‘Communication and facilitation techniques’ and ‘Supporting academic peer learning’), although you may find the other sections helpful

**Please note:** If you are a returning mentor and completed the training last year then you do not need to re-do it, although you may find it helpful to refresh your memory, and there are a few new resources and topics that you might find helpful

* After 2 October we will check who has completed the compulsory elements of the module and those mentors will be matched with mentees where possible. You will find out who your mentee(s) are by **xxxxxxxx.** In a change to previous years, you will only receive the APM certificate if you have actually been matched and completed a mentoring relationship, although you do receive a Moodle badge for completing the compulsory training and another one for completing the entire module

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the team at slasapm@kent.ac.uk or speak to your School Liaison Tutor. Congratulations again!

Kind regards,

Appendix 3: Mentee recruitment blurb
**N.B This is just sample text and can be amended as appropriate. Dates are for example only and will vary year to year**

Dear student,

**Can we help?**

To help new students get to grips with their course and navigate their first assignments, all first-year students can apply to have an [Academic Peer Mentor](https://www.kent.ac.uk/learning/school-support/apm.html). Mentors are experienced students who have been trained to support your transition to University and give you advice on how to manage your learning.

If you’d like to find out more about the scheme and how it can help you to enhance your skills, please come along to one of the two virtual Mentee Information Sessions (no need to pre-register):

[xxxxxxxx](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3Ameeting_MWE4YjFkODktYWFjOS00NWVkLWE4NzQtNzY2NWI3NTkwY2Ji%40thread.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%2251a9fa56-3f32-449a-a721-3e3f49aa5e9a%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22a4d85c6d-1935-4cb3-963c-1e26d60e9f9e%22%7d)

xxxxxxxx

To find out more, or if you’d like to put your name down to receive a mentor, please contact [enter contact info] by [enter deadline].

Kind regards,

1. Except in SMSAS where mentors are currently paid [↑](#footnote-ref-1)