

Learner Autonomy Through Mentoring

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Challenges experienced by students

- emergent themes
- are we talking specifically about disabled students?

The project

- Based on work with students who have Asperger syndrome and the REAL model, mentor training and student paperwork was developed
- The paperwork was conceived to help students to reflect and to come up with solutions after identifying issues and their relative importance

Mentor training

- Mentor training emphasised the need to be reliable, empathic, anticipatory and logical
- Mentors trialled the paper work
- Students are trying it out next academic year
- Pilot feedback

'this is great I have been looking for something like this all my life'

'what is the point of all this extra paper work?'

Action Plans

- Issues are identified by the student, with the mentor if necessary, but not necessarily
- The opportunity to rate issues 1-10 according to importance assists with prioritising and is designed to alleviate anxiety
- Post action reflection is built in

Seeking services

- Proactive seeking out of services is encouraged in the section of the Action Plan entitled 'who can help me?'
- Reflecting on useful information learned encourages generalising
- Reflecting on information which may be of use to other students encourages the development of empathy maybe?

Definitions

- Learner Autonomy
- Mentoring
- The role of the mentor at college-university

'This is great. I have been looking for something like this all my life'

..Mentoring for the Logical Mind....

Next stage & future plans:

- Mentor training being delivered by the Disabled Student Support team will be offered more widely
- The paperwork is being evaluated by disabled and non disabled students next year
- Based on the notion that 'information is power' we are now stating the obvious and encouraging the pro active take-up of services by all students
- Induction into each year is being built in in parts of the university.

What has this got to do with Asperger syndrome?

- Although the catalyst was work with students with AS, feedback from mentors in training and academics is that the paperwork could be useful for all students
- All disabled students or all students?
- The words Asperger syndrome are missing from the paperwork for a reason (discuss)

General student feedback

- We don't arrive here knowing Harvard referencing
- What is plagiarism?
- What's wrong with Wikipedia?
- I was getting 60% in the first year and I never get over 50% now in the second year. I don't know why-my work is the same standard

more

- I needed a dentist and I did not have a clue what to do
- I got really confused about my student loan and in a mess with money in general
- I was really lonely in the first year
- I was so shy I didn't want to leave my room
- No one told me you could get advice in the Student Union.

Common Ground

- None of the students who made the comments disclosed being disabled
- The development of learner autonomy is a goal for all students
- Many forms of mentoring take place at university and college (eg peer mentoring)
- Discussing-understanding the development of learner autonomy is part of the mentor training at Hallam

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