Faculty and undergraduate student perceptions of an integrated mentoring approach

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Abstract

The role of an academic mentor is typically diverse, discipline specific and institutionally heterogeneous. Mentoring relationships are common place yet the experience and delivery of mentoring in universities reflects a broad spectrum of approaches and execution. This article reflects on the pedagogic evolution of mentoring, examining the student response to systematic changes in undergraduate mentoring. Much has been written on mentoring, but this research focuses on student experiences when pastoral, professional and curriculum based mentoring models are integrated and applied together, rather than adopted as separate, distinct approaches. The research employs a mixed methodology, adopting qualitative and quantitative analytical techniques to investigate how mentoring relationships evolved following the implementation of an updated contemporary mentoring system. Initially, faculty responses to the changing mentoring system were related through semi-structured interviews.   Student experiences were then collected in a pilot study via questionnaires disseminated across all undergraduate levels and subsequently analysed. Key findings suggest that by adopting multi-faceted approaches to mentoring which blend the modern and traditional, institutions can effectively add significant 'value' to the student experience. Typically (but not exclusively), the undergraduate students' personal and academic development is enhanced when a system which integrates the pastoral, professional and curriculum based models is applied.

Keywords
Undergraduate mentoring, best practice, integrated approach, pastoral model, professional model, curriculum model.

How do we understand 'mentoring' and why do it?

Academic mentoring has a wide range of benefits and has been linked to improvements in academic achievement, growth in collegiality, scholarly productivity, personal development, academic persistence and psychological health (Boyle and Boice, 1998; Johnson, 2007; Lumpkin, 2011). Despite the evidence of the positive effects of academic mentoring programs (Bean et al 2014), formal mentoring programmes are still developing in popularity and much more critical analysis is needed. It is important

to know the form these systematic changes can take and their implications, in order to increase knowledge on how academic institutions can foster effective mentoring today.

There is a clear consensus that mentoring has become increasingly important in higher education to facilitate integration into the culture of a programme and institution and is pivotal as a student support mechanism to the success of students' learning (Foster et al., 2015; Santora et al., 2013). In order to shape effective mentoring relationships careful consideration must be given as to how students will be adequately supported (Fry et al., 2009). Therefore, the mentoring relationship has a unique place and role within higher education (Bornsheuer-Boswell, 2014) and how it is delivered is paramount.

Academic mentoring is an indelible part of university experience in the twenty-first century. The academic mentor imparts knowledge, provides support, and offers guidance to a student protégé on both academic and non-academic issues (Eby et al., 2013). Academic mentoring is a relational process whereby a more experienced individual contributes to the professional development of a protégé by providing psychosocial support, career-related support and role modelling (Wang et al., 2010). Mentoring is unique in nature; it is complex, multidimensional, diverse and idiosyncratic. The process is contextualised and is dependent upon the academic institution and the varied expectations involved. Taking into account the complexity and multidimensionality of mentoring, it is not surprising that experiences can be subjective.

A wide range of definitions is evident in the literature relating to what mentoring is and what makes a 'mentor'. More than three decades of mentoring research has yet to converge on a unifying definition of mentoring (Dawson, 2014), with more than 50 definitions of mentoring used in the research literature (Crisp and Cruz, 2009). Typically, mentoring relationships are developmental relationships where a more advanced or experienced person (a mentor) provides career and /or personal support to another individual (a protégé) (Eby et al., 2000). Where a senior, experienced person (the mentor) and a more junior person (the mentee) join in a collaborative and personal relationship the mentor guides the mentee, aiming to enhance success (Santora et al., 2013). Mentoring traditionally indicates a one to one interaction and the majority of mentoring research has been focused on understanding mentoring as a single, primary relationship (Gibson, 2005). The literature suggests that a wide range of significant benefits result from effective mentoring, including improvements in academic achievement and productivity, professional development, building relationships and networks among protégés and mentors as well as personal identity development (Boyle and Boice, 1998; Johnson, 2007; Lumpkin, 2011).

Mentoring relationships may confer benefits through the provision of both career related support (opportunities to engage in research, direct training) and emotional support (unconditional acceptance, encouragement) to students (Eby et al., 2013). Suggested general benefits of mentoring include improved knowledge acquisition, technical and behavioural competence, increased self-awareness and confidence as well as clarity of personal goals (Kram, 1983). In this respect, it is important to respond to mentoring needs situated within specific academic disciplines. Mentoring in higher education offers an enhanced learning experience for the student as well as helping students to integrate into their programme of studies and institution (Santora et al., 2013). Academic and pastoral support is an integral part of the student's learning experience (Cahill et al., 2014), and when integrated into a programme of study, is key to a student's successful progression and achievement (Thomas, 2012). Positive educational support experiences are thought to encourage learning, decrease attrition rates and contribute to improved academic achievement (Ning and Downing 2012; Vesico et al., 2008). Institutional and individual benefits as a result of effective mentoring include improved academic performance, greater access to academic resources for students, and improved personal satisfaction (Thomas, 2002; Putsche et al., 2008).

Mentors come in many guises, ranging from supervisors, peers and individuals offering support for protégés (Kram, 1985; Eby et al., 2000). This support can be categorised as instrumental or psychosocial (Kram, 1985). Instrumental support refers to aspects of the relationship that enhance protégé's career advancement such as the mentor acting as a coach and protector, in addition to providing exposure, visibility and challenging assignments. Psychosocial functions include providing counselling, advice and acting as a role model. It is important that the mentoring relationship is accessible, open, accepting and understanding, providing feeling comparable to that of social support (Young and Perrewé, 2004).

Mentoring relationships and their typical characteristics

A plethora of characteristics of best practices in mentoring programmes exists. These range from defining purpose, goals and strategies, holding regular meetings and evaluating programme effectiveness (Lumpkin, 2011), to the need for respect, trust, understanding, and empathy in relation to the aspirations and interests of the student (Santora et al,. 2013). Mentoring can be viewed as a long-term process, involving sharing experiences and providing the mentee with a way of developing insight through reflection, resulting in mutual learning.

Common characteristics that 'good mentors' share are numerous and include subject matter and organisational knowledge, the desire to mentor, care, respect and tolerance, non-judgement and trust (Lamn and Harder, 2009). Mentor/ mentee relationships may be enhanced by matching mentors and mentees on the basis of similar interests or demographics (Fowler, 2004). Selecting mentors with a strong academic background and using interview procedures to assess the suitability of mentor candidates contributes to more successful programmes (Weisz and Kemlo, 2004). Successful mentoring relationships often include proactive mentors who have invested in the relationship (Gibson, 2005).

However, literature reveals a wide range of poor mentee experiences for various reasons. These include dissimilar personality and habits, self-absorption, manipulative behaviour, delegation of duty, intentional exclusion, self-promotion, incompetence, sabotage, general dysfunctionality, and deception (Eby et al., 2000). Other suggested reasons for negative mentoring relationships include the nature of the boundaries between mentors and mentees, issues of academic study support and mentees feeling that their trust in the mentor has been breached (Christie, 2014). Other common issues postulated relate to mentor unavailability, feeling unable to meet mentor expectations and problematic mentor personality traits (Johnson and Huwe, 2002). Good mentors can be hard to find and matching interests and personalities is important for a successful mentor- protégé relationship (Cronan-Hilix et al., 1986). Certainly, matching students and mentors in this way is difficult, especially at the beginning of a programme at university. It is also worth noting that the quality of mentoring relationships can vary dramatically within and during the duration of the process. As with other types of close relationships, most mentoring relationships have both positive and negative aspects (Ensher and Murphy, 2011; Lunsford et al, 2013).

The literature indicates that a wide range of definitions are evident relating to what mentoring is and what makes a 'mentor'. Mentoring is unique in nature; it is complex, multidimensional, idiosyncratic and often a subjective experience. In order to shape effective mentoring relationships and support students, careful consideration must be given as to how students will be adequately supported. This research examines whether a contemporary integrated approach to mentoring is effectively shaping mentoring relationships and whether undergraduate students are adequately supported in an academic context.

Bridging the gap? Pastoral, professional and curriculum mentoring models

Bassett et al suggest that overall the idea of mentoring 'is simple…It involves tutors and tutees, reflecting, acting, planning and learning' (2014: 31). However, it is apparent from the literature that mentoring, although a simple idea, the process itself can be riven with potential pitfalls as well as successes. As Hale suggests there is a 'question over whether there is anything that can be done to devise a formula for successfully managing or creating the right dynamics' (2000: 224), due to the heterogenic nature of the interaction. Various models have been suggested as possible approaches to overcoming and balancing the challenges inherent within mentoring, from the perspective of the academics and the students.

Laycock (2009) offers an overview of models applied to mentoring, observing that the mentor's traditional function has become increasingly obsolete in the twenty-first century: As academic roles in higher education alter, student numbers grow and become increasingly diverse, mentoring is evolving. Laycock (2009) reflects on various universities experiences of applying Earwaker's (1992) three models of mentoring, the pastoral, professional and curriculum models:

- The ***pastoral model*** reflects a mentoring system whereby each student is allocated an academic mentor for the duration of their degree, ideally forming an open and supportive relationship where both academic and personal concerns can be discussed.
- The ***professional model*** offers support to students through specific university services; students are referred directly by academics to alternative mechanisms for support. In this way, academics were not providing guidance beyond their capabilities.
- The ***curriculum model*** integrates mentoring into a degree programme, an approach which has been praised by Owen (2002) for its positive outcomes.

However, the application of these models is considered in isolation. It is not known how successful the models are if implemented together. This study examines whether a contemporary integrated approach to mentoring is effectively shaping mentoring relationships and whether students are adequately supported in an undergraduate context. It also evaluates the pastoral, professional and curriculum models, assessing whether blended, integrated mentoring incorporating all three models can successfully enhance the student/academic mentor relationship. The research also builds on Laycock's suggested further research by 'collecting more detailed, preferably qualitative, information on the adviser/student relationship from the student perspective' (2009: 12). By 'bridging the gap' between the models, blending them into an integrated approach, can an effective mentoring relationship be created where academics succeed in adding significant value to the student experience?

Methodology

Rationale

A mixed approach was used (Bryman, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The reasons for this approach were threefold. Firstly, the qualitative data collection was used to inform the quantitative data collection, which takes the form of a pilot study. The second reason was to ensure that personal experience was implicit within the research, in addition to the statistical analysis, offering depth and detail to the investigation. The third reason for using a mixed approach relates to expanding the scope of the investigation in an accessible way in the future.

Research design

Various media were used in the data collection; secondary desk research informed the primary collection of data via semi-structured interviews and developed through student questionnaires. The questions related to drivers for change, benefits and challenges of the new approach, successful and problematic student interaction, and commentary on the overall experience: these questions were explicitly linked to the three models of mentoring.

The questionnaires were collated using the online platform Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com/) and were purposely created to be balanced between content and length. The surveys were as concise as possible to encourage participation, but the design ensured that data collection was comprehensive. The questionnaires consisted of 7 questions, in a mixed format, including open-ended questions with text box responses (four questions), tick box responses on a Likert scale (one question) and demographic / discipline specific information (two questions). The Likert scale employed reflected a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, with six possible response options (which included 'no response'). The statements provided were clearly presented in a list of 24 and students rated their level of agreement with the comments. Examples of statements are included in table 3, with each linked to their assigned codes for statistical analysis (see table 1).

Insert table 1 here.

Research context and participants: student and faculty perspectives

The research was conducted with undergraduate students and academic mentors in a built environment school in a Scottish university following the implementation of a new integrated mentoring model.

The new mentoring system built on the traditional one-to-one model. Students continued one-to-one meetings with their mentor, and the pastoral model remained. However, the professional model was also integrated, with the academic applying their best judgement as to when they should refer a student

to alternative university support services if appropriate. The curriculum model was also integrated into the new approach. In the first year of university, mentors are allocated as soon as the students arrive and are distributed with regard to ensuring equitable workloads. Small group mentoring was introduced in the first year (2009/10). Students meet weekly with their mentor, in groups of four to six, and this process continues throughout the two semesters. The meetings are linked to a first year course, representing 40% of the overall assessment for each of the two semesters. Five percent of this mark reflected attendance and 15% student group exercises (SGEs). These were directly related to specific scholarship skills, such as effective group working, compiling a bibliography, referencing, and presentations. Year two (2010/11) saw the continuation of small group mentoring meetings and years three and four (2011/12 and 2012/13) continued with one-on-one mentoring at the beginning and end of semester, in addition to any further meetings at the student's request.

Sample

Six semi-structured interviews were carried out in 2013 (February - April) with faculty members who were instrumental in applying the new contemporary mentoring strategy, including directors of studies, year co-ordinators and programme leaders. All staff involved in the mentoring process were invited to take part in the interview process and final number of interviewees was based upon their willingness to take part. Following the interviews, the questionnaire was distributed to 767 students via email from first to final year in 2013 (excluding any exchange students). This was done to elicit the widest student perceptions of the integrated mentoring programme possible, representing the entire full time undergraduate cohort. The student administrative team provided the student list and administered the survey on behalf of the research team to ensure anonymity. Students were also emailed reminders to participate on two additional occasions following the initial dissemination of information (after two and four weeks had passed). The questionnaire was disseminated in May 2013, towards the close of the academic year and remained active until August 2013. The reason this timeframe was adopted was to collect information which reflected experience following a completed academic year. The end of the academic year 2013 reflected the first 'full circle participation' for the students. The new integrated mentoring process was fully implemented by 2009/10. Thus, all students finishing in the 2012/13 academic year were exposed to the full complement of the new contemporary mentoring system over their four year undergraduate degree programme.

Analysis: qualitative and quantitative

The analysis of interview transcripts directly influenced the syntax and phrasing in the student questionnaires, therefore the qualitative element of the research was analysed first. The semi-structured interviews offered participants the opportunity to reflect in detail on aspects of mentoring relationships that they had experienced without confined question delivery (Bryman, 2008). Descriptive analyses of transcripts assessed key responses, noting recurring themes and anonymised quotes are referred to in the following sections, relating to both the analytical findings and the context. The interviews informed the themes in the quantitative aspect of the work, assessing the relevance of those themes on the student population's experiences of mentoring. Although the student questionnaire was reactive to and influenced by the semi-structured interviews, additional themes were integrated to ensure the students' perspective was also clearly collated.

The survey reflected an overall response rate of 9.4%, representing a sufficient response rate for our pilot study and a large enough sample size to make tentative conclusions overall, but insufficient for in-depth analysis at year group / discipline level. Closed ended tick box responses were coded on a scale of one to six, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The coded data was inputted into SPSS v.22, where non-parametric tests were carried out to assess relationships between the variables (Fink, 2003; Saunders at el., 2003). The Likert scale variables were all ordinal. Two-tailed Spearman's rho tests were carried out to establish the linear correlation coefficient (positive or negative) and its relative significance, indicating the strength of interconnected relationships between variables. Relationships were analysed between two variables at a time, to assess the connection between the statements.

Results

Seventy-two valid and completed questionnaires were received across all four of the year groups, the smallest response rate coming from second year (21.1%) and the largest final year reflecting 28.2% of

total responses. When assessing relationships between variables any with a two-tailed significance of more than 0.05 were rejected, due to the increased possibility that the correlation is happening by chance. Therefore, significant correlations are only represented by two-tailed figures less than 0.05 or in numerous cases 0.01, representing chances of error at only 5% and 1% respectively. All other correlations were disregarded as insignificant and are not discussed. SPSS was also used to examine descriptive statistics for each response, including mean, variance and standard deviation (SD). The SD figures represented a range from 0.934 – 1.42 across all the statement responses, indicating a relatively consistent distribution around the mean overall and therefore minimal volatility in the majority (of the 24 statements analysed via the Likert scale only four had SD values higher than 1.25). This is not surprising considering the scale adopted and the sample size of the pilot questionnaire – greater variation is likely with an increased number of respondents and / or an expanded Likert scale.

The relationship between the academic mentor and the student mentee was identified as a prominent and prolific theme. Statistically, relationships between 11 of the 24 variables relating to student/academic mentoring relationships were identified as significant (see table 2).

Insert table 2 here.

Positive perceptions of the contemporary mentoring system

Strongly correlated relationships reflected positively on the new contemporary mentoring system, from the perspective of the pastoral and professional models. specifically illustrating how students who were comfortable discussing issues with their mentors also felt like they knew their mentors as individuals (.715**) and that those who had an informal and relaxed relationship with their mentors found that the latter always had time for them (.671**).

Students commented on positive mentoring experiences, with mentors who are 'helpful, honest and non-judgemental', 'reassuring and supportive' and 'patient'. Others reflected on how they appreciated their mentor's encouragement and experience, how they helped build confidence and were effective communicators. The importance of support (relating to each of the three models) when necessary was also appreciated by students:

'I had a difficult time with my health last year and my mentor did everything he could to help me through' (linked to professional model).
'My mentor was very helpful during my special circumstances appeal' (pastoral and professional models).
'When I was struggling with certain issues they were reassuring and supportive about my classes and results, encouraging me' (pastoral model).
'My mentor helped by advising on dissertation work and projects' (curriculum model).
'Our mentor challenged us to present in front of the group on our engineering project work, their knowledge helped us to develop confidence and skills' (curriculum model).
'Mentoring meetings are EXCELLENT ways to keep students engaged in the work they are doing' (pastoral and curriculum models).

In line with these comments, the Spearman's rho tests indicated strong positive correlations (between .60 - .79, significant at the .01 level) in aspects of mentoring directly relating to communication, positive influence, advice and support (see table 3).

Insert table 3 here.

Negative perceptions of the contemporary mentoring system

Both positively and negative moderately correlated relationships (between .40 - .59) were present across numerous variables and as anticipated, the negative relationships were linked to the variables 'I think my mentor would rather not be a mentor at all' (NOTMENT) and 'I only see my mentor as it is required by the curriculum' (MENTREQ). The relationship between these two variables reflected a weak correlation of .0258*, indicating that the majority of students who responded to the questionnaire were engaged with the process and their mentor. However, the results indicate that there is an element of disengagement within mentoring relationships. Students indicated that mentor unavailability, poor communication and personality issues were experienced:

'After first year my mentor has never really had time for me.'
'My mentor ignored many of my emails and I didn't feel like she really wanted to be a mentor at all.'
'My mentor has been extremely impatient, abrupt and even rude towards his mentees.'
'The mentor's contribution to my learning this year has been minimal if not non-existent and his enthusiasm, abysmal or laughable on some occasions.'
'I want to change mentor – I do need a mentor I can rely on and it is not the case right now'.
'I have no positives to offer about my mentor'.

Mentoring relationships can be problematic, and even though the clearer, more defined structure in the new integrated system has fostered positive relationships in the main, negatives must be acknowledged and addressed.

Faculty staff also confirmed that a number of challenges exist. One academic sees this as an inevitability, commenting that '*whatever system you have in place there are going to be certain people who are going to engage and others who will not…some people are good at [mentoring] and others are not*' (Interviewee six). However, they also noted that those who were seen as 'good' at mentoring often meant you actively put yourself at a disadvantage, spending more time on mentoring at the expense of other academic activities as '*you don't get any extra brownie points for it*' (Interviewee six).

Suggestions for continued improvements

Both staff and students reflected on future improvements to the mentoring system. Students made suggestions through the questionnaire for possible recourse when the mentor relationship was proving challenging, including introducing a 'head of mentoring', as '*students should have more help provided in the case of any mentor trouble'.* Running themes through the student comments were that mentors should want to be a mentor and that if possible, there should be a way for students to change mentors if necessary, to avoid negative experiences. Several academics commented on the need to ensure that expectations are still made explicit to the students and that they have a clear understanding of what the mentoring relationship entails: it is a balance between support and encouragement, pastoral care and academic development, but '*you always need to be very careful, it is better to be clear about what the relationship effectively is. The fact remains that we are all members of the faculty and they are students'* (Interviewee three). In this school, the mentoring relationships and roles reflected today are more relaxed, supportive and developmental over time, pastorally, professionally and through the curriculum. However, there is still the need to be explicit in communicating the purpose and role of the mentor / mentee relationships and not become '*too friendly'* (Interviewee one). One student also commented that the students should also '*work with the mentors to make them aware of what we expect from them'*, emphasising the need for effective communication of expectations between mentors and students as a two way dichotomy.

Does the integrated approach successfully combine the three models?

Although there is a formalised system of mentoring, the results indicate that it is one which works in an open and relatively informal way, with the experiences of the students generally reflecting successful interactions with mentors from the perspective of both the pastoral and professional models. Several students commented positively on how their faculty mentors provided advice and recommendations on additional support available from the university for challenging circumstances that the mentor is not equipped to deal with. However, experiences of negative relationships were also communicated through the student questionnaire, specifically relating to pastoral mentoring, and none of these students commented on any links to the curriculum or professional models. This would indicate that when the pastoral model fails to work effectively, this is to the detriment of the other two models and students become disengaged with the mentoring system. The pastoral model emerges as key to the integrated approach.

The influence of the curriculum model as an integral element proved to be influential, with a strong correlation of 0.608** observed between the statements 'small group mentoring in first year helped with my transition into university' (SMLGRP) and 'small group mentoring helped me get to know my classmates better' (MENTSOC). The strength of this relationship is apparent and unsurprising considering an average of 70.9% of respondents to the SMLGRP and 68.9% to the MENTSOC indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statements. However, what is surprising is that

this was the only strongly correlated relationship for the SMLGRP, with other relationships at best being moderately statistically significant at 0.477** (SMLGRP & MENTSBE). The majority of statistical relationships with SMLGRP were weak and not significant.

Students commented that *'weekly meetings enabled us to know each other better and learn to work together',* although some group experiences resulted in *'a more positive experience with [the] group than with my mentor'.* But, the majority of student responses reflecting on how the curriculum has been integrated into the mentoring system were positive, a situation which was supported strongly by the academics interviewed, stating that the small groups offer a *'clearer structure'* (interviewee six) and that although *'it isn't perfect, it is quite a good system now'* (Interviewee one).

Discussion and conclusion

This research sought to assess whether it was possible to 'bridge the gap' between the pastoral, professional and curriculum models, by blending them into an integrated approach, creating an effective mentoring relationship where academics succeed in adding significant value to the student experience.

Evidence of the success of the integrated approach to mentoring is demonstrated in the results. From the literature reviewed and the responses collated it is explicitly evident that effective mentoring relationships, which incorporate the professional, pastoral and curriculum models, can have a positive influence on a student's personal and academic development throughout their time at university. Strong positive correlations were observed between statements which reflected both the psychosocial and instrumental elements of mentoring, effectively providing guidance, support, career advice and pastoral care supporting the work of Young and Perrewé (2004) specifically. The research also reinforces the view that individual and institutional benefits continue to be apparent when the mentoring process works well (Thomas, 2002; Putsche et al., 2008).

The findings from the study suggest the combination of the pastoral, professional and curriculum models integrate to provide an effective overall mentoring experience. However students do not separate the pastoral and professional models in their discussions of the positive attributes of the mentoring process. Evidence of the professional role is limited, with no statistically significant responses linked to the related statements, although a number of students reflect on their mentor's capacity to support them with personal issues. Whether such issues warranted professional services is however unclear.

Evidence of the curriculum model of mentoring and its integration into a degree programme as supported by Owen (2002) is demonstrated in the structure of the mentoring process that has been implemented. However there was only one strongly statistical relationship that emerged as part of the results. This was for the SMLGRP statement, even though students generally have a positive response to the small group mentoring, it is not apparent that this experience remains inextricably linked to their overall academic experience of mentoring. This finding warrants further, more in-depth research to explain the tacit relationship experienced by the students rather than a formal acknowledgement the importance of the curriculum model to the success of the mentoring programme.

The research also examined whether a contemporary integrated approach to mentoring is effectively shaping mentoring relationships and whether undergraduate students are adequately supported in an academic context.

Students commented on a range of positive mentoring experiences, suggesting that they were on the whole adequately supported. Successful experiences existed where mentors had been able to devote time energy and commitment to the relationship (in line with Bean et al, 2014). Students recognised the importance of the mentoring relationship in building confidence and communication skills (as per Taylor and Neimeyer, 2009). The importance of available and accessible support (relating to the pastoral and professional models) was also appreciated by students, supporting previous work by Kram (1985) and Eby et al. (2000), and students reflected positively on the informality of their mentoring relationships, within a formal system.

However, although the newly integrated mentoring system described was generally well received by students and academics alike, the challenges and pitfalls associated with mentoring remain. Negative perceptions of mentoring were described by the students. Persistent issues arise from personality

differences (Eby et al., 2000). Lack of interest and time (Johnson and Huwe, 2002). This theme within mentoring relationships is an enduring one and reflects the complexities and difficulties which arise (Lumpkin, 2011). The findings support research that indicates that the quality of mentoring relationships can vary within the duration of the process and that mentoring is not a unitary or all-or-nothing phenomenon, but rather, falls on a continuum of effectiveness and emotional valance (Ensher and Murphy, 2011; Lunsford, 2013). Students emphasised the importance of managing expectations (from both student and faculty perspectives), faculty staff accessibility and communication. Having a 'head of mentoring' was offered as a suggestion, to allow for mediation under difficult mentoring circumstances. The majority of negative responses surrounding the integrated model were directly related to pastoral concerns, which suggests that if the pastoral model is not established effectively, the other two models do not emerge successfully and the student is disengaged with the mentoring process. Findings imply that the pastoral model is the foundation from which the professional and curriculum based models can develop, however such findings are tentative and would require additional investigation.

There are key issues of balancing time and effort from the perspective of the mentor, with effectively performing your role. This is in addition to challenges that may be encountered more specific to personality clashes and differences. At the moment however, students have no channel for recourse relating to testing mentoring relationships at a school level. Through examining mentoring relationships, which have typically indicated successful and beneficial relationships, disconnects in the system remain. There appears to be a need to manage expectations more efficiently, reflecting mentoring practice which not only communicates what the mentors expect from the students throughout their university careers, but additionally considers what the students expect of their mentors. Results from both academics and students demonstrate the overall need for a *'wider capture of mentor experience'* (Interviewee three).

By bridging each of these three models a comprehensive strategy has been created which integrates pastoral care, student welfare and a dichotomy within the curriculum between academic development and supportive mentoring relationships. The transformation to this contemporary approach combines traditional dyadic mentoring with a variety of small group exercises specific to a specific degree programme, ensuring that the process of mentoring itself becomes an integral and implicit element of university experience, rather than something additional or external.

Both the data collected and literature reviewed makes it abundantly clear that mentoring is in no way a clear cut, consistent experience, but rather one riddled with antagonisms and subjectivities. Due to the personal nature of the mentoring relationships, with various personalities to manage, it can be challenging for both mentors and students to establish effective relationships. However, the key findings indicate that in the main this integrated mentoring system is proving beneficial to students and academics alike. An integrated approach to mentoring can prove successful in supporting and encouraging students if it is effectively delivered within a clear but flexible remit which blends pastoral, professional and curriculum based models.

There are a number of limitations of this research that should be acknowledged. First it involves a small group of faculty staff during the interview stage and a limited number of students at the questionnaire stage, so its findings are limited in terms of the themes and perceptions concerning an integrated mode of mentoring. The cross sectional nature of this study across all years also limits the ability to draw defined conclusions about specific disciplines or year groups within the data set. The responses are entirely drawn from a school of the built environment in the UK, which offers a particular perspective, but one which is not necessarily transferrable. Experiences from different disciplines, universities and countries may provoke very different results and comparative studies with universities outside of the UK would be interesting to pursue. Although the research didn't consider respondents gender, age or cultural background, this could be a limiting factor when considering the nuances of mentoring relationships. As a pilot study, the survey approach and resulting statistical analysis were limited due to their exploratory nature, but could be developed in a slightly different way, to meet different aims, or address the aims of this research in an alternative way (e.g. by including more open-ended questions in the survey, interviewing students, looking into one element of integrated mentoring in more detail, offering incentives to students for completion or alternative statistical modelling).

The pilot study executed provides a useful basis for further research. Further studies looking at larger population sizes would verify or refute the themes demonstrated. A longitudinal study design would

also offer an informed perspective on experiences of students as the integrated mentoring system becomes embedded.

Given that the study does not measure opinions outside the Built Environment discipline or a single university in Scotland, the study could be widened to explore other disciplines, and also a geographically wider sample would indicate whether contextual factors are a major influence as suggested by the literature. Finally by combining a larger longitudinal study it would offer the opportunity to develop a contemporary model of best practice mentoring and allow the model to be tested across a range of contextual backgrounds.

In terms of understanding student responses to a new contemporary mentoring system which reflects a blended model, incorporating elements of pastoral, professional and curriculum approaches overall the student and faculty perceptions are that the process is working well. However students focus their discussion around the traditional pastoral mentoring model being drawn on the most in terms of the mentoring relationship and the importance of the supporting role as the main driver. Limited discussion and recognition is given the other facets of the integrated mentoring model in terms of professional and curriculum elements even though they are fundamental to the structure of the integrated mentoring scheme being presented.

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Table 1: Example statements from the questionnaire relating to 'mentoring relationships'.

Questionnaire Statement	SPSS Code*
My mentor clearly communicates and explains what the university expects from students	MENTCOMM
My relationship with my mentor is informal and relaxed	MENTREL
I am comfortable discussing personal and academic issues openly with my mentor	COMFMENT
I think mentoring is important for my academic development	MENTIMP
I only see my mentor as it is required by the curriculum	MENTREQ
I think my mentor would rather not be a mentor at all	NOTMENT
I feel supported by my mentor	MENTSUPP
Having a good mentor has helped me feel part of the university community	MENTSBE

* Coded variable name

Table 2: SPSS results relating to 'mentoring relationships'.

Spearman's Rho

		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
My mentor is one of the first members of faculty staff I speak to if I need advice **(A)**	Cor. Coeff.	1.0										
My mentor clearly communicates and explains what the university expects from students **(B)**	Cor. Coeff.	.766**	1.0									
My relationship with my mentor is informal and relaxed **(C)**	Cor. Coeff.	.597**	.531**	1.0								
I am comfortable discussing personal and academic issues openly with my mentor **(D)**	Cor. Coeff.	.573**	.553**	.509**	1.0							
I feel like I know my mentor as an individual, not just as an academic **(E)**	Cor. Coeff.	.587**	.535**	.656**	.715**	1.0						
My mentor has had a positive influence on my time at university **(F)**	Cor. Coeff.	.630**	.669**	.575**	.605**	.614**	1.0					
My mentor always has time for me **(G)**	Cor. Coeff.	.557**	.542**	.671**	.700**	.589**	.574**	1.0				
I only see my mentor as it is required by the curriculum **(H)**	Cor. Coeff.	-.419**	-.378**	-	-.427**	-.444**	-.279*	-.293*	1.0			
I think I will need my mentor less in my later years at university **(I)**	Cor. Coeff.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.0		
I think my mentor would rather not be a mentor at all **(J)**	Cor. Coeff.	-.413**	-.502**	-.319**	-.297*	-.356**	-.507**	-.505**	.258*	-	1.0	
I feel supported by my mentor **(K)**	Cor. Coeff.	.615**	.772**	.534**	.636**	.591**	.699**	.604**	-.386**	-	-.533**	1.0

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). – Insignificant result.
Negative relationships are highlighted in grey.

Table 3: Strong positive correlations

	FIRSTADV	MENTCOMM	MENTPOS	MENTSUPP
My mentor is one of the first members of faculty staff I speak to if I need advice (FIRSTADV)	1.0			
My mentor clearly communicates and explains what the university expects from students (MENTCOMM)	.766**	1.0		
My mentor has had a positive influence on my time at university (MENTPOS)	.630**	.669**	1.0	
I feel supported by my mentor (MENTSUPP)	.615**	.772**	.699**	1.0