

Insights from the Student Education Panel: Academic Mentoring

Originally published as part of:
LSE Curriculum Shift - Issue 16 - Teaching out the term
(Emailed 22/03/2021)

The [Student Education Panel](#) is composed of 50 students from across LSE who meet once per term to engage in dialogue about their experiences of education at LSE, and partner with staff to co-create educational change.

In Lent Term 2021, we invited panelists to share their experiences of Academic Mentoring both through their closed online community and also during one of the fortnightly discussions at the Eden Centre facilitated Academic Mentoring Community of Practice. This dialogue resulted in an important conversation between students and mentors.

Academic Mentors can join the community of practice and find further information and resources on the Academic Mentoring Portal or by contacting Dr Akile Ahmet (Academic Developer for Inclusive Education, Eden Centre): a.ahmet@lse.ac.uk.

If you would like to find out more about the Student Education Panel, please contact Lydia Halls (Student Partnership Coordinator, Eden Centre): l.halls@lse.ac.uk.

Awareness of Academic Mentors

"I am sometimes not really sure what exactly I can expect of my academic mentor/with which kinds of questions I can turn to them [...] If I had more clarity on that point, I would probably attend office hours more often."

Panelists have mixed levels of awareness about the purpose of Academic Mentors and said they would appreciate more information about the support their Academic Mentor can provide. Some postgraduate students felt they could only approach their mentor to discuss their dissertation and were unaware they could also discuss their general progress and wellbeing.

Office hour availability and regular check-in emails

"I was reluctant to meet my academic mentor without a proper interest. I ended up not meeting her for a while. However, my academic mentor reached out and asked me to book an office hour with her. That was a much-needed push."

Panelists expect their mentor to have a good availability of office hour appointments, particularly at the beginning and end of term, or in the run-up to their dissertation. They said they generally have a more positive experience of mentoring when their mentor pro-actively reaches out to invite them to office hours.

Student-student community building

"My academic mentor hosts regular group meetings on zoom for all his mentees and we use the opportunity to catch up and ask any questions. These meetings are optional too, so there's no pressure to join if it happens to clash with classes."

Panelists view their Academic Mentor as being well-positioned to help increase the sense of community among students, particularly for part-time students. They responded positively to mentors arranging group meetings with small groups of mentees, saying that it enabled them to discuss mutual interests with students outside of their classes/seminars.

Student-staff community building

"I am really hoping for the chance to socialise more with my mentor – to chat not just about my academic work, but also get to know and learn from their own journey as an academic."

Panelists said that they enjoy opportunities to engage in dialogue with their Academic Mentor about their discipline or career path, as this helps them feel connected to faculty in their department and to make informed decisions about their own futures.

Timely advice and support

"Personally, my mentor has been great, [they] always respond timeously and offers great advice/support. Friends of mine, however, have had entirely different experiences. Some have reached out to mentors and not received any reply, others get a delayed response. This is very disheartening for students because approaching one's mentor is sometimes daunting to begin with, and then being ignored makes this even worse, making any future interaction unlikely."

Panelists recognise that it can take courage for students to email an Academic Mentor to ask for help. It was felt that receiving timely responses to their enquiries can make students more likely to contact their Academic Mentor again in the future.