Academic Mentoring Community of Practice
Annual Report 2024-25

Executive Summary

The Academic Mentoring Community of Practice (AM CoP) has delivered significant value in advancing LSE's commitment to high-quality academic mentoring for all students. With 20 members from 11 departments (46% departmental engagement), the CoP has achieved high implementation of practice changes (87.5% of participants) and offered a space for meaningful reflections about academic mentoring. Feedback from participants indicates that 100% of respondents would recommend this space to colleagues with mentoring tasks.

Key achievements include high participation levels, meaningful cross-departmental conversations about practice, four conference presentations showcasing LSE's mentoring practices at the UKAT annual conference, and the Academic Mentoring Learning Exchange, where colleagues had the opportunity to hear from academics within the School and other HEIs.

The CoP directly supports LSE's Access and Participation Plan objectives and Academic Code requirements whilst fostering cross-departmental collaboration and evidence-based practice enhancement.

Moving forward, success will depend upon maintaining the balance between structured learning opportunities and organic professional conversation whilst addressing technological and institutional barriers. Continued institutional commitment to addressing systemic challenges, combined with the CoP's proven collaborative model, will ensure ongoing effectiveness and expansion of high-quality academic mentoring across LSE.

Aims and rationale

The Academic Mentoring Community of Practice (CoP) aims to:

1. **Enhance Mentoring Practices Across the School and Within Departments:** Actively contribute to the advancement of academic mentoring by identifying and promoting best practices, aiming to enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of mentoring in educational settings.
2. **Promote Knowledge and Practice Sharing:** Cultivate a collaborative environment where participants can openly share their diverse experiences, facilitating the collective identification of successful mentoring strategies.
3. **Disseminate Impact Awareness:** Advocate for the vital role of academic mentoring in students' academic journeys and overall well-being, aiming to raise awareness about its importance to both staff and students.
4. **Co-Develop Resources with the Inclusive Education Team:** Persist in the creation and refinement of resources tailored to the evolving needs of academic mentors, ensuring an ongoing improvement in mentorship strategies and support mechanisms.

We meet twice a term to discuss various aspects of the role of an academic mentor at LSE, share relevant experiences and challenges, present results and analyses of mentoring practices within the School, and explore resources that could improve our practice. The sessions are led by the Inclusive Education Team, and dates are agreed upon based on members' availability. Most sessions are held in person when possible. We invite our members and other relevant School services to present on different topics.

Once a year, we organise a Learning Exchange Day. This event provides longer sessions to reflect on academic mentoring not only within the School but also to learn more about practices in other Higher Education Institutions.

Having an active Community of Practice promotes a continuous revision of mentoring activities and allows for identifying current issues that need to be addressed by departments and the university as a whole. The main idea is to be aware of the effectiveness of mentoring practices, and how they can support students in their educational journey at LSE.
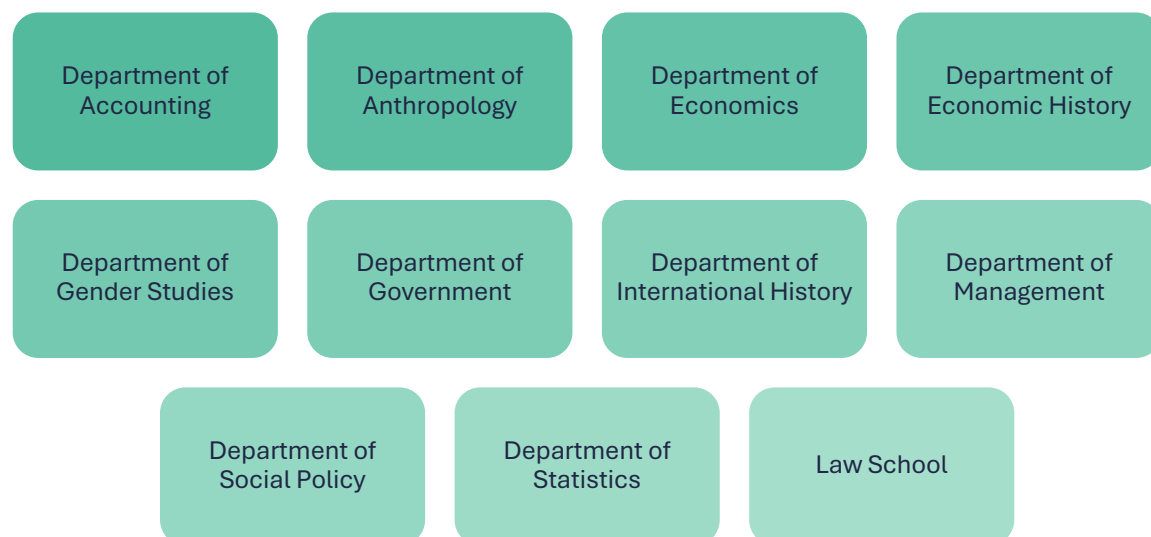
Participation and Engagement

This academic year, we had a total **of 20 members**, of whom **18 attended (90%) our activities** and **11 (55%) of them attended at least three activities.**

Departmental Representation:

- **11 departments (46%)** participated in CoP meetings
- **3 Support Services (ARD, DMHS, LSE Life)** actively engaged
- **13 departments (54%)** remain unengaged, presenting an opportunity for expansion

Engaged departments:

Department of Accounting	Department of Anthropology	Department of Economics	Department of Economic History
Department of Gender Studies	Department of Government	Department of International History	Department of Management
Department of Social Policy	Department of Statistics	Law School	

One of the main challenges we face is finding an optimal group size to ensure that all participants have the same opportunity to share practice and engage in activities that meaningfully improve their mentoring approaches. Since we are planning to expand our reach, this is an aspect that we keep considering.

Activities and Session Overview

This past year, we organised 5 sessions, the first four were CoP meetings, and the Academic Mentoring Learning Exchange Day (AM LED), in-person. This year, we also transitioned from in-person to hybrid sessions to increase the number of attendees. Having this format allowed us to achieve this goal; however, we experienced occasional technological issues that affected the fluency of the sessions, and it is something we are considering paying more attention to next year.

Term	CoP Attendees	Type of session
Autumn Term (October 2024)	12	Hybrid
Autumn Term (November 2024)	11	Hybrid
Winter Term (January 2025)	14	Hybrid
Winter Term (February 2025)	8	Hybrid
AM LED (May 2025)	12	In person

The following section presents a summary of the main topics discussed in our multiple sessions:

1. **Student Engagement & Participation (Enhance mentoring practices)**   • Strategies for maintaining student participation in voluntary academic mentoring   • Techniques to encourage one-to-one appointment attendance through group meetings   • Systematic follow-up processes and providing actionable outcomes from sessions   • Inconsistent mentor-student relationships, particularly affecting second-year students
2. **Vulnerable and Diverse Student Populations (Knowledge and practice sharing)**   • Safeguarding policies for under-18 students   • Inadequate support networks for mature students   • Better approaches for Widening Participation students   • Specialised preparation programmes for different student demographics
3. **Infrastructure and Resource Development (Knowledge and practice sharing)**   • Centralisation of resources through a shared OneDrive folder   • Academic Mentoring Hub review and restructuring around distinct user groups (mentors, mentees, evidence-based materials)   • Development of clearer expectations around student-mentor relationships   • Systematic resource organisation and accessibility
4. **Professional Development and Training (Disseminate impact awareness)**   • UKAT membership and professional recognition schemes   • Webinar series planning featuring student support services (DMHS, LSE Careers, LSE Life)   • Eden Centre training and development opportunities   5. Mentor preparation and support programmes
6. **Institutional Integration (Knowledge and practice sharing**   • Collaboration with Student Union representatives   • Partnership with Department Senior Student Advisors   • Integration with broader LSE student support structure   7. Working relationships between academic mentoring and professional support services
8. **External Partnerships and Knowledge Sharing (Knowledge and practice sharing, disseminate impact awareness and enhance mentoring practice)**   • UKAT conference presentation at UCL   • Cross-institutional collaborations with UCL, King's College London, and Imperial College London   • Academic Mentoring Learning Exchange Day planning   • Sector-wide knowledge sharing initiatives
9. **Operational Challenges (Knowledge and practice sharing)**   • Student attendance monitoring and inappropriate alert systems   • Delayed data updates affecting mentor notifications   • Need for better communication coordination   • Referral pathways and integrated support approaches

In addition to our regular meetings, we also organise the **Academic Mentoring Learning Exchange Day**. This event is designed to provide an extended time to share experiences and learn from colleagues beyond LSE about mentoring and tutoring practices. This year, we had a representative from senior management sharing their institutional vision about academic mentoring, as well as generating space for academic mentors to present key aspects of their experiences, challenges and ideas on the opportunities offered by mentoring students. For further details visit the Academic Mentoring Hub – Resources . A summary of the day is part of the annex of this report.

Finally, another action we took this year to incentivise participation was joining the **UK Advising and Tutoring (UKAT)**. This institutional membership represents a strategic investment in professional development for our CoP members, providing access to research, accredited programmes and development resources whilst promoting professional recognition for mentoring work that currently lacks formal institutional acknowledgement.

This past year, five members of the Community of Practice started their application to get Professional Recognition from UKAT, and four members of the CoP presented at the UKAT annual Conference.

- *The role of full cohort, small group and individual meetings in Undergraduate transition to university* - Natalie Paris
- *Community of Practice: Collaborative approaches to academic mentoring* - Daniela Perez Aguilar
- *PSS and Faculty Collaboration: How Working Together on Large Scale Mentoring Has Transformed Academic Support for Undergraduates at a Russell Group University* - Stephanie Lambert and Paulette Annon
- *Supporting care-experienced students: using trauma-informed principles* - Serena James

Members' Feedback Analysis

This section presents findings from a survey of Academic Mentoring Community of Practice (AM CoP) members at LSE, conducted for the 2024-25 academic year. With a 44% response rate (8 of 18 members), the survey reveals high satisfaction with the CoP, significant practice improvements, and strong collaborative outcomes. Key findings include high levels of changes in practice (87.5%) and strong perceived benefits for mentoring work (4.5/5). The analysis identifies three core themes: collaborative professional development, practical knowledge sharing, and structural challenges requiring institutional support.

Methodology

Survey Design and Implementation

The survey employed a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative Likert-scale ratings (1-5) with open-ended qualitative questions. Data collection focused on four key areas: CoP activity evaluation, practice implementation, collaboration benefits, and future development needs. The online survey was distributed among CoP members via email in May, 2025.
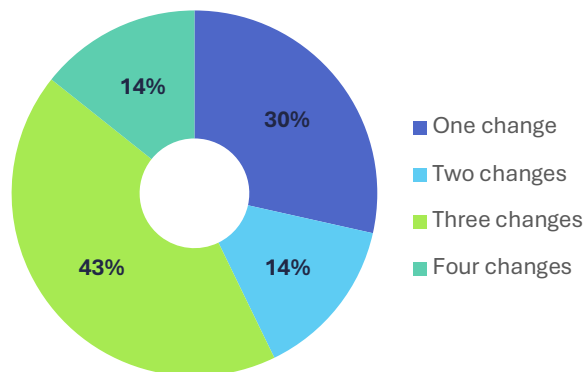
General information

- **Response Rate:** 44% (8/18 members)
- **Experience Level:** 88% have more than three years of academic mentoring experience
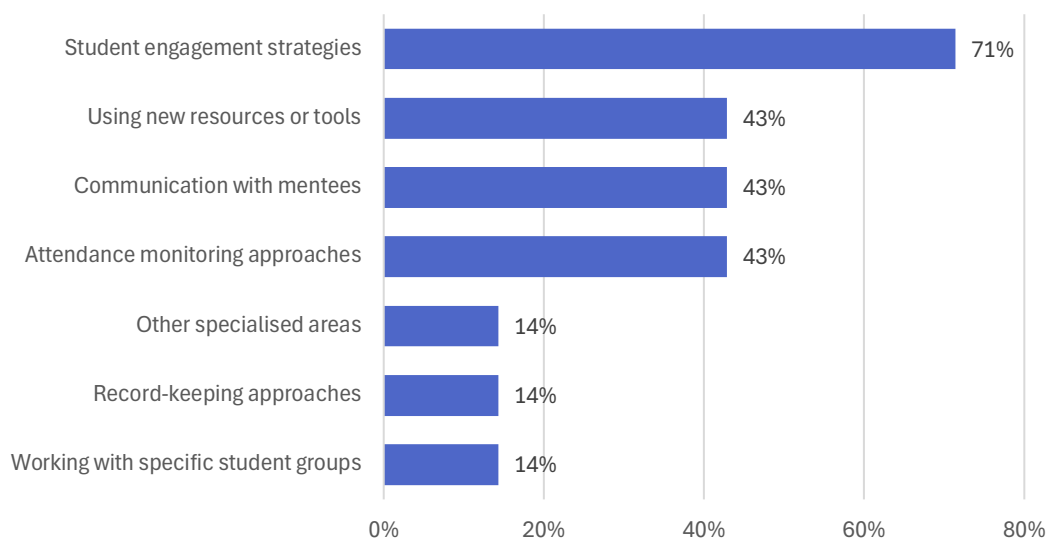- **100%** of respondents would recommend the CoP to colleagues

CoP Activity Effectiveness (Scale: 1-5)

87.5% of respondents implemented changes to their mentoring practice

- One change — 30%
- Two changes — 14%
- Three changes — 43%
- Four changes — 14%

Practice Implementation Areas (Multiple Selection)

Area	Percentage
Student engagement strategies	71%
Using new resources or tools	43%
Communication with mentees	43%
Attendance monitoring approaches	43%
Other specialised areas	14%
Record-keeping approaches	14%
Working with specific student groups	14%

Themes from open questions

Theme 1: Collaborative Professional Learning Community

The CoP functions as a vital space for peer learning, professional networking, and shared problem-solving.

- **Peer Connection and Support:** Participants valued "networking with peers" and the "feeling of community" that provided professional solidarity
- **Shared Problem-Solving:** The opportunity for "talking through issues with others and troubleshooting together" was consistently highlighted
- **Cross-Departmental Learning:** The CoP facilitates understanding of "intersections with other services such as Student Well Service, LSE Life, LSE Careers"

"Having a scheduled time to meet with interested colleagues even in busy periods is very helpful to keep in touch with others doing similar things."

"The feeling of community, the sharing, knowing there is a space where you can discuss concerns."

Theme 2: Evidence-Based Practice Enhancement

The CoP effectively translates knowledge into practical mentoring improvements with measurable outcomes.

- **Resource Integration:** Participants implemented new tools, with one noting plans to "adapt some of the resources we have received (like the self-rating wheel)"
- **Systematic Approach Development:** Improved "recording, summarising and dissemination of meeting records"
- **Student Engagement Innovation:** Significant focus on improving engagement strategies, with 71.4% implementing changes in this area

"More information from central teams has allowed the approach to shift slightly - there was more nuance in what was discussed in meetings than was clear in the emails sent by SSC."

"Much better with first year intake in September 2024 due to course leader setting an assignment (20%) which required the new students to meet with us."

Strengths of the Current Model

The results from the survey demonstrate that the AM CoP has successfully established itself as a high-value professional learning community. The high scores for student engagement strategy discussions (4.9/5) and overall benefit perception (4.5/5) indicate that the CoP is meeting core professional development needs. The high implementation rate (87.5%) with diverse areas of change suggests effective knowledge translation from discussions to practice.

Professional Development Impact

The results reveal that participants experience the CoP as more than information sharing; it functions as a collaborative problem-solving community. The emphasis on peer learning aligns with established mentoring literature highlighting the importance of mentor support networks (see Allen & Poteet, 1999; Ragins & Cotton, 1999). The cross-departmental collaboration (scored 4.5/5) addresses institutional silos and creates broader professional learning opportunities.

Implementation Challenges

Despite high satisfaction, our CoP members identify structural barriers that may limit the CoP's potential impact. The call for greater senior leadership engagement is a common challenge in professional learning communities where institutional support is crucial for sustainability and resource allocation. On this note, things that need to be implemented are a standard system to keep a record of mentoring meetings, and feedback mechanisms in place from mentors and mentees about their experiences of mentoring, and the contribution it has on their studies and academic career.

Conclusion

The Academic Mentoring Community of Practice has established itself as a highly valued and effective professional learning community. With all respondents recommending the AM CoP and high implementation of practice changes, the CoP demonstrates clear value for participating mentors. The three core themes - collaborative professional learning, evidence-based practice enhancement, and institutional integration challenges - provide a roadmap for continued development.

The high interest in student engagement strategies and cross-departmental collaboration suggests that the CoP is addressing real professional needs. However, the identification of structural barriers indicates that continued success requires institutional commitment to addressing systemic challenges while maintaining the peer-driven collaborative model that participants value.

Moving forward, success will depend upon maintaining the balance between structured learning opportunities and organic professional conversation whilst addressing technological and institutional barriers. As the Inclusive Education Team, Eden Centre, we will continue developing this work to promote good practice among colleagues and to ensure that students get the best experience whilst studying at LSE.

Annexes

Anex 1: Departments' engagement

Total number of departments:

1. Department of Accounting
2. Department of Anthropology
3. Department of Economics
4. Department of Economic History
5. Department of Gender Studies
6. Department of Government
7. Department of International History
8. Department of Management
9. Department of Social Policy
10. Department of Statistics
11. Law School

Total number of divisions:

1. ARD
2. DWS
3. LSE LIFE

Departments that have not yet engaged with the CoP:

1. Department of Finance
2. Department of Geography and Environment
3. Department of Health Policy
4. Department of International Development
5. Department of International Relations
6. Department of Mathematics
7. Department of Media and Communications
8. Department of Methodology
9. Department of Philosophy, Logic and Scientific Method
10. Department of Psychological and Behavioural Science
11. Department of Sociology
12. European Institute
13. School of Public Policy

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Annex 2: Sessions' summary

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Session 1: October 2024 - Foundation Setting

- **Student Engagement Focus** The session opened with positive observations about increased student liveliness and resilience, particularly among first-year students, setting an optimistic tone for the year's work.
- **Professional Development Infrastructure** UKAT membership received strong support from participants, leading to actions around professional recognition schemes and member engagement. The session established polling mechanisms to gauge interest in formal recognition pathways.
- **Operational Challenges** Significant attention was given to student attendance monitoring, with members identifying issues around delayed data updates that were triggering inappropriate alerts for mentors.
- **Relationship Clarification** A critical need emerged for clearer expectations around the student-mentor relationship, prompting plans for engagement with Student Union representatives.
- **Resource Centralisation** The group agreed to centralise resources through a shared OneDrive folder, addressing previous difficulties in accessing materials and best practices.

Session 2: November 2024 - Strategic Development

- **Institutional Collaboration** The session emphasised external engagement through the UKAT annual conference, encouraging members to submit proposals and share institutional experiences with the broader academic mentoring community.
- **Student Engagement Deep Dive** Extensive discussion focused on maintaining student participation in mentoring, acknowledging that whilst academic mentoring is mentioned in the Academic Code, attendance remains voluntary. Members shared various strategies:
  - Group meetings to demonstrate the value of one-to-one appointments
  - Systematic follow-up processes
  - Utilising end-of-term reports to emphasise meeting importance
  - Providing actionable outcomes from each mentoring session
- Vulnerable Student Populations
  - **Under-18 Students**: The session highlighted gaps in safeguarding policies and the need for clearer institutional guidance when supporting younger students.
  - **Mature Students**: Concerns were raised about inadequate support networks for mature students, with plans to revisit this issue in future sessions.
  - **Widening Participation (WP) Students**: Significant discussion centred on improving support for WP students, including proposals for specialised preparation programmes and enhanced communication with the WP team.
- **Service Integration** Plans were established for a webinar series featuring various student support services (DMHS, LSE Careers, LSE Life) to help mentors better understand referral pathways and collaborative opportunities.

Session 3: January 2025 - Institutional Integration

- **Departmental Student Advice Management** Lisa Corns, Head of Departmental Student Advice Management, presented on the positive implementation of Departmental Senior Student Advisors, creating opportunities for closer liaison between academic mentoring and professional student support services.
- External Engagement
  - **UKAT Conference**: Confirmation of LSE's presentation acceptance at UCL (7-8 April) demonstrated the CoP's growing external profile.
  - **Professional Recognition**: Four members expressed interest in UKAT's

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Professional Recognition scheme, leading to dedicated planning meetings.
- **Educational Partnerships** The session featured collaboration with the Education Forum on Principled Spaces and Inclusive Pedagogies, along with planning for the Academic Mentoring webinar series and Inclusive Education workshops.

Session 4: February 2025 - Resource Development and Future Planning

- **Academic Mentoring Hub Enhancement** Review of the Academic Mentoring Hub revealed engagement challenges and prompted restructuring around distinct user groups:
    - **Mentors**: Guidance materials, question frameworks, and first meeting topics
    - **Mentees**: Differentiated guides for undergraduate and postgraduate students
    - **Evidence Base**: Reports, videos, and workshop materials from previous sessions
- **Mentoring Relationship Challenges** The session identified inconsistent mentor-student relationships as a key issue, particularly affecting second-year students. Solutions proposed included:
    - Co-running introductory sessions with departments
    - Structured support for mentors
    - Enhanced resource synthesis to present essential elements clearly
- **Cross-Institutional Collaboration** Plans were established for webinar series with UCL, King's College London, and Imperial College London, creating sector-wide knowledge sharing opportunities beyond the immediate LSE community. This includes activities such as the Academic Mentoring Learning Exchange Day
- **Future Sustainability** The session concluded with plans for continuous feedback systems, ongoing resource development, and evaluation of the CoP's impact through member conversations and questionnaires.

Annex 3: Academic Mentoring Community of Practice Evaluation Survey 2024-25
Introduction
Thank you for being part of our Academic Mentoring Community of Practice this year. We've learned many things from your experience and we hope we continue growing as a community.
This survey evaluates how well our sessions worked for you, and whether our conversations have influenced your mentoring practice. Your feedback will directly shape how we design future CoP activities.
The survey should take between **10-15 minutes, and your responses are anonymous.**
We are very keen to hear about your experiences, what has worked, and what could be improved. Once we have all your voices, we'll share a summary of the results with you.
When you are ready, just click on the arrow.
Inclusive Education Team.

Background Information

Q1 How many of the four CoP meetings did you attend this year?

- All four meetings
- Three meetings
- Two meetings
- One meeting

Q2 How long have you been involved in academic mentoring at LSE?

- Less than 1 year
- 1-3 years
- More than 3 years

Overall Usefulness and Effectiveness

Q3 Please rate the usefulness of these activities:

Activity	Very Useful	Moderately Useful	Slightly Useful	Not Useful	Didn't Attend
UKAT membership and professional recognition scheme	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lisa Corns' presentation on Senior Student Advisors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Student engagement strategies discussions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Academic Mentoring Hub resources review	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q4 On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1= No benefit at all and 5 = Significant benefit. How much has participating in the Academic Mentoring CoP benefited your work as academic mentor this year?

- 1 – No benefit at all
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 – Significant benefit

Q5 What is your preferred format for CoP meetings?

- In-person sessions only
- Hybrid sessions (in-person with online option)
- Online sessions only
- Mix of in-person and online sessions
- Other (please specify): _____

Q6 Would you recommend the CoP to a colleague involved in academic mentoring?

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure
- Other (please specify): _____

Impact on Practice

Q7 Have you made any changes to your academic mentoring practice as a result of CoP conversations?

- Yes, significant changes
- Yes, some changes
- Yes, minor changes
- No, but I plan to make changes
- No changes made

Q7.1 If you made changes, could you tell us in which areas have you implemented changes? (Select all that apply)

- Record-keeping of mentoring meetings
- Student engagement strategies
- Working with specific student groups (WP, under-18, mature students)
- Communication with mentees
- Using new resources or tools
- Attendance monitoring approaches
- Other: _____

Q7.2 Could you tell us a bit more about the changes you've implemented? This is very important for us to plan the year and support academics and students.

[Open text box]

Q8 Have you noticed any changes in your interactions with your mentees this year? If so, could you tell us more?

[Open text box]

Q9 How important is the CoP, in your practice, to increase collaboration with colleagues outside your department?

- Not at all important
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

CoP Aims Achievement

Q11 Based on your experience attending CoP meetings and general information you have, please rate how well the CoP achieved each aim?

Activity	Completely achieved	Largely achieved	Partially achieved	Not achieved	I don't know
Enhanced mentoring practices across departments	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Promoted knowledge and practice sharing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Raised awareness about the importance of academic mentoring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Co-developed resources with the Inclusive Education Team	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Fostered interactive dialogues about academic mentoring	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Open Feedback

What has been the most valuable aspect of the CoP this year?

[Open text box]

What could be improved for next year?

[Open text box]

Are there topics you'd like to see in future CoP meetings?

[Open text box]

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

[Open text box]

Thank you for your feedback. Your input is essential for improving the Academic Mentoring Community of Practice.

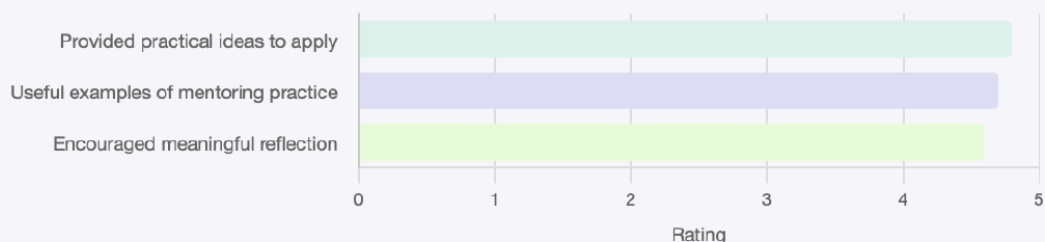**Annex 4: Academic Mentoring Learning Exchange Day**

Academic Mentoring Learning Exchange Day

Feedback Results | 7th May 2025

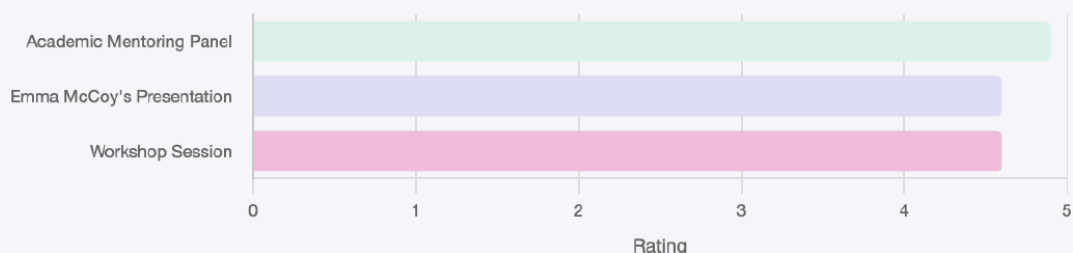Inclusive Education Team, Eden Centre, LSE

Mentoring Insights Gained

Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

Usefulness of Presentations

Scale: 1 = Not Very Useful, 5 = Very Useful

Qualitative Feedback Highlights

Positive Outcomes
- Valued variety and engaging content
- Strong appreciation for external speakers
- Valuable networking opportunities
- Senior management presence beneficial
- New approaches gained from presentations

Areas for Development
- More interactive small group discussions
- Advance notice of presentation topics
- Include student voice in future events
- More practical guidance on complex situations
- Connect with other HEI approaches

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Key Outcomes

High Satisfaction and Practical Value

Consistently high ratings (4.6-4.9/5) across all measures demonstrate successful delivery of practical, applicable insights.

Cross-Institutional Engagement

Strong attendance from 18 departments and positive networking feedback shows significant institutional interest.

Knowledge Sharing Success

Participants gained new approaches and made valuable connections, indicating effective knowledge transfer between colleagues.

Senior Leadership Engagement

Management presence highlighted by multiple respondents as valuable, demonstrating institutional commitment to mentoring development.

Response Rate: 27 attendees, 12 responses (44% response rate)