



Department of
Sociology

Academic Mentoring Department of Sociology

Suki Ali
Claire Tomlinson



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History and Experiences of Academic Mentoring:

- Department tutor/academic advisor/academic mentor.
- Has become more formalised over time.
- Key part of the educational role and student belonging within the department.
- Varied practices – including the workload colleagues then take on depending on the students they are allocated to.
- Feedback from SSLCs/surveys about poor communication from academic mentors.
- Feedback from academic mentors that students do not come to meetings.
- Students want to have consistent contact to discuss a range of topics, not just academic work – current events, research, employment, etc.



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Key area of development - Communication

- Communication with students - about the importance of academic mentors, starting from offer holder comms. Featured in regular student newsletters and in conversations with students.
- Communication with colleagues – mentoring should be seen as part of their teaching, offering advice and support within their role.



Examples of actions over time

- Trialled a few different ways of mentoring (group meetings, individual meetings, set weeks) and have looked to create a more structured approach.
- A lot of internal work to provide guidance to both students and colleagues about the relationship – expectations, responsibilities, relationship development in order to facilitate both pastoral and academic support, how academic mentors can be better supported in their role.



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Current Practice

- BSc – formalised plan with scheduled group meetings and topics to discuss across the first two years, with their dissertation supervisor becoming their AM in third year.
- Still strongly encouraged to book 1-2-1 appointments outside group meetings.



BSc current mentoring plan:

Year 1 and General Course Students

Key focus for Y1: Orientation; thinking sociologically; setting goals; individual work progress.

Key focus for GC: LSE experience, interdisciplinary thinking; setting goals; individual work progress.

Welcome Week	Autumn Term	Winter Term	Spring Term
<p><u>Welcome meeting:</u> Brief introduction to your mentor and group, how you can access your mentor, any early questions.</p>	<p><u>Group meeting (w 2 or 3)</u> <u>Getting to know you:</u> What students can expect from the programme and the mentoring relationship.</p>	<p><u>Group Meeting (w 4 or 5)</u> <u>A sociological discussion:</u> Addressing a social issue, organised around the discussion of a film, article, podcast etc. to be chosen by the students.</p> <p><i>A more social format with tea and coffee etc.</i></p>	<p><u>Group meeting (early in term)</u> <u>Reflections and goals:</u> Discussing experiences of year 1 and outlining goals for year 2.</p>
	<p><u>Individual progress meetings (w 9, 10):</u> Further relationship building through 'personal catch up'. Engaging with student work, e.g: going over a formative piece, an intro, a reading etc.</p>	<p><u>Individual progress meetings (w 9, 10):</u> Engaging with student work, and/or student priorities</p>	<p><u>Office hours</u> As and when needed for both academic and pastoral issues.</p>
	<p><u>Office hours</u> As and when needed.</p>	<p><u>Office hours</u> As and when needed.</p>	



Year 2

Key focus: Critical engagement; individual progress; thinking about dissertation and next stages



Autumn Term	Winter Term	Spring Term
<p><u>Group meeting (w 2 or 3)</u> <u>Taking your work to the next level:</u> Critical thinking, e.g: a careful reading of a text.</p>	<p><u>Individual progress meetings</u> (w 4 or 5) <u>Checking in:</u> Engaging with student work, e.g: going over a formative piece, an intro, a reading etc.</p>	<p><u>Individual progress meetings</u> (w 5, 6) <u>Checking in:</u> Reviewing any issues that have arisen during the year and whether they have been resolved. Engaging with student work and/or discussing dissertation plans.</p>
<p><u>Group meeting (w 9 or 10)</u> <u>Next stages:</u> Discussing dissertation ideas.</p>	<p><u>Group meeting (w 9 or 10)</u> <u>Next stages:</u> Discussing plans for next steps including further study and work <i>A more social format with tea and coffee etc.</i></p>	<p><u>Office hours</u> As and when needed for both academic and pastoral issues.</p>
<p><u>Office hours</u> As and when needed.</p>	<p><u>Office hours</u> As and when needed.</p>	



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Year 3

A comprehensive mentoring plan is organised within the structure of SO302 - fortnightly workshops together as a cohort with the dissertation course convenor, with alternative weeks meeting in smaller group meetings just with their academic mentor and peers in the group.



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- MSc – less formalised, group meeting arranged during Welcome with office hours expected to be 1-2-1.
- For staff – we set an expected number of hours each academic mentor should be offering per student, with discussions about how this fits into dissertation supervision.
- Cross over at MSc level between AM and dissertation supervisor.



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Review at MSc level:

- Firstly , we collated up-to-date data on what people were doing
- Some students attending more office hours than others, and block booking so others cannot benefit.
- Still a varied practice between colleagues based on student feedback (some AMs signpost straight away, some handle a problem directly, some do not respond to emails, etc).



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Current Practice MSc

- Devised common principles
- Took it to department Away Day for teaching, agreed MSc programmes could diversify their offering but with the expectation all programmes are offering the same number of contact hours.
- Re-iterate the expectations and responsibilities for staff – lack of training for academic mentors remains a concern.



- **Dissertation teaching and supervision practices:**
- Supervision workload principles where practically possible and appropriate:
- Ratios over 1:15: no ug supervisees or less ug supervisees or focused on YR1 & YR2 and not YR3.

- **Common principles for good practice for in-term supervision:**
- In ST we drop from 2 OH to 1/week
- Each programme allocates 3 distinctive dissertation supervision times per supervisee in (at least one in ST?), minimum 0.5 hour and bookable via the Hub. This is distinct from OH.
- Each programme develops a one-page outline for students on supervision practice and expectations



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Ongoing issues, future plans ...

- Core issues remain the same
- Students
- **BSc** tracking change and effectiveness
- Strengthen role of DT and use of LFY
- **MSc** still rely on information from student reps both formally and informally, hard to track consistency
- **Staff**
- Workloads, recognition, learnt helplessness etc.