



*Erasmus+ programme, KA210, Small scale partnership project in the field of Vocational education and training*

## **“Improvement of digital and peer mentoring support skills of marginalised students to prevent their drop-out from school”**

*Project number: 2022-2-BG01-KA210-VET-000092203*

**A1: Production and customisation of Peer mentoring training materials**



### **Result 1:**

**“Model for peer learning mentoring between advanced students and students with learning difficulties and low skills”**

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## Introduction and context

This guide has been developed for the project team, who will organise and facilitate the peer mentoring concept. Under the term “project team” we include the school principal, the head teacher, other main teachers, and the school pedagogical counsellor. The guide is providing the modalities, stages, and tips for the implementation of the peer mentoring process specifically designed for peer mentoring relationships between advanced (successful) students and the mentees/students, who are low-skilled, with learning difficulties or representing disadvantaged communities (i.e. Roma students) – all of them in the position of a potential school drop-out due to lack of enough knowledge, skills and competences to succeed in the academic performance.

"Mentoring" as an approach and supporting method is widely used, but there is a lack of agreement and some confusion about what it means (*Hurley, 2021*). No universal agreement on a definition of "mentor," (*Mertz, 2011*), so therefore depending on its context (educational or labour) it may have different concept and definition. In the context of the “IM-PRO-MENT” project, we accept the following definition for mentoring – **“A one-to-one, non-judgmental relationship, in which an individual mentor voluntarily gives his/her time to support and encourage another, the mentee** (*ACU, HOME OFFICE 2001*) as well as **“Enduring and supportive mentoring relationships can powerfully influence the course and quality of adolescent lives...”** (*Rhodes, 2002*).

Mentors may guide, support and counsel youths as they navigate their way in the peer world (Kram, 1985). Mentors are like older, wiser, friends, who are available at informal

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times to talk, and exchange advice and counsel (Skouge et. al., 2020). Mentors and those who they assist hold different, often conflicting perceptions of the relationships in which they are involved (Pfleeger & Mertz, 2018), may be formal or informal (Ragins, 2009).

In the context of this project and its activities, it is important to acknowledge the following terms:

- **Peer mentoring** is a volunteering organised “one-to-one” guidance and support between advanced student and vulnerable/disadvantaged peer student, where these students could become more independent, self-directed learners, freeing the instructor (their advanced peer) to focus on course content and facilitation rather than continue with routine tasks, which may lead to their potential school drop-out.
- **Peer student/peer mentee** is a less experienced or/and disadvantaged student (minority representative, student with disability, learning difficulty or low skills), who is frequently observing difficulties in learning participation, comprehension with the training content, preparation of homework due to problems with engaging in class discussions, and writing in an academic style or experienced serious challenges during distance or online learning.
- **Peer mentor** is an advanced student (at least one year older than the peer mentee), who is willing to cooperate with the peer mentee for their mutual academic and personal development. Peer mentors are recruited by the teachers at school based on definite criteria. They are expected to collaborate with the peer mentee for successful implementation of mentoring process *for a period of 4 months – 3 times of week for 90 minutes per session.*

Peer mentoring schemes offer several benefits to both the school/college and learners acting as peer mentors. For learners (mentees), it is an opportunity to gain in confidence, develop a sense of responsibility and acquire active listening, empathy, and communication skills.

Peer mentors among advanced students often have more in common with learners who need help than adults. Because of this, learners who have been bullied often find it helpful to talk to a peer and are more likely to listen to them than an adult (i.e. teacher, pedagogical counsellor, principal etc.). In this way, peer-mentoring schemes can influence behaviour to create a positive change in a school's culture.

Throughout the past decades, several research reports have been conducted in terms of the major outcomes from the mentoring and peer support. Among them, we may highlight the following:

- Peer mentoring helps youth develop skills, knowledge and motivation to successfully transition from high school to adult life (*Moccia, Schumaker, Hazel, Vernon & Deshler, 2010*);
- Peer mentoring changes the course of a young person's life, decrease substance abuse and improve academic performance (*Beier, Rosenfeld, Spitalny, Zansky & Bontempo, 2014*);
- Peer mentoring impacts many of the goals that are part of the transition process: succeeding academically, understanding the adult world, developing career awareness, accepting support while taking responsibility, communicating effectively, overcoming barriers and developing social skills (*Rhodes et al., 2015*);

- In the peer mentoring relationship, mentors and mentees both win, resulting in long-term benefits for society at large (*Burgstahler & Cronheim, 2001; Kram, 2019; Kram & Isabella, 2015; Saito & Blyth, 1992*).

The school achievements of marginalised and low skilled students (i.e. Roma origin) are still a huge problem in Bulgaria. The onset of the COVID-19/flu pandemics and the shift to distance and digital learning that followed has placed unique pressure on these students and badly impacted their families.

For example: Roma students and their parents have often been left to fend for themselves as they look for support services alongside in-person learning — even though Roma students are entitled to receive support services according to the legislative framework in school education — the parents feel uncomfortable that their children face a heightened risk of learning loss during periods of remote instruction, which can lead to potential school drop-out.

The parents are frequently worried, that they cannot find a stopgap solution, and, in that case, this could make their children with special educational needs gravely vulnerable. Peers can be a powerful motivator for other students. Advanced students' behaviour is related to their proven success as supportive students.

Less-experienced and students with low-academic achievements frequently observe difficulties, especially in distance learning participation, comprehension with the training content, preparation of homework due to lack of online and physical support of teachers as well as problems with engaging in class discussions, making presentations (PPTs) and writing in an academic style. The idea is that through peer learning mentoring support, these students from marginalised groups would become more independent, self-directed

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learners, freeing the peer supporter (their advanced peer) to focus on course content and facilitation rather than continue with routine tasks, which may lead to their potential school drop-out.

Our solution is to set up of peer learning mentoring schemes between advanced students and low-skilled Roma students to prevent potential school drop-out including via digital tools (*see Result 3*), which will lead to peer support. This will improve the digital competences, which are lower than any their student group.

Target groups in our pilot peer mentoring schemes are:

- **Peer mentors** selected among advanced, who will support their peers (from disadvantaged communities – ethnic origin, disability, learning difficulty etc.) at the project piloting phase.
  - In the local pilot site at 94 SU “Dimitar Strashimirov” Sofia, Bulgaria 15 students will be trained and act as peer mentors for a period of minimum 4 months.
  - **Selection criteria** for them are:
    - Aged at least 1 year older than the mentee.
    - Proven success in the academic activities
    - Same specialty at school as the mentee.
    - Time availability to provide mentoring support.
    - Proven level of responsibility, trustfulness and empathy.
    - These mentors will take part in the project tryouts to strengthen their personal skills to enhance and facilitate the peer mentoring experiences of their peers in the academic/educational subjects but also in areas such as active citizenship, empowerment, social inclusion, equal opportunities.

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- **Mentees** - students representing disadvantaged communities (Roma origin, learning difficulties or disabilities) will be also engaged - minimum 15 students (with the potential this figure to be increased) at 94 SU will be selected based on following selection criteria:
  - Leading principle: "the most vulnerable to succeed in the learning". This will be evaluated by interdisciplinary team at the school, composed by the school principal, head teacher and the pedagogical counsellor.
  - Aged between 14 and 17 years old (8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> grade of education)
  - Eagerness to be supported in the education process by peer mentor.
  - Acceptance by their parents to take part in the pilot mentoring scheme.

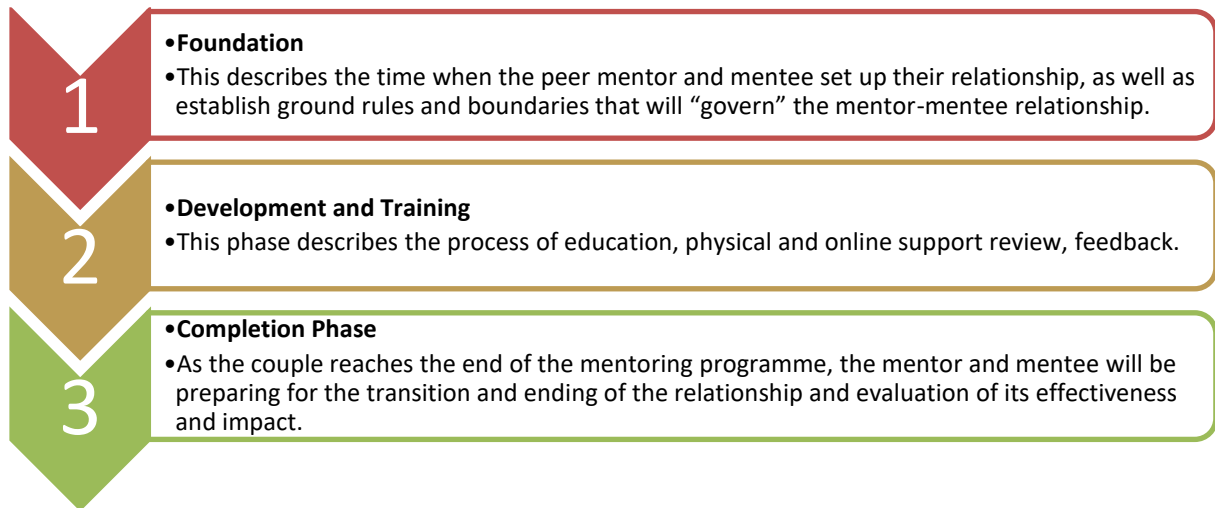
The peer support mentoring will guarantee that Roma' young people that there is someone who cares about them, assures them they are not alone in dealing with day-to-day challenges, and makes them feel like they matter.

We believe that the quality mentoring relationships will have powerful positive effects on young people in a variety of personal, academic, digital and professional situations. This kind of mentoring will connect the young people to personal growth and development, and social and economic opportunity, which will improve their educational and societal inclusion.

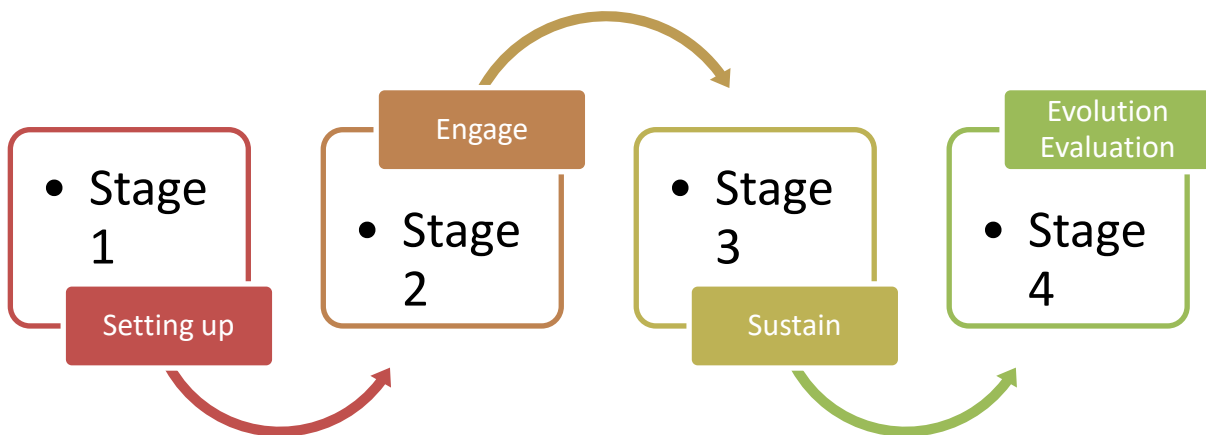
Our peer support mentoring will provide meaningful connections that impact the people involved and influence their lives at home, at work, and in their communities. For those who are being mentored, it is linked to improved academic, social and economic prospects.

## Main characteristics of the peer mentoring process

The typical peer mentoring framework includes the following **three phases**:



Most peer mentoring relationships go through **four stages**:



It is important to remember that these stages are not clear-cut. They frequently overlap, and the mentoring process that is facilitated at the school may bring the mentoring couple returning to an earlier phase. This is all part of the normal development of the relationship.

## Stage 1 – Setting up

Setting up of the mentoring relationship is where it all begins. During this phase, the project team at school (consisting of teachers, head teacher, pedagogical counsellor, and the school principal) will experience one of the most exciting events – the selection and matching process of candidates for mentors with mentees, which after evaluation, are determined in risk of educational drop-out. This process should follow a particular procedure, which should be publicly announced at the school and to the parents of both mentors and mentees.

Efficient recruitment must be targeted – resources will be wasted unless they are directed at the groups you need to reach, and you should make sure that your marketing reflects the needs and interests of the groups from which you are seeking to recruit.

Remember also that you will need to recruit more participants than may seem to be required: some will drop out, others will prove impossible to match and some will prove to be inappropriate for peer mentoring. Always remember the risks that can be associated with mentoring. The timing of recruitment is important – there is little point in trying to recruit participants, in the middle of summer vacation periods. Also, it is very important not to leave more than a short gap between recruitment and the start of the mentoring period: otherwise, there will be a danger of potential participants dropping out.

It is self-evident that good procedures for matching mentors and mentees are fundamental to any successful peer mentoring programme.

On the other hand, it is essential that expectations are not unrealistic. The role of the peer mentor is to provide support and guidance: crucially it is to help the mentee develop her/his own skills and competences, not to provide detailed instruction in the performance of technical tasks.

Upon finalisation of the matching process, the project team needs to set up the peer mentoring relationship and organising the meeting between those in the couple. It is wise to think during the matching process, that potentially if the mentor and mentee knows each other previous, it might accelerate the process of start of the peer mentoring relationship and activities. You will also talk with your mentee to find out what each of you is expecting from the relationship.

Let's look at what the project team can do to make sure that the first few meetings of each mentoring couple go well. The first meeting is where the peer mentor and the mentee will form first impressions for each other, so it's important that the meetings go well. A little advanced planning can do a lot to ensure that their first meeting is a success.

From the first recruitment onwards, the peer mentor and mentee will be gaining knowledge and understanding of the nature of mentoring and each step must contribute to the overall process. It can be helpful to encourage mentors and mentees to recognise the boundaries of their normal interaction and to understand the need for delicacy and care if either feels that they should raise issues, perhaps of a personal nature, that go beyond these limits. If you take this approach, you should address it specifically in the training process. Time is a key aspect of successful training programmes: you may have to balance the pressures on the sometimes-busy schedules of participants with the need to ensure that mentors and mentees give enough time to training to enable them to meet their responsibilities effectively.

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**Here are some things to think about and to discuss internally at the project team before organisation of the first meetings of the peer mentoring couple:**

- Since we want this relationship to be a partnership, you can start with the notion of shared responsibility from the beginning.
- For example, rather than telling a young person *"Let's meet at McDonald's?"* the peer mentor might say, *"I've thought about a few different places we might meet up - how about I tell you about them and you can let me know if one sounds best?"*
- Meeting with the mentee (vulnerable student) for the first time is one of the most exciting points in the relationship. However, it can be a bit uncomfortable - for both!
- Both mentors and mentees often worry about the other person's opinion.
- Both often worry about what they will say.

The following are some suggestions to help **to develop a connection and build trust between the peer mentor and the mentee:**

- Suggest a good place to meet.
- Help both (mentor and mentee) to be prepared.
- Prepare yourself also as facilitator of this first meeting.
- Ensure that all involved people will be on time.
- It is important that the conversations are set with a comfortable tone.
- Prepare a list of things (aims, goals etc.) to talk about.

Setting ground rules early in the peer mentoring relationship will help the mentoring couple avoid many problems later. Ground rules establish the framework of their relationship. It is important that both are comfortable with and agree to the ground rules the project team has set.

The peer mentor/mentee pairs should set **ground rules** that dealt with:

- How often to meet?
- Places/times to meet.
- What to do if one partner is unable to make a meeting?
- Bringing friends to mentor meetings.
- Confidentiality issues.
- Dealing with problems.

During the first meeting or two, it will be important for the peer mentor to talk with his/her mentee to clarify what it is that he/she hopes to get from the relationship.

*Is he/she looking for help with schoolwork?*

*Does he/she have an educational goal they could help to achieve?*

Maybe the mentee is just looking for someone to talk to about the important issues in his/her life.

The peer mentoring relationship will be successful if the peer mentor can help his/her mentee to work towards his/her goals, but they need to find out what they are first. During the first few meetings, they need to try to define these at a high level and they can define them in greater detail later.

Strong communication skills will be critical to building your relationship. There are **four critical communication skills** for you to master:

- *Listening skills* - Most of us never attended a class in school on how to listen to other people - though we all could have used it! While we may think we're pretty good listeners, in fact most people don't listen as well as they could - but the good news is, this is a skill that everyone can learn and used immediately!

- Some common traps we tend to fall into as we listen to other people are:
  - Listening to respond
  - Making assumptions
  - The emotional shut-down
- *Questioning skills* - Just as most of us have never really learned how to listen deeply, neither have we had a class in asking great questions!

To get the mentee to open up and talk with the peer mentor, it's a good idea to practice asking "open ended" questions.

- *Reading body language* - Body language is the non-verbal movements we make as a part of how we communicate, from waving hands to involuntary twitching of facial muscles. Just as there are common mistakes and barriers to good listening, the same can be said of talking - verbal communication.

### **Confidentiality**

- In the peer mentoring relationships, confidentiality is an important element of an effective relationship. The mentee must feel able to bring difficult issues and their own vulnerability to the relationship to explore and work on areas for development.
- To provide a safe environment for the mentee, the peer mentor must offer confidentiality. During the foundation phase, the peer mentor and mentee must explore the nature of this confidentiality. They need to agree that personal issues shared in mentoring will remain confidential as far as possible. Should a discussion of general aspects of learning and development needs with project team be necessary, the peer mentor and mentee will discuss and agree how the peer mentor might best support the mentee.

- There are times when confidentiality needs to be broken, when the mentor feels the mentee, or another person being discussed is at risk. These limitations of confidentiality are to be explicit for both parties.

### **Ethical framework**

An ethical framework will balance an appropriate responsibility for the mentee with respect for their autonomy. Following aspects should be respected by the peer mentor and the project team may provide these during the induction training:

- Do not harm!
- Maintaining appropriate concern for the well-being and protection of the mentee and others
- Acting within the limits of one's own competence and knowing when to seek help.
- Fidelity – keeping explicit and implicit promises made.
- Openness to challenge and feedback combined with an active commitment to on-going learning.
- To work with a light touch – using humour and relaxation.

Key points during the induction training of peer mentors that the project team should consider are:

- Guidance about what may be achieved and the setting of goals.
- Preparation for each stage of the process.
- Agenda setting and meetings organisation.
- Sustaining focus and attaining goals.
- What to do in the event of problems.
- Equal opportunity awareness.
- Issues about confidentiality and data protection.



- Do not forget asking feedback on training to assess its effectiveness.
- Review and closure.

## Stage 2 Engage

Once the peer mentoring relationship is off to a good start, the peer mentor and the mentee enter the second phase: engage. From the outset they have worked on getting to know one another, they can at the same time to plan specific activities and goals for the mentorship. This is sometimes called paying attention to "task" - the things peer mentor and the mentee want to do and accomplish; and to "relationship" - building a solid connection between them.

In the "Engage" phase, the peer mentoring couple will deepen and strengthen their relationship, developing greater mutual trust and respect. At the same time, they will be further defining tasks - defining goals and making plans for activities that will help meet the mentee's goals.

One of the key elements in building a strong mentoring relationship will be that the peer mentor is helping his/her mentee to define and achieve his/her goals. As they begin the process based on definition where he/she wants to go, it can be helpful to encourage them look at where the mentee is now.

When a young person, or anyone for that matter, applies these concepts to him/herself, s/he can make choices in life that are consistent with whom s/he is and wants to be. This is sometimes called living your life "on purpose." It's a powerful experience and one that can be very much life-enhancing.

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Many a wise person has pointed out that "if you don't know where you're going, any road will do." Just like other practical skills which didn't make it into the high school curriculum, most of us were never taught the skills of defining a personal mission (the "destination") and then setting goals and objectives (the "roadmap") to help get us there. Take a time to support the peer mentor on structuring of this process. To begin, the peer mentoring couple should define their terms.

Once the peer mentor and the mentee have gotten clear on mission, goals, and objectives, it will be much easier to plan activities they can do together. Of course, many of the activities can and perhaps should relate to helping the mentee achieve his or her goals and objectives - but remember, **this mentorship is not only about task - goal achievement - it's also about relationship - getting to know each other better, enjoying themselves.**

### Stage 3 Sustain

The next stage of the peer mentoring relationship will likely be the longest as they should sustain their peer mentoring relationship. During this stage the peer mentor should continue to help the mentee one reaching his/her goals.

They will both need some new skills to keep their relationship strong over the long term. These include:

- Giving feedback.
- Solving problems.
- Determining if they are really making a difference (evolution and transition).

Let's discuss each one of them in the next block.

### Giving Feedback

As the peer mentoring relationship continues to grow, there will be times when both will need to give the other feedback. Feedback is important to both correct problems and reinforce positive aspects of the relationship. However, even though feedback is critical to sustaining a relationship, most of us don't really know how to give constructive feedback and in positive manner. Giving helpful feedback is a very important skill - for both - the peer mentor and the mentee.

### Problem-solving

As in any relationship, it is inevitable that problems will occur. These may be problems between the peer mentor and the mentee, or between the mentee and someone else (i.e. teacher or another student). There may even be mentee problems that don't involve others (internal problems or mental health problems etc.).

Here, the project team can instruct the peer mentor that s/he can play two key roles. First, s/he can help the mentee to find a workable solution to the problem. Even more importantly, the peer mentor can model a problem-solving process that mentee can apply to other problems.

The problems solving process consists of six steps:



Most young people choose to become a peer mentor because they want to make a positive difference in the life of a person younger than them. There will be times where it is easy to see the impact they are having. For example, the mentee might:

- do well on a test or an assignment/task on which the peer mentor provided help.
- successfully resolve a long-standing problem.
- talk with teachers and other peers more freely.
- ask you more questions.
- be clearer about what they want or need from others.
- acknowledge something about them.

However, sometimes it can be hard to tell if the mentee really is making a difference.

#### Stage 4 Evolution (Transition) & Evaluation

Some peer mentoring relationships do come to an end, often at the end of an agreed upon time (at the end of the fourth month). However, some mentors and mentees choose to stay in touch in addition after their formal interaction ends. The project team should talk with both peer mentor and mentee about the ways their mentoring relationship may end or change in this section and help them feel good about how that can happen.

**Keep in mind, though, that there's another way that mentoring is an ongoing cycle without an end: when a mentee grows up and decides to become a mentor to a young person, the cycle of giving - you might call it a 'virtuous cycle' - continues.**

When a mentee has reached his or her mentoring-related goals and the time both people have committed has ended, it is time to come to closure on their formal relationship.

Remember to tell them, that this does not mean "this is goodbye - sob!" - you can and should talk together about whether they would like to remain in touch - and if so, how.

Sometimes - despite everyone's best efforts - a mentoring relationship comes to an early conclusion.

Common reasons for this to occur include:

- Mentor or mentee moves out of the "area".
- Other major life changes (health concerns, family issues etc.) make continuing impossible.
- One of the pair decides to end the relationship.

If the relationship ends because of an unavoidable circumstance, consider taking the time to get closure between the peer mentor and the mentee and help them celebrate what they have accomplished. It is helpful to acknowledge that there is probably some disappointment on both parts and then make sure the mentee knows that this is not a reflection on him/her or how much the peer mentor care.

If one or both truly feels it would be best to end the relationship, then the goal should be to make the ending positive and affirming for both. The peer mentor may ask his/her mentee for a last meeting to talk about the ending and say goodbye.

The project team may advise the peer mentor at that meeting to remember to:

- Emphasize what has gone well - ways s/he seen the mentee grow, and ways s/he has benefited.



- Acknowledge that sometimes relationships are challenging, and the peer mentor hopes they both gained some skills in working on interpersonal issues.
- Reaffirm the faith in the mentee's abilities and potential.
- Encourage him or her to keep reaching out to others who can make a positive difference in his or her life - and to give back of him/herself to others.

The monitoring, evaluation and validation of the learning outcomes are dully explained in the next chapter.

## E-mentoring (online/virtual peer mentoring)

E-mentoring has demonstrated to be a two-way mutually beneficial learning and supporting situation, where the peer mentor provides advice, shares knowledge and experiences using a self-discovery approach. Mentoring over the Internet, e-mentoring or virtual mentoring, is becoming increasingly more important especially during and after COVID-19 pandemic. The prospects for virtual mentoring have a great future in education and human resource development, according to Bierema and Hill (2015).

Peer mentors will be responsible for sending out regular communication, offering direction on locating additional technical support, directing online mentees to resources on effective online study strategies (*see Result 3 Handbook for usage of digital tools in peer support*), and providing direction for overcoming any obstacles mentees may encounter in an online setting.

Peer mentors can assist mentees with more adept topics relating to strategies for succeeding within online learning environments such as ZOOM, Microsoft Teams, Google Meet, WebEx etc., such as time management, establishing a productive learning space, interacting/connecting with teachers and peers, navigating online teachers' resources, etc. In such the project team needs to train peer mentors to assist mentees with troubleshooting and mastering institutionally supported educational technology.

In terms of online safety, the role of a peer mentor should include:

- providing learners with someone of their own age to talk to about problems they experience online.



- reporting incidents of online bullying or other issues to staff members.
- understanding the issues that exist among their peers in relation to the online world.
- working with and supporting learners who have experienced issues such as online bullying.
- helping to review policies and procedures around online safety.
- running activities and campaigns which educate learners, staff and parents/carers about online safety and promote positive online behaviour and attitudes.
- educating learners and parents/carers about what they can do if they and/or their child are struggling with an issue online.
- building a school/college culture which places a strong ongoing emphasis on online safety and skills.



## Monitoring, evaluation, and validation of the learning outcomes

The overall functions of monitoring and evaluation divide into **two categories**:

- the first is about individual mentoring pairs and their progress.
- the second concerns the effectiveness of the mentoring programme in achieving its objectives.

### Monitoring the progress of mentoring pairs

Monitoring in this respect must reconcile requirements that are potentially in conflict with each other.

- On the one hand confidentiality and flexibility are intrinsic to successful mentoring. Both parties must feel free to talk openly about what may be very sensitive subjects that they would not wish to be more widely exposed. Similarly, they may need to adapt their operational arrangements to meet requirements that are confidential between them. As a matter of principle, the mentee and peer mentor take joint responsibility for their arrangements and in some crucial respects 'ownership' lies above all with the mentee.
- In contrast, some monitoring of mentoring partnerships is essential.
  - Project team need to know whether the participants view their experience as successful and what aspects worked well or badly, so that future practice can be improved.
  - Project team need to know what the participants did in order to be able to relate this to positive and negative feedback.

Work in these respects does not present the same unusual challenges as are dealt with above, except, of course, that every effort must be made to ensure that confidential information about individual mentees or mentors is not revealed in any process of overall reporting. Specific examples can be very valuable in reporting on any programme – but if used in relation to peer mentoring particular care must be taken to remove any possible identifying details and, where appropriate, to obtain the consent of the individuals concerned.

### **The validation of learning outcomes**

The structure of this section provides an explanatory statement dealing with a series of important background issues and some overall principles concerning the validation of learning.

The main reason for this is that validation – in particular the recognition of learning outcomes achieved by mentees – is an aspect of peer mentoring that remains somewhat controversial and that many peer mentoring programmes do not yet implement. There are real difficulties in any formal assessment of the achievements of mentees: too readily it can interfere with and distort the operation of the mentoring relationship. So, the attempt to assess can easily prejudice the success of that which is being assessed.

We present an approach to validation that is built on three core principles:

- Validation should give the mentee the opportunity to achieve recognition for her/his learning.
- It must vary in format and level of detail to suit the preferences of the mentee.
- It should be designed not to interfere with the mentoring process itself.

The validation of non-formal and informal learning enables the achievements of learners to be properly taken account of by those who may be considering the learner as not any more in danger of school drop-out. This is a major benefit to learners who often lack other, more conventional evidence of their abilities. But ‘validation’, the demonstration that learning has taken place, requires processes that can have other important benefits for the learner. The process also encourages reflection by learners on their own learning.

Despite these benefits, it is essential to remember that participation in the validation process is, and must remain, optional. Mentees may choose to opt out of the whole process or of any part. So, for example, they might produce a learning statement, but choose not to compile a portfolio or to develop a full CV.

But it is important that all programmes should seriously consider doing so and it is recommended that the rationale for any decision not to do so is made clear. It should be remembered that validation offers genuine, important, benefits to mentees, particularly in a future of unstable job-markets. Therefore, we suggest at least a partial form of validation and evidence of this consideration should be presented in the **Statement of Self-Assessment**.

### **Our model for the validation of learning outcomes**

The core principle of our model is that the learner should be able to draw on three ways of recording learning achievements.

The mentee may choose:

- a simple Statement.
- May decide to produce a wider portfolio of evidence.

- May also wish to represent learning achievements on a Europass CV.

The mentee will be free to choose between these methods, to combine them or to opt not to use any system of recording.

### **The Learning Statement**

Learning Statements express what a mentee can do as the result of a learning experience – in this case peer mentoring. They will be expressed at quite different levels according to the position of the mentee, but should cover:

- A brief description of the peer mentoring process.
- The objectives that the mentee sought to achieve because of mentoring.
- Any changes to these objectives during the period.
- A summary of what the mentee did, to include both planned activities and others that may have emerged during the mentoring period.
- Any hard, technical, skills used an/or learned during mentoring (examples might be IT skills during online learning – *see Result 3 for more information*).
- The softer skills of social interaction and personal self-appraisal learned during mentoring (varying from timekeeping and time-management, through objective-setting to face-to-face communication).
- An indication of the range of tasks that the mentee feels able to undertake as the result of the learning that has taken place.

The length of the Learning Statement will vary according to the individual case, perhaps normally within the range of one to three A4 pages. Work towards the development of a

Learning Statement would be a useful element of “IM-PRO-MENT” peer mentoring programme.

## The Portfolio

The Portfolio provides a full set of evidence about the peer mentoring process and the mentee’s achievements. Its form and content could vary according to the programme and the needs of the mentee.

### *Core ingredients*

1. Summary description (written and owned by promoter) of the nature of the peer mentoring programme, covering:
  - Duration
  - Purpose
  - Mentee/mentor roles
  - Requirements (or tasks) of mentee
2. An optional statement, prepared jointly by the mentee and peer mentor, explaining any features that might be specific to their peer mentoring arrangement.
3. The mentee’s objectives (this could be the plan agreed between the mentee and the peer mentor, or might be an adaptation of it, with any confidential material taken out; it is owned by the mentee, although the mentor will have supported the preparation of the original version and the promoter may help in any adaptation for the portfolio)
4. The mentee’s statement of outcomes/achievements – following [Europass CV categories](#).
  - It would probably be produced through an interview using some sort of loose questionnaire. Mentees are likely to need help to recognise and state what they have

learned (even though they will have made some progress in this through the mentoring process).

- It could be in the form of a video or a sound recording if this is more practical than a written text.
- It should include some sense of the 'before' and 'after' – to provide an indication of what the added value has been.
- But it must be owned by the mentee - the mentee makes the final decision about what is included.

5. An evaluation by the project team, stating that the mentee has followed the requirements of the programme and providing some confirmation of the mentee's statement of achievements. The evaluation would be owned by the project team – although it should be produced in consultation with the mentee.

Here are some possible questions the evaluator might address:

- Has the mentee participated fully in the process (kept appointments etc.)?
- Can I identify achievements by the mentee during the mentoring process?
- Is the mentee's self-evaluation consistent with my knowledge of her/his progress?

6. A formal certificate of 'Satisfactory Completion' should be provided.

#### *Format of the portfolio*

1. Traditionally portfolios are in hard copy – recently the trend has been towards e-portfolios. Both should be acceptable.
2. A key feature is that, overall, the portfolio is the property of the mentee – so it must be in a format to which the mentee has access.
3. The portfolio does not need to be in a single format – some parts could be on paper, others online or in alternative formats.

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## Tips for success

The following provides a **list of tips for a successful peer mentoring process**:

- The peer mentor is a person able to provide support for other individuals on a suitable level at concrete school setting.
- Through support training and direct guidance, the peer mentor can ensure the connection between theoretical training and practice, thus helping the mentees in their academic success.
- Training (induction) is usually provided for both parties' mentees/peer mentors, and this is widely viewed as an essential to the success of the peer mentoring.
- Effective monitoring is often seen as a key to success.
- Mentoring is a form of informal learning. However, its main essence is not simply replacing or replicating learning/formal education by more attractive and appealing forms of learning, studying, and practicing. It solves the task of quality learning in the process of education, which ensures achievement of higher results.

This can be realized through the following **functions and requirements**:

- Acquired skills, knowledge, techniques, or way of activity should be of a good quality and be understood in detail by the mentee.
- Peer mentor's explanations should be comprehensive and detailed so that the shared knowledge and experience can be analysed, scrutinized, and understood in the greatest detail, and afterwards summarized.

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- The peer mentor should make sure, that every element, every taught knowledge, and skills can be reproduced or repeated with a view that the mentees might apply it later their own.
- The peer mentor may correct the gaps and mistakes, made by the mentee in the process of learning.
- The peer mentor should encourage every creative interpretation of the studied knowledge, every non-standard solution, related to what the mentee learned. This also helps the peer mentor to learn himself.



## Relevant sources

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