
PUTTING THE PASS IN CLASS: IN-CLASS PEER MENTORING ON CAMPUS AND ONLINE

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We analyse the introduction of peer mentors into classrooms to understand how in-class mentoring supports students' learning in first-year courses. Peer mentors are high-achieving students who have completed the same course previously, and are hired and trained by the university to facilitate Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS). PASS sessions give students the opportunity to deepen their understanding through revision and active learning and are typically held outside of class time. In contrast, our trial embedded peer mentors into the classes for *Professional Scientific Thinking*, a large (~250 students) workshop-based course at the University of Newcastle. Analysis of Blackboard analytics, student responses to Brookfield's Critical Incident Questionnaire and peer mentors' journals found that during face-to-face workshops, peer mentors role-modelled ideal student behaviour (e.g. asking questions), rather than act as additional teachers. This helped students new to university to better understand how to interact and learn effectively in class. Moving classes online mid-semester reshaped mentors' roles, including through the technical aspects of their work and their engagement with students – adaptations that were essential for supporting students to also adapt effectively to changed learning circumstances. This study highlights the benefits of embedding student mentors in classrooms, both on campus and online.

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