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Promoting Student Engagement Through the CCT Student Mentoring Academy

Marie O Neill

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Promoting Student Engagement: The Impact of the Student Mentoring Academy at CCT College Dublin

Marie O' Neill
EDI Officer

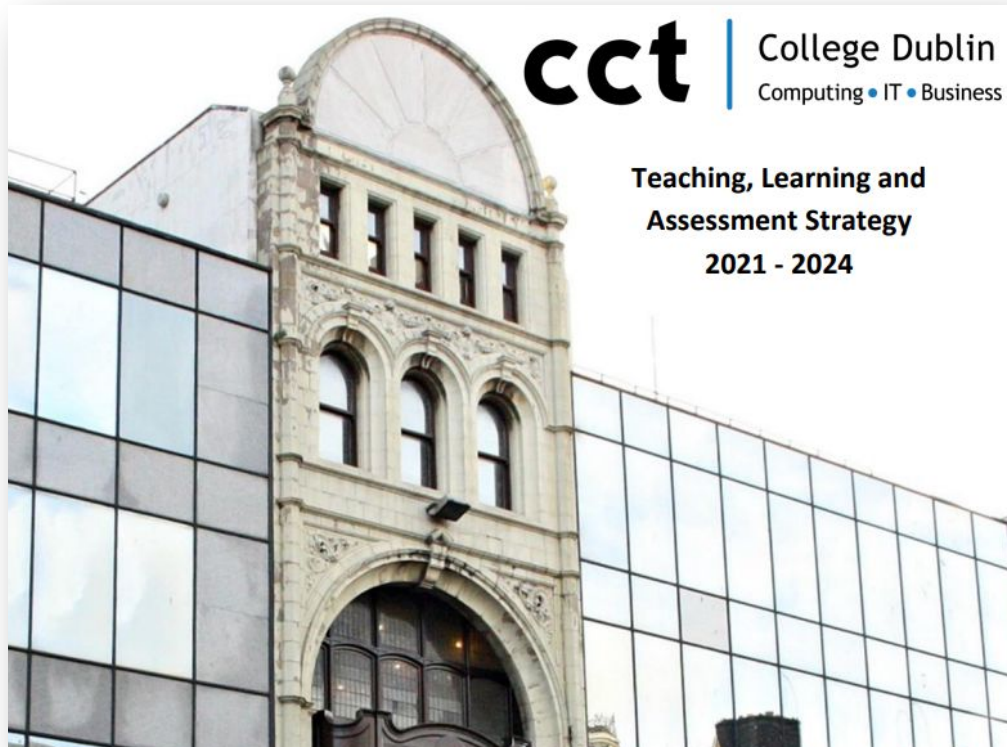




About CCT College Dublin

- Founded by College President Neil Gallagher in 2005. CCT is based in college owned premises at Westmoreland Street. Approximately 1350 students.
- Offers **QQI validated programmes in business and ICT up to and including Level 9 of the NFQ**
- **Blended learning provider** status awarded by QQI in 2020. **Devolution** awarded in 2023.
- CCT has passed **stage 1 of the AsIAM accreditation process** to become an autism friendly college
- Member of the Higher Education Colleges Association (HECA)
- CCT is a strategic partner of Microsoft Ireland

Strategic Commitment to Peer Learning at CCT Since the College's Foundation in 2005



https://arc.cct.ie/strategy_documents/5/

“peer learning is a central priority in relation to the creation of **student identity and the ability to engage in the learning environment.....for academic success...** research shows that peer interaction and **social integration** in higher education are closely linked to student **retention, progression and performance**”

(CCT Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, 2021)

“We believe that the further development, of our Student Mentoring Programme will facilitate the **development of self-efficacy.**”

(Ibid, p.14)



1. Background Context

Key Sectoral Priority – Widening Access



<https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/national-access-plan-2022-2028/>



<https://www.ahead.ie/Launch-of-21-Report-on-Numbers-of-Students-with-Disabilities-in-Higher-Education>

Progression Statistics HEA: Examples

- While the overall non-progression rate improved in 2019/20, the non-progression rates for new entrants at **Level 6 and 7** is at least double that for entrants to Level 8 courses (16% and 18% at Levels 6 and 7 respectively, compared to 8% at Level 8).
- As in recent years, the highest overall non-progression rate was in the Services field of study (16% for 2019/20 entrants), closely followed by **ICT (15%)** and Engineering, Manufacturing & Construction (13%).
- **Mature entrants** have a higher non-progression rate than non-mature entrants at Level 8



Source: <https://hea.ie/2022/04/11/non-progression-rates-among-first-year-students-continue-to-trend-downward/>

The Academic Literature

- The **academic performance** of students is positively impacted by psychosocial and academic support provided by peers (**Thiele et al., 2018**)
- College students who engage in first-year programmes such as a peer mentoring programme experience increased academic success, increased **progression to future semesters, enhanced enjoyment of the university experience, sense of belonging, and campus participation.** (**Graham et al., 2022**).
- When student engagement increases, **student dropout rates decrease** (**Bowman and Culver, 2018; Weaver et al., 2017**).
- Students in formal mentoring relationships have an **increased sense of belonging** to their academic institution and have **increased confidence and skills in relation to transitioning to the workplace** (**Hamilton et al., 2019**)

Peer Mentoring and Inclusion

- Peer mentoring relationships support the academic outcomes of **ethnically diverse first-generation college students** (Flores and Estudillo, 2018)
- Peer mentoring programmes support students with **developmental or intellectual disabilities** (Ames et al., 2015; Hillier et al., 2019; Roberts and Birmingham, 2017)

Article | [Open access](#) | [Published: 11 November 2022](#)

Female peer mentors early in college have lasting positive impacts on female engineering students that persist beyond graduation

[Deborah J. Wu](#), [Kelsey C. Thiem](#) & [Nilanjana Dasgupta](#) 

[Nature Communications](#) **13**, Article number: 6837 (2022) | [Cite this article](#)

4855 Accesses | 2 Citations | 147 Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

Abstract

Expanding the talent pipeline of students from underrepresented backgrounds in STEM has been a priority in the United States for decades. However, potential solutions to increase the number of such students in STEM academic pathways, measured using longitudinal randomized controlled trials in real-world contexts, have been limited. Here, we expand on an earlier investigation that reported results from a longitudinal field experiment in which undergraduate female students ($N = 150$) interested in engineering at college entry were randomly assigned a female peer mentor in engineering, a male peer mentor in engineering, or not assigned a mentor for their first year of college. While an earlier article presented findings from participants' first two years of college, the current article reports the same

<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41467-022-34508-x>



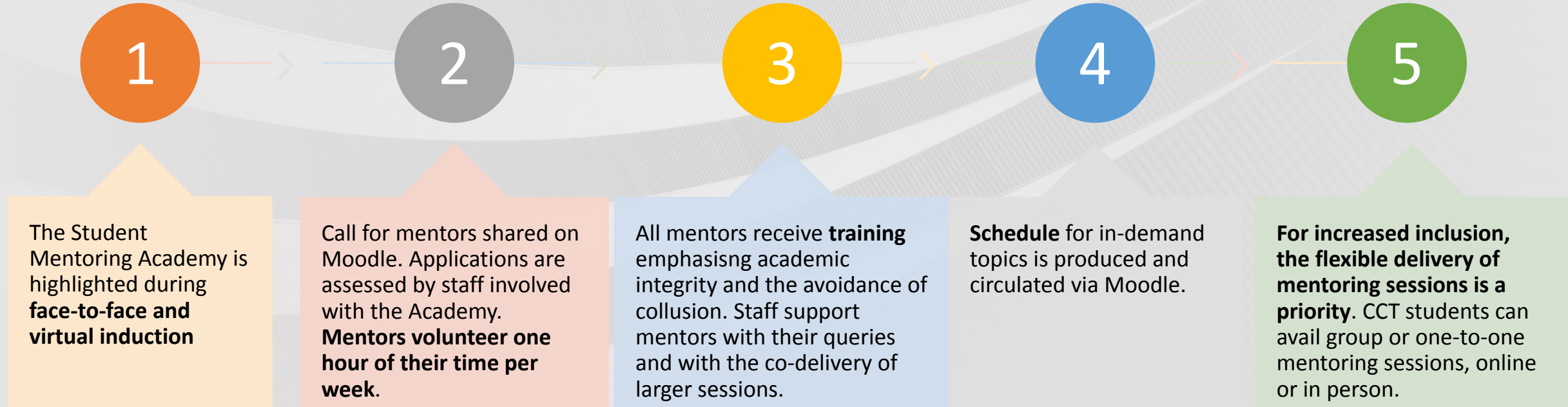
2. The CCT Student Mentoring Academy

Aims of the CCT Student Mentoring Academy



- To support student transition, academic support, progression and student success initiatives at CCT College Dublin.
- To provide **additional academic support** to students studying complex subjects in ICT and Business.
- To support the development of students' **social learning and self-efficacy** skills whilst enhancing their **career development**
- To support **equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives**. Student mentoring is valuable for international students, students with disabilities and mature learners etc.
- To support institutional **student partnership initiatives** with the aim of developing the **leadership and teamwork skills of mentors**.
- The Student Mentoring Academy is an extracurricular activity co-led and managed by the **Head of Student Services** and members of **Faculty** in partnership with student mentors

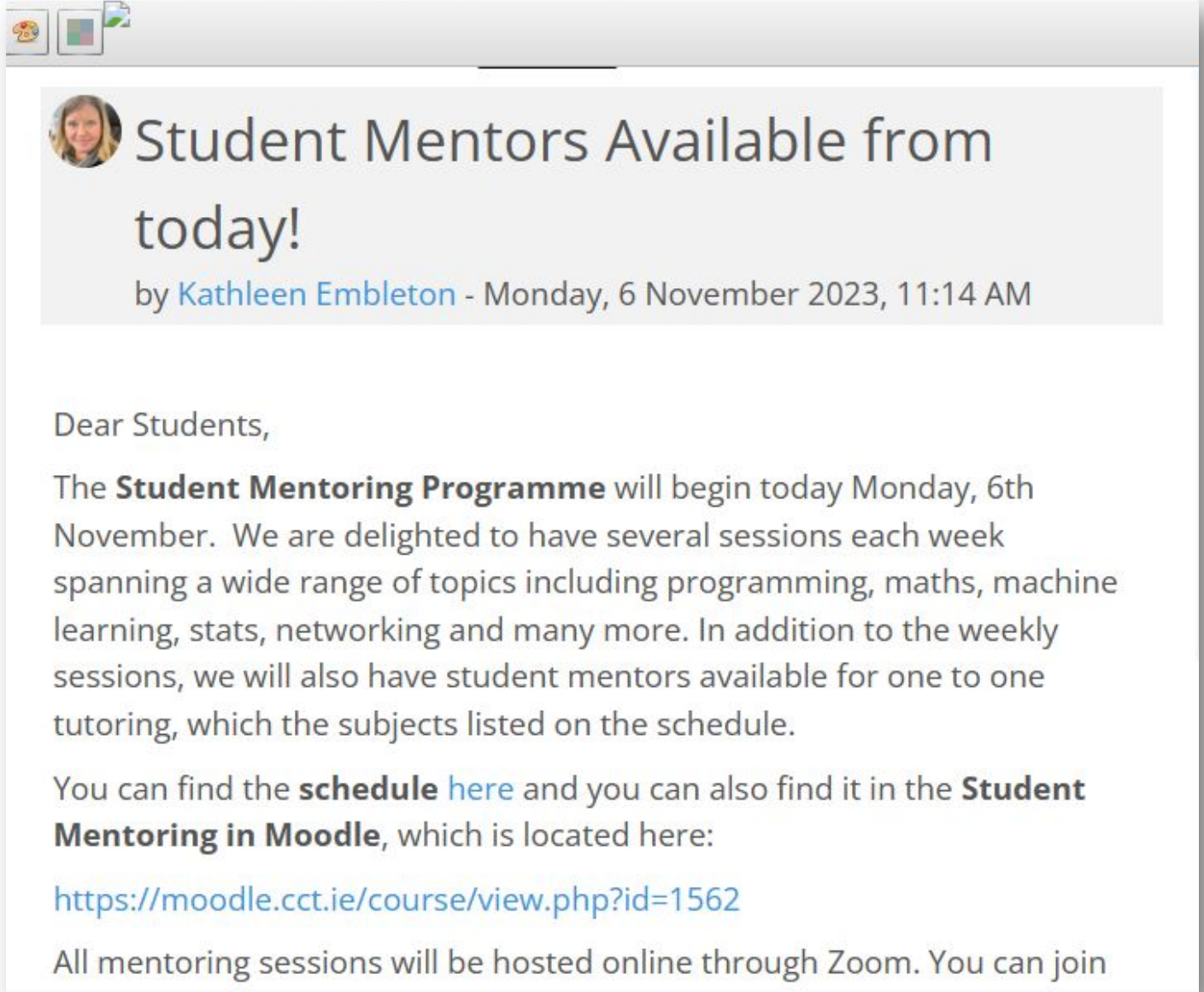
How does the CCT Student Mentoring Academy work in practice?



Training Mentors

- Mentors are selected by faculty based on knowledge, aptitude and interpersonal skills
- Mentors aim to foster **competence, autonomy and relatedness** in peer mentees (**Deci and Ryan, 2000**)
- Mentors are trained to engage in **effective listening, communication and problem solving**
- The difference between collaboration and collusion is emphasised to mentors as part of the mentor training programme and institutional academic integrity strategies
- Mentors are encouraged to avail of support from staff. Larger mentoring sessions are co-delivered by mentors and faculty.
- In addition to providing **pastoral support** to mentors and mentees, the Head of Student Services plays a pivotal role in supporting faculty with the sourcing of mentors, scheduling and engagement strategies.

Moodle plays an important role in **advertising student mentoring sessions**. A **dedicated Student Mentoring Academy page** is available on Moodle with support resources.



The screenshot shows a Moodle announcement post. At the top left, there are three small icons: a palette, a grid, and a document. The main header of the post features a circular profile picture of a woman with blonde hair, followed by the title "Student Mentors Available from today!" in a large, dark font. Below the title, the author's name "Kathleen Embleton" is displayed in blue, followed by the date and time "Monday, 6 November 2023, 11:14 AM". The body of the post begins with "Dear Students," followed by a paragraph explaining the start of the Student Mentoring Programme on Monday, 6th November. It lists various topics like programming, maths, machine learning, and stats, and mentions one-to-one tutoring. A link to the schedule is provided, along with a reference to the "Student Mentoring in Moodle" page. The URL <https://moodle.cct.ie/course/view.php?id=1562> is shown in blue. The post concludes with the statement that all sessions will be hosted on Zoom.



Student Mentors Available from today!

by [Kathleen Embleton](#) - Monday, 6 November 2023, 11:14 AM

Dear Students,

The **Student Mentoring Programme** will begin today Monday, 6th November. We are delighted to have several sessions each week spanning a wide range of topics including programming, maths, machine learning, stats, networking and many more. In addition to the weekly sessions, we will also have student mentors available for one to one tutoring, which the subjects listed on the schedule.

You can find the **schedule** [here](#) and you can also find it in the **Student Mentoring in Moodle**, which is located here:

<https://moodle.cct.ie/course/view.php?id=1562>

All mentoring sessions will be hosted online through Zoom. You can join

Day and Time	Subjects
Monday @ 5:30pm	Python
Tuesday @ 11:00am	Programming
	Java, Python, Math
Tuesday @ 5:30pm	Algorithm
	Mathematics
	Programming
Wednesday @ 11:00am	Programming: Obj-Oriented Approach
	Introduction to Databases, Operating Systems & Architecture, Introduction to Programming, Introduction to Computing
	Mathematics, programming, databases
Thursday @ 2:45pm	Problem Solving - Maths
	Python, Google Docs and Sheets

One to One Tutoring Topics

If you are unable to make one of the sessions above, there are mentors available in the topics below. Please email kathleen@cct.ie or ken@cct.ie and we will match you with a mentor.

- Algorithm
- Career goals
- Databases
- Google Docs and Sheets
- Introduction to Computing
- Introduction to Databases
- Introduction to Programming
- Java
- Machine Learning
- Mathematics
- Object-Oriented
- Operating Systems & Architecture
- Personal development
- Programming
- Python
- Statistics

Mentoring sessions typically focus on course content pertaining to programming and mathematics as well as modules pertaining to Data Analytics such as machine learning. CCT Mentoring Academy initiatives also incorporate laboratory sessions in which software is downloaded and configured such as Java JDK, NetBeans, Packet Tracer, and Virtual Box



3. Recent Developments

National Student Engagement Programme

CCT is an Institutional Member of NStEP. Student mentors are equal partners with staff of the CCT Student Mentoring Academy.



studentengagement.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/NStEP-2022-3.pdf

The image is a screenshot of a document page. At the top, it features the heading 'Strategic Priority C' with a blue speech bubble icon containing a white letter 'C'. Below this, the text reads 'Supporting staff to create and sustain...'. A paragraph follows: 'NStEP has shaped a vision for student-staff partnership across the sector at all levels and in a variety of roles, championing new and existing practices.' Another paragraph states: 'NStEP will seek to develop a new professional development programme for staff and students to foster and champion student engagement practices.' Below this text is a teal-colored section header 'Objectives'. Underneath, there are three numbered objectives: 'C1. Design and implement an accessible and inclusive programme of staff professional development activities and opportunities to support enhanced student engagement practices.', 'C2. Facilitate both institutional and smaller-scale partnership projects through co-creation between staff and students, that can inspire innovative ways of thinking in higher education.', and 'C3. Engage institutional senior leadership in dialogue and collaboration to enhance key student engagement activities.' A red arrow points from the top right towards the 'C1' objective.

The CCT Student Mentoring Academy has an emphasis on **co-creation between staff and student mentors**. Former student mentor Mariana Braga Vasconcellos created multimedia content to support the recruitment and training of new mentors. **Mariana is now working as human resources professional and is an EMCC certified life coach.**



https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bz8cFFtsaCqZaVsX_s7XWLHMSaOD37Tx/view



**CCT undertakes NsTEP's class representative training programme.
Synergies with CCT's Student Mentoring Academy.**

Some class representatives also become student mentors.

Kathleen Embleton, Head of Student Services leads NsTEP's class representative training programme. She also manages the CCT Student Mentoring Academy in partnership with faculty.

Peer Mentoring During COVID-19

The screenshot shows a journal article page with a blue navigation bar at the top containing the breadcrumb: Home > All Journals > College Teaching > List of Issues > Volume 70, Issue 3 > Creating an Online Peer-to-Peer Mentoring On the left, there are statistics: 954 Views, 2 CrossRef citations to date, and 0 Altmetric. The article title is 'Creating an Online Peer-to-Peer Mentoring Program: Promoting Student Relationships, Engagement, and Satisfaction during the Era of COVID-19' by Alan J. Krause & Sarah Y. Moore, published online on 01 Jun 2021. Below the title are options to 'Cite this article' with a DOI link and a 'Check for updates' button. A horizontal menu includes 'Full Article', 'Figures & data', 'References', 'Citations', 'Metrics', 'Reprints & Permissions', and a green 'Read this article' button. The 'Abstract' section begins with the text: 'In the shift from on campus to online education, liberal arts colleges have lost much of the interaction among students that fosters student engagement, learning, and satisfaction. We present an online, student peer-to-peer mentoring program that creates learning partnerships between students and recreates this vital cocurricular learning online. Assigning mentors and mentees a year apart in the same major and asking them to...'. On the right, there is a 'Related research' section with three tabs: 'People also read' (active), 'Recommended articles', and 'Cited by 2'. Below these tabs, a link for 'Online peer mentoring and remote learning >' is visible. A blue sidebar on the left contains a promotional message: 'Sample our education journals > Sign in here to start your access to the latest two volumes for 14 days'.

<https://doi-org.ucd.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/87567555.2021.1925624>



3. Impact of the CCT Student Mentoring Academy

Brookfield's Reflective Model



https://valenciacollege.edu/faculty/development/courses-resources/documents/brookfield_summary.pdf

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10755-021-09556-8>. The page header includes the Springer Link logo and navigation options like 'Find a journal', 'Publish with us', and a search bar. The main content area has a dark green background with the article title 'Students as Partners in Peer Mentoring: Expectations, Experiences and Emotions' in white. Below the title, it indicates 'Open access | Published: 03 May 2021 | 46, 663–681 (2021)'. A 'Download PDF' button is visible, along with a note that the user has full access to this open access article. At the bottom, the authors are listed as Christina Seery, Andrea Andres, Niamh Moore-Cherry & Sara O'Sullivan, and there are metrics for 10k accesses, 8 citations, and 16 altmetric scores.

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-021-09556-8>

“Peer mentors are usually full-time students and taking on the mentor role, in addition to study and other obligations, brings a range of logistical, interpersonal, and emotional challenges. There may be difficulties in establishing and maintaining contact with mentees (Heirdsfield et al., 2008)..Mentors may be frustrated when mentees disregard the help they offer, do not respond to messages, do not turn up for pre-arranged meetings, or demand immediate attention” (p.665).

“an unexpected finding from our analysis was the degree of emotional labour involved in peer mentoring,” (p.674)

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10755-021-09556-8>. The page header includes the Springer Link logo and navigation options: 'Find a journal', 'Publish with us', and a search bar. The breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Innovative Higher Education > Article'. The main title is 'Students as Partners in Peer Mentoring: Expectations, Experiences and Emotions'. Below the title, it indicates 'Open access | Published: 03 May 2021 | 46, 663–681 (2021)'. A 'Download PDF' button is visible, along with a notification: 'You have full access to this open access article'. The authors listed are Christina Seery, Andrea Andres, Niamh Moore–Cherry & Sara O’Sullivan. At the bottom, there are metrics: 10k Accesses, 8 Citations, and 16 Altmetric, with a link to 'Explore all metrics'.

“mentors were not yet fully comfortable with the partnership dynamic and that they did not consider themselves equal to the staff (and therefore in a position to decline requests or suggestions) and did not fully feel their ownership of the programme: “I think that the **people organizing just above us that could help organize events should be presented as facilitators and that it is our own initiative**” (FG4). This reflects Kehler et al.’s ([2017](#)) findings that significantly more attention needs to be paid to power in students as partners practice” (p/670).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-021-09556-8>

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10755-021-09556-8>. The page header includes the Springer Link logo and navigation options: 'Find a journal', 'Publish with us', and a search bar. The breadcrumb trail reads 'Home > Innovative Higher Education > Article'. The main title is 'Students as Partners in Peer Mentoring: Expectations, Experiences and Emotions'. Below the title, it states 'Open access | Published: 03 May 2021 | 46, 663–681 (2021)'. A 'Download PDF' button is visible, along with a notification: 'You have full access to this open access article'. The authors listed are Christina Seery, Andrea Andres, Niamh Moore-Cherry & Sara O'Sullivan. At the bottom, there are metrics: 10k Accesses, 8 Citations, and 16 Altmetric, with a link to 'Explore all metrics'.

“The partnership approach adopted in this peer mentorship programme provided opportunities for mentors to work with staff as equal partners and maintain that relationship throughout the semester.... This led to an enhanced sense of belonging to the university, a key outcome of this kind of partnership work.... A significant benefit reported by peer mentors was the personal growth that they experienced as a result of participation. They gained confidence in themselves and in their ability to use newly acquired transferable skills outside the university (p.670).”

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-021-09556-8>

Mentor Feedback

“**Seventy-five percent of respondents** stated that they had received the necessary information and training to perform effectively as a peer mentor and that being a peer mentor **enhanced their own learning** as well provided **skills for their career development**. Most peer mentors also stated that the **Student Mentoring Academy** was “an important student partnership initiative.”

Negative feedback was low. When it did arise, it pertained to mentors’ frustration with mentees not engaging sufficiently.

The image shows the cover page of a report titled "NStEP Case Study of Student Engagement". The top section is a teal banner with white text. Below the banner, the title "Peer Learning and Student Partnership at CCT College Dublin" is written in teal. The authors' names, "Aldana Louzan Grandi and Marie O'Neill", and their affiliation, "CCT College Dublin", are listed below the title. A short summary paragraph follows, and then the section "Introduction and Context" is introduced. The bottom part of the page shows the beginning of the text under the "Introduction and Context" heading.

NStEP Case Study of Student Engagement
Supporting student-staff partnership in Irish higher education

National Student Engagement Programme
Clár Rannpháirtíochta Náisiúnta na Mac Léinn

Peer Learning and Student Partnership at CCT College Dublin

Aldana Louzan Grandi and Marie O'Neill
CCT College Dublin

In this case study, the authors reflect on the development of a system of student peer support in a small college through a model of student partnership, ensuring that student agency and empowerment are central to the implementation and outcomes of the project.

Introduction and Context

Peer learning has been an integral focus of the teaching and learning experience at CCT College Dublin since its foundation in 2005. The CCT Student Mentoring Academy is a key institutional student engagement and suc-

<https://studentengagement.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Louzan-Grandi-and-ONeill-CCT.pdf>

CCT Feedback Survey with Mentors in 2022 (45% response rate)

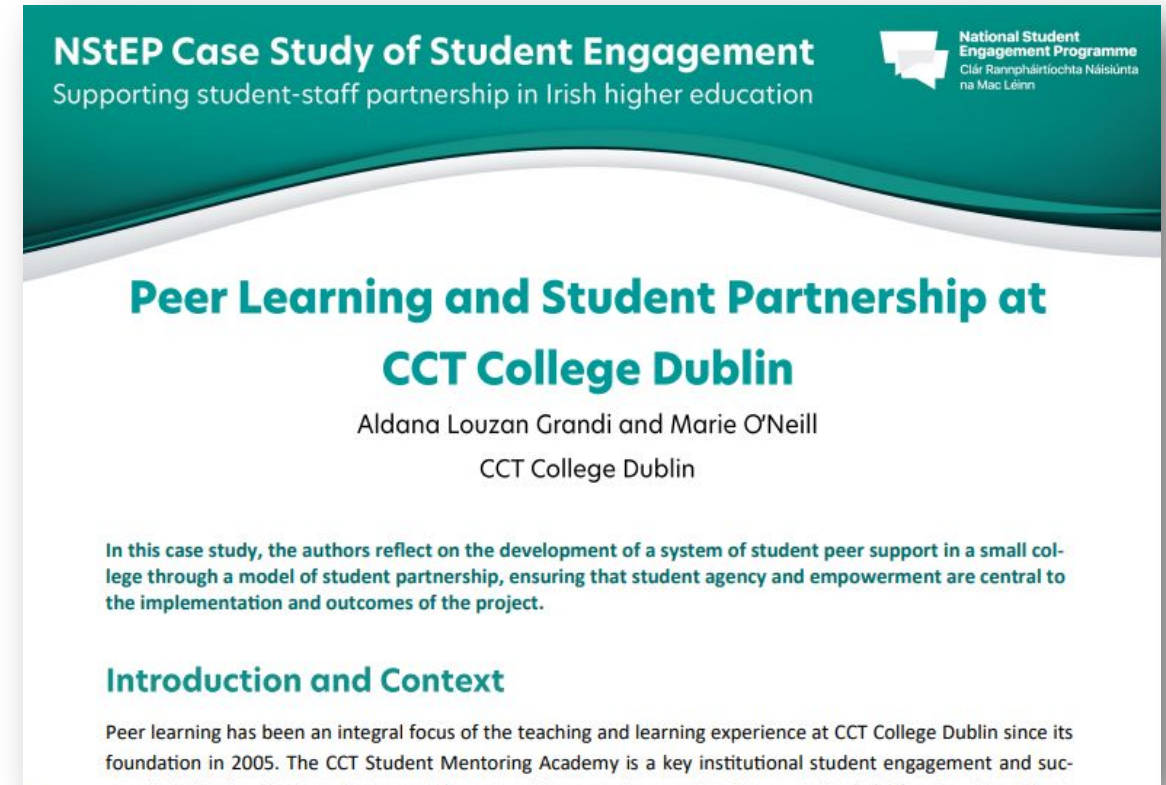
Mentors

“I contributed by being available for one hour per week to help students with statistics and data preparation”

“I helped students with both databases and programming subjects. I went through some of the basics. I also was involved in answering emails and I was very happy to see students’ progress”

“In the mentoring session, I was helping new students with programming and coding”

“going back to the basics also helped me..I kept studying and learning from troubleshooting issues.”



<https://studentengagement.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Louzan-Grandi-and-ONeill-CCT.pdf>

Other forms of Impact

- Aldana Louzin author of the NStEP case study and a former member of the Student Mentoring staff team described how her involvement with the academy enhanced her **leadership skills**. She also observed that mentees acquired more **confidence** becoming more **engaged** in class, asking more questions etc. Anecdotal feedback from other lecturers is similar.
- Many **student mentors went onto assume leadership roles** on other college fora. Mariana Braga Vasconcellas as an example became Co-Chair of the CCT Academic Integrity Committee and institutional representative to the National Academy Integrity Network.
- **Increased data gathering from staff, mentors and mentees** in relation to the impact of the Student Mentoring Academy is required also investigating potential correlations with student progression and retention figures. A question about the Student Mentoring Academy is now incorporated into the Annual CCT Engagement Survey.

The background features a dark grey field with three overlapping circles in shades of blue. A white horizontal band is positioned across the middle of the image, containing the text.

4. The Future

Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-022-00325-7>

REVIEW PAPER



A Scoping Review of Peer Mentoring Programs for Autistic College Students

Isabelle F. Morris¹ · Christy Matta¹ · Lawrence K. Fung¹

Received: 7 June 2021 / Accepted: 11 May 2022

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Abstract

Many autistic college students struggle with academics, mental health, and career development. Despite a proliferation of peer mentoring programs, there is little consensus as to what approaches are effective and even less published data on the impact of such programs on student outcomes. The purpose of this review is to describe peer mentoring programs for autistic college students and understand whether they are improving outcomes. The search identified 21 articles, with half reporting student outcomes data. Most programs provided weekly one-on-one mentoring individualized to student needs and offered additional supports (e.g., social skills group). Among them, three tracked academic outcomes, three reported non-academic outcomes, and one followed both academic and non-academic outcomes.

Keywords Autism · Neurodiversity · College · Higher education · Peer mentoring · Support program

The prevalence of autism continues to rise dramatically in the past 30 years. About 0.7–1.9% of students in the US institutions of higher education are on the autism spectrum (Maenner et al., 2020; White et al., 2011). About one-third of autistic students who completed higher school attend institutions of higher education (Shattuck et al., 2012). In

generally (7.7%) and more than triple that of non-disabled graduates (Equality Challenge Unit, 2015). Autistic college graduates worked full time at nearly half the rate of non-disabled individuals (Equality Challenge Unit, 2015). In the USA and Australia, only about 20% of young autistic adults worked full time compared to 40% of those with intellectual



<https://med.stanford.edu/content/dam/sm/neurodiversity/documents/Manuscripts/Morris-2022---A-Scoping-Review-of-Peer-Mentoring-Programs-for-Autistic-College-Students.pdf>



Education > Student Service Centre > Studying with special needs

▾ Studying with special needs

Studying with special needs

I will study with...

Support possibilities

Additional information

Study buddy

Introduction and explanation

Have you been diagnosed with ASD or AD(H)D? Do you have difficulty planning and organizing your work or feeling at home in the university? If so, you may well benefit from a study buddy. A study buddy is a senior student who offers help to a student from the same degree programme with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) or an attention deficit disorder AD(H)D:

- Sorting out your timetable.
- Planning your work.
- Studying together occasionally.

Conclusion

Boud- What is peer learning and why is it important?

“the opportunity to learn from each other. It gives students considerably more practice than traditional teaching and learning methods in taking responsibility for their own learning and, more generally, learning how to learn. It is not a substitute for teaching and activities designed and conducted by staff members, but an important addition to the repertoire of teaching and learning activities that can enhance the quality of education”

Thank
you

@marielibrarian

[linkedin.com/in/marie-
o-neill-9340747a](https://www.linkedin.com/in/marie-o-neill-9340747a)

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