

# 'HOW TO' GUIDES

## BE A PEER LEADER

Studying with peers is a fun and interactive way of learning which has many benefits to you both as a Peer leader and the student you are mentoring. Get involved in Exeter's Peer Support Scheme to gain numerous skills, networking opportunities, employability traits and make new friends.

### How... does being a peer leader work?

- WHAT IT INVOLVES**
- 1) You will advise and guide students with their studies
  - 2) You will collaborate with academic staff to improve learning experiences.
  - 3) You will be the connection between students and staff

*"I actually found it really rewarding to be able to use my experience to improve others experience of university"*

### What is is...

### What it isn't...

**Helping explore, and facilitate discussion on, aspects of the module or topic...**

...but not formal teaching or specific advice on assignments.

**Helping students 'find the answer' by directing them to resources, supported discussion and appropriate questioning techniques...**

...but not to give the answers to students or allow them to copy your completed assignments.

**Exchanging good practice and helping overcome challenges...**

...but not an expectation that you have all the answers.

**Providing a 'safe environment' where no one is scared to 'say something silly'...**

...not to act as a teacher but rather share ideas on a ground of mutual respect.

**Covering aspects where students are struggling**

...not covering the whole curriculum in depth.

**Offering insights into your own experiences...**

...but not telling them how to think.

**A chance to discuss how they are settling in...**

...not to tell them how to behave.

**A channel for referral to sources of support...**

...not to take on the role of counsellor.

*"Being a peer leader really increased my confidence, I'm definitely going to do it again next year"*

### How... you can help

Think back to your first year of university and all the adjustments you had to make. Lots of students struggle to adapt to the new way of living and learning. For example:

- Living away from home** Discuss how they are getting on in halls and if they are making the most of Exeter's student community.
- Time management** Talk about how you kept on top of assignments and still enjoyed your time at university.
- Essay writing** You could show them your essays to show the standard expected or give feedback on an essay of theirs.
- Lectures** Talk about how you adjusted to this new way of learning.
- Referencing** Advise them on your discipline's referencing style and how to do it efficiently.
- Presentations** They could practise standing up in front of you and presenting their work.

*Tip: Use the other How-to guides in the series to find some tips on these topics, use them as a teaching aid, or to hand out to your peers.*



## How... to do it well

<b>Plan ahead</b>	Come up with a structure for each session. eg. Set aims, discuss course-work or problems, quiz, plan for next time.
<b>Put yourself in their shoes</b>	What did you want to know this time at their stage? What did you struggle with? How did you overcome it?
<b>Be guided</b>	Listen to the student and what they want to know more about.
<b>Provide frameworks</b>	Don't just give them the answers, provide a framework that they can reuse in different scenarios when you're not there!
<b>Signpost</b>	Point them in the right direction. eg. suggest a textbook but not which pages to read.
<b>Keep track of time</b>	Don't try to cover everything, a grasp of the basics is the best starting point.
<b>Check</b>	Design fun quizzes to see what your peer has learnt from the session.
<b>Reflect</b>	Could that have gone better? Did the student get out of it what they wanted? Don't be afraid to ask them this at the end.
<b>Pass it on</b>	If their problems are beyond your realm of knowledge or comfort zone, refer them onto someone that can help. eg. Health & well-being services
<b>Be open</b>	Be open to new ideas and unexpected questions or viewpoints.
<b>Don't worry...</b>	If you don't know all the answers it doesn't matter; you're not their tutor, you're their peer.
<b>Be a friend</b>	You don't have to be formal; it's not a teaching session, it's support.

*"Looking back, I wish I'd used a peer mentor in my first year of university"*

*"I did it to look good on my C.V but actually ended up finding it a really rewarding experience."*

## How... it benefits you

<b>Improved understanding</b>	Mentoring others consolidates your own learning and gets you to think about things in new ways.
<b>Improved skills</b>	You'll get a whole range, such as: communication, leadership, organisation, teamwork, self-directed learning skills, critical thinking and problem-solving.
<b>Learn from others</b>	Share tips and resources on various topics. The peer scheme does not have to be a one-way process.
<b>Recognition</b>	We have a Peer Leader Recognition Event where your achievements are awarded and recognised. The scheme can also contribute towards your 'Exeter Award'.
<b>Employability</b>	A great thing to have on your C.V and talk about at interview.
<b>Networking</b>	Events are organised for peer leaders to meet other mentors and potential employers.
<b>Improve your course</b>	Feed back issues and ideas so tutors can align their sessions to student learning needs.
<b>Social</b>	Make new friends and feel part of a community of like-minded people.

## How... to get involved

Talk to your course tutor or visit our peer-learning website at: <http://ex.ac.uk/peersupport>



Have you seen the other Guides in this series?

### How to...

*Manage your time*

*Read effectively*

*Write essays & reports*

*Reference & avoid plagiarism*

*Make the most of lectures*

*Give presentations*

*Manage groupwork*

