 **Exeter Peer Support Resources**

**Peer Leader/Mentor Training:** Boundaries and Relationships

The peer leader/mentor role is likely to be somewhat different depending on the style of peer programme. Peer assisted study sessions (PASS) are generally set-up to support a specific topic or module and tend to be quite structured. In contrast to this, many peer mentoring (PM) programmes tend to be designed to support students through the transition into university. These often consist of quite informal, adhoc meetings with a pastoral and signposting agenda.

It is important to establish the boundaries of the peer leader or mentor role. Peer leaders are there to support students/learners as appropriate for the peer programme they are involved in. In PASS programmes they support learning and complement the sessions provided by staff. Hence, they would not be expected to teach but rather to guide students in discussing the topic in question. In peer programmes designed to support transition they provide information about services, activities, local facilities, etc. that might help the student adjust to university life and study.

These boundaries also help to direct the relationship between the leader and the students/learners. All participants in the peer programme need to fully understand and appreciate the need for such boundaries and in so doing match their expectations to the limits of the programme.

Suggested support offered by and boundaries for leaders.

Leaders can:

1. Facilitate discussion of a topic but avoid providing 'answers' to academic questions.
2. Offer information about personal experiences & activities but do not imply that using such an approach will 'make' them pass.
3. Provide signposting to other appropriate services but avoid trying to sort out all their personal or academic problems.
4. Be friendly and compassionate but avoid developing personal relationships with students/learners.
5. Provide a means of contacting you, preferably your university email address, but avoid giving personal contact details, eg your personal mobile number, home address, etc.
6. Invite contact but provide limitations of time, location and appropriateness, eg day time, not approaching you while you are in an informal meeting, etc.