



A Peer-Assisted-Student-Support Scheme to Enhance Student Outcomes and Foster Inclusivity, Self-Confidence and Motivation

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Abstract

Science and Engineering subjects require high levels of student efforts and self-motivation for understanding complex concepts, often abstract and counter intuitive. Different student backgrounds and prior experience can provide important challenges for the learning experience and student learning outcome gains in HE settings, particularly in the context of large classes and scientific disciplines. Students coming from non-traditional academic backgrounds may experience significant difficulties, which can cause low performance and loss of motivation in continuing their studies. In light of this, a Peer Assisted Student Mentor (PASS) scheme has been conceptualised and implemented in the last few academic years within the School of Engineering & Built Environment, with the intent to further improve the student outcomes, enhancing continuation and retention rates. The project aims to provide our students with an additional and effective support opportunity route for challenging modules, e.g. highly maths-based or other modules requiring high problem-solving skills, across all levels (from 4 to 7). This consists in scheduled weekly student-mentor sessions, where a group of students from higher levels of the course help newer students struggling with their modules. Support may include reviewing theory, specific teaching material on Blackboard, resolution methods of specific numerical exercises, preparation for typical exam questions, etc. The scheme has provided significant improvements, not only in terms of student outcomes in traditional low-performing modules, but also for building a stronger students' sense of community, where mutual support and peer-to-peer learning are at the basis of a growth in sense of belonging, self-confidence, and motivation.

Keywords

student outcomes, inclusivity, sense of belonging

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