

Win/Win: The Engineering Peer Tutors

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Presentation: 10 minutes

The presentation will briefly explain the development and execution of the Engineering Peer Tutor system, which was started in September 2012 in response to the problem of increased student numbers in the School of Engineering. Third and fourth year engineering students were asked whether they would be able to help the lecturer in mathematics tutorials with first and second year students. Permission was given from the School to make use of current students.

The Peer Tutors have already taken the engineering maths modules themselves, in previous years of study, so they are familiar with the material being covered. Each Peer Tutor is assigned to a particular group on one of the engineering mathematics modules, and is informed of times and room numbers. They are given access to the module material on Moodle, as a non-editing teacher, and they are kept informed as to which topics will be tackled in forthcoming sessions. In each tutorial, the lecturer is present at all times, and all work individually with the students.

The system of using more senior students as Peer Tutors was developed as a result of being in a difficult situation with regard to class size. The idea was simply that these students, who had already studied the modules in previous years, would be happy to help out and that this would mean that the first and second year students would get the attention that they needed in tutorials. Feedback on the Peer Tutor system has been obtained from focus groups, module questionnaires and informal feedback, and an overview of the process and results will be presented.

Discussion: 15 minutes

The Engineering Peer Tutors have been extremely successful. Their help results in the students taking the module getting the help that they need when they need it and it also reduces the demands on the lecturer. The Peer Tutors are regularly mentioned in module questionnaires as being a good thing about the module. Additionally, the Peer Tutors have gained from the experience themselves, for example; keeping their maths current and gaining new skills in tutoring and mentoring.

Some of the current Peer Tutors will be present at the session and will explain why they volunteered for the scheme, and what they gained from the experience, and they will also be happy to answer questions from the audience.

Possible questions for discussion could include:

- Transferability of the Peer Tutor system to other disciplines.
- Ideas for improving the system.
- Other ways of facilitating students' support of each other.

Theoretical Underpinning

1. Colvin, J.W. (2007) Peer tutoring and social dynamics in Higher Education. *Mentoring and Tutoring* , Vol 15, No 2, pp. 165 – 181.
2. Topping, R. (2005) Trends in peer learning. *Educational Psychology*, Vol 25, No 6, pp. 631 – 645.