sfG MentorNet
Supported Mentoring Software
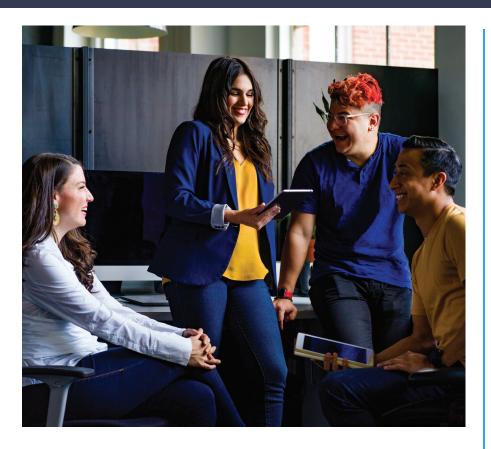
BIRMINGHAM CITY University

RUNNING A CENTRAL PLATFORM ACROSS MENTORING PROGRAMMES

OVERVIEW

Birmingham City University (BCU) runs a university-wide mentoring programme, delivered by the Careers+ team, to give students an insight into a chosen industry, whilst at the same time developing their employability skills and gaining access to a professional network. The mentoring programme is available for all year groups to participate in as mentees, from level 5 upwards. The mentors involved have at least 2 years experience in their professions, many of whom are BCU alumni, and they are not only based in West Midlands but nationwide and overseas.

The programme aims to assign mentees with mentors who have the skills that are relevant to the areas that the mentee hopes to work in. Over the last two and half years, over 700 students sand graduates have taken part in 10-week mentoring programmes.

SOLUTION OVERVIEW
- Increasing engagement in online and offline mentoring at Birmingham City University

CHALLENGES
- Spreadsheets and relying on different software made the program challenging
- Needed an online solution to support additional e-mentoring scheme and help streamline many of the routine administrative tasks
- Wanted to grow the scheme, but unable to with previous process

BENEFITS
- Frees up time to offer quality events and activities that meet the needs of the scheme's target students, in addition to the mentoring programme
- Improves the quality of communication and matching between mentors and mentees
- One central location for all materials, all contact information and reports for the scheme, which are vital for evaluation

MENTORNET BENEFITS
- A flexible, responsive and knowledgeable team that provide a tailored service
- Easy to use and administer the scheme
- Extensive reporting that gives invaluable insights

Prior to using sfG MentorNet as their online mentoring platform, Frankie Galati, who has been responsible for running the programme until she recently changed roles, says, "We wanted to introduce a platform for the programme which was easy for users to navigate, reduce a lot of the administrative tasks for the team and provide detailed reporting functionality." After receiving demos on a number of different platforms, we decided that sfG MentorNet met and indeed exceeded our needs."

HOW MENTORING SOFTWARE FACILITATES THE RUNNING OF THE PROGRAMME

The team decided to use sfG MentorNet as its mentoring platform. The current Mentoring Programme Officer, Ellie Galvin comments, "As one of the key aims of this mentoring programme is to match mentees with mentors in a relevant industry, being able to use the system to match them and help identify relevant pairs is incredibly beneficial. We can pull reports and match people based on a grade or score relevant to profession, industry, skills, even gender, and more. This increases the likelihood of success of the programme, but also substantially reduces the administrational burden on the person running the programme."

Now with sfG MentorNet as their mentoring software, BCU can keep everything regarding the mentoring programme in one place. For Ellie who came into the role fresh, it has meant one login to all information relating to the programme. As soon as someone is interested in the programme, mentors and mentees receive a link, so Ellie can easily see who has registered.

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> *Ellie Galvin, Mentoring Programme Officer, Birmingham City University*

BENEFITS OF MESSAGING CAPABILITIES, WITH SFG MENTORNET

Having an initial conversation with a new mentor can be a daunting first step for mentees, but as sfG MentorNet keeps all communication within the system, it helps make it that bit easier to kick off and start initial conversations. In addition to this, sfG MentorNet has an app available that caters for messaging, which BCU also uses. Having the option for a messaging app allows mentors and mentees to communicate on the go.

"There is an ability to communicate en masse with participants of the programme and a resource area, which is really good," adds Ellie. "Incidentally, we have 2 other programmes at BCU using the platform and each has their own, ringfenced system and resource area. There is also an activity tracker option, so new mentors can use this to list activities, conversations, and assign actions, but also to come back to as a reminder of past discussions. We like to keep the discussion topics open, but the mentors are asked to check their mentee's CV and LinkedIn profile for them – and to record when they have done it."

The team also makes use of the ability to run surveys within the sfG MentorNet software. BCU run a pre-programme questionnaire for mentors and an exit survey, where mentors and mentees can provide feedback and see how they have done.

PROFESSIONAL AND STRAIGHTFORWARD USER EXPERIENCE

Frankie comments, "It's a really good user experience with sfG MentorNet. I've never had negative feedback about the platform. It's easy for an administrator to use and have everything in one place - and straightforward for mentors and mentees too. Now Ellie has everything in one place, she can log in and track active users, see how many licenses have been assigned to other programmes, plus look at previous reports from different years. It's also nice to have a formal platform that makes the programme more professional and safer. Registration is online, all information is secure and mentors and mentees log into one online platform to see everything and kick off communications."

GROWING THE NUMBER OF MENTORING PROGRAMMES ON THE PLATFORM

Going forward, BCU plans to continue to grow the existing mentoring programme and use more reports across it. Additionally, more areas of the university are looking to introduce bespoke mentoring programmes and it would be beneficial to host all programmes under the one sfG MentorNet platform. With sfG MentorNet, BCU can use one system but ringfence each programme, so they have their own setup, their own resource area, and all information is kept secure. This can be particularly useful if, for example, someone within the programme is away for some reason - another person in the university can log in to help support the programme and keep things running.

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