



# Comparative view of mentoring approaches in Southampton



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# Why are we talking about Mentoring?

Mentoring schemes are high on the HE sector agenda.

Recently the university networks, including the EDI team, have been reviewing the mentoring provision, developing and piloting three mentoring programmes:

- Career
- Business
- Diversity



# Existing provision



[https://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/students/mentoring.page#how\\_the\\_programme\\_works](https://www.southampton.ac.uk/careers/students/mentoring.page#how_the_programme_works)

[Mentee handbook \(Career Mentoring programme\)](#)

# Existing provision at University

The mentor-mentee relationships in these schemes are typically **one-to-one**, and the agenda for discussion is typically **not structured**

***“ You drive the process.***

*You are responsible for driving the mentoring process (not your mentor).*

*To achieve this, you need to think about what you want to achieve from your mentoring relationship. This can then be discussed and agreed with your mentor.”*

# Existing provision in FEPS

- Offered since 2010
- MSc programmes in Electronics and Computer Science (ECS) and the Optoelectronics Research Centre (ORC).
- Within some other disciplines mentoring is still almost non-existing.

# MAXIMISING YOUR POTENTIAL

Mentoring sessions cover highly relevant topics, which help students to gain a full understanding of academic expectations and life in Southampton during postgraduate study. Our students find this complementary to the support from their academic tutor, as it's a great opportunity to talk in a group to a dedicated mentor they can relate to."

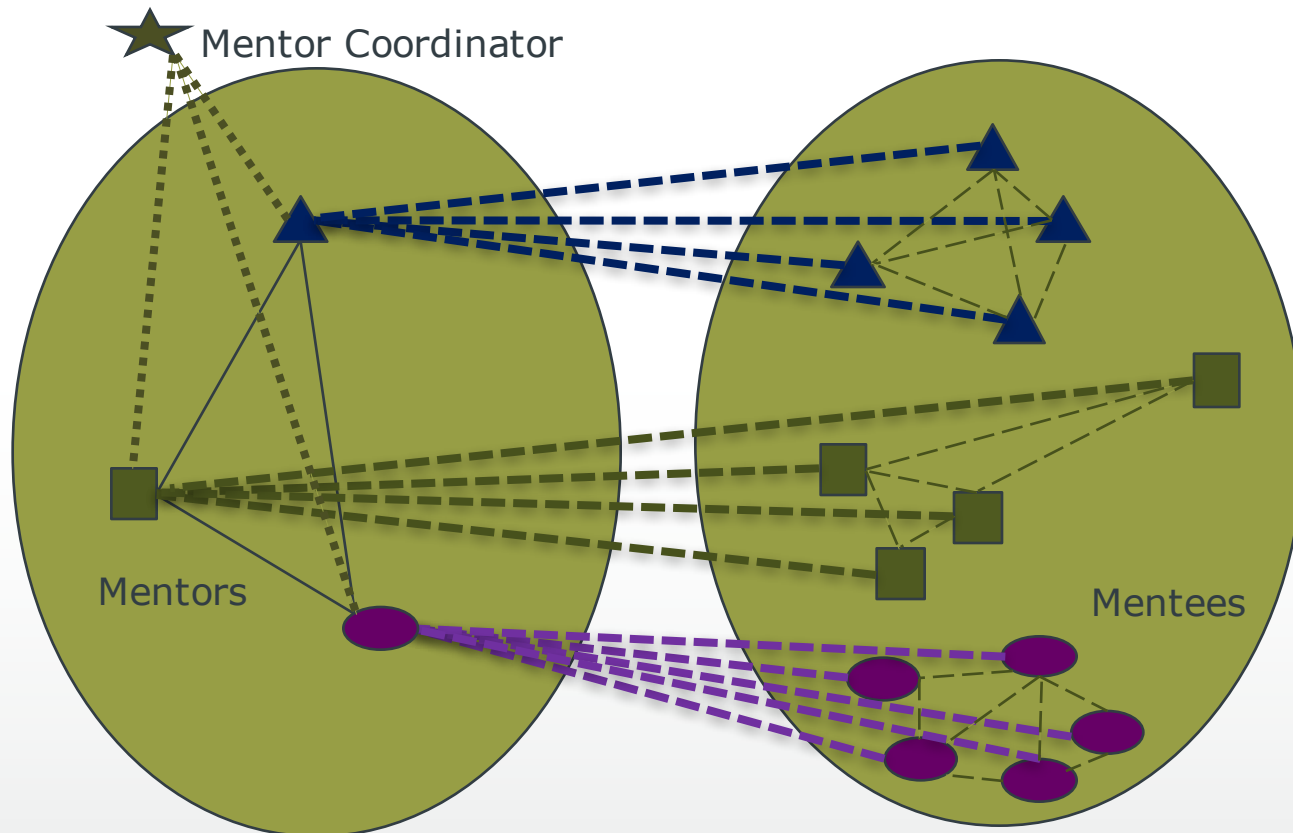
Adriana Wilde  
PhD Computer Science, fifth year;  
MSc Mentors Coordinator



## Existing provision in ECS



# Existing provision in ECS



Mentor-mentee relationships are **one-to-many**, and the agenda for discussion is structured or **semi-structured**

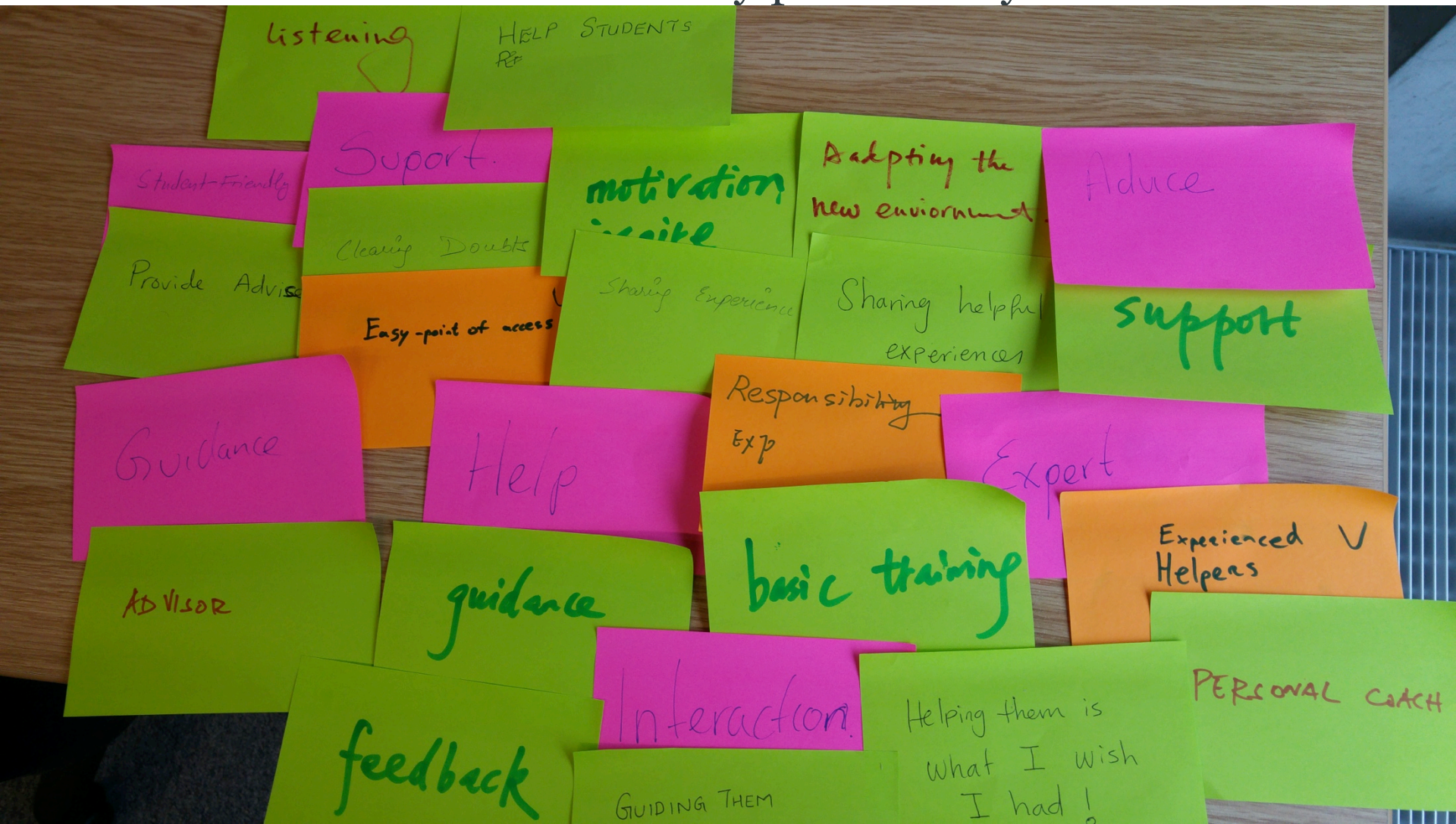
# What is a mentor? What is it not?

Brainstorm in your tables, and write one word in post-its in as many post-its as you wish



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# What's NOT?

Brainstorm in your tables, and write one word in post-its in as many post-its as you wish



# What's NOT covered?

## Advice to ECS Mentors

### **Coursework**

Discussions on coursework specifications are OK, but keep academic integrity in mind when providing help. Mentors are not there to solve exercises.

### **Academic issues**

Some guidance with required knowledge or tools is OK but academic issues are best dealt with by academics.

### **Counselling**

You are not a counsellor or therapist (not your role)

## What is a mentor then?

- A role model, a facilitator, a bridge.

## What is our aim?

- To empower students to become proactive, independent learners, informed of their rights and obligations on the path to success.

# What are meetings for?

- Mentors:
  - Gain experience!
  - Protecting time to facilitate dialogue and reflection
  - Role modelling (not for replacing academic tutors)
- Students:
  - Accessing regular pastoral care without losing face
  - Understanding what is expected from a ECS student
  - Scaffolding for peer-support

# What is mentoring?\*

- A one-to-one relationship between a mentor and a “mentee” where the mentor is an **expert**
- Longer-term
- Guidance
- “How things are done round here”
- Learning
- A stretching, broadening experience for both parties
- Flexible, to meet the needs of both parties
- A positive a trusting relationship
- Open, but confidential

\* Extracted from the “Essential Mentoring Skills slides from Elan Coaching (Facilitator Anna Sheather)

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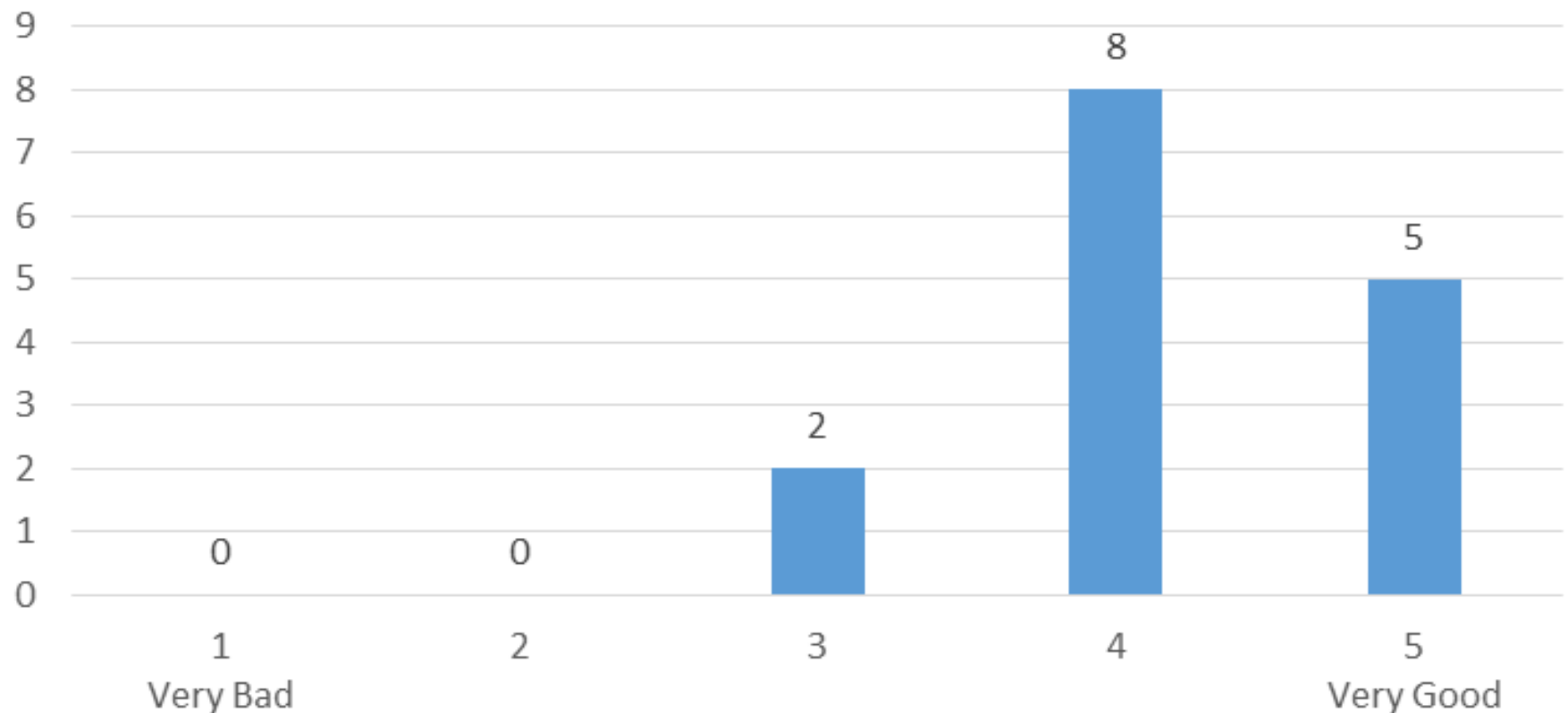
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*Risk of providing advice beyond their expertise!*

But does it work?

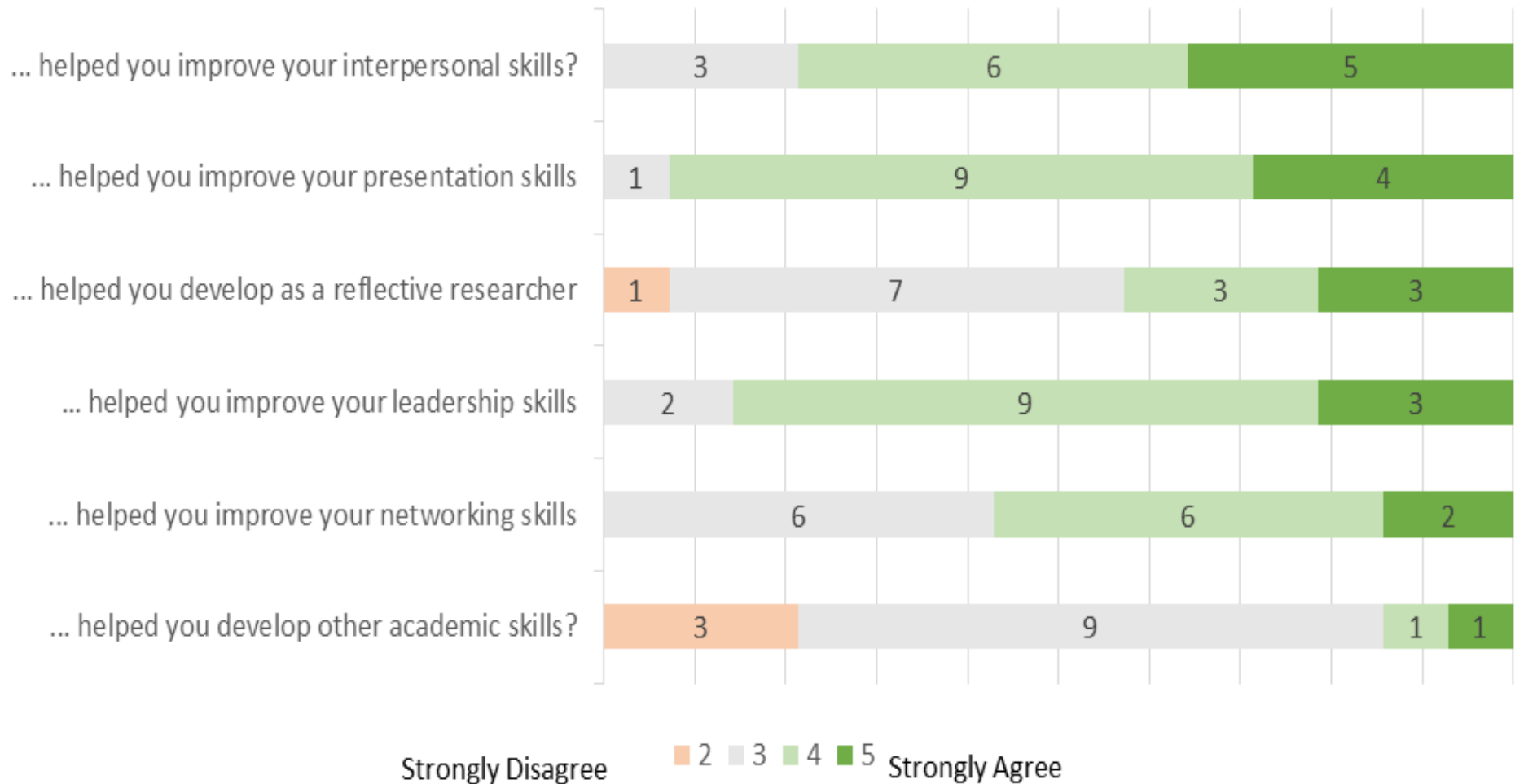
# We asked mentors:

How would you rate your experience with the mentoring scheme overall?

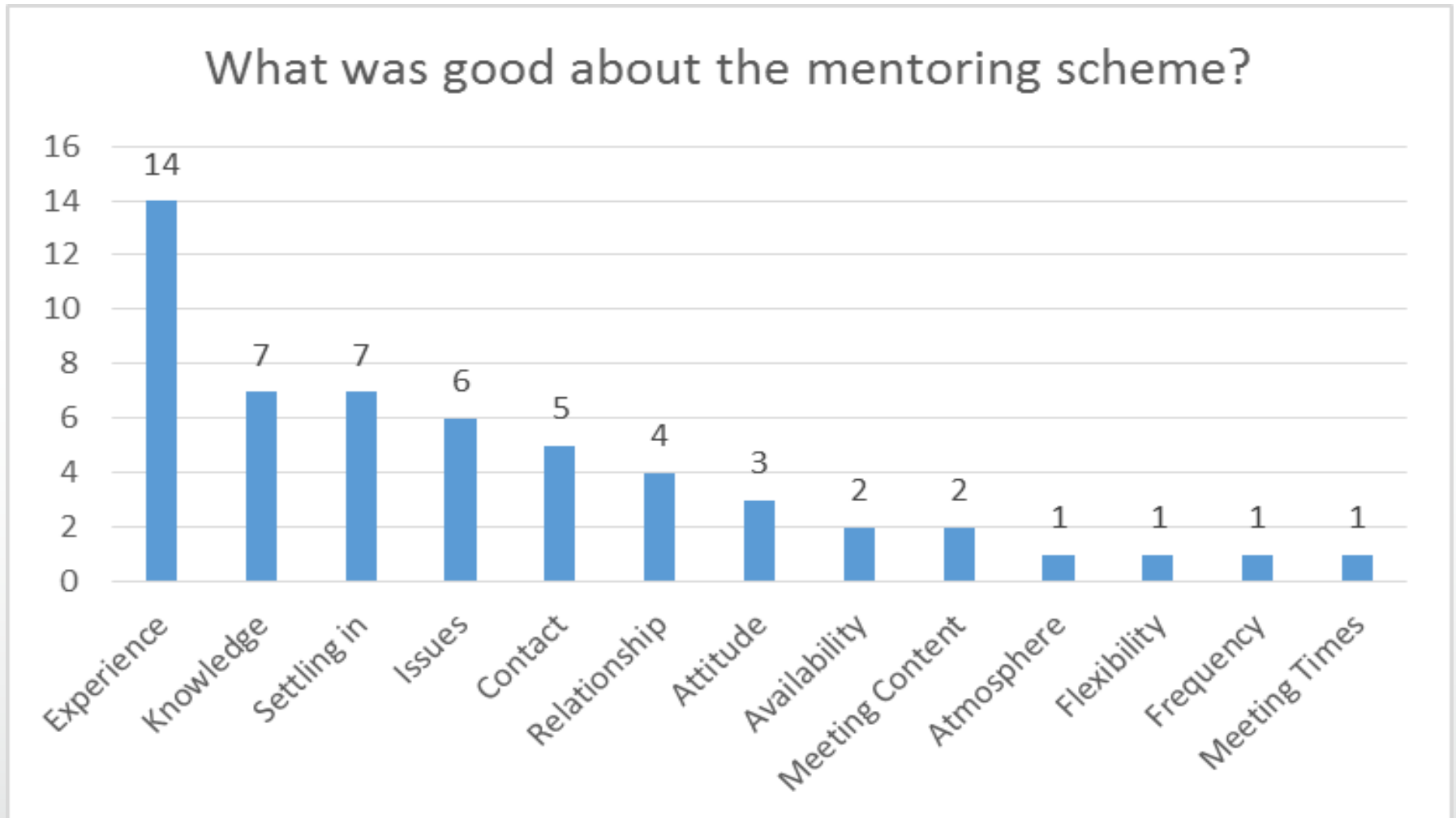


# We asked mentors:

Would you say that participating in the mentoring scheme ...

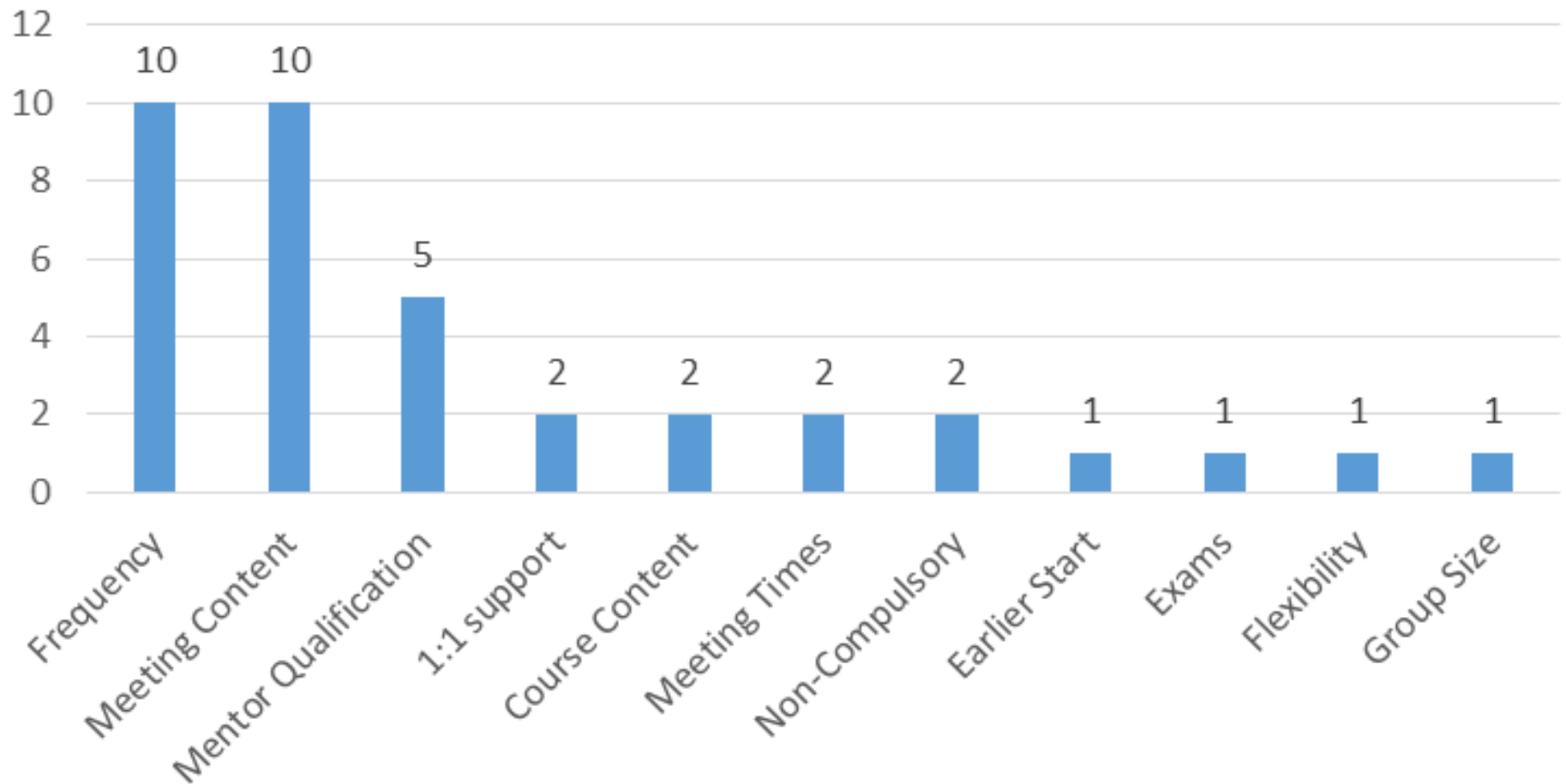


# We asked mentees:



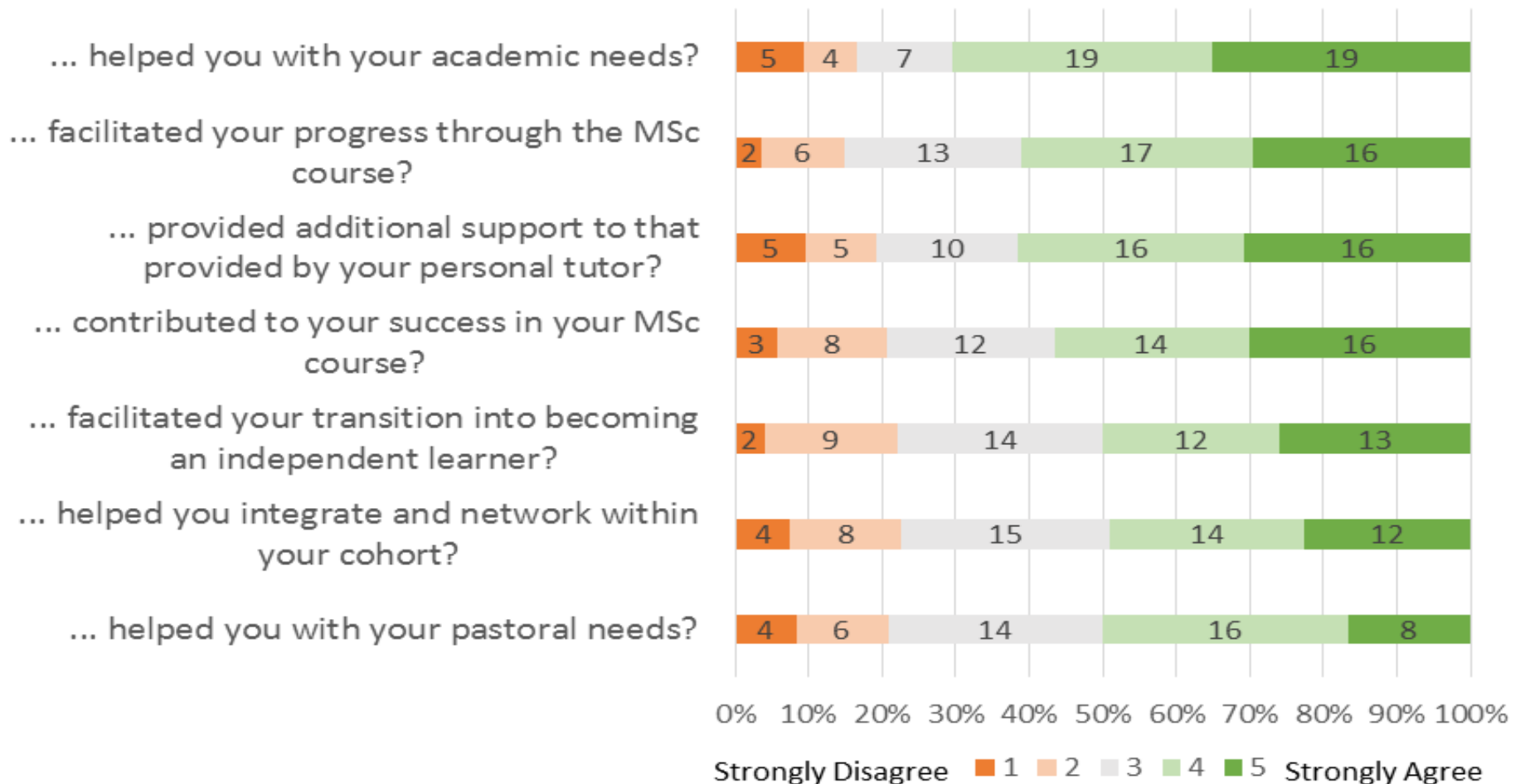
# We asked mentees:

What could have been better?



# As perceived by mentees:

Would you say the mentoring scheme ...





# Meetings

# Success stories

- Good mentors:
  - **Plan** meetings in advance
  - Make meetings **relevant** to students
    - Giving information before it is needed, but also offering support when requested by students
    - Tell mentees the meeting cover, and send a brief email afterwards to summarise
  - **Keep track** of students' engagement and are organised with their paperwork
  - Are available but **manage** their time well

# Meeting advice

- **Always** in English
  - some students may need additional EAP support
- Only meet on individual basis for **personal** issues
  - think about fairness
- Explain coursework and what's required
  - But do not do it for them!
- Keep track of **attendance**
- Be as professional as possible yet remain approachable.

# In practice!

# Practicalities: Are you right for the job?

- Requirements:
  - PhD student in FEPS (with an MSc from ECS or ORC)
  - To be confident conducting sessions in English
  - Happy to arrange meetings and support MSc students
  - Willing to undertake teaching training (ITSPG1 and 2)
- In principle this is ONE YEAR appointment – no expectation to continue for longer
- Will be paid at demonstrators rate, so must be able to work in the UK
  - Asylum and Immigration Act 1996

# Plan!

Introduce yourself to the tutor of your mentees (email is OK)

Email your mentees for the first meeting but always agree at the end the date and time of the next meeting (preferably on the same venue)

Ideally one group meeting per week (esp. the first few weeks), but later is ok to meet every fortnight (or even monthly in Semester II). Listen to their needs.

Topics! From structured to semi-structured and ad-hoc

# Relevant topics!

Introduction to Southampton and university life

Adapting to study in FEPS (Calendar)

Time management and stress

Academic Integrity

Optional theme (report writing, Matlab, Google Scholar...)

...

Exam preparation (strategies, structure, rubrics)

Introduction to Semester II

Marking Systems and preparing for results



# Sessions (I)

Session #	Topic	Aim of the session
1	Introduction to university life	To give a broad introduction to the course in general and the first semester in particular.
		To advise the students on how to find the required information.
		To make sure that the students are well settled and to answer their queries about life in Southampton.
2	Adapting to study at ECS	To prepare the students for the amount of work they are going to face in ECS in the first semester.
		To make sure the students know about the teaching system in the UK in general and in ECS in particular.
3	Time management and managing workloads	By this time the students would have received lots of coursework. Most of them will feel stressed about not being able to cope with the work load.
		To share some of the mentor's experience with the students and advise them on how to manage their time and work.
4	Academic Integrity and coursework discussion	To make sure the students know about the University's policy on plagiarism and the expected standard of the MSc students as well as the adopted procedure to safeguard these standards.
		To answer the students questions about plagiarism, working in a group and how can the group deal with someone who is not doing his/her work
		To make sure the students know how to deal with deadlines.

# Sessions (II)

Session #	Topic	Aim of the session
5	Coursework discussion (examples)	For this session the mentors can choose any topics based on the students request.
		To answer the students questions about various coursework specifications.
		To give students a basic tutorial on a programming language if it is needed
		To teach students how to use LATEX and reference manager
		To teach the students how to read a journal paper or a book effectively and how to cite other peoples' work.
		To help the student with their presentations.
6	Coursework discussion	For this session the mentors dealt with the students questions about their coursework.
7	Coursework discussion	(Optional)
8	Coursework discussion	(Optional)
9	Exam preparation and what to expect from exams	Talking through rubrics, expectation of assessments and revising strategies. Looking at past papers may be appropriate.

# Sessions (III)

Session #	Topic	Aim of the session
10	Exam preparations and time management.	To encourage the students to use their time wisely during the holiday as most of the students are going to submit 3-4 assignments and have to do 3-4 exams during January.
		To make sure they know where to study for the exam and how to study effectively.
		To answer any questions related to the exam such as using a dictionary and getting a university calculator.
11	Exam preparations	To help and advise the students on how to read and analyse exam papers.
		To tell the students how to use the exam time wisely.
		To help the studying analysing the exam questions and tell them what to do if they could not answer one of the questions or if they could not understand it.
		To make sure everyone started studying for the exam.
12	Exam preparations	To discuss past papers and make sure students are managing well.

# Who to ask questions?

- Did you ask yourself? :-)
  - Common sense but also “common knowledge”
- An experienced mentor in your area
- Your tutor/supervisor OR Tutor/course leader
- School office ([feps-student@soton.ac.uk](mailto:feps-student@soton.ac.uk))
- MSc Mentors Coordinator (me, [agw106@ecs.soton.ac.uk](mailto:agw106@ecs.soton.ac.uk))
- Senior Tutor ([stutor@ecs.soton.ac.uk](mailto:stutor@ecs.soton.ac.uk))
- MSc Director of Programmes (Maurits de Planque, [mdp@ecs.soton.ac.uk](mailto:mdp@ecs.soton.ac.uk))

University  
Regulations  
Bound by the  
Data  
Protection Act

# Potential pedagogic benefits

- Valuable work experience for mentors
- Additional opportunity of discuss topics (“extra processing”)
- Deep learning
- Scaffolding to integration
- Peer assisted learning

# Contrasting but related schemes

- Supplemental instruction from teaching assistants (PhD students are part of teaching team)
- Peer-Assisted Learning (facilitation but not instruction)
- Peer mentoring (one-to-one)

# Conclusions

- Mentoring is good! For mentors, mentees, institution
- Same word, different interpretations
- Uniform provision is tricky but there are potential pedagogic benefits.



# Related reading

- Foot & Howe (1998) "The psychoeducational basis of peer-assisted learning" ch.2, pp.27-43 in Topping,K. & Ehly,S. (eds.) Peer-assisted learning
- Howe, Tolmie, Greer and Mackenzie (1995) "Peer collaboration and conceptual growth in physics: task influences on children's understanding of heating and cooling" Cognition and Instruction vol.13, pp.483-503.
- Howe & Tolmie (1998) "Computer support in learning in collaborative contexts: prompted hypothesis testing in physics" Computers and Education vol.3/4, pp.223-235.
- Miyake (1986) "Constructive interaction and the iterative process of understanding" Cognitive Science vol.10 no.2 pp.151-177

Thank you!  
Any questions?