

Boundaries, Processes and Participation: Integrating peer support through a buddy scheme

Mrs Roanna Pain, University of Aston

Abstract

Buddying and mentoring schemes are playing an increasingly vital role in student support and integration, especially in the context of a global shift in internationalisation. In this project, one cycle of improvements to a buddy scheme for exchange students was completed in accordance with three principles: ongoing orientation, the internationalisation of “home” students and staff/student liaison. Theory and student feedback were applied to professional practice, with a focus on student participation. Suggested future evaluation includes quantitative measures such as levels of participation, as well as qualitative data from surveys and focus groups. Work to date has resulted in an initial hypothesis of the relationships between peer support, student participation and mobility. Reflective practice and the practical implementation of the three principles have contributed to the process of personal and university internationalisation, and have led to a set of general guidelines for those considering peer-support initiatives at other institutions.

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Introduction from Dr Dave Burnapp (Course Leader)

This article focuses on one aspect of ‘Midland’ University’s internationalisation strategy, which aims to improve the integration of international students and the quality of the student experience as a whole, by developing mentoring and buddy schemes. These schemes will also help develop the intercultural competences of home students. The article describes how such schemes can be operated, and importantly suggests how they can be evaluated.

Keywords: international students; mentoring; buddying

Introduction and context

On the global HE stage there has been an increasing emphasis on the quality of the international student experience. This has resulted in higher levels of participation in benchmarking activities such as the International Student Barometer (ISB) (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2007). As will be discussed in the following literature review, this issue is therefore becoming an ever more important one for UK institutions, against a background of higher student expectations and increasing competition in recruitment.

The work outlined below takes place in the context of Midland University, a small, central UK HEI. Midland's strategy is currently being reviewed, and drafts indicate that *Midland 2020* will include an updated internationalisation strategy with a focus on the integration of international students and the quality of the student experience as a whole (including targets for the ISB). The introduction of new targets and initiatives working towards these aims are necessary if Midland is to increase its share of home and international HE markets, and successfully retain its student population.

The University has also recently launched its *Midland First* initiative. Among the objectives of *Midland First* are the provision of clear visions from senior leaders and an improvement of communication, avoiding duplication and sharing best practice across all departments. One of the outcomes of this is a desire to achieve the benefits of centralization, even where restructuring is prohibited by constraints on resources.

These two characteristics of Midland's development form an important background for this project, which focuses on buddy schemes. Within the University, there are various mentoring and buddy schemes in operation. My role has been in the Undergraduate Office of Midland's Business School (MBS) focussing partly on incoming exchange students and the related buddy scheme.

The original focus of this project was one cycle of the ongoing improvements made to this scheme in MBS. During the course of the project, however, I have moved to a new role in the central University International Student Support Unit (ISSU). It is appropriate, therefore, to apply what I have learnt to my new role, and to look at the wider implications for Midland University.

Although, as will be discussed below, there is a clear framework in the literature for the intervention described in this report, it is fair to say that a large part of my inspiration came from a conference I attended at one of MBS' partners in Europe. I was impressed by the student-organised scheme, which included events throughout the year, high levels of "home" student participation, and close staff/student liaison.

Obviously, this experience in isolation would not have been sufficient to instil a change to my professional values. Since my induction at Midland, I have been undergoing a gradual process of integration into the international HE community. Through training, reflection and the sharing of best practice, I have become committed to internationalisation and developed my own priorities within this overarching aim.

As a result, the personal and professional motivation behind this project is a desire to improve the integration of staff- and peer-based support, and to encourage integration and the development of intercultural competences among "home" and international students. My work hangs on three main principles: ongoing orientation, the internationalisation of "home"

students and staff/student liaison. These have emerged not just from my professional experience but also from the literature, as I will outline below.

Literature review

Global HE is increasingly reliant on student mobility, and the market is competitive. Europe, in the context of the Lisbon Agenda (see Europe Unit, n.d.), has “staked its future on a robust level of student mobility” (Academic Cooperation Association, n.d., p2). Recruiting international students to study at UK institutions requires universities to take an increasing interest in the student experience. Student expectations of this experience are high (UK Higher Education International Unit 2010), and the increasing cost of and restrictions on student and post-study visas are likely to augment this effect.

Providing a positive encounter with UK HE is important not only for the well-being of these students once they arrive, but also for encouraging completion and maintaining low dropout rates. This is likely to become more important as Universities work to protect their Highly Trusted Sponsor status with the UK Border Agency so that they can continue to enrol international students (see UKBA, 2011).

In response to this, HE institutions are evolving their approach to internationalisation. There has been a move away from a marketing discourse towards a sustainability/developmental rationale (Caruana & Spurling, 2007), which has been reflected in the UK since 2006 by the Prime Minister’s Initiative 2 (PMI2) and an increasing focus on the quality of the student experience (British Council, 2010).

This shift is being worked out in University strategies as many move from international activities towards the *process* of internationalisation (Middlehurst & Woodfield, 2007), aiming to integrate internationalisation across all areas. Middlehurst and Woodfield refer to more centralized organization, and/or clearer lines of responsibility and communication across boundaries, side-effects of this change. Of course, there are other trends in HE strategy, for which there is not room in this short discussion (see Hudson, 2010).

Against this organizational background, institutions are investing in what Knight (1999) calls Internationalisation at Home (IaH) to enhance the international student experience. There is recognition that orientation is not a discrete process (Green & Healy, 2008), amongst calls for improvements in student services (UKCOSA, 2007).

The integration of international support services across universities to enhance the ongoing student experience often requires the participation of “home” students. Linking inward and outward mobility (e.g. returning students participating in orientation) is one way to integrate staff- and peer-support (Tang, Nollent, Barley & Wolstenholme, 2009) and facilitate the long-term social networks that buffer against stress and facilitate transition (Peat, Dalziel, & Grant, 2000). Encouraging “home” student contributions to internationalisation is, therefore, an objective closely related to that of University-coordinated transition support.

Buddy/mentor schemes are increasingly being recommended to achieve these aims (e.g. UK Higher Education International Unit 2010) by addressing three issues: the integration of support across an institution, the ongoing support for students in transition and the participation of “home” students. A well-co-ordinated buddy/mentor scheme can be vital for international students, especially those who want longer-term support during their transition (Partridge, 2008). Such a scheme can supplement short-term induction programmes and address initial difficulties that can be a predictor of later adjustment to University life (Martin

& Kee, 2008). Supporting international students through an extended period of transition is important to avoid increased drop-out rates due to poor adjustment (Peat et al., 2000).

A strategic approach to ongoing peer support is useless, however, if existing students are not motivated to participate, and the issue of broadening UK students' horizons is discussed widely in the literature (Peacock & Harrison, 2007). Buddy/mentor schemes can help address this through improved cultural understanding and opportunities for personal development (Partridge, 2008).

From among the many topics pertinent to the internationalisation of UK HE, three areas of work relevant to mentor/buddy schemes have emerged from this brief review. The UKCISA Mentoring guide demonstrates the interaction between these, highlighting the contribution of mentoring/buddy schemes to ongoing orientation, as well as encouraging staff to avoid duplication (Partridge, 2008). From these interdependent issues I have extracted 3 principles, which are applied to the buddy scheme described below:

- Communication/liaison between groups of staff and students
- Ongoing orientation of international students
- The internationalisation of "home" students

In the global and institutional context described above, the research questions for this project are as follows:

- What practical interventions can be applied to the MBS buddy scheme from these 3 principles?
- What contribution can these interventions make to internationalisation in MBS and at Midland?
- How can what I have learnt be applied to my new role and to the further development of peer support at Midland?

Intervention

The 3 principles outlined above have arisen from my professional experience, a review of the literature, feedback from students and Midland's internationalisation strategy. During this project I have applied this theoretical standpoint to my professional practice, implementing changes for the September 2010 MBS UG buddy scheme for exchange students.

I inherited a simple scheme whereby students returning from a year abroad were paired up with several new exchange students and invited to a welcome meeting. After this initial introduction, the rest of the scheme relied entirely on individual students and staff had no further input or knowledge. Reflecting on this arrangement, in the light of the literature and the institutional context, I was moved to make changes to the scheme.

Much of the practical implementation of these adjustments, which are described below, was done by the buddies themselves, with my encouragement. This is vital to the application of my three principles; I have facilitated and advertised events, fostering better liaison between students and staff, and the students have deepened their own opportunities for internationalisation.

Some ethical issues inevitably arise when dealing with student participation. The buddy scheme is voluntary and the additional involvement was run as an opt-in trial. Where student-run activities were advertised, it was made clear that MBS could not vouch for the event in terms of quality. In time, it is hoped the nature of the scheme will also improve the accessibility of support by including a wider body of students through the proposed ERASMUS society.

The diagram and descriptions below illustrate the translation of my three principles into specific and practical interventions, and the extent to which they are interlinked. The reader will see how I have worked to link small-scale amendments into the wider theoretical perspective.

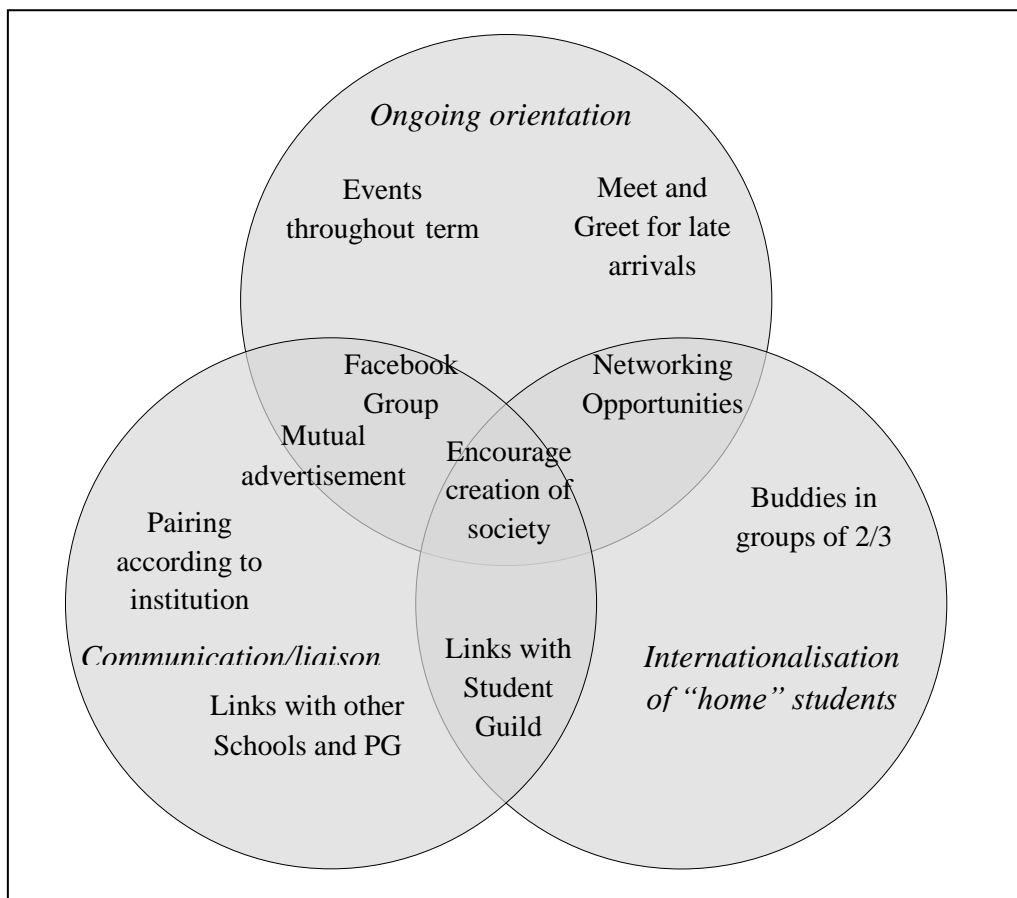


Figure 1: Framework of interventions

- Events throughout term – buddies were invited to volunteer to organise additional activities/socials after the welcome meeting. Several more events than usual were organised.
- Meet and Greet for late arrivals – one of the buddies decided to hold a fish and chip lunch at the start of term to welcome late arrivals. Buddies and exchange students from other schools and PG also attended. I circulated the details to MBS exchange students and colleagues in other departments to help advertise the event.

- Networking opportunities – the initial welcome meeting and following events have been designed to allow networking amongst students (see also below).
- Buddies in groups of 2/3 – I created groups for the initial meeting, where two or three buddies shared a group of 5-7 exchange students. This achieved 3 aims. Firstly, it facilitated an atmosphere of networking, while keeping a fairly small group for those who need extra support. Secondly, it allowed the buddies to co-ordinate their support. If one couldn't attend the meeting, they could organise for someone else in their group to meet their students. Finally, although I do not promise to pair them by language, the groups made it possible to offer opportunities for language practice.
- Pairing according to institution – this was also facilitated by the buddy groups. I was able to place each buddy who had studied abroad with at least one of the exchange students from that institution, where appropriate.
- Facebook group – While being careful not to officially endorse this student-run network, I have encouraged its creation and use, especially by late arrivals. This group is used by students in all Schools and at all levels.
- Mutual advertisement of events – I made sure the buddies were aware of the location and time of the exchange welcome meeting, and asked them to encourage attendance. As already described, in return I circulated details of events where appropriate.
- Links with other schools and PG – to date this has consisted of sharing events and sharing best practice with colleagues. My ideas to take this further will be described below.
- Links with student Guild/Encourage creation of society – I had hoped at the start of this year that the end result would be the creation of an ERASMUS society, and it has been under discussion. This would be university-wide and contribute to the internationalisation of the Guild.

During the handover period, as I prepared to leave MBS UG, I was able to document the progress made so far, cement the principles into the design of the scheme through my handover documents and suggest actions to further improve it.

<i>Initial improvement</i>	<i>Seek feedback/reflect</i>	<i>Possible further action</i>
Encouraging the creation of a student society	Recruitment and diversity of membership Perceived relationship with staff	Establishing clear links with staff Negotiating boundaries
Facilitating student organisation of induction events	Feedback on staff-run induction Interest of buddies in closer involvement	Student-led ice breakers during welcome meeting
Links with outgoing 2 nd year students, other schools, and PG	Possible duplication across incoming/outgoing, UG/PG, Schools/Central	Link society to Placement Team's social networking opportunities Students to help with recruitment of new buddies

Figure 2: Example applications of the feedback cycle

Suggested evaluation methodology

Several methods of evaluating my MBS UG interventions would be appropriate, requiring various levels of School commitment to internationalisation to justify the necessary resources. I was not in a position to carry out any of the evaluation outlined below, but during my handover I submitted a document suggesting a range of possibilities, depending on the actual resources available.

Initially, the levels of participation and the number/nature of events organised by the buddies/society will be important measures of success. It has been usual over the last 2 years for the buddies to end up with 3 – 5 exchange students assigned to them, whether individually or as part of a larger group. It can only be beneficial to improve this ratio, and more buddies mean more “home” student participation. Simple measures of evaluation would include documenting levels of participation in the buddy scheme and monitoring the progress of the proposed ERASMUS society e.g. tracking the number/variety of student-organised events. This type of data would lend itself to longitudinal graphs identifying trends and basic significance tests. Such analysis could answer research questions such as whether participation rates have increased in the last 3 years and whether there is evidence of a significant improvement since the interventions.

These simple methods of quantitative analysis would be useful to a certain extent but by their nature cannot fully represent the actual impact of the scheme on the orientation and internationalisation of students. They can, however, give an indication of the opportunities being made available to support these processes, which will be ongoing both for individual students and for Midland’s campus as a whole.

To move beyond this, it would be necessary to seek student and staff perspectives on the interventions. Student-focussed data might be captured by extending the online survey that exchange students currently complete before they leave. The existing survey could be adjusted to generate both longitudinal quantitative data (e.g. levels of satisfaction with induction, rating of integration) and qualitative information (e.g. student suggestions for further improvements). To assess the benefits of staff/student liaison, I would suggest consultation (e.g. informal interviews) with colleagues regarding the impact of the ERASMUS society in other Schools and the impact of the buddy scheme on the work of the International Placement Officers.

The benefit of these methods of evaluation is that they form part of the normal cycle of feedback and improvement in MBS, needing no formal ethical approval. More in-depth work will require closer attention to ethical issues, including managing expectations regarding the feasible outcomes of student feedback.

Ultimately, alongside other ongoing improvements, this scheme should have a positive effect on student satisfaction through better orientation and integration. Exchange students don’t complete the National Student Survey (NSS) or ISB (although the buddies do), but their satisfaction is still important in relation to the School’s reputation with its partners. It will also be important to investigate the inter-cultural experiences and perspectives of the buddies. These issues would need to be addressed through richer, qualitative data, which would require specifically designed methods of evaluation.

With appropriate resources and approval, all areas of intervention could be evaluated extensively through student focus groups. Researchers would explore themes relating to

ongoing orientation and the inter-cultural experiences and attitudes of “home” students, as well as the perceived relationships between staff/students, incoming/outgoing students, and different University departments. Qualitative techniques such Grounded Theory (see Glaser & Strauss, 1967) could be used to document emerging themes, while remaining close to the original data and therefore preserving the student “voice”. It would be interesting to see if my three principles emerge from the data, and, if so, what model of interaction is evident. This could form part of a wider review of MBS internationalisation strategy/administrating, which is currently in progress.

Finally, it would be beneficial to MBS to investigate the impact of improvements to the buddy scheme on mobility (both incoming and outgoing). In my experience, the issue of completion is not such an important one for exchange as for degree-seeking international students; exchange students who drop-out after nomination tend to do so for visa-related or serious personal reasons. If MBS is to build on its reputation as an internationally important business school, however, recruitment and levels of mobility should be areas of concern.

Results, Discussion and Reflections - The MBS intervention

The results of the evaluation above will help to answer the following questions, with varying richness of data, depending on the method used.

To what extent have the buddy scheme interventions:

- Improved communication/liaison between staff and students, integrating staff- and peer-based support?
- Contributed to the ongoing orientation of international students?
- Encouraged the internationalisation of “home” students?

What is the impact on incoming/outgoing mobility as a result?

The answers to these questions will inform the future of the scheme. Interviews with MBS IR staff should highlight the extent to which incoming and outgoing students are connected across the School, e.g. whether the buddies/exchange students also use the Facebook group run by the International Placement Officers. This team are already working on incoming/outgoing links and the buddy network would have a valuable contribution to make. This would be one way to maximise the benefits to international students of promoting outgoing mobility, as discussed by Tang et al (2009).

Tang also describes how this sort of activity can blur the boundaries between “home” and “international” and positively impact integration. Indeed, my use of “home” throughout this report is an indicator of my distrust of such distinctions. Not all of my Midland buddies were of UK origin, but there is not room here for a discussion of nationality, identity and the concept of “other”. Suffice it to say that that the true blurring of boundaries would require the breaking down of cultural assumptions, to which it is hoped an ERASMUS society could contribute.

The ERASMUS society may act as a catalyst for improved co-ordination, but care should be taken to protect staff/student liaison if students are given further responsibility for organising the buddy scheme. Additionally, an Erasmus society would be University wide, so thought needs to be given to the relationship between “MBS UG buddies” and other groups of

interested students. It may be necessary to re-draw boundaries or negotiate responsibility between staff and students/different departments.

The need to define boundaries and manage expectations reflects a similar issue both in the buddy relationship and in my own experience of developing the scheme. Mentoring guides (such as Heriot Watt University, n.d.) emphasise the need to establish boundaries in the mentor/mentee relationship, e.g. the limits of the mentor's competence to advise. In my own work during this project I have had to establish, challenge and accept professional boundaries according to my circles of control. These situations have sometimes been positive opportunities, but on occasion they have resulted in a sense of limitation/frustration.

Limitations

As might be expected, the development of the buddy scheme continues to be subject to various restrictions, including those of workload, decreasing departmental budgets and institutional cuts. The nature of the interventions described above should minimise the impact of these constraints, however. I have attempted to maximise the use of existing resources, through student participation, and improve efficiency, through cooperation between stakeholders. With roots in *Midland First* and *Midland 2020*, the benefits should hopefully outweigh the perceived drain on resources.

Of course, as with all aspects of strategy, senior management commitment is vital to the implementation of internationalisation (Fielden, 2008), and this will influence the allocation of resources at School level. *Midland First* provides an appropriate framework for the implementation process, linking senior management objectives with bottom-up innovations and practical implementation (see Burnapp, 2010).

Obviously, this project has had its own limitations as well. I have been restricted by the nature and scope of the PG Cert assignment for which this report was originally produced to a fairly small-scale intervention, and to hypothetical evaluation and analysis. There have been positive aspects to this limitation, for example the non-requirement of formal ethical approval.

Despite these and other weaknesses, reflections on my professional practice and the implementation of the three principles have resulted in change and contribution at School level and beyond.

Contributions to School internationalisation

The three principles that have formed the framework for this project reflect the direction in which MBS and Midland are moving. My concept of staff/student liaison, for example, echoes the desire to strengthen communication and streamline processes to avoid duplication, not necessarily through functional reorganisation. Improved liaison in relation to support for exchange students is one practical way to contribute to this, as *Midland First* encourages staff to do.

Improvements to the MBS buddy scheme and peer-support in general are also opportunities to engage with the complex and interconnected areas of recruiting and retaining international students. This is possible through intercultural opportunities for "home" students and the support of ongoing orientation for international students.

The authors of the Midland draft strategies recognise the importance of "home" student internationalisation, for example through outgoing exchange (a *Midland 2020* KPI).

Encouraging “home” student participation and internationalisation through buddy schemes will help the School and University progress towards this objective. Although my influence in this area has been limited to one cohort, the establishment of an ERASMUS society may contribute to a snowballing of interest in study exchange across all Schools. Increased uptake of study abroad opportunities by “home” students will help to balance exchange agreements and grow the capacity of MBS and Midland as a whole to recruit large numbers of incoming students.

Within the new MBS draft strategy there is also a recognition that opportunities for cultural integration must go on beyond the initial induction period. Increased internationalisation among a more mobile “home” student body will result in higher levels of motivation and understanding in providing ongoing peer support. The encouragement of ongoing events should provide opportunities for international students to continue to engage with the process of transition long after the formal induction weeks have ended. In the case of degree-seeking international students in particular, this may be instrumental in supporting long-term adjustment and completion rates. Ultimately, through the in-depth evaluation of focus groups, a model may emerge of the impact of more integrated peer-support in ongoing orientation and the internationalisation of “home” students, and in turn the contribution of these processes on inward and outward mobility. An initial hypothesis for this, based on my observations to date follows below:

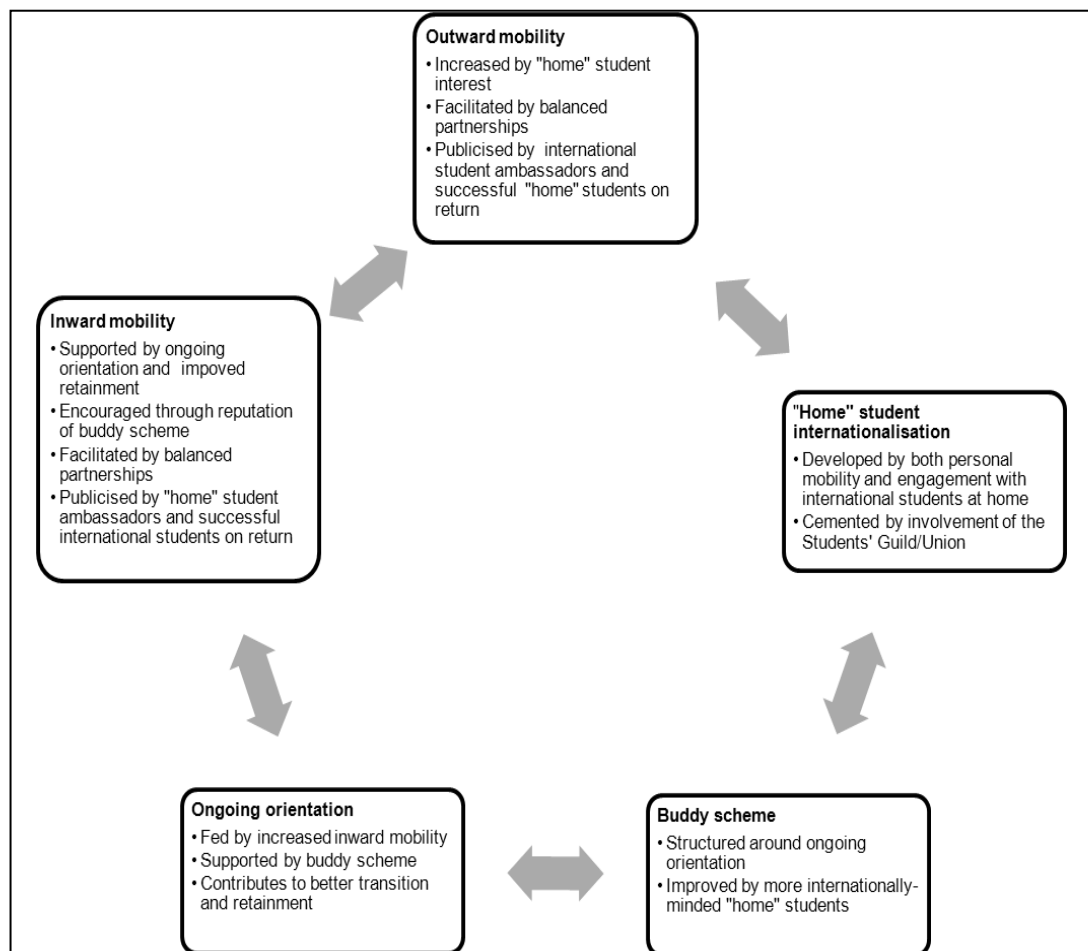


Figure 3: Proposed model of buddy peer support and mobility

Further developing my professional practice and internationalisation at Midland

This discussion has been primarily concerned thus far with the student experience and with contributing to internationalisation at Midland. Reflecting on the project as a whole, it has also been a time of professional development. From my attendance at the buddy presentation at a European Business School, I have been through a gradual process of adopting internationalisation as a priority in my professional values. The principles applied throughout this project have been just some of the practical outworking of this. Without such ongoing development, I would not have had the opportunity to move into my new position at Midland.

Following this move to the central University International Student Support Unit (ISSU) I am working to continue my contribution to internationalisation. My new role gives me an opportunity to extend my professional practice at University level. My job description included the creation of a buddy scheme for new international students at University level. There is, however, an existing provision for this type of support, so in the spirit of Midland First, my intention has been to foster a closer relationship between ISSU and the Peer Mentoring (PM) scheme that is already in place.

I have met with the team, sharing information and resources, for example advertising for mentors/mentees through ISSU publicity. The ISSU/Student Services reception is visited by many students on a regular basis, and I have been able to improve the advertisement of PM in this space as a contribution to cross-departmental cooperation. My biggest area of contribution with the PM scheme, however, will be the development of provision in less developed areas.

The most obvious of these is a gap between the responsibilities of pre-arrival mentors and the training of transition mentors, who support new students from the second/third week of term onwards. As a result of my discussions with the PM team, a new event to bring pre-arrival mentors into contact with new students is being organised for Freshers' Week this year. This is only a first step, but addressing this gap will contribute to ongoing orientation and high completion rates, by supporting students through the initial adjustment processes that form the foundation for successful transition (Martin & Kee, 2008).

As my relationship with the PM team has developed, and in part because of my move to a central department, I have become involved with peer support in a wider sense at Midland, facilitating communication across the University. There is a strong desire to keep the PM team as the central contact for all variations of the scheme, but there are also pockets of peer support in individual departments, and a fair amount of interest in those areas that are not yet involved. I have been working to encourage staff to engage in mutual signposting, share best practice and avoid duplication.

There are also opportunities to expand staff/student liaison in relation to peer support. As I have experienced during the course of this project, there is an increasing interest in the student Guild to internationalise (a national trend, see National Union of Students, 2010), and it would be both sensible and beneficial to harness this resource. I have, therefore, ensured that my work includes the Midland Student Guild, improving links with support services and Schools.

Conclusion

Evaluation of the MBS UG scheme and future developments in mentoring at Midland will reveal if this project has successfully achieved its internationalisation objectives. I have, in the meantime, addressed the research questions for this project:

- I have demonstrated practical examples of interventions designed to carry forward my 3 principles, both at School and University level.
- I have outlined the likely contribution of these interventions to internationalisation in MBS and at Midland, notably through increased student participation at home and abroad, and the impact of this on mobility.
- I have applied my experience to my new role and to the development of support at Midland.

Obviously, this work is ongoing and each cycle of evaluation and improvement will further refine the principles and best practice through which peer support contributes to internationalisation at Midland. It has been possible, however, to identify some very productive methods, which may be of use to other institutions/departments looking to develop their peer support provision. Through the experience of applying my experience to my professional practice, working with colleagues to find practical improvements, an initial set of guidelines have emerged:

General guidelines for improving peer support for international students

Consider the ongoing transition of your students

- Map out the student journey and identify times of particular need (e.g. on arrival, in the run-up to exams).
- Look into initiatives to fill any gaps in provision, ideally by extending/linking existing activities to encourage smooth progress from one stage to the next.

Find out what is already going on at your institution

- Another department may already be putting resources into recruitment and training.
- Make sure you are signposting your students to existing support and that this support is appropriate to their needs.

Communicate the benefits of peer support in a variety of ways

- Make use of social networking, especially for pre-arrival support.
- Through your marketing material, make prospective students aware of successful schemes to aid their transition to studying in the UK.

Link up with your student Guild/Union

- They may be able to help with recruitment or even take responsibility for some types of peer support schemes.
- Publicise your scheme so that the Guild/Union can encourage participation from a student perspective.

- Involve student societies relevant to your degree programme/s in welcome/induction events.
- Encourage student-led support and new societies, especially where your students consider this to be lacking in a particular area.

In these guidelines, and indeed throughout this report, it will have become clear that three concepts have emerged repeatedly: Boundaries, Process and Participation. At a basic level, this could be viewed as a summary of the three principles by which I have made amendments to my professional practice in relation to buddy schemes at Midland. There are, however, several layers to their relevance.

During this project, I have encountered and challenged professional limits, encouraged stakeholders to work across lines of responsibility, and seen students step outside of their comfort zones. Boundaries of all kinds have been defined, re-defined and made more permeable. Of course, internationalisation itself could be termed a type of boundary-blurring. Midland University and staff at other institutions can tap into the benefits of centralisation without expensive reform, by encouraging similar attitudes to structural boundaries.

This activity would not have been possible without the participation of students, staff and management. This project has begun to explore the theory and practice of student involvement, and has taken place in the context of *Midland First*, which encourages the contribution of staff at all levels and a sense of mutual responsibility. Evaluation in MBS will reveal the benefits of this, and how best to further improve levels of participation and motivate students in their own internationalisation. It is hoped that increased participation will be an outcome, as well as an input, of this project. As “home” students become more interested in international activities, both inward and outward mobility will be affected. Ultimately, this will impact on both participation in international education and integration on an international campus.

Finally, all of this has taken place in the context of various processes. It has been my intention to contribute to the personal development and integration of my students. I anticipate that their successful transition, affecting their experience of and continuation in UK HE, will be a smoother process as a result of improved peer-support. The buddies/mentors have also had opportunities to mature and acquire new skills through their participation.

Indeed, this project has been characterised by continuous development, not just for the students engaged in the buddy scheme, but also for Midland’s internationalisation. I hope that I have contributed not only to the process of internationalisation, but also, through my commitment to staff/student liaison, to the *concept* of internationalisation itself as a process (see Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2007). Future work at Midland will be needed to assess my contribution to the understanding of personal transition and institutional internationalisation as non-discrete processes, vital to the future of UK HE.

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About the author

Mrs Roanna Pain graduated from the University of Exeter with an MA in Gender and Identity in the Middle East, and is currently an International Student Adviser.

Email: r.a.pain@aston.ac.uk