



Aimhigher

West Midlands

MENTORING HANDBOOK

2021/22

MENTORING HANDBOOK

2021/22

Mentor Name:

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University Co-ordinator Name:

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If found please return to the University of Birmingham Outreach Department, Beech House, B15 2TT

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SECTION 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook is designed to give you an overview of your role as a mentor and to provide you with the practical resources you need to carry out this role effectively. Along with the training you have received from your Higher Education Institution (HEI), the content of this handbook is designed to support you in planning for sessions and knowing how to deliver these with confidence.

1.2 WHAT IS AIMHIGHER?

Aimhigher West Midlands is a partnership of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), schools, academies and colleges who aim to encourage more learners from under-represented groups to achieve their potential to participate in higher education.

The Aimhigher Partnership provides opportunities for local learners to explore what higher education might mean for them. Together these activities provide a progressive and integrated programme that gives young people support as they progress through Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. Our aim is to have an impact on learners' aspirations, motivation and exam results, and to give them opportunities to experience higher education first hand.

1.3 THE AIMHIGHER MENTORING SCHEME

Four local universities participate in the Aimhigher Mentoring Scheme:

- Aston University
- Birmingham City University
- University College Birmingham
- The University of Birmingham

The scheme aims to increase participation in higher education amongst young people from lower socio-economic groups and disadvantaged backgrounds who live in areas of relative deprivation or low participation in higher education. Aimhigher has a long history of undergraduate mentoring in West Midlands' schools and colleges since 2000.

Mentors are undergraduates who provide (mentoring) support and encouragement to learners as they encounter the various transition milestones. You will receive training to help you in this role. Aimhigher plans to place around 130 mentors each year, with the capacity to support over 650 learners in each cycle.

1.4 TRAINING MATERIALS

During your training, you will have covered a number of topics including:

- Child protection and safeguarding
- Ground rules
- Mentor knowledge, skills and attitude
- Communication
- Learning styles
- Barriers to learning
- Models of engagement
- Target setting

What follows in sections 2, 3 and 4 is an overview of the topics covered at training. If you would like a copy of the training slides, these can be requested from your HEI co-ordinator along with any further guidance you may need.

Please make sure you refer back to these materials regularly.

1.5 OTHER AIMHIGHER ACTIVITIES

In addition to the Mentoring Scheme Aimhigher also provides residential summer schools (UniFest), university taster days, a “single point of contact” service to help schools and colleges find higher education outreach activities, and Aimhigher Plus, part of the Office for Students’ Uni Connect Programme (Previously known as NCOP).

As a mentor, you have an opportunity and responsibility to make learners aware of other Aimhigher activities that might benefit them.

Guidance on how to discuss the activities relevant to your learners in sessions can be found in the [‘Idea Bank’](#) (section 5 of this handbook); and more detail can be found below:

- **Aimhigher Plus** - This programme extends to include partners at the University of Worcester, Newman University and local colleges. It is targeted at young people living in 25 local communities in the West Midlands, and works with about 70 schools and colleges who serve these areas. Aimhigher Plus provides a wide range of outreach activities for students in years 9 to 13 in these schools and colleges, who also receive funding and the support of visiting Aimhigher Progression Ambassadors and Undergraduate Coaches as part of the programme.
- **Masterclasses** - These are targeted, subject specific sessions held and organised by a university. Usually a teacher at their school would book spaces on these sessions though individuals can book on independently, but will need to be sponsored by someone at their school in order to attend. For example, if a learner was interested in becoming a forensic scientist then they may be interested to attend a masterclass on this particular subject/course. If you think your learners would benefit from attending a masterclass please speak to your university co-ordinator.



- **Aimhigher Roadshow** - The Aimhigher Roadshow is open to students in years 11, 12 and 13. This interactive experience uses short, targeted workshops to encourage students approaching their next steps to think ambitiously about their future and make informed choices about HE and other pathways. If you think your school would benefit from the Roadshow please speak to your school co-ordinator.
- **UniFest Summer Schools** - “UniFest” is the name for University Summer Schools in the West Midlands. It is an opportunity for learners to see what student life is like at one of our universities. UniFest events last for 3 days. The events take place towards the end of the summer term and details and application forms are circulated in January. If your learners are interested in attending one of the UniFest Summer Schools then please go to: aimhigherwm.ac.uk/unifest for more details. Alternatively speak to your university co-ordinator.
- **Campus visits** - The school may arrange a visit to a university where learners would be given a tour of the campus and/or other sites and accommodation. It is a good opportunity for learners to physically see what a university looks and feels like. Speak to your university co-ordinator if you think your learners would benefit from a campus visit or you would like to show them your own university!
- **Staff Development Events** - Aimhigher arranges a number of conferences and staff development events for schools and colleges each year, to give teachers and careers advisers a chance to update their knowledge of developments in university access, UCAS, student finance and related matters. Staff can also sign up to the Aimhigher Newsletter which offers a monthly briefing on the Widening Participation sector.
- **Aimhigher Awards** - Each year Aimhigher celebrates the achievements of mentors and the young people they support. Mentors and school /college staff are asked to nominate learners who have engaged positively with the scheme, and university, school and college staff nominate mentors who have “gone the extra mile” to help learners reach their full potential.

To find out more about any of the projects above visit the website:
aimhigherwm.ac.uk

SECTION 2:

OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

2.1 MENTOR SUPPORT MATERIALS AND FORMS

The Aimhigher mentoring page, online Idea Bank and associated resources are all tools created to support you throughout the mentor cycle. Other resources available to you are:

- Mentor training checklist
- This Mentor Handbook
- Mentor FAQ page on website

All of your learners will also be asked to complete a Learner Information and Consent Form before the mentoring sessions begin. These will be distributed by your host school or college, but it is likely you will be involved e.g. by reminding learners to sign and return their forms.

2.2 MENTOR TIMESHEETS

Your timesheets are an essential part of the Mentoring Scheme. Your university uses them to pay you and monitor the volume and content of engagements with your learners. You must ensure that you complete your timesheet as accurately as possible and submit them on time. Your university will let you know where and when they must be returned. If you have any questions or difficulties in completing your timesheets, please speak to your University Co-ordinator.

2.3 EVALUATION

Mentors - We are required to evaluate all aspects of the scheme. We will be asking you to provide evaluation and feedback at various stages throughout the scheme and we would be grateful for your support in completing these tasks. Your feedback will enable us to make improvements for mentors/learners working not only this year but in the future.

Learners - The experience of your learners is evaluated throughout the scheme, to see if their attitudes/knowledge/aspirations about higher education have changed. Sometimes, the learners are asked to complete pre and post mentoring evaluation forms. If your learners are asked to, you will be asked to support them with this.

The pre-mentoring assessment is a valuable opportunity for mentors to work with their learners to identify and agree the main topics or issues where they need help or support. The post-mentoring assessment is an opportunity for learners to reflect on how the scheme has supported them.

An example can be found within in section 4.4, although please note this should not be completed within this handbook for data protection reasons. Your HEI will provide further details on how and when these should be returned.

2.4 TIMELINE OF ACTIVITY

The mentoring scheme usually follows the model below, although there will be some variations between Institutions.

Month	Activity	Area of Training / Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment campaign in the universities/ briefing sessions 	Introduction & Briefing
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor applications submitted and shortlisted Interviews take place 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DBS and employment documentation completed 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two day training programme Mentors appointed Matching process commences 	Safeguarding/Child Protection Mentor Skills & knowledge Learner Engagement (1:1 / Group work / Session Planning) HEI Organisation & Procedures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentors placed in schools/colleges/ academies Mentor/Learner engagements commence 	Preparing for launch meetings Planning your first session
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor/Learner engagements continue. 	E-Mentoring / updates / exit strategies
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor/Learner engagements continue Mentor mid- year review 	Mid Review / top-up training / employability skills review
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mentor/learner of the year nominations Evaluation of the scheme Aimhigher Mentor / Learner of the Year event and Campus Experience Day 	Evaluation / reflection / employability skills review

*Some schools and colleges prefer to launch later in the academic year, and some mentors may find that they are not able to commence their work until January or even February. In these cases your university co-ordinator will liaise with their school / college counterparts and keep you informed.

SECTION 3:

KEY SAFEGUARDING MESSAGES

This section is here to remind you of the key safeguarding points that were covered in your training. Always refer to your online training materials if you need further guidance, or contact your HEI co-ordinator.

KEY MESSAGE #1

Safeguarding is the responsibility we all have in protecting children from harm.

As explained in your training, it is important to remember that everyone in the Aimhigher Mentoring Scheme has a statutory duty to safeguard children and promote their welfare. As mentors, it is important to have an awareness and understanding of the scheme's policies in this area, which were covered in training and can be found in detail on the Aimhigher website.

It is also important that mentors are aware of their own behaviour and how, in certain circumstances, this behaviour can be misinterpreted.

For mentors there are three practical points to note:

- It is essential to set **ground rules** at the start of the mentoring relationship
- **Confidentiality cannot be maintained** in child protection or illegal situations
- If you are unsure or suspect anything – **speak to somebody**. Your first contact should be the school co-ordinator.

Types of Abuse

In your training you will have covered many different types of abuse and how to identify signs of these in any learners you are working with. Detailed guidance on how to spot signs of neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse and emotional abuse are available on the safeguarding section of the Aimhigher website.

How to deal with a disclosure of abuse from a learner

Although disclosures of abuse are very rare in the history of Aimhigher mentoring, we want all mentors to be prepared. This is general guidance on how you should respond if you feel that a young person is going to disclose something to you:

<p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be accessible and receptive• Take it seriously• Reassure the child that they are right to tell you• Make careful and accurate notes• Get prompt help and assistance – speak to your school co-ordinator before you leave the school	<p>Don't:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jump to conclusions• Try to force a disclosure• Speculate or accuse• Make promises you can't keep• Promise confidentiality• Take a statement
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Bullying

In a school/college environment the most common type of abuse a mentor may encounter is bullying. A bullied student may be facing threatening behaviour, physical violence, insults or isolation from their peers and this may be taking place inside or outside of the school environment.

Cyber bullying is also an increasing problem, where threatening behaviour towards a young person is facilitated by mobile phones, social networks or online forums. If and when using technology in sessions, it is important to be aware of the risks involved and to use the opportunity where possible to promote safe and responsible online behaviour.

If your learner discloses to you that they are being bullied in any way or you have a strong suspicion that it may be the case, you must take the matter seriously and treat it as a disclosure as you would for any other form of abuse.

Mentor Behaviour

Mentors should not behave in a manner which would lead any reasonable person to question your suitability to work with children or act as a role-model. If you have any uncertainty as to whether you are using good practice, seek guidance from your university or school co-ordinator.

As explained in training, it is important to protect yourself by avoiding any conduct that could be misinterpreted as 'grooming behaviour'. To avoid any possibility of claims of abuse against you, the following notes are provided to give you general guidance.

- Avoid doing anything that is not totally open
- Avoid any favouritism and make sure you treat all learners the same way
- Avoid making unnecessary physical contact with any student
- Do not make any sexually suggestive comments to any learners
- Avoid being isolated with a learner - keep doors and blinds open

In addition, being mindful of the following can ensure mentors act appropriately and that both you and your learners are protected:

- **Dress** in a way that is appropriate to your role as a mentor in a school/college environment
- Do not give or accept **gifts**, particularly in situations which may be misconstrued. In situations where this is impossible ensure these are declared to the school/university co-ordinator
- If aware of a developing **infatuation**, contact the school co-ordinator at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate action can be taken to avoid any hurt, distress or embarrassment
- Do not make arrangements to meet with your learners **outside of the school setting**
- Do not exchange telephone numbers or email addresses with your learners (including your university email address)
- Under **NO CIRCUMSTANCE** allow your learners to connect with you on **social media**. If they try to add/follow you, decline and then discuss in your face-to-face meetings why this is not possible / appropriate within the scheme
- Always make sure you know who the **designated safeguarding lead** (DSL) is at your school. They will usually be made known to you at the launch

KEY MESSAGE #2

Be completely open in everything you do. Always ensure somebody else knows where you are and what you are doing and never hesitate to gain approval for any activity you are planning, especially if it is different to what you do week in, week out.

NOTES

SECTION 4:

PREPARING FOR YOUR SESSIONS

4.1 PREPARING FOR THE LAUNCH MEETING

Once you have been successfully matched you will be invited to visit your school or college for an initial launch meeting. A launch is not a formal mentoring session, but instead is a short introductory meeting where you will get to meet the staff and students at the school for the first time.

The details of how the launch may work will often vary between different schools or colleges and your university co-ordinator should be able to advise you of any further detail at the time. However there are always a few things that mentors will need to think about in advance in order to be as prepared as possible. Remember - first impressions count!

Use the spaces below to plan for your launch. Some things are obviously important for you to know (who are your learners?) but also think about other practicalities like where to sign in when you arrive? It would also be a good idea to plan a short icebreaker (around 10-15 minutes) in case you have some spare time with your learners.

Your learners will hopefully have time to complete the pre-mentoring assessment during the launch meeting, but if not you must make sure they do it during your first one to one session. Please see section 4.4 for more information.

Questions for the school / college co-ordinator:

E.g. why have these students been selected? How often will we meet?

Questions for your learners and their parents / carers:

E.g. how do you think a mentor can help you? Is there anything you're unsure about?



Times and arrangements for your first mentoring sessions are normally confirmed at the launch meeting. Sometimes your co-ordinator will contact you after the meeting to confirm the arrangements. Before your launch meeting finishes, make sure you fully understand what will happen next.

4.2 PLANNING YOUR FIRST 1:1 SESSION

We understand that your first session is may be the most nerve-wracking. Therefore planning activities in advance can help you to feel calmer and more prepared when getting started with your learners.

TIP: Always try to plan more activities than you think you may need to fill the time, just in case things go quicker than expected. You can always save unused activities for another session

The key objectives for the first session are to:

- Break the ice
- Agree ground rules
- Complete the pre-mentoring assessment and Balance Wheel if not already completed at launch meeting

Introduction and Ice Breakers

Although you may have already met at the launch meeting, do not expect your learners to remember any details! Re-introduce yourself, talk a bit about your interests, your course and why you are here. You may wish to discuss with the student about your role as their Aimhigher mentor and find out if they are aware why they have been selected to take part in the scheme?

It is very important that your learner feels comfortable with you and it is unlikely that they will open up to you if you immediately bombard them with questions about university and their future.

Talking about your own interests is a good way to open up the conversation, however also think about creative ways to find out information about your learners, as different learners may respond to different types of activity (i.e. quizzes, games or crafts).

You could use the icebreakers from your training session, or other activities you know or remember from your own experiences. The Aimhigher online Idea Bank, Google, Pinterest boards or summer camp & teaching resource websites can be helpful for gaining ideas.

Whichever activities you decide to use, it is important that you join in with the exercise along with your learner so that they can also get to know about you.

Planning Future Sessions

Covered briefly in your training, your mentoring structure will vary based on timetables, learning styles, activity type etc. However, as a basic guide, a 30 minute session could look like;

- Reconnection with the learner/checking progress since the last meeting (2 mins)
- Deciding on the main focus of today's exchange (3 mins)
- Working on today's activities (10-15 mins)
- Agreeing an action plan/targets for the forthcoming week (5 mins)
- Reviewing today's session and arranging the next meeting (5 mins)

As a role model it is important that your learners see you as organised and prepared. Try to plan more activities than you may need to fill time, in case things go quicker than expected.

Setting Next Session Dates

You will need to establish with your learners how your sessions will be planned on a weekly basis. Will they see you at the same time every week? Or will they rotate and see you during a different session?

Talk to your school co-ordinator about this in advance (if not covered at the launch meeting) so that you know what the process will be.

4.3 GROUND RULES

Setting Boundaries

Ground rules are about protecting you and your learners during your sessions and relationship. It is essential that you discuss with your learners the ground rules that you are going to share and put in place as a set of boundaries for how you are going to take your sessions forward together.

It's important to set aside enough time in your first session for laying the ground rules. To kick off discussion, it can help to ask your learners what they hope to get out of mentoring sessions. Being able to achieve these goals will inevitably depend upon positive behaviours being demonstrated within your sessions. Ask your learners what they think is expected of them and ensure they take ownership of these rules (encourage learners to write these down rather than yourself).

There are two essential ground rules that you will need to agree with your learner. Creating these ground rules together will help the learner to take ownership of their rules rather than feeling they have been imposed upon them.

GROUND RULE #1

Everything you talk about is between you and your learners unless you feel it is essential to pass information onto somebody in authority as the information you have received is of a child protection or an illegal nature. Your ground rule could be "whatever we talk about is between us unless you tell me you are being harmed or you are harming others or yourself" and "you tell me of an incident that you have either been involved in or know of that is illegal".

GROUND RULE #2

This second ground rule must cover restrictions about the sharing of personal details. Your ground rule could say “we will not share personal details for example, mobile phone numbers, email addresses, personal/home address and we will not use social networking sites”.

After these have been discussed you are free to add as many additional ground rules as you both wish.

Here are some examples you may like to think about or suggest with your learner:

- Honesty between each other
- What will we call each other?
- What happens/what do you need to do, if either of you are unable to attend the session?
- Timekeeping / punctuality and who is going to be responsible for keeping an eye on the clock?
- Mobile phone etiquette
- Use of language and how will we speak to each other
- What equipment are we going to bring – logbooks, pens, paper etc.?
- How are we going to show respect for each other?
- When in a group how are we going to ensure everybody has a say and how are we going to show respect for what they say?

Once the ground rules have been created, don't forget about them! Use these as a tool in future sessions and don't be afraid to refer back to the ground rules if learners demonstrate any challenging behaviour.

Ground rules are not set in stone and you may feel the need to re-visit them at various times during the scheme, particularly if either you or your learners feel they are not working for both of you.

Your HEI will provide further details on how to complete the ground rules with your learners.

4.4 PRE-MENTORING ASSESSMENT AND BALANCE WHEEL

This questionnaire and assessment tool should be used by all mentors with each learner at the start of their mentoring relationship, ideally in the launch meeting or first 1:1 session. It helps you and your learners identify their current level of knowledge about their future careers, their study / learning skills and their attitudes to learning, school or college and higher education.

Using the questionnaire and balance wheel to identify and agree learner's priorities and needs was covered during training, but it is not an exact science, and mentors will need to use the full range of skills and techniques explored during training to do this with their learners. What are their aspirations and concerns about the future? What do they feel are their strengths and weaknesses? What subjects do they like and dislike? What clues or lines of enquiry do their responses to the questionnaire provide?

For example:

If your learner has indicated an interest in higher education or a graduate level career:

- Do their other responses identify any worries, concerns or misconceptions that they need help with e.g.:
 - Fear of debt / the costs of university
 - Concerns about getting the grades needed, or coping with higher level study
 - Worries about leaving home or missing friends / family.

If your learner is more interested in getting a job or apprenticeship:

- Do they have a career or job in mind? Do they know what that career or job will involve? Is it a "graduate only" career?
- Do they know anything about high level or degree apprenticeships?

If your learner has ticked "I'm not sure" to the career question in section 2

- They need to be placed in the "definitely needs help" sections of the balance wheel for "future career plans", "subject choices" and possibly the "confidence and motivation" segments of the balance wheel.

How to use the Pre-Mentoring Assessment and Balance Wheel to plan your mentoring support

- If they want to improve their study skills, ask them about how they currently approach homework or revision. Where and when do they try to complete it? How much help or support do they get from family members? Do they use school or college homework or revision support sessions? Do their friends at school / college or home encourage and help them, or distract and demotivate them?
- If they feel they lack confidence or motivation ask them about their hobbies, favourite subjects and any extra-curricular activities they enjoy at school or college. Could these form the basis of an exciting career ambition?
- If they are not making best use of their time at school / college, or their free time, ask them why they feel this. Are there any problems associated with life at school / college, or at home or in wider circles of friendship / relationships?

Pre and Post Mentoring Assessment 2021-22

All learner mentoring assessments will be handed out and completed separately to this handbook or online. The example below is shown here for your reference. Pre and Post mentoring assessments have the same format and are completed at the beginning and end of the mentor cycle in order for us to measure distance travelled by our learners. It is important that your learners are given adequate time to complete these and that you encourage them to answer each section honestly.

Learner Name	
Mentor Name	
School	

*Please note that throughout this form 'higher education' refers to both university degrees and higher/degree apprenticeships

Future Plans	YES	NO	Not Sure
Go to sixth form/college (only applicable for years 7-11)			
Go to higher education (includes a degree or higher level/degree apprenticeship)			
Start work			
Start a traineeships or lower level apprenticeship			
Start voluntary work or work experience			
Do you currently have a specific career/job in mind? If 'yes', please specify:			

Higher Education: Your current views	Definitely will apply	Very likely	Fairly likely	Not very likely	Not at all likely	Definitely won't apply	Don't know
I plan to go into higher education (e.g. degree or higher level/degree apprenticeship)							

What are the main reasons you might not go into higher education?	Yes		Yes
Having school qualifications is enough		I am not academic enough	
I have decided on a specific career (that does not require further study)		Higher education does not appeal to me	
I want to work and earn money		I want to travel	
The cost of higher education is too much		I am as yet undecided about higher education	
It depends on the grades I get		There is not a university close enough to home	
There aren't any higher/degree apprenticeships available in my area		Higher/degree apprenticeships are too competitive	

How much do you know about higher education study?	A Lot	A fair bit	A little	Nothing at all	Don't know
Different routes into higher education such as: higher apprenticeships, distance learning, or higher education in a further education setting					
What courses are available at universities					
How to apply to university through UCAS					
What higher/degree apprenticeships are available					
How to find and apply for higher/degree apprenticeships					
The qualifications / grades I would need to get into the higher education course that I am most interested in					
What life would be like at a university					

How much do you know about higher education study?	A Lot	A fair bit	A little	Nothing at all	Don't know
What life would be like as a higher/degree apprentice					
How higher education leads to careers that I may be interested in					
The costs associated with higher education study					
The financial support available to study in higher education					

How much do you agree with the following statements about higher education?	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I know enough about higher education to decide whether to go or not						
I would fit in well with others if I went into higher education						
I am clear on which higher education course/subject to apply for						
I am clear on which higher education institutions I want to apply for						
I could cope with the level of study required for higher education						
I will earn more in the future as a result of higher education						
I will get a better job as a result of higher education						
If you are clear on which higher education course/subject to apply for then please specify						

Score each topic below to reflect the amount of help or support you now feel you need	Less support	A little less support	Support just right	A little more support	More support
1. Exploring different careers					
2. Exploring higher education options					
3. Exploring other education options					
4. Improving my study, revision and exam skills					
5. Making the most of time at school / college					
6. Making the most of time outside school / college					
7. Developing my confidence / motivation to succeed					
8. Other					

Satisfaction with the Mentoring Scheme

How satisfied are you with the support/guidance you have received from the mentoring scheme?

Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Not Sure	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied

Please provide an explanation for your answer? (e.g. what has worked well, has the scheme benefited you, do any improvements need to be made)

With your mentor discuss your responses to the questions over the page and the responses you made to the same questions at the start of the scheme in the pre-mentoring assessment. Comparing your pre and post mentoring assessment will help you and your mentor see how much the mentoring scheme has helped you.

NOTES

SECTION 5:

IDEA BANK

5.1 IDEA BANK

The Idea Bank is primarily an online resource which provides a sequential and coherent programme of activities for learners in Years 8 to 13. Its main aim is to support the work of mentors in raising aspirations and improving progression rates to higher education, particularly among more disadvantaged young people.

The Idea Bank is not intended to be prescriptive, but should provide a useful starting point upon which to build exchanges with your learners.

ONLINE IDEA BANK

VISIT AIMHIGHERWM.AC.UK/MENTORING-RESOURCES

What follows is a brief overview of the topics you may wish to cover with each year group. The online version includes links to a wide range of websites and resources to help you in your work as a mentor. These are specifically linked to different levels of study and are intended to act as your principal source of support and ideas for developing and delivering your sessions effectively.

5.2 DELIVERING THE IDEA BANK – FAQs

Q: How do I use the Idea Bank?

A: Use the Idea Bank to identify topics to cover in each weekly session.

The plans for each year group contain roughly 12-16 topics, so you can choose to focus on one per week or combine several together depending on your student's needs. **You do not need to cover all of these topics in your sessions...** they are just for guidance and should be used as a starting point for your own research and planning.

We expect that each activity within the online Idea Bank should take at least 20 to 25 minutes. In most cases the activities can be undertaken on a one-to-one basis, but occasionally they will benefit from a paired or small group approach. Some of the activities and their learner outcomes are developed over more than one phase, helping to reinforce and consolidate the learning process.

Throughout the sessions it will be important to signpost learners to additional information, advice and guidance available to them.

Please note that although the printed and online Idea Bank is divided up into year groups, your learners may benefit from activities in other sections. For example, a year 11 pupil may not have the knowledge as described in the year 11 section. Therefore, some of the activities from the year 9 and 10 sections would be better suited.

Q: What if my learner isn't interested in Higher Education?

A: Higher Education isn't going to be the right option for every learner and although Mentors should aim to break down any barriers or preconceptions their learners have about university study, they should not be afraid to approach and explore other options with them.

Although higher education and graduate careers are the underpinning theme of the programme, there is also an emphasis in the activities provided on the development of the softer skills that are so highly valued by employers. Indeed it is hoped that the programme will help to improve communication and decision-making skills, while also enhancing confidence and self-esteem – something that will be of relevance for many of the learners as they navigate their way through the first years of secondary school.

It is also important for mentors to introduce other pathways as part of their work with learners. The online Idea Bank includes links to up-to-date information on careers, Apprenticeships and inspirational stories, as well as student life, student finance, and other general matters. The growth in higher level and degree apprenticeships may be of great interest and relevance to some learners.

Q: What else can I do with my learners?

A: Ultimately, you have control over the activities you run in your sessions. Your university co-ordinator can help with ideas but we encourage all mentors to research and plan their own activities.

Activities can be as academic, active or creative as you want to make them. However, we would ask that mentors check with their school co-ordinator before doing any activity that requires specific resources or spaces, as they may need to comply with the school's health and safety guidelines.

There are also other external events organised by Aimhigher and each of our partner Universities. These include;

- Campus visits
- Subject enrichment programmes
- Aimhigher Roadshow
- Masterclasses
- Revision classes
- Summer schools
- Higher education conventions

In many schools and colleges, such events may feature regularly as part of the provision made to raise aspirations and levels of attainment. However, in some you will need to be more proactive in raising awareness among the staff, and in promoting the value and benefits of learner participation.

For further details of such events see section 1.5 of the handbook and the [Aimhigher website](#).

For details of any deadlines please contact your university co-ordinator.

**What follows below is a jumping off point for your sessions.
Use Aimhigher online as your main source of ideas!**

Search for local university and college open days and other activities here:

aimhigherwm.ac.uk/activities

Follow Aimhigher on Twitter to get up to the minute information on careers,
the world of work, colleges, university and Apprenticeship developments:

@AimhigherWM

5.3 YEAR 8 IDEA BANK

Many Year 8 learners are still finding their feet and learning how to navigate through their time at school. This is an exciting time, but also a challenge for many, with organisation, priorities and the requirement to be and do more resulting in some students feeling overwhelmed.

During this year a mentor can assist their learners by helping them to see the positives in being organised, being good at time management and goal setting and having confidence to speak up if they need some help.

The following table can be used as a guide to help you plan your sessions. You will find comprehensive resources and internet links to supplement this and all other year guides on the Aimhigher website.

Topic/Theme	Description
Positive attitude, a way forward?	Help learners discover what their attitude towards certain aspects of their study and investigate if this is affecting them reaching their potential
Importance of role models	Design a session to focus on what makes a successful role model
Get involved	Explore the positives/importance of being involved - maybe joining school / out of school clubs
Thinking ahead	Use this session is to research options for options at GCSE and beyond (i.e. BTEC's and College)
Stay focused – what type of learner are you?	This session aims to give the learner an insight to how they learn and how they can adapt activities to suit their learning style
Managing Homework	This session looks to encourage yr. 8 learners to adopt a realistic routine for managing their homework
Study skills	Use this session to help learners develop good study skills, use tips and resources that have helped you in the past
Introduction to revision and memory skills	Help your learners to prepare for tests or assessments by encouraging good study habits
Differences between school and university	This section looks at the key differences between going to school and attending university
Making subject choices for study in Years 10 / 11	Explore your schools' 'Options' process, highlighting both the compulsory and optional subject routes that are on offer to learners
Building self-confidence	You can explore ideas around self-esteem and confidence. Many learners can feel they are 'not good enough'
Communication & presentation skills	This is important for learners as some may struggle with speaking up in class or find it hard when asked to talk in front of a crowd
Ending the Scheme (Exit Strategies)	Take a few sessions to work towards the end of the scheme, set long term targets and empower your learner to carry on the processes and actions that you have covered in the scheme

5.4 YEAR 9 IDEA BANK

During year 9 many students will be challenged to tackle some of the biggest decisions they have had to make for themselves so far – making their subject choices. Find out the deadlines and criteria for this process (ask your school co-ordinator) so you can best prepare and support your learner.

Topic/Theme	Description
What is Higher Education?	Introduce the concept of Higher Education and the terminology surrounding it (degree/ undergraduate/ university)
Why do people go into Higher Education?	The aim here is for learners to realise that there are a variety of reasons for going into HE, many of which they may not have considered
What sort of person are you?	Here you are trying to build an opportunity to help your learner really focus and begin to understand who they are
Soft skills	With employers placing a considerable emphasis on the development of soft skills, the aim of the session is to discuss the nature and importance of these skills
Making decisions	Help learners become aware of the importance of being able to make informed decisions
Goals	Learners face uncharted territory each year as they are confronted with new decisions that will impact on their futures
Making subject choices for study in Years 10 / 11, (Key Stage 4)	Explore the schools' 'Options' process, highlighting both the compulsory and optional subjects that are on offer to learners next year
Researching a range of careers	Learners can research what different careers actually involve and how they can become involved
Qualifications and courses	The aim here is to explore the range of types of qualifications and courses available to young people
Difference between school and university	This section looks at the key differences between going to school and attending university
Routes into Higher Education	The focus here is on the variety of pathways and progression routes that can lead to Higher Education – not just A-Levels
Developing study skills and time management	The session highlights how to develop effective study skills and why this is important
Money matters	Mention of bursaries, grants and loans as well as the cost of living as a student
Ending the Scheme (Exit Strategies)	Take a few sessions to work towards the end of the scheme, set long term targets and empower your learner to carry on the processes and actions that you have covered in the scheme

Year 9 is quite often when many learners begin to realise they are growing up and they have to begin making decisions for themselves and their future. Mentors may find that they need to concentrate on helping their learners explore careers, options, issues around the 'sense of self' and their future aspirations.

5.5 YEAR 10 IDEA BANK

During year 10 many learners will be settling into their chosen subjects, following their exam's curriculum.

This year is when many undertake valuable work experience too. Mentors working with year 10 learners will likely find a need to start helping them set a direction, looking at how attitudes can influence success, and how work experience can be so necessary and valuable.

Topic/Theme	Description
What does HE mean to me?	The aim here is to create an opportunity for learners to discuss how they feel about higher education
Why do it?	Here learners identify the wider benefits of higher education, the aim is to help them identify places they can find out answers to questions they may have
True or false?	Here learners can explore the possible misconceptions or prejudices about higher education
Richer pickings	Learners may find it beneficial to research the long-term benefits of higher education, maybe look at some case studies of famous graduates?
What's stopping me?	Use activities where the focus is on the possible barriers to higher education progression
Financial help	Here the learner explores the practical implications of moving into higher education. It is important to stress that money doesn't have to be a barrier to learning
Are you up for the job?	The aim of this session is to encourage learners to think about the different types of jobs
Routes into higher education	This session is designed to show that there are more ways into higher education than just A-levels
Help!	The session should encourage learners to think about where they can find help about higher education
Work experience	Here, encourage learners to consider the types and benefits of work experience
Finding a career that's right for you	This session has a focus on identifying activities learners enjoy both inside and outside of school, and researching the careers that match up with them
Exploring Apprenticeships	Here there is an opportunity to extend the learner's knowledge of Apprenticeships
Learning and qualifications	Here learners can find out about the key issues surrounding learning and qualifications
Choices at 16: what's right for you?	The emphasis here is on the need to keep learning beyond sixteen, either full-time at school or college, or through work-based training
Ending the Scheme (Exit Strategies)	Take a few sessions to work towards the end of the scheme, set long term targets and empower your learner to carry on the processes and actions that you have covered in the scheme

5.6 YEAR 11 IDEA BANK

Year 11 learners have much to prepare for during this year.

Not only do they have exam pressures, they also need to make decisions about their time after compulsory education. Mentors will likely be involved in assisting learners to hone revision/study skills, explore progression options and careers. It may also be useful to explore independence issues such as budgeting or securing part time employment.

Topic/Theme	Description
What do you already know about Higher Education?	Learners can take the opportunity, either on an individual or group basis, to idea-storm all the knowledge they already have about HE
Where will I be in ten years' time?	To encourage learners to think about the future and how it might be affected by the choices they make now
Typical student!	The aim during this session is to address stereotypes and to look not only at the reasons people might have for going to university, but also to explore what might put some people off going
Name that job!	This session will help learners recognise the range of different careers open to them
Ways into a career	Encourage learners to consider how qualifications impact on career choices
Choices at 16: what's right for you?	The emphasis here is on the need to keep learning beyond sixteen, either full-time at school or college, or through work-based training
Routes into Higher Education	The aim is to raise awareness of the variety of routes into HE, and the range of HE options from which to choose
Which course?	Explore with learners the extensive range of courses available
Auditing my skills	Focuses on helping learners to identify the study skills needed to succeed in HE
Developing revision skills	Here, the session can cover a range of skills related to revision and examinations
Learning styles	The aim here is to help learners to discover their preferred learning style and how to use that knowledge to their advantage
Making decisions	Highlights how we need and use information in order to make informed decisions
Graduate market trends	Find out what happens to graduates after they leave higher education
Higher Education funding	Money matters are important, use this session to help learners gain a good background to understanding about finances
Understanding personal finances / banking	Focus on the financial issues that students and their families need to consider
Ending the Scheme (Exit Strategies)	Take a few sessions to work towards the end of the scheme, set long term targets and empower your learner to carry on the processes and actions that you have covered in the scheme

5.7 YEAR 12 IDEA BANK

Many learners in year 12 are adjusting to the change in learning / teaching styles and the increased independence on offer. This year, learners are looking at the 'for and against' debate of going into higher education, and are mindful of courses and careers.

Mentors working with year 12 learners will possibly be helping learners carry out thorough investigations to their skills and look to match them with suitable careers and courses. Looking at alternative progression routes and making applications to higher education will also be common. Mentors may spend time working with learners to dispel myths about HE and also work through money worries.

Topic/Theme	Description
Learning Styles	This session helps learners to identify different learning styles and forms of assessment
What can higher education do for you?	Use this session to outline the benefits of higher education and explore progression routes
Recognising your skills and potential	Encourage your learners to investigate and discuss qualities employers will look for in potential employees
Which subject? Which Qualification?	It is important to help learners think about their subject choice and qualification. Reinforce that these decisions should take precedent over where or how to study
Where to study?	Focuses on narrowing the choice of 300 plus UCAS institutions, over 150 of which provide only higher education courses
UCAS process Applying for a course	The activity explores the application process and qualification requirements
UCAS Entry Profiles	Use this session to assist learners in the process of narrowing down choices
Getting it right first time	Ensures that applicants are aware of some of the reasons that lead students to discontinue their studies
Student Finance	Use this session to highlight the financial issues that students and their families need to consider
Student Life	The aim of this session is to prepare for the changes in lifestyle and learning whilst studying at University
Get Involved	Encourage learners to see that applications to university depend on more than just academic grades
Draft a UCAS personal statement/Job application	Use this session to discuss points to consider when attempting the first draft of the personal statement/job application
Review first draft of UCAS personal statement	This session will focus on the personal statement/job application
Ending the Scheme (Exit Strategies)	Take a few sessions to work towards the end of the scheme, set long term targets and empower your learner to carry on the processes and actions that you have covered in the scheme

5.8 YEAR 13 IDEA BANK

Issues with year 13 learners are often very specific and focussed on exams and 'what's next'. Here mentors will possibly find learners need study skills support during their current year, but also to prepare them for the year ahead.

Helping learners gain a realistic view of what to expect whilst in Higher Education; study time, independence, finance, budgeting, work/study/social life balance – will be of paramount importance. Mentors may find themselves preparing learners for university interviews and possibly helping to identify useful additional work experience.

Topic/Theme	Description
Where to study Lifestyle: home or away?	These sessions can help learners gain an understanding of where universities are geographically and what that means in terms of lifestyle
UCAS Tariff / Understanding HE league tables / Application processes	Looks at the system for allocating points to qualifications used for entry to HE, how to apply and also league tables
University statistics / Student Satisfaction Surveys	The NSS enables learners to see what over 177,000 undergraduate students felt about the quality of their HE experience. Also this session can be used to look at finalising the personal statement
Work experience, employment & Gap Years?	Look to highlight the benefits of work experience whilst in HE and describe the different types. Also focus on the strategies for seeking and securing work experience....or maybe take a gap year
Skills and strengths.... and part time employment	Enable learners to idea-storm a list of skills and attributes needed for a particular profession/job
Study skills	This session shows how learners can maximise the academic experience by gaining an understanding of 'how it all works' effectively from an early point.
Identifying barriers to HE & Handling Interviews	Help learners to recognise and be encouraged to address the visible and invisible barriers to HE, including the possibility of an HE interview
Reasons to be cheerful – social and non-academic benefits of HE	Use this session to explore the broader aspects of life at university and examines the social and non-academic benefits
Additional support for students with a disability	This session will be very useful for students with an already diagnosed disability, or a suspected disability such as dyslexia
Money facts	Use this session to examine the financial problems that could be encountered
Next steps checklist	Within this session encourage applicants to develop a calendar/checklist in support of their applications
Revision programme	Introduce the learners to the host of online support available for revision

YEAR 13 IDEA BANK CONTINUED OVERLEAF

YEAR 13 IDEA BANK CONTINUED

Topic/Theme	Description
A day in the life including ...How I got where I am today	Use this session to illustrate the marked differences between a typical day in the life of a school/college student and HE student
Spend, spend, spend Balance your budget	This session will look realistically at student spending
University challenge: are you ready?	This session is light and quick, additional time can be used to plan where the learner would like additional input perhaps?
Finance – loans and supplementary income.	This session will look at when a loan isn't a loan and talk about ideas to supplement the student income
Loan repayments	This session looks at the loan system and how and when repayments are made
If I were you...	This session is a really useful to help learners realise they are taking the progression route that is suitable for them
Ending the Scheme (Exit Strategies)	Take a few sessions to work towards the end of the scheme, set long term targets and empower your learner to carry on the processes and actions that you have covered in the scheme

Below is a template that can help you to plan and record your sessions, along with some example session plans.

Session details			
Date:	Time:	Session Number:	
Location:		Length:	
Learner Name/s:			

Session details			
Date:	Time:	Session Number:	
Location:		Length:	
Learner Name/s:			

Session focus
What is the aim of today's session and what topics will we cover?

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Session Notes
Key points for next session:

Session Notes
Key points for next session:

Year 9 Example Session

Session details

Date: 29/11/18

Time: 10.35

Session Number: 3

Location: Breakout area, English Block

Length: 35 minutes

Learner Name/s: Joe

Check in: Feeling okay, didn't sleep well so is tired

Session focus

What is the aim of today's session? Help learner build a better understanding of the qualifications and courses available

What topics will we cover? What is the difference between a qualification and a course? What different paths can they go down in terms of qualifications? What qualifications and courses are available to them?

Resources required: Qualification activity, levels chart, Wi-Fi for online research

Session Notes

Start with a discussion of what qualifications the learner already is aware of. If struggling think about what they have already done up until year 9 and what they know is coming (5 mins)

Use qualification ladder to fill in ones that learner already knows, then bring out cards with different qualifications on. As a pair, discuss where each one would go on the ladder using higher/lower, then once in the right order get learner to use the cards as building blocks to see which would lead on to which. (15)

Activity: 'pathways' handout with different professional people, all of which have been educated to different levels from GCSE to PHD. Get learner to think about which qualifications belong to who based on the job they have, then check answers. (10)

Discussion of next session and small research task (5)

Key points for next session:

Tasks assigned: Learner has expressed an interest in being a Physio or Radiographer. Research both jobs using ladder template and map out the qualifications that would be needed for both.

Date of next session: 6/12/18

Time: 35 minutes

Year 10 Example Session

Session details

Date: 04/02/2019

Time: 1.30pm

Session Number: 6

Location: Form room

Length: 40 minutes

Learner Name/s: Sarah, Anisah, Amara

Session focus

Financial help

What is the aim of today's session and what topics will we cover?

Cover the financial implications of going/not going to university, myth busting, and introduction to the support that is available.

Session Notes

Quick check-in and recap of last week's session.

STARTER: Get learners to anonymously write down on post-its 2 financial worries that are stopping them thinking about university then put them in a bucket or box in the middle

- Encourage students to pick out post-its (3 or 4) and discuss them as a group. As discussions happen make a note of key words that pop up repeatedly e.g. debt, expensive, parents, travel etc. (8 mins)

- Give student a role with a different coloured counters - **MONEY IN**, **MONEY OUT** and **DEBT**. Using a timeline (from year 13 to 10 years' time) get students to work their way along the path to university, as a graduate and after, chipping in where they think money will be paid out, paid in and what debt they might accrue.

- Now introduce **LOAN**, **BURSARY** and **GRANT** (with definitions) to the timeline as different colours if they haven't come up with these already. Get students to consider where these might be relevant (e.g. application process and during studies) and then plot these on the timeline, encouraging them to think about how **DEBT** and **MONEY OUT** decrease with the addition of financial support. (20 mins)

Close: Return to worry post it's at beginning- get learners to write in a different colour what support is available to counter each one. This should lead to them seeing how they can get rid of most of these barriers. (10 minutes)

Agree time, date and location for next session.

Year 12 Example Session

Session details

Date: 25/02/19

Time: 10.35

Session Number: 10

Location: Form roomk

Length: 45 minutes

Learner Name/s: Ellie, Veronika, Mehmood, Nur

Session focus

Draft a UCAS personal statement/ Job application

What is the aim of today's session and what topics will we cover?

Ensure learners feel informed of what should be included in their personal statement and that they have a strategy for writing this.

Discuss what needs to be included in a personal statement and how to write a first draft.

Session Notes

Check in and recap of last week's discussion - the importance of participating in activities that are outside of their immediate studies for skills development and their UCAS application. (5)

Ask the group what they think the personal statement is used for and check their knowledge of key facts (e.g. 1 statement for all unis and applications, no longer than 4000 characters, submitted via UCAS) (10 mins) then talk through some tips for success (5 mins)

Hand out UCAS PS worksheet and ask learners to work through each section, encouraging discussion with others in the group. Once they have rough plan, they can begin to type up. (30 mins)

Hand out checklist of things to include and things to avoid in a personal statement. Encourage learners to show their personal statement to others, to not get attached to their first drafts and to read their personal statement aloud.

Key points for next session:

Task: Finish first draft and get at least 1 person to read and feedback to them.

Agree time, date and location for next session.



2021/22 HANDBOOK

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