



SEER SPOTLIGHT – CLIENT CASE STUDIES

Below are a couple of examples of current practice, which we have delivered with two of our clients (The Academy of Contemporary Music (ACM) and BIMM Institute).

ACM Buddy Scheme

A number of our clients deliver projects designed to support students from discreet under-represented groups with the transition to study at undergraduate level in higher education (HE). Mentoring, Peer Assisted Learning and Peer-to-peer support projects are extremely prevalent within the sector. Many students with no family history of HE can find the transition into HE difficult and are more unlikely to seek support than peers with more family history or are from backgrounds that are more affluent.

ACM have delivered their 'Buddy Scheme' since 2021, piloting the project in the 21/22 academic year targeting students with additional needs or care experience supporting them in transition to ACM. The aims of the project are detailed below:

- To ensure students are aware of the support for them at ACM
- To support early identification of any issues new students are facing
- To support students to 'settle in' and limit any feelings of loneliness

SEER designed evaluation processes and resources to assess how the scheme performed against these aims. This included development of a pre, post and mid-programme survey to track buddy and student experiences and the development of a focus group to review the scheme. Unfortunately, within the pilot project student engagement was low, partially in part due to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic and resultant knock-on implications on student engagement. However, the feedback from participants did provide some useful insights regarding programme implementation and reflections on the scheme, which could be used for programme and evaluation design for future years.

During initial planning meetings for the 22/23 project, we discussed the importance of defining the project effectively. The term 'mentoring' can sometimes appear overly formal and imply a level of commitment, which can be potentially off-putting to potential participants. We agreed that ACM colleagues would conduct an internal mapping exercise to identify other strands of peer support activity and define what participating students would get from taking part in each project and what is required from a mentor/buddy on each project.

The mapping exercise reaffirmed ACM's decision to frame their project as a 'buddy scheme'. Participants are paired up with an existing ACM student, who can help to help them settle into life at ACM and the local area. Therefore, we felt that 'buddy' was the most appropriate term, given the informal nature of the scheme. In addition to being available for 1:1 meetings to discuss how new students are finding things and to answer any questions they may have about being an ACM student, the scheme opens and closes with Buddy Lunch events, which enable participants to meet their buddy, as well as other new students.

As part of the evaluation for the scheme in 22/23, we are once again supporting ACM with recruitment of participants, have developed evaluation resources (surveys) as in previous years and will deliver interviews and focus groups as part of the Buddy Lunches. We will provide a further update on the 22/23 iteration of the scheme in a future Newsletter.

BIMM Institute – Summer Schools evaluation

Summer Schools are another type of intervention that has been offered by many institutions for many years. SEER members may have noted TASO's recent [report](#), which suggested, "summer schools designed to reduce equality gaps in access to higher education are largely attended by students already destined for university". This was an interesting contribution to the ongoing debate around the impact and value for money (VfM) that certain WP interventions provide.

BIMM Institute have a number of campuses situated across the UK and Europe and each year deliver a series of nine Summer Schools during late July/early August across their four campus locations.

BIMM wanted to develop a uniform approach towards evaluating their Summer Schools programme. They also wanted to understand how effective delivery of these interventions could support BIMM in meeting their APP (Access and Participation Plan) commitment to increase awareness of their curriculum offer.

In order to support BIMM in evaluating their summer school programme, SEER staff have worked with BIMM colleagues to develop a mixed methods approach to evaluation of the interventions, making use of data collation and analysis, pre- and post- surveys, and qualitative, semi-structured focus groups.

The evaluation aims to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Summer School programme against stated objectives, focusing on access for under-represented groups.
- Assess the experience of participants in terms of confidence and skills development, focusing on under-represented groups.

The evaluation has the following objectives:

- To capture and analyse participant attendance, disaggregating by key student demographic and bursary recipients.
- To measure participant development in technique and confidence in relation to performance through pre- and post-activity survey with findings disaggregated by target student populations.
- To consult with relevant staff exploring perception of student development, focusing on APP students.

As part of supporting BIMM staff ahead of the delivery of the Summer Schools programme, SEER also delivered a session designed to support staff deliver focus groups effectively, providing hints and tips on how these can be incorporated into a Summer School intervention.

The interventions were delivered in July and we are currently collating participant data towards supporting the development of a final report, which alongside evaluating this year's Summer Schools programme will present findings from evaluation to BIMM, as a model for future evaluations of future WP interventions.