GROW@BU: A strategy to use professional coaching behaviours to support student retention and success

Janet Hanson   Education Enhancement Adviser

Emma Crowley   GROW@BU Project Manager

Dermot McCarthy   Lecturer in Economics

bucoaching@bournemouth.ac.uk

HEA Annual Conference, Manchester, July 3-4 2012

Overview of session

- GROW@BU: The concept of using coaching in support of student success and retention.

- Summary of work in progress to implement GROW@BU pilot in 2011/12.

- Feedback from students and staff gained through the evaluation.

- Review draft versions of staff development resources.

- Appreciative Inquiry as an evaluation approach.

Commitment to Fair Access

- BU's *Fair Access Agreement 2012-2013* sets out plans to support access to Widening Participation (WP) students in 3 ways:
    - Outreach;
    - Retention;
    - Financial Support.
- The GROW@BU approach:
    - Is central to supporting student retention and success.
    - Will benefit *all* students, but WP students will have the opportunity to gain extra support.

Strategic Alignment

- GROW@BU supports objectives in BU's new vision and values statement, BU2018:

    "create a culture of coaching, mentoring and personal development throughout BU in all student/staff interactions"

- GROW@BU is also embedded within:

    - BU Student Experience Strategy;

    - School Strategic Plans;

    - Student and Academic Services' Plan 2012-2018.

GROW@BU Approach

- Aimed at enhancing students' ability to realise their academic, professional and personal goals.

- An integrative programme:

  - incorporating new activities;

  - drawing together existing coaching and mentoring activities and support.

- Providing support throughout the Student Journey from pre-arrival, in-course activities, peer mentoring, career coaching and as alumni.

Coaching to support learning

- Developing and defining our understanding of coaching in support of learning.

- Need for a versatile approach that could be used with individuals, or with large and small groups.

Approaches to coaching

- Range of different theoretical and practical approaches (Ives 2008).

- Current use at BU for staff development.

- Varied interpretations, eg: need to differentiate our approach from sports coaching.

- Use of the GROW (Whitmore 2009) model to maintain a goal-focused approach.

GROW model of coaching

- GROW – a four stage process:
  - Goal – where do you want to get to?
  - Reality – what's the current situation?
  - Options – what could you do?
  - Will – what will you do?
- Three key features:
  - Goal oriented;
  - Focused on specific outcomes;
  - Based on an equal partnership.

Researching other examples of coaching in HE

- Evidence from *What works? Student Retention & Success programme*.

- Peer mentoring research (Andrews and Clark 2011; Morosanu et al. 2010; Parkinson 2009).

- Academic coaching examples from USA (Robinson & Gahagan 2010; Bettinger and Baker 2011).

- Coaching and learning theories (Griffiths 2005).

- PC3 Personalised Curriculum through Coaching project at Leeds Metropolitan University.

GROW@BU:
Aims & Objectives achieved by...

- Working with academic and professional staff to identify where coaching and mentoring interventions and good practice exist.

- Developing an understanding of skills required to be a coaching academic or coaching professional staff.

- Being available to all, but involving careful monitoring of and extra support and signposting for Widening Participation Students.

Project Pilot programmes

- Level C students and programme teams from 3 Schools:

    - School of Applied Sciences – BSc (Hons) Environmental Science (35 students);

    - The Business School - BA Accounting and Finance Framework (216 students);

    - School of Health and Social Care – BSc (Hons) Nutrition (29 students);

- Total of 280 students & 24 academic staff.

Coaching explored through activities and support

- Student peer coaching.
- Academic coaching behaviours:
  - In lectures, seminars, or 1-2-1 on a needs basis.
- Professional and personal coaching:
  - In groups or 1-2-1 on a needs basis, mostly for placement support.
- Online tools and diagnostics:
  - Support resources in myBU (VLE) community;
  - e-portfolio tool – Mahara;
  - Diagnostic tools e.g. MBTI assessment.

Student feedback on peer coaching

- ES students expressed the most positive reactions:
  - they found it motivating and challenging;
  - it also prompted them to consider practical solutions.
- Nutrition students were:
  - largely positive;
  - some mature students queried its value.
- Accounting/Finance students
  - appeared positive initially but -
  - sessions weren't integrated into the programme - may have been better received if delivered by an academic.

Academic staff feedback

- Ten academic staff participated in individual semi-structured interviews. They were asked…
  - to reflect on a successful example of using coaching behaviors with their students;
  - to describe these in the context of their lectures, small group project sessions, drop-in workshops or individual guidance sessions.

1. Fam... lectu... appro...
2. need... lectures to enha...
3. co... ...iate for interactions ...essions or project g...
4. The ... was successfully used in individual guidance sessions
5. However, it might not always ... coaching approach in individu...

"You are simply asking reflective questions at appropriate points as you deliver the material and that is related to the pace at which you deliver...

"letting go of the reins and allowing students to take ownership of the pro... ...little bit more difficult...

"I have never called it a coaching session, but basically we go through these multiple choice questions, that's how we start the session. We go through these…but I don't say ' This is the answer', I say 'What is your strategy for answering this question? or 'Where do we need to start?"

...s that come out ...uld be different. I ...ink lecturing staff would need a little bit more training or guidance"

"If a student came to talk to you could use the [GROW] model, but many come when they didn't get the result they expected so they are quite upset, and you have to work through that, so it wouldn't be appropriate to take a coaching approach."

"Its good to get them to work through the problems, get them to identify their various options and get them to identify what is the best solution for them and get them to think 'What should I do right now in order to implement this solution?'."

Review of resources

Video clips

Question prompts

Handouts

Appreciative Inquiry for evaluation

- Appreciative Inquiry is "a group process that inquires into, identifies, and further develops the best of 'what is' in organizations in order to create a better future" (Preskill and Catsambas 2006:1).

- Appreciative Inquiry is both a philosophy and a process that focuses on strengths and past successes as a means to achieve future goals.

- If individuals look for success, then they are more likely to create more success.

- The evaluation focuses on what went well rather than problems and if the best of what is happening continued, what else would need to happen?

Appreciative Inquiry process

- A four stage process:
  - Inquire
  - Imagine
  - Innovate
  - Implement

What next for 2012/13?

- Phase 1 Implementation of GROW@BU will begin in September 2012;

- All BU academic staff who teach or have a pastoral role with Level C students should engage with it and consider how it may be incorporated into their interactions with students;

- Enhancing what is already done well - some of which is coaching and mentoring;

- Use GROW@BU to share excellent practice and consider possible enhancements.

Final thought

"As the body of literature surrounding coaching is still in its foetal stages, claims about what coaching is, does and how it works are as yet largely unsubstantiated. Despite this…learning indeed appears to be at the heart of coaching" (Griffiths 2008:62)

Thank you – any questions?

References

Andrews, J and Clark, R., 2011. *Peer Mentoring Works!* Birmingham: Aston University.

Bettinger, E. and Baker, R., 2011. The Effects of student coaching in college: An evaluation of a randomized experiment in student mentoring. Available here

Bournemouth University, 2011. *Fair Access Agreement 2012-2013*. Available here.

Bournemouth University, 2012. *BU2018:Creating, Sharing, Inspiring*. Available here.

Griffiths, K., 2005. Personal coaching: a model for effective learning. *Journal of Learning Design*, 1(2), 55-65. Available from www.jld.qut.edu.au/

Morosanu, L., Hindley, K. and O'Donovan, B., 2010. Seeking support: researching first-year students' experiences of coping with academic life. *Higher Education Research and Development,* 29(6), 665-678.

Parkinson, M., 2009. The effect of peer assisted learning support (PALS) on performance in mathematics and chemistry. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 46 (4), 381 – 392.

Preskill, H. and Catsambas, T.T., 2006. *Reframing evaluation through appreciative inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, Cal.: Sage Publications.

Robinson, C. and Gahagan, J., 2010. Coaching students to academic success and engagement on campus. *About Campus*, September–October, 26-29.

Whitmore, J., 2009. *Coaching for performance*. 4th. ed. London: Nicholas Brealey Pub.