



1st Australia and New Zealand Symposium on Academic Research (ANZSAR- 2019)

Adelaide, South Australia

ISBN :978-0-6482404-3-3

Asia Pacific Institute of Advanced Research (APIAR)

www.apiar.org.au

STUDENT PERSPECTIVES OF A PEER MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME AT A UNIVERSITY

Lisa-Mari Coughlan^a, James Swart^b, Nicole Joannou^c

^{abc}Central University of Technology, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Corresponding email: lcoughlan@cut.ac.za

Abstract

Student peer mentorship programmes have been implemented at many higher education institutions to combat high attrition and failure rates amongst first year students. Despite the numerous researched benefits of mentorship, many first year students choose not to participate in the programmes. The purpose of this paper is to present students' perspectives on the benefits and challenges of a voluntary student peer mentorship programme. Three focus group interviews were conducted to obtain students' perspectives, until data saturation was achieved. Key results point to five perceived benefits of peer mentorship programmes to first year students. The perceived benefits include a better adaption to higher education, social support, an impact on learning and understanding, the acquisition of graduate attributes, and personal development. The students identified a few challenges, mainly the lack of support from senior students at the university. Recommendations were made to overcome the challenges and increase first year students' participation in mentorship programmes, which will ultimately have a positive impact on the pass and attrition rates.

Keywords: Peer Mentor, Higher Education, Student Perspectives.
