

Mentors' Reflections of a Pilot Mentoring Programme in a South African University

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ABSTRACT Issues of student throughput and graduation rates are issues of concern in many South African universities. Numerous intervention programmes are put in place to assist students to progress well with their studies and curb failure and subsequent drop out from degree programmes. Student mentoring is one such intervention. The purpose of this study was to establish trained mentors' reflections of their contact with mentees in a pilot student mentoring programme in a South African University. The study adopted a wholly qualitative approach in which a purposefully selected sample of 42 mentors participated in the study. Data were collected through document analysis of mentors' weekly reports and postings to a Facebook page were read and analysed. Data were analysed through content analysis of emerging themes. The study found that although the mentors were positive about the establishment of a student support programme, they were concerned about schedules, communication between themselves and the Teaching and Learning Unit and between mentors and mentees. The level of commitment by mentees and the impact that the programme had on assessment were found questionable. In conclusion mentors agree that this programme is important in this context but more still needs to be attended to, to improve the system. The paper provides a list of recommendations that the university needs to take into account to provide a more effective student support programme.