



STUDENT TUTOR – A TOUR GUIDE TO UNIVERSITY WORLD

Eeva Miettinen
 Eeva.Miettinen@helsinki.fi
 Student advisor,
 Faculty of Pharmacy

INTRODUCTION

Faculty of Science student admission is annually over 1,000 but only about 300 Master students (MSc.) graduate. Student retention is a challenge in the Faculty of Science.

Peer support and working orientation are important factors in promoting student persistence (1, 2). Student tutors have a significant role in guiding the first year students in the beginning of their academic studies. Besides supporting the student tutoring can also prevent retention.

Aims of this study were to get a better understanding of what are the key elements in student tutoring and what should and could be done to make it work even better.



Student tutors can be recognised from the pins they wear for the first weeks.

METHODS

The data was collected by using surveys answered by the people responsible of tutoring from departments (n=8) and student organisations (n=11). Student tutors (n=93) filled in a survey at the end of tutoring and also new students (n=155) were asked to give feedback on tutoring. Data were analysed by data based content analysis.

RESULTS

What are the key elements of tutoring?

The results showed that the main goals of student tutoring were considered to be :

- new students get to know the physical and social environment of the Campus and University in general,
- peer support given by the Tutor and the group,
- hands-on knowledge about studies and studying, compared to the higher level information provided by the department,
- tutors tell about the free time activities.

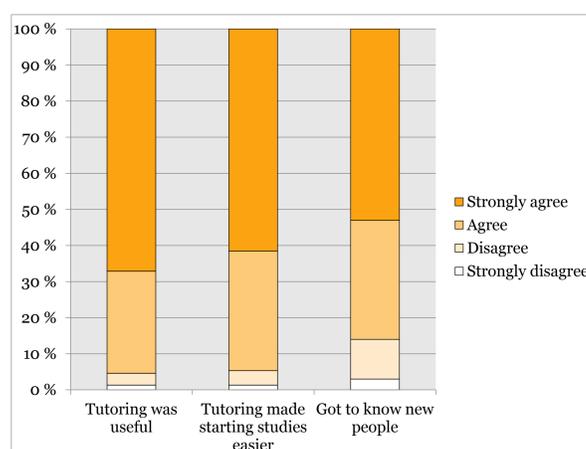


Figure 1.
New students opinions on student tutoring were positive.

How student see tutoring?

Over 90 % of new students said that tutoring was useful and it helped the beginning of studies (Figure 1). Many also said that they got to know new students through tutoring. New students also said that student tutoring made it easier to start studies at the university.

"[Tutoring is] An important part of starting the studies without it the atmosphere would be totally different and there would be a lot less friends"

- New student, translated by author

Table 1.
SWOT-analysis presenting the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of student tutoring.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer support • Hands-on knowledge • Getting to know people in a small group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covering enough study related questions • How to motivate students to participate • Communication
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone finds it important • Continuous development • Fluent start to studies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too much responsibility from departments • What happens after student tutoring? • Communication

What could be done better?

The results showed that as a whole student tutoring works well at the moment.

However, new students wished for more meetings covering studying and more formal things, although the informal get-togethers were seen important in getting to know new friends (Table 1).

Co-operation between tutors and also tutors and departments were seen in this study as an opportunity to develop tutoring. Information and communication between participants are also issues that should be taken account in order to make tutoring work even better.

CONCLUSIONS

Student tutors give the first impression of studying and the university in general to the new students.

- Student tutors should be able to give a positive and inspiring image of the studying.
- Student tutors are seen as an irreplaceable resource in guidance and grouping of the new students.
- Both the students and staff see it as an important part of orientation.
- Every tutor meeting should have a clear agenda and tutors should tell this to the students. This can enhance student participation and their motivation to attend tutoring.

Student tutoring is recognised as a part of orientation it is worth studying and improving. Also the question that what happens after tutoring is a relevant question.

REFERENCES

1. Pitkethly, A. & Prosser, M. (2001). The first year experience project: A model for university-wide change. Higher Education Research & Development, 20(2), 185–198.
2. Falchikov N. 2001. Learning together. Peer tutoring in higher education. London: RoutledgeFalmer.