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Title

Transitional experiences of international postgraduate students utilising a peer mentor programme /

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Abstract

Background: Mentoring provides a range of benefits and one of them is social support. The number of students in transnational education has been increasing, and their transition into university is often fraught with difficulties. Universities can support transition through the use of a peer mentor programme (PMP). Purpose: The purpose of the study is to investigate the transitional issues that international postgraduate students (IPSs) face in their transition to an Australian University. The study also investigated the role played by a mentoring programme, and how this assists students with their transition. Sample: The sample included 31 IPSs, who had come from Asian European, Middle Eastern, African and South American countries, 15 being male, and 16 being female, with an average age of 24; most had been studying at the Australian University for more than 12 months. Design and methods: The study utilised a qualitative research method to examine the experiences of IPSs undergoing transition from their home universities to an Australian university. Semi-structured

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interviews were conducted with students, who were asked about their transition experiences and the assistance of the mentor programme. Thematic analysis was then conducted to determine themes from the research. Results: IPSs reported mixed experiences with their transition. Those with difficulties referred to loneliness, different studying practices, finding accommodation and making friends. IPSs reported that the PMP helped, as mentors provided the necessary social support, friendship, information and confidence to overcome those difficulties. Those students who did not have problems with their transition had reported that they had friends or family that assisted them with their transition. As a result, these students did not need the support of mentors to the same degree as those students having problems. Conclusions: It is concluded that mentor programmes were important for transitioning IPSs who had difficulties. Therefore, this study identified a role for a PMP in universities where there are a high proportion of IPSs who are going through transitional problems.(HRK / Abstract übernommen)