



**UMHAN**

Working together to maintain high standards of mental health professional support in education.

# What is a Specialist Mental Health Mentor?

Kindly adapted from “The role and impact of specialist mental health mentoring on students in UK higher education institutes”.

Written by UMHAN Chair Anna Matthews.



# Achieve Potential

Specialist Mentors work to help students achieve their full potential at university while also mitigating the impact their mental health condition might have on them. The mentoring they provide is a personalized, practical and outcomes focused intervention for students with mental health conditions and relies on a combined understanding of an individual student's ability to learn and develop, and psychological insight into the emotional experience of university life.

Mentors can work with students with a range of mental health conditions, and will help them improve their self-management competences, as well as helping them come to terms with their diagnosis.

The role also provides support with learning and study skills - for example, timetabling, goal-setting, and managing expectations about appropriate levels of study. Mentors will work with the student on creating more appropriate study patterns, providing them with the tools and strategies to achieve personal academic goals. You can find out more about the parameters of the role in the Student Loans Company's [Disabled Students' Allowances guidance](#).



‘The patience and understanding of my mentor was particularly helpful. Really nice to have someone who understands the strains on a university student and is creative to come up with solutions to make things work out for the benefit of my academic life.’

Student in receipt of mentoring

Specialist Mentors either have specific mental health professional qualifications or significant equivalent experience in the field of Mental Health. The qualifications required are set by the Department of Education in consultation with relevant professional bodies and take into account the need for mentors to understand and respond to a student's mental health condition as it manifests within the duration of their course. Although a Mentor should not be directly responsible for crisis support and intervention, they need an ability to assess risk and safety within the context of their role, in order to ensure that students are correctly signposted.

The Specialist Mentor role is normally funded by Disabled Students Allowances (DSAs). You can learn more about DSAs on the [Government's website](#). Some Universities may fund specialist mentoring. This can sometimes be as an interim measure, while students are going through the DSAs application process, or for students who are not eligible for this funding. DSA funded students will often have an hour a week of mentoring recommended, although it is up to the student themselves to decide whether to take this up.

'Negative thoughts about myself decrease when I see my mentor, which makes it easier for me to enter situations (e.g. work shadowing) which I would have not believed I was capable of normally.'

Student in receipt of mentoring



## UMHAN and Specialist MH Mentoring

UMHAN welcomes Specialist Mental Health Mentors as members. Benefits for mentor members include access to meetings and an online forum where peers can discuss relevant topics, share resources and gain up to date information and knowledge. UMHAN represents mentors to sector leaders and organisations, such as the Student Loans' Company and Department of Education.

Our supervision and CPD requirements ensure that students receive the highest standards of support, ensuring the safety of both students and practitioners alike.

‘It helped me to better cope with the personal issues I was challenged with. It also helped me to manage my worries and anxiety. In general, I am sure I was not able to be successful in my programme without the support of my mentor. She brought big changes to my academic and personal life. Mentoring means a lot to me.’

Student in receipt of mentoring

# The Role and Impact of Specialist Mental Health Mentoring on Students in UK Higher Education Institutes

Specialist Mental Health Mentoring has been shown to have a positive impact on both the student - in terms of academic performance, satisfaction with their university experience and functioning - but also those KPIs measured by universities - attainment, retention and transferable skills. More information can be found within the paper:

“The Role and Impact of Specialist Mental Health Mentoring on Students in UK Higher Education Institutes.”



## Data from this report shows

**100%** of students stated that as a consequence of having SMHM their confidence improved.

**89%** of students found they were more organised and prepared for the timetabled components of their course.

**78%** of students reported that specialist mentoring positively impacted their attendance on their course.

**94%** of students reported improved engagement with their course.

**93%** of students felt that specialist mental health mentoring improved their ability to keep up with their work.

**95%** of students reported having learnt and applied practical strategies to their academic work which positively impacted on their ability to manage their own mental health.

**82%** of students felt that their grades and assessments had improved as a result of mentoring.

**93%** of students felt mentoring had increased the likelihood they would successfully complete their course.

**94%** of students reported a more positive attitude toward their time at university.

**52%** Just over half of mentored students (52%) of students stated that they were more involved in recreational and social activities, improving their overall university experience.

Nearly half of students who found they required additional support were in a better position to take responsibility for themselves and seek out help before reaching crisis point.

**94%** of students stated that the strategies they developed and honed from their mentoring experience were sustainable and would assist them into the working world.