

# EXCHANGING EXPERIENCE: A PEER-ASSISTED LEARNING APPROACH TO MENTORING

Lisa Shepherd and Dr Kay Calver  
Education, Children and Young People  
Faculty of Education and Humanities

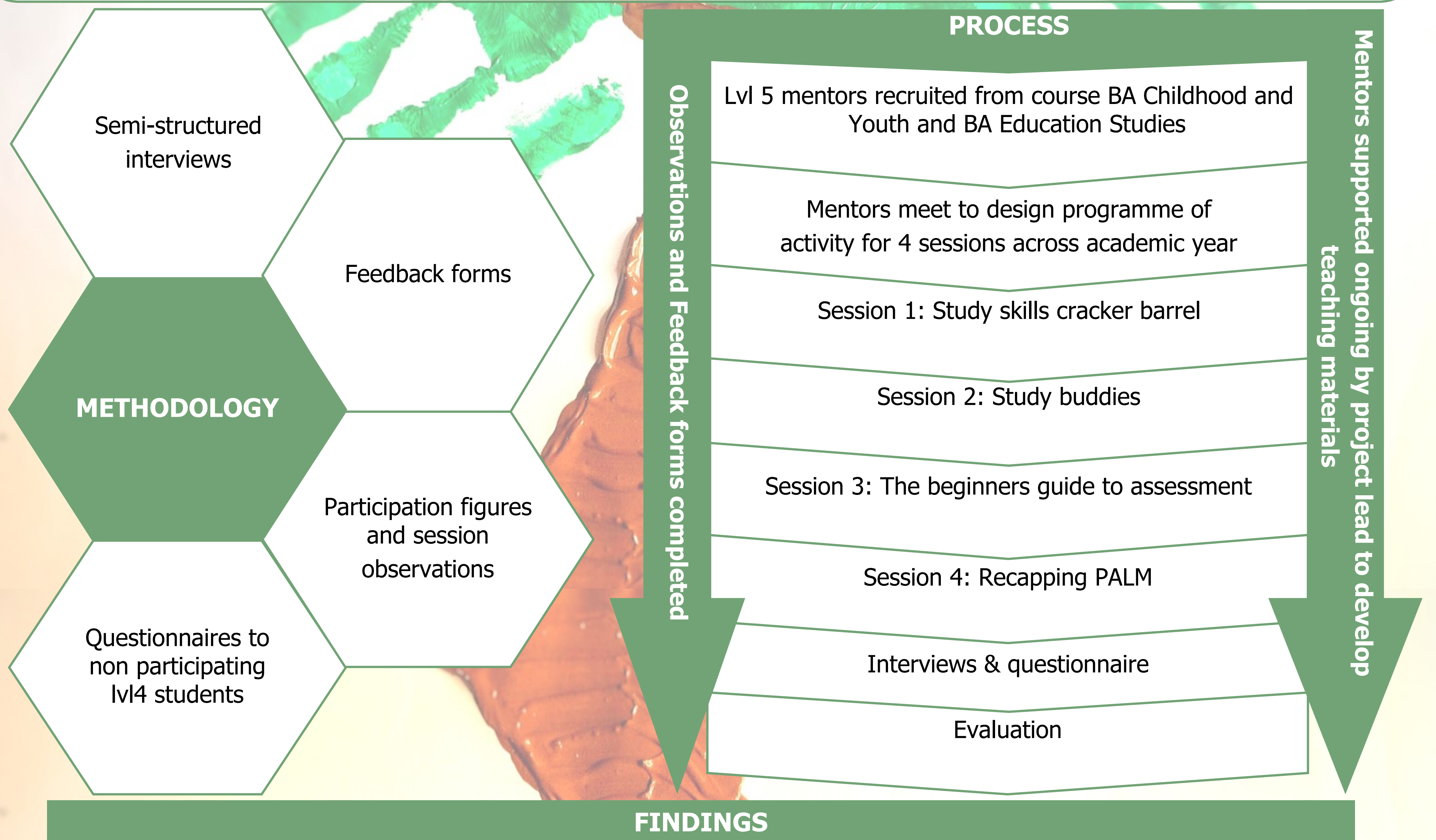


## Aim:

Utilise peer-assisted learning (Topping, 2005) as part of the existing peer to peer mentoring scheme, involve students as partners in integrated learner support activity to enhance student experience on the programme BA Childhood and Youth.

## Objectives:

- Pilot a redesigned approach to peer to peer mentoring on the programme BA Childhood and Youth
- Engage students at levels 4 and 5 in mentoring and peer-assisted learning activities across the academic year 2018-2019
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot project by gathering stakeholder opinions.



- There is agreement in relation to the idea that the PALM project as planned could be effective dealing with some of the students' problems (academic performance, students' self-confidence and development of other skills).
- Students recognise a wide range of positive benefits from their being part of the PALM project including; developing new skills which improved their academic performance, developing confidence and communication skills.
- Students found a safe space to talk about their concerns as students.
- Participation of students was identified as the most critical aspect of the project.
- Staff involved recognise a positive impact of the project on the confidence of both first year and second-year students.
- Student participants said they are willing to participate in future and want to encourage other students to be part of the project.

## CONCLUSION

The PALM project received a positive evaluation suggesting it could help to tackle problems such as social inequality and exclusion within higher education system by enhancing learning strategies, but also cultural capital, social capital and a sense of identity as students (Crozier, Rea, Clayton, & Grinstead, 2008). Additionally, in a context of credential devaluation, undergraduate degrees are not enough. Students' soft skills and engagement with extra curricula activities are pivotal for getting a graduate job (Tomlinson, 2008) and the PALM project has been successful on enhancing those abilities in students. Students' lack of engagement was the most critical aspect of the project, and several changes are needed in order to make the project more suitable to different students' needs and requirements hopefully promoting student participation.

Email: [Lisa.Shepherd@Northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Lisa.Shepherd@Northampton.ac.uk) & [Kay.Calver@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:Kay.Calver@northampton.ac.uk) Project blog: <https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/exchangingexperience/>

## REFERENCES

- Reay, D., Crozier, G., & Clayton, J. (2010). 'Fitting in' or 'standing out': Working-class students in UK higher education. *British educational research journal*, 36(1), 107-124.
- Tomlinson, M. (2008). 'The degree is not enough': students' perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability. *British journal of sociology of education*, 49-61.
- Topping, K.J. (2005) "Trends in Peer Learning", *Educational Psychology*, 25:6, 631-645.