Northumbria Research Link

A National Mentoring and Buddying Pilot Scheme for UK Early Career CS Academics

Tom Crick*
Swansea University
Swansea, UK
thomas.crick@swansea.ac.uk

James H. Davenport*
University of Bath
Bath, UK
j.h.davenport@bath.ac.uk

Alan Hayes*
University of Bath
Bath, UK
ah347@bath.ac.uk

Alastair Irons*
University of Sunderland
Sunderland, UK
alastair.irons@sunderland.ac.uk

Tom Prickett*
Northumbria University
Newcastle upon Tyne, UK
tom.prickett@northumbria.ac.uk

Simon Payne*
University of South Wales
Pontypridd, UK
simon.payne@southwales.ac.uk

ABSTRACT

In the United Kingdom (UK), a thriving computer science education (CSE) community of practice is evolving, supported by national and international professional body/learned society specialist interest groups, and being developed through a number of CSE research and practice conferences. A key group within this emerging community of practice are early career academics who are required to overcoming significant obstacles in the early stages of their academic career, from developing an independent research career, delivering high quality learning and teaching, continuing their own professional development, alongside wider academic service commitments. Institutional-level, but generally subject-agnostic, support for early career colleagues in the UK is supplemented by nationwide developmental sessions and initiatives such as journal clubs. This poster reports on a pilot scheme to support early career CS academics through a mentoring scheme consisting of cross-institutional mentoring from experienced academics as well as buddying groups of similar career stage colleagues.

CCS CONCEPTS

• **Social and professional topics** → **Computing education**.

KEYWORDS

Early-career academics, community of practice, professional development, mentoring

*N.B. all authors contributed equally to this work

We build upon recent work [1, 2] in exploring, developing and delivering a pilot mentoring and buddying scheme to supplement institution-based professional development and training available to early-career CS academics in the UK, involving regional and national activities. Mentoring is higher education is common practice, however there are limitations if such guidance and support is provided within one university rather than from a wider community [3]. Use of buddying schemes have been reported as beneficial, for example [4]; however, buddying between academic colleagues is less well reported although it has been successful in certain contexts [5]. In this pilot mentoring scheme, early career academics were paired with a more senior academic (largely Professor, or equivalent) from a different university. Brokering/matchmaking has been based on the preferences of the mentee as indicated in the response to a pre-scheme online survey. The survey capture preferences for the initial focus of the mentoring (e.g. research, career development and planning, learning & teaching, professional registration, subject sub-specialism related), together with preferences for other factors such as gender, geographical location, etc. To date, 16 early-career colleagues have participated in the scheme. In the first cohort of the pilot buddying scheme, early career colleagues where grouped into groups of five buddies on a first-come first-served basis. At the time of writing, two cohort groups of buddies have been formed. This poster provides insight into the emergent practices adopted and the feedback from the founder communities of mentors and buddies, as well as preliminary evaluation of the approach for future scaling. It provides insights for other disciplines or jurisdictions seeking to establish similar schemes and the highlights the future potential of international mentoring and buddying schemes.

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