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**A Small-Scale Study into Peer Tutoring within Backstage Academy**

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**A Small-Scale Study into Peer Tutoring within Backstage Academy**

**1 Introduction**

“There may be no single best method of teaching, ‘but the second best is students teaching other students’” (McKeachie et al., 1986, cited in Biggs and Tang, 2011, p.146). The pressure on lecturers to deliver quality teaching, whilst engaging a wide demographic of students, means that suitable techniques need to be employed; peer learning is one such method. Empowering students to work with their peers, not only allows them to develop their own learning, it ensures more contact time with technical equipment whilst minimizing the impact on staff workload.

The aim of this Action Research report is to investigate the potential benefits of peer learning within Higher Education. In order to undertake the study, a small-scale pilot intervention was delivered at Backstage Academy during April 2019. Third-year students tutored first-year Live Sound students during practical preparation sessions. In order to measure the effectiveness of the intervention, students were asked to fill in questionnaires and partake in focus-group interviews.

This report will analyse current literature within the field of peer learning; describe the research methodologies utilised; evaluate data from teacher observations, focus-group interviews and individual surveys. It will conclude with relevant findings and recommendations for any potential future studies.

**2 Literature Review**

This review of relevant literature aims to compare and synthesise information from a broad range of sources. Through critical analysis, the review aims to highlight the strengths, weaknesses and potential gaps in current knowledge.

Literature regarding peer learning, advantages, disadvantages, implementation and good practice will be identified and discussed. Further to this, a conclusion will summarise key areas, identify gaps and outline recommendations for further study.

In order to conduct a study into Peer Learning, the concepts of ‘Peer’ and ‘Peer Learning’ must be defined. Within the book *Learning together: peer tutoring in higher education*, Falchikov (2003) defines a ‘peer’ as a person of the same social standing, or in terms of higher education, ‘peers’ are students of a similar educational level and age. Topping (2007) expands on this definition by stating that ‘peers’ are from similar social groups and are not professional teachers. Callese et al. (2019) go further and introduce the idea of ‘near’ and ‘far’ peers. Near peers are students within a few years, or the same year as their peers; far peers are junior professionals or postgraduate students.

Peer Learning is defined as the increasing of skills and knowledge through active support and helping peers. Students coach each other to learn, and in turn learn as part of the process (Topping, 2007).

In a study of 65 independent peer tutoring programs, Cohen, Kulik and Kulik (1982) concluded that peer-tutored students outperform non-tutored students. The peer learners were shown to develop positive attitudes towards the subject, and the tutors were shown to gain a better understanding of the topic. This study, however, claims that there is little or no effect on the self-esteem of the participants. The notion that there is little or no effect on self-esteem is later contested by Topping (2007), who argues that self-esteem is positively affected by peer learning. Furthermore, Topping suggests that research evidence shows that Peer Learning can yield significant gains in academic achievement and communication skills. The views of Cohen et al. (1982) and Topping (2007) are further substantiated in a research study by Carr et al. (2016). Carr et al. reinforce the notion that peer teaching lowers levels of stress, helps to conceptualise understanding, provides opportunities to explore, question and reflect on the learning gained.

When looking at the benefits to the tutor compared to the tutee, Biggs and Tang (2011) argue that the tutor is more likely to demonstrate an increase in academic skills, social skills and positive attitude to study. Duran’s (2016) review of studies including ‘Learning by teaching’ (38 studies) and ‘Learning through teaching’ (15 studies), identifies that students with an expectation of having to learn a topic in order to teach will perform better than students tasked with learning for an exam. Callese et al. (2019) agree that a widely posited benefit to peer teachers, is the development of a deeper knowledge within the subject being taught.

Peer Learning is not, however, immune from potential issues. Social relationships between peers may affect the learning process and hidden power hierarchies may create a hostile or competitive environment. Individuals asking for assistance, aid or support may view themselves as being less able than their peers (Nielsen et al., 2018). Topping (2007) explains that, with a lack of structure, peer or cooperative learning results in the “blind leading the blind”, combining ignorance or one person doing all the work.

A series of case studies undertaken by the Cathedral Group/Leeds Trinity University in partnership with The Higher Education Academy (2017) highlight a range of Peer Learning and Mentoring schemes practiced by institutions throughout the UK. A case study into third year students peer mentoring first years was undertaken by Bishop Grosseteste University. Although the scheme has been running for over 20 years, there is still the potential for issues. Staff are aware that there may be personality clashes and know when it is best to intervene. The study highlights the importance of training the mentors in aspects such as health and safety and ethical considerations before they work with their students. Nestel and Kidd (2005) confirm that peer tutors require support in order to suitably prepare them for the process (Nestel and Kidd, 2005 cited in Biggs and Tang, 2011).

It is important to avoid choosing the ‘brightest and the best’ students as mentors. Topping (2007) explains that outdated perceptions of peer learning define the peer helper as a surrogate teacher. This notion follows a linear model of transmission; from the teacher to peer-helper to student learner. Recently, there has been a shift towards utilising helpers whose capabilities are closer to those being helped; both the tutor and the learner find some cognitive challenge in the activity. Lockspeiser et al. (2008) write that the ‘shorter-gap’ in knowledge between peers enhances the relay of information. In comparison, the large gap between staff and students may result in a reduced capacity to effectively communicate knowledge (Lockspeiser et al., 2008 cited in Williams and Reddy 2016).

Peer learning activities require management if learning is to be initiated within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). If the ZPD is exceeded then a negative impact may be experienced by both the peer helper and student learner (Vygotsky, 1978 cited in Topping, 2007). In order to manage the learning, a clear structure needs to be implemented. The teacher should facilitate the process and specify clear goals, tasks, roles, resources and rewards. Falchikov (2003) describes seven “golden rules” for peer mentoring: define the aims, define roles, properly train tutors, structure content, support tutors, keep logistics simple and evaluate the process.

Topping (2007) goes on to discuss the process of embedding peer learning into teaching. New students should receive tutorship and in turn expect to become tutors to new students the following year. This culture helps to break any stigma of receiving assistance from peers and encourages a cooperative learning environment.

**2.1 Literature Review Conclusion**

The reviewed literature shows that there are clear benefits to peer learning if it is well structured and managed. Peers should be from similar social groupings and demonstrate a similar level of understanding. Although there are a mix of educational levels discussed, Higher Education is well represented throughout.

**3 Methodology**

**3.1 Design**

Due to the nature of this study and its proximity to the end of semester assessments, care was taken to ensure that it did not unfairly impact any individual (or groups of) students. The issue of unfairly impacting students means that a design using control groups was not employed. One solution could have been to ‘divorce’ the study from any course, this would have removed any potential problems, however the findings might not have related to any real context.

A more suitable solution was to employ a design that provides all participants with the same intervention. Within a repeated measures design (or within-subjects design), the participants in a study are “typically exposed to all of the treatment conditions” (Oxford Reference, 2016). The benefits of this design are its efficiency (compared to the independent measures design) and the reduction in experimental error due to participants serving as their own control group (Verma, 2015). The repeated measure design is not without problems however; students may have improved through practice, this is known as the ‘carryover’ effect (Cherry, 2019). Without using a control group, it is difficult to identify if there is any advantage to the peer tutoring intervention verses practice alone.

**3.2 Materials**

As a means to evaluate the success of the intervention and triangulate the research methodology, three types of data gathering instruments were employed. The objective of triangulation is to provide a comprehensive picture of results through comparing two or more independent measures (Heale and Forbes, 2013). For the purpose of this study the three research instruments are:

* Teacher observation
* Tutor and Tutee focus groups
* Confidence questionnaires

Throughout the module, lecturers have observed the performance of the groups. During the intervention, direct observation was employed. Students were made aware of the observation and the purpose behind it. The disadvantage of this style is that students may unnaturally alter their behaviour. In a teaching situation, this problem is somewhat negated due to ongoing observations of student behaviours and learning (Norton, 2009).

In order to develop an understanding of the participants’ perspectives, focus group interviews were scheduled after each practical session. Focus groups differ from group discussions in that they require an interviewer to guide the process. Well-structured interviews encourage in-depth responses and a skilled interviewer will allow for all participants to take part. Questioning should mimic a natural exchange and follow a logical sequence (Gray and Malins, 2007; Devault, 2018). Poorly structured interviews may be prone to subjectivity and bias (through leading questions) and unless participants feel comfortable, they will not interact openly. In order to prevent bias, peer tutors did not attend tutee focus groups and vice versa.

The study also aimed to gather data pertaining to a student’s level of confidence. For this purpose, an Attitude Scale Survey was created. Attitude (or measurement) scales are questionnaires intended to give a measurement of a specific area. The advantages of surveys are that respondents are likely to give honest answers, especially if the survey is anonymous, and the ease of distributing to a wide and large sample. The disadvantages are that only 30-40% of participants are likely to respond in their own time, responses may be questionable due to poor design, and complicated statistical analysis may be required (Gray and Malins, 2007; Norton, 2009). In order to counter potential problems, all surveys were sampled by staff to pinpoint any issues with the questions or structure and participants were asked to complete the survey during lesson time to ensure a good response rate.

The surveys consisted of several questions relating to an individual’s confidence in different technical areas. Each question used the Likert Scale, this allowed for degrees of opinion rather than a simple yes/no answer. The quantitative data obtained can be analysed with relative ease (McLeod, 2008), however, a potential disadvantage of using the Likert Scale is Social Desirability bias. “Social desirability is the tendency of some respondents to report an answer in a way they deem to be more socially acceptable than would their ‘true’ answer.” (Lavrakas, 2008). McLeod (2008) suggests that anonymous surveys may reduce social desirability bias, and therefore an anonymous methodology was employed.

**3.3 Sample**

Throughout this study, first-year students maintained their group allocations as assigned during enrolment at Backstage Academy. Students are split into smaller groups alphabetically, groups are not sorted by ability, age or gender. Prior to intervention, all groups had undertaken the same fourteen weeks of Live Sound training, and all groups were judged to be similar in academic and practical performance.

**3.4 Procedure**

Once permission from the course-leader was granted, the study was undertaken within the first and third year’s timetabled ‘Live Sound’ lectures and practical sessions. The initial survey was completed by the tutors and tutees, at the end of their respective lectures, in the days prior to the guided practical sessions. Each student group then undertook a three-hour peer tutored practical session. At the end of each session, students were asked to complete the second survey and invited to take part in the focus groups. As the surveys and focus groups were part of timetabled lectures, all students in attendance were expected to take part. In order to accurately document interviews, audio recorders were utilised. Participants had to give their permission before any audio recording took place.

With a potential data set of 71 first year and 11 third year students a suitable method for quantitative data collection was identified and implemented. Initially Survey Monkey (Survey Monkey, 2019) was the preferred platform as it offers a means of free data collection, easy cross platform access for participants and straight forward feedback. A limitation to such platforms is that they require all students to have a device capable of logging into the system. In order to address this, paper surveys were used throughout. Although this method has led to issues in comparing pre/post data (see chapter 4.4), the speed and ease meant that all students in attendance completed the surveys.

**3.5 Ethical Considerations**

In undertaking pedagogical action research, the design must consider the ethical implications of any interventions. Norton (2009) reasons that “involving students in research that might potentially disadvantage them in work that counts is not a defensible option”. Care must be taken to inform students, ensure that privacy and confidentially are maintained (where required) and to protect individuals from harm. Any intervention that negatively affects self-esteem or lowers academic confidence is viewed as harmful.

In order to address these potential issues, all first-year students were included in the interventions. Third year tutors undertook the same practice sessions and were instructed how to interact with other students fairly. Finally, staff were present throughout all sessions to observe and ensure each student was not disadvantaged.

**4 Evaluation**

Within this project, the evaluation of data is split into two distinct areas, qualitative and quantitative. Both the teacher observations and the focus group interviews provided qualitative data, whilst the surveys provided quantitative data. Unlike objective quantitative data, the aim of qualitative research is to fully acknowledge the subjective nature of the researcher in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data (Norton, 2009).

In order to evaluate the qualitative data, a suitable method of analysis must be selected. Thematic Analysis allows the researcher to identify, analyse and interpret patterns or themes within the data. Careful analysis of qualitative data provides procedures for creating themes and codes. Codes are the building blocks for generating themes which, in-turn, provide a framework for reporting analytic observations (Clarke and Braun, 2016).

A potential pitfall of thematic analysis is the failure to analyse any data, analysis must go beyond simply stringing together a collection of extracts. Researchers should avoid looking for themes within the questions, rather analysing the overall commentary (Norton, 2009). The advantage of thematic analysis is flexibility, its ability to analyse a wide range of data sets, from small case studies through to large interview studies. For this reason, thematic analysis has been chosen as the preferred method for analysing the data provided by the focus groups.

**4.1 Pre-intervention observation notes:**

‘During my time observing the first-year students, I noted that, although each group had a wide range of academic and practical abilities, the overall group performance was fairly consistent across the board. Key Issues observed throughout the first-year module were the amount of taught time on practical equipment being limited due to staff workload and staff sometimes struggling to simplify concepts to a level that all students might understand. A general observation was regarding the speed at which students would ask for help immediately if they could not do something. Although staff try and encourage students to think through the problems, there is a temptation to help fix the issues to keep the lesson flowing and the students ‘happy’.

Observation of the third-year students also demonstrated a wide range of abilities, this range created some uncertainty as to the potential success of a peer-tutoring programme. Both myself and my colleague expressed reservations about using the weaker third-year students as mentors for the first-year groups, especially if it could be shown that this disadvantaged one group over another (leading up to their assessments). Another issue that was identified was that third-year students were not practising the basic hands-on skills required to set up live sound equipment. In many ways, I thought that the first years would be teaching the third years.’

**4.2 Intervention observation notes:**

‘The most surprising observation during the intervention was that, no matter the ability of the third-year students, they were still able to help the first years with problems that arose. This observation is in contrast with my initial hypothesis that the weaker tutors would not be able to help the tutees.

In addition, I noted that, when answering questions, the majority of peer tutors would often hesitate and struggle to come up with a solution quickly. The process of the tutor and tutee working through issues until a solution was provided meant that it appeared to be easier to for the tutee to follow. Interestingly, if a lecturer was seen to not fully understand something, they may be seen as weak in the eyes of the students.

A general observation was that even the most confident third years tended to stand back until the first years engaged with them. This is quite different to a lecturer supervised session where there is always a temptation to jump in and fix issues instead of leaving students to work through the problem themselves.’

**4.3 Focus Group – Researcher notes:**

‘In undertaking the process of transcribing the audio from the focus groups, I noted several common themes. Students highlighted the following points as the benefits of their intervention sessions:

* Pace of delivery
* Communication
* More approachable/relaxed delivery
* Group size

As discussed in my intervention observation notes, the process of the tutor and tutee working through issues meant that more time was spent explaining the setup of equipment and fixing of problems. Many students commented that the pace of delivery was a major factor in their eyes. Student B1 talked specifically about the pace and how it benefitted them:

“I thought it was a lot like slower paced as well, cause sometimes the lectures are like quite fast, like really fast paced. Since it was like quite slow and just like plenty of questions were asked like about us own knowledge like every-so-often it helped a bit I think. It was just quite slow pace compared to like bang, bang, bang, bang. It was like slower than that which I thought helped me personally.”

Student 3B agreed that the slower pace was beneficial and went on to link it to the process of the tutor working through issues:

“…and not just brush over it like super quick, like especially with like the effects and things like that. Obviously when you come over, you can just like go straight into it and you know where everything is already at already, where as [Tutor 3], I think he’s not as [good], but that means we get to watch the whole process of him trying to find it which is quite good at the same, do you know what I mean?...”

The interviewer went on to ask the students if they thought we taught too fast, the general consensus is that we did not, but some really benefited from the pace the student tutor worked at.

Another key area was identified as communication or language differences. The interviewer asked the student groups about the language used and if they found it more (or less) understandable. For some groups the difference in language was important:

Student 1C – “Like it’s easier, I think, for him to like communicate stuff to us in terms of like, just like…”

Student 1A – “Cause he’s like in our shoes”

Student 2B agreed with this and discussed the fact that because peer tutors have been through this learning process recently, they are in a good position to communicate well:

“I think because they have come through the same things, they know like where we might not understand things. Like they might be better at saying what thing they need to explain to us better…”

This view, however, was not shared by all groups, most saw no advantage in relation to the language used. When asked about the potential language barrier, Student 6C stated that:

“I personally, I don’t really find that much of a difference like in that sense, I still learn both ways, it doesn’t mean... If someone says calibrate it as opposed to set it, it’s the same thing to me. It’s like you might get an occasion when I’m like “what does that mean?” but, on the whole it’s…[okay]”

Student 4A also commented that the language used did not have an effect on their learning, in fact pace is more important:

“I wouldn’t say the language as such no, I think it’s just a bit slower, and a bit more, not in depth as such, because you do cover it in depth, it’s just quite quick.”

An answer that did surprise me came from Student 6D, she pointed out that lecturers were able to explain principles better than peer tutors:

“I feel like, yourself, you know how to explain things more simpler, like sometimes you know how to explain it better. So, they were like almost, like, going back on themselves if they were experiencing “oh yeah, this is because that” if you get what I mean?”...”You know how to explain it better than they did, because that’s just you’re a lecturer as well.”

This should not be surprising as lecturers are expected to be good communicators, however other groups had highlighted that the peer tutors were able to explain concepts better than some staff. I think that with such a range of students; a range of different communication styles will benefit everybody.

One area that I had not considered was that, peer tutors are more approachable than teaching staff. I always aim to be very approachable, however, some students pointed out that it is easier to approach someone they consider to be on the same level as themselves. Student 5A commented that:

“…it sort of works out a little bit better when you’re asking them questions. It’s not that you’re not approachable, it’s that, sometimes having someone who is on the same level as you can become more approachable…”

Group four provided a similar response. When the interviewer asked about what attributes a peer tutor might have compared to a lecturer, Student 4A answered:

“More approachable… In certain respects yeah. It’s a lot less daunting for me personally to kind of, speak to someone who is obviously still a student than someone who has got a lot more experience…”

As well as peers being more approachable, group six noted that the session felt more comfortable and relaxed compared to a lecturer led session. Student 6C observed that working with the peer tutor was more like talking to a friend:

“…I think it feels like, it’s sort of like you’re chatting to your mate in that sense as opposed to someone with authority or what not. So, it’s more relaxed in that sense.”

Student 4A also commented on the fact that lecturers hold a level of authority which may cause a gap between teacher and learner:

“Not that you are not approachable, it’s just this level of authority. So it’s to speak to someone that is on our level, like yeah they’ve got a couple more years’ experience than we have but it’s a lot more.”

This level of ‘authority’ is an unintentional aspect of being in a professional teaching position. Just as a range of languages are required, a range of teaching styles including formal and casual will benefit a wide range of students.

An unsurprising yet unexpected observation by the students was the benefit of smaller group sizes within the sessions. The interview questions had focused solely on the potential benefits of peer tutoring; however, the intervention had taken place with small assessment groups, unlike the lessons which had larger teaching groups. Student 1E observed that:

“…I mean our group is pretty small as it is generally, but I just find it a lot easier, I don’t know, more when I’m in a smaller group. The other day we did lighting and I think there was like four of us in and it gave us all a chance to really work on the things we needed to…”

Student 2A commented that if they were in a larger group, they would have been less likely to use their peer tutor:

“I think if we was in a bigger group, we wouldn’t have used him as much because there is more people like in our group who have done different things more experienced. But because us in a smaller group there was less people to ask, so then we like ask him.”

These observations show that peer tutoring might not have been the only factor in the intervention. With each student having more time on the equipment, smaller group sizes (and not peer tutoring) potentially may have been the more beneficial element of the intervention.

Through analysing the third-year interview transcripts, only a few common themes were identified. Most students discussed specific problems that they faced and areas where they felt particularly strong or weak. One of the common themes was in relation to confidence, both tutors one and two described how their confidence improved throughout the day. Tutor one explained that:

“I think from, just even from this morning’s session to this afternoon’s session I can, I was more confident in looking about it and even questioning early decisions that they were doing… even just by the morning I was just confident that I knew what was going on in every scenario… yeah, definitely a positive experience, I didn’t think it was going to be as positive as it was and, yeah, I was quite surprised actually.”

When asked what he gained from his session, tutor two gave a similar response:

“I think I’m more confident with like, how to actually set up stuff. I know we had a few hurdles in terms of like patching and stuff.”

It is interesting to note that the third years did not mention about the benefit of learning through teaching; however, the first-year students did identify and discuss this as a benefit of the process. Student 5D explained that:

“It’s good to tutor as well because, me I like to be able to explain something and learn. I learn more when I explain it.”

Within the focus groups, most students agreed that peer tutoring was a good idea and that it should be introduced into all of the technical subjects at Backstage Academy. When asked if they would consider becoming peer tutors in the future, the majority agreed, however a few had reservations. Student 1A commented:

“If I got more knowledgeable on the subject.”

Student 2A expressed a similar sentiment:

“Yeah if I knew what I was talking about.”

When questioned about the potential downsides of peer tutoring, the only response given was regarding the fact they had never worked with the peer before. Student 4A explained that:

“I think that the only negative possibly is that obviously, cause we’ve never really met him before, that it’s kind of like “oh, this is a new person”, but apart from that.”

Tutor one mentioned that although they were not nervous, they were sceptical about the process and how the first years might receive him. He commented that:

“I wouldn’t say nervous, but I think just a bit sceptical… I think as well for them they didn’t really know what I was going to be doing, or kind of like just observing.”

He went on to explain, however, that it did not take long for the barriers to fall between himself and his peers:

“I think once that first person asked that question they seemed all ok because, they don’t know me and obviously I don’t know them so obviously it’s coming over that barrier of getting to know the person and then after that I think they were quite fluid with, if there was any problems they didn’t hesitate to ask me.”

This shows that although there may be some hesitation for tutors and tutees to work together, in this case, it did not take long for a good connection to develop.’

**4.4 Survey Responses:**



**Figure 1: Sample Survey (pre-intervention).**

As part of the study, all students were invited to take part in surveys before and after the intervention. The following section will present an overview of the collected data.

Prior to the intervention, all students were asked to complete the survey (detailed in Figure 1). Each question was rated from one to six, with one representing ‘not confident’ and six representing ‘very confident’. Following the intervention, participants were asked to complete the survey again. The data was collected and averaged to provide an overview of the students’ confidence levels.

In total, 40 first year students undertook the pre-intervention survey and 50 undertook the post-intervention survey. Although this provided a large sample size, the difference in numbers of participants and the anonymous design means that the data cannot be compared fairly. The graph in figure 2 demonstrates an increase in the average confidence level for all questions with the greatest increase in questions one (Microphone Selection) and five (Digital Mixer – Outboard and Effects routing).

Surveys were also undertaken by third year tutors. Three students undertook the pre and post-intervention surveys. This provided a small sample; however, the same students took part in both surveys so the data can be compared. Figure 2.1 demonstrates the increase in confidence in level across all questions, with the greatest increase in questions one and five.



**Figure 2: Peer Learner (Whole Year) average responses.**



**Figure 2.1: Peer Tutor average responses**

The increase in confidence, specifically in questions one and five, may be attributed to the coaching provided to the third-year tutors in preparation for the intervention. Staff and student tutors analysed the pre-intervention survey results in order to identify any weaker areas. Training was then designed around these particular areas. This coaching aligns with Falchikov’s (2003) rules for peer mentoring, which highlights that tutors must receive proper training in order to prepare for their roles as tutors.

**5. Findings**

The data collected within the study has concluded that peer tutoring is an effective means of transmitting knowledge. The implementation of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies has yielded results which support existing academic literature. Through focus group interviews, observations and survey data, it is clear that tutors and learners have benefited from the process.

Although teaching staff within Backstage Academy hypothesised that weak third year students would not be able to support strong first year students, the findings of the intervention observations and focus group interviews demonstrated that this hypothesis was incorrect. These findings align with Lockspeiser’s (2008) notion that a ‘shorter-gap’ between peers enhances the transfer of knowledge.

An unexpected observation in relation to the communication between peer tutor and learner was that the language employed by the tutors was not always beneficial. Interestingly, for some students, the communication and language employed did not support learning; however, for some, a more basic and less technical delivery enabled a smoother transmission of knowledge. Topping (2007) argues that peer tutoring improves ‘communication skills’, however, a study over a longer duration would be required to measure any improvement.

**6. Conclusions**

The aim of this Action Research project was to investigate the potential benefits of peer tutoring within Backstage Academy. Overall, the findings have demonstrated that the pilot was a success, however, there are a few areas that require further study in order to effectively measure the effectiveness of peer tutoring.

A potential issue with this study is the fact that most people improve through practicing a subject. Without implementing a control group, it is not possible to compare the potential benefits of peer tutoring verses the students undertaking self-guided sessions. A recommendation for future study is to implement a control group in such a way that will not advantage or disadvantage any students. Interventions could be administered in a topic not covered by the learning outcomes of the module assessments. This would ensure that the control group is neither advantaged nor disadvantaged by the process.

With undertaking a stand-alone pilot, a disadvantage is that there is no data to compare from previous years. This particular study may seem beneficial, but without studying the performance of past years, it is difficult to draw clear conclusions. One recommendation is that a series of interventions are undertaken with multiple modules and year groups. Through staff observations, focus groups and student feedback, it will be possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions.

A significant area for improvement is the implementation of the surveys. The decision to use anonymous paper surveys resulted in a large sample size, however, the discrepancy in pre and post sample sizes means that the surveys cannot be compared fairly. Future studies would ensure that a more suitable data collection method is utilised. For the purpose of the surveys, students could be given a unique identification number; this would allow data to be compared accurately. Alternatively, online surveys could be implemented; however, this has the potential for smaller sample sizes due to lower participation.

Although this study is not without problems, the findings show the benefits of peer learning. Further to the report, peer tutoring schemes have been implemented across Technical and Event Realisation modules at Backstage Academy. These schemes will be subject to regular review as a means to evaluate their effectiveness and value.

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*Appendix A – Sample Questionnaires*

Pre-Intervention Survey



Post-Intervention Survey



*Appendix B – Survey Responses*





*Appendix C – Focus Group Notes*

**Audio Transcription**

**Group 1 – 577\_0085\_01**

Interviewer – Right so today we tried something a bit different which was to take the academic staff out, and trialling peer-group mentoring. So, first of all what’s your thoughts?

Multiple students – Good, yeah good, helped a lot.

Interviewer – Why do you think it helped? Why was it different from every other week?

Student A – I think there was more kind of like, we did what we know and if we got stuck we could check and the bits we didn’t know we could ask and get more clarification on. So I thought that was easier because we got on with it and anything we didn’t know we could just ask and then we did know it and now we know it for next time as well.

Student B – I thought it was a lot like slower paced as well, cause sometimes the lectures are like quite fast, like really fast paced. Since it was like quite slow and just like plenty of questions were asked like about us own knowledge like every-so-often it helped a bit I think. It was just quite slow pace compared to like bang, bang, bang, bang. It was like slower than that which I thought helped me personally.

Interviewer – Was it easier for you in respect that you were talking to a peer rather than a lecturer?

Student B – I personally I wasn’t…

Student A – I think it was the same

Multiple students – Yeah same

Student C – Like it’s easier, I think, for him to like communicate stuff to us in terms of like, just like…

Student A – Cause he’s like in our shoes

Student C – Yeah, like so he sort of knows, when he was in our boots sort of what he struggled with so he can sort of relate it. But in terms of actually like, just in general, like it’s the same.

Student D – I thought for me it’s like, umm, because we are a smaller group and we all kind of have like the same level of knowledge, like you were saying earlier, there’s not people who know what they’re doing, they don’t do the stuff they know what to do so it gives us a chance to like learn how to do it. Like I didn’t know how to like do amps or like plug in the back of the amps and then like there was no one doing it so I like did it and asked Josh and like I asked you and then it clicked with me how to do it.

Interviewer – So overall you feel more confident for next week?

Student A – Yeah definitely

Multiple students – [Agreement]

Interviewer – So… is it a good idea?

Multiple students – Yeah, yeah definitely, general agreement

Interviewer – Did you get anything from it? [Addressing student E]

Student E – Yeah, I mean, just I think I just struggle with sound generally. I’ve never really done it before and it’s not really my main interest so I just kind of pushed it away and tried to avoid it. But I understand the desk a lot more, it’s a lot more simpler than I thought it was going to be. And generally the setting up is just pretty much plugging cables in and I can do that.

Interviewer – Do you think it would be good, this is collectively so I want everybody to have an opinion on this, would it be useful to take a similar model and put it into lighting, or into video, or other subject areas?

Multiple students – Yeah [general agreement]

Student E – I think it’s just, I mean our group is pretty small as it is generally, but I just find it a lot easier, I don’t know, more when I’m in a smaller group. The other day we did lighting and I think there was like four of us in and it gave us all a chance to really work on the things we needed to, instead of having five people trying to do one thing.

Interviewer – So all in all it was a positive experience and we should roll it out further?

Multiple students – [General agreement]

Interviewer – So when come to third year are you going to be peer mentoring our first years or second years if you have to peer mentor?

Multiple students – [Few nervous laughs]

A student – I wouldn’t want to

Student D – If I got more knowledgeable on the subject [other students agree]

Interviewer – I think you learn. If you know you’ve got to peer mentor someone you kind of brush up and make sure you know all the attributes. I mean, we had a session with the third years yesterday and said “are you all confident?”. The third years don’t use the equipment as much as you do because they’ve been dealing this year with array calc and computer software, SMAART training. So they have not been so hands on this year. So for some of the third years, they’ve had to get on the equipment and brush up because they knew they were walking into this position today. So it’s really good for those third years as well.

Interviewer – Frazer, do you want to add anything to that?

Frazer – No, it’s just if you had any downsides, if there was anything you thought today didn’t run smoothly then this would be the perfect time to discuss anything you thought I didn’t really like that. I’ve got to run to an assessment, so Brian is going to carry this on.

Interviewer – So, is there anything you didn’t like about it?

Student E – Not really

Student D – No, to me it was good, like really good and I felt that this was more than a lesson, it was more like it says like it’s a practical prep. It was like we were going over it for like the last time just before, you know what I mean, rather than a lesson, so which is good in that sense. It’s kind of like we were kind of left to it, but you were just kind of like oh just do it.

Student A – Like more free rein.

Student D – I think that was good.

Interviewer – Well thank you for your time, thank you for taking part in this.

[End of interview]

**Group 2 – 557\_0086\_01**

Interviewer – So as you will be aware, Frazer has been doing this action research which is saying that the students get much more benefit, or they can get more benefit out of peer assessment [meant to be tutoring], because the knowledge gap between the peer and the learner, if you like, is reduced. So, where as we sometimes speak, and we don’t mean to, but sometimes we might be a little bit fast, or might be working in bigger groups. It might be the case that we’re not getting down to your level. Sometimes we get a peer, the theory says, you get a peer that’s training you, you feel more relaxed, you know, you feel they’re a bit more approachable. So we are just trying to get your opinion of that. So what do you think? Is it a good idea to begin with?

Multiple Students – [General agreement]

Interviewer – What did you get from today?

Student A – I understand how to setup the amps and use the Midas desk better. Cause like before I was just like…sort of like cruise through it, but now I actually understand like what to do.

Interviewer – What do you think makes a peer better than a tutor in the respect of what you have done today?

Student B – I think because they have come through the same things, they know like where we might not understand things. Like they might be better at saying what thing they need to explain to us better, if that makes sense?

Interviewer – So their experience could be to the same process that you…

Student A – And they explain it simpler [group laugh and agree]

Student C – Yeah they break it down like into sort of how we would know.

Student A – How we would say it, yeah.

Interviewer – So are their disadvantages that you see with this kind of…?

Multiple Students – Not really. No

Interviewer – Do you think you are benefiting though partly, there is only three of you here today, so you’ve got more time anyway?

Student B – Yeah maybe

Interviewer – Or do you think that the peer was the catalyst to your learning today?

Student A – I think if we was in a bigger group, we wouldn’t have used him as much because there is more people like in our group who have done different things more experienced. But because us in a smaller group there was less people to ask, so then we like ask him.

Student C – Quite a bit yeah.

Student B – It means it more like one-to-one as well, you get more like one-to-one time.

Student A – Which is better, yeah.

Interviewer – And would you like to see peer group mentoring rolled out into other areas?

Multiple students – [General agreement]

Interviewer – Lighting?

Student B – If it’s possible yeah.

Student C – Lighting would be good.

Student A – Yeah

Interviewer – Good, and would you be prepared to become peers next year?

Multiple students – [Laugh]

Student A – Yeah if I knew what I was talking about.

Student C – As long as it’s lighting yeah.

Interviewer – I mean, if you are getting something from this and you think that, I mean, what I’m hearing from you right now, is that it’s good because you look at that person and think ‘that was me’, or that was you two years ago [mumbles].

Student A – Fast forward

Interviewer – And you’re saying well actually they understand more because they see…

Student A – They’ve been through it.

Interviewer – The pitfalls they’ve fallen down, so it seems like a positive idea… Good, and there are no negatives in that?

Multiple Students – No, don’t think so.

Interviewer – And did he speak to you? Does he seem knowledgeable?

Multiple Students – Yeah

Interviewer – Seems to know what he was doing?

Student C – Definitely

Interviewer – Thank you very much.

[End of interview]

**Josh W – 557\_0087\_01**

Interviewer – Now, we’ve done two sessions today, and first of all, what do you think about peer mentoring? How does it make you feel, what’s your thoughts on it?

Josh – I think to start off with you are a bit worried because you don’t want to come off as a bit arrogant, or kind of, yeah having that arrogance over people that are a similar age to you, but, I think after now I’ve done it I can see it’s both beneficial for both parties as it helps. Helps them identify kind of like their core strengths and weaknesses, and obviously you can highlight that, but then also for me to see each aspect of every area and then see where they are going wrong and then be able to point that out to them so. But yeah I think it’s really good.

Interviewer – So, tell me maybe about your first group, so you’ve come in first of all. You’re a bit nervous?

Josh – I wouldn’t say nervous, but I think just a bit sceptical. I think they just don’t, I think as well for them they didn’t really know what I was going to be doing, or kind of like just observing. Obviously I’m just a bit of a hawk, just like walking around the room, just like watching them and obviously. I think once that first person asked that question they seemed all ok because, they don’t know me and obviously I don’t know them so obviously it’s coming over that barrier of getting to know the person and then after that I think they were quite fluid with, if there was any problems they didn’t hesitate to ask me.

Interviewer – And, the second group, was that a different experience to the first one?

Josh – Err, no I think they’re both the same. I think it just comes down to the individuals as well, obviously being able to talk to them on a personal level as well, not just kind of peering over them and kind of watching what they are doing, saying “oh that’s wrong”, but being able to make them think as well, so this is both groups. So, saying to them, like questioning what, obviously you don’t want to come off arrogant, you know what I mean, or having that ego, but you do say to them like “what do you think about that, have you done that right?”, and then they’d kind of look at it and then question it, so then obviously it’s making them think about it before they kind of just do it; which, obviously then helps me think about it as well.

Interviewer – Well this is the next question, because all the comments I’m getting back… There’s two parts to this survey and all the comments I’m getting back [read’s the surveys], “was the tutor knowledgeable? Yes”, “was he able to explain, was it beneficial?” have all got really good marks for beneficial.

Josh – Yeah, that’s good.

Interviewer – “Has increased my confidence? Yes”. “Was the tutor knowledgeable? Six”, there you can read it yourself. “Was he able to explain things? Five”. “Was the session beneficial? Five”. “Has it increased my confidence? Five”.

Josh – That’s good yeah.

Interviewer – [Goes through scores on another sheet] So we look at that Likert scale of one to six, fives and fours are high.

Josh – Yeah, of course.

Interviewer – So we’ve got students here that, and talking to them, the point that I’ve been making to them is “why do you think, is it a positive experience?”. “Yes it is a positive experience”. “Why is it a positive experience?”. One of the big things they say is that you [Josh], they look at you, that you were in their shoes two years ago.

Josh – Yeah of course.

Interviewer – And you understand the pitfalls better than the teaching staff.

Josh – Yeah definitely

Interviewer – Do you think that is true?

Josh – Yeah definitely, a hundred percent. I think that obviously being in their shoes only a couple of years ago obviously, I can see where they’re going wrong as I can be in, I was in their shoes. You know what I mean? You look at a brand new amp such as like the d&b amps down there, and you just look at it thinking like a spaceship, but once you actually dive into it then it’s ok because, you overcome that barrier don’t you? And then it’s, yeah just basically putting myself in their shoes the way I was and helping them overcome it to what, you know what I mean, to where I am today as well so.

Interviewer – I think most of them saw that, and they didn’t take… you were saying “I didn’t want to come across as arrogant or…”

Josh – Yeah of course

Interviewer – I think most students saw you and did say look, this guy is here to help us and he’s the guy that’s in this position and you know more than most. So the experience for them has been really positive. What have you learnt?

Josh – Umm, I think just obviously generally learning about how other people work as well. Obviously seeing how everyone else works together as a team, but also observing, because you’re not just in one area, you are not just setting up microphones on mic stands or equipment or setting up the amps to power the speakers. You’re having to watch everybody’s process and obviously keep an eye on everybody, so having eyes in the back of your head to watch someone else because, you know what I mean, you don’t want something to go wrong down there but then obviously if you can see that they are going wrong then you can question it early, and obviously it makes them think about it, so. But yeah, I think it’s just observing the group, umm, as well as just… I guess sort of teamwork, because obviously you were trying to help them accomplish what their practical next week, so you’re helping them overcome that, so either when they’re asking me questions and obviously I can try and question their questions, if you know what I mean? By not just giving the answer straight away. So I guess it’s helping them as a team because if I was just to give the answer straight away then, a lot of them would just kind of, you know what I mean, dismiss that and they might forget it next week. Where, if I’m questioning it then they’re all going to think about it as well, it’s not just like an individual person. So, when I was like showing them the monitors, or showing them the desk, I was questioning them what they were thinking, so obviously it gets them all thinking at the same time.

Interviewer – Do you think you are better… that you’ve gained? I mean I’ve been teaching for many years, and they way that I learn something, the best learning I ever, ever undertake is teaching it.

Josh – Yeah

Interviewer – And the more times you teach it… When you come in on Thursday, you’ll be a dab hand and I think you’ll feel a greater experience on Thursday that you can handle that equipment.

Josh – Yeah of course

Interviewer – For you, I think your confidence will rise. I don’t know…

Josh – Definitely, I think from, just even from this morning’s session to this afternoon’s session I can, I was more confident in looking about it and even questioning early decisions that they were doing, obviously it helps, helps considerably. But even doing it just from this morning to this afternoon it does help because, even, I’ve done this system, you know what I mean, many times, this morning I’m still a bit kind of like, oh, I don’t want them to throw a question at me that I don’t know. But, and then even just by the morning I was just confident that I knew what was going on in every scenario and where they were going through and how they were going to the desk and how it was all labelled. But, yeah, definitely a positive experience, I didn’t think it was going to be as positive as it was and, yeah, I was quite surprised actually.

Interviewer – Yeah, you know more about teaching it, you’ve looked at things now. Even troubleshooting, the way you handled the amps and everything was really positive. I think when you are seeing somebody, you can see where they make mistakes, and you’ve got to troubleshoot…

Josh – Yeah of course

[Students interrupt interview]

Interviewer – On that note, we will stop there.

[End of interview]

**Group 3 – 557\_088\_01**

Interviewer – So, you’ve had Jack as a peer mentor. First of all, did you have any assistance from Jack?

Student A – Yeah, in the right moments

Multiple students – yeah

Interviewer – Did he help at all?

Multiple students – Yeah

Interviewer – You found that there were some things he said that were helpful?

Multiple students – Yeah

Interviewer – So, thinking about that then, what kind of things did he assist you with?

Student B – Just general knowledge that you obviously have from experience, so like I had a microphone up in a position which was probably more suited for a vocal rather than a guitar and he was like “are you sure you want that to be there?”. Actually, I think you said it and Jack assisted with it. So that’s obviously just something that comes with the experience of like knowing what height to put everything at for each individual instrument. But yeah, that was one instance I can think of.

Interviewer – So going around the table and asking why you think…do you think than that peer mentoring is a positive experience?

Multiple Students – Yeah

Interviewer – So we all kind of think that. Is there negatives to it?

Student C – There’s only when, like his knowledge isn’t as far as yours, that’s the only thing. But he can explain it in a different way though, so it’s kind of a bit of both.

Interviewer – Is that explanation useful to you then? Is it he had something a little bit different and useful to you?

Student D – I think it’s helpful having somebody who knows more than us, but, is able to explain from a different perspective.

Student B – And not just brush over it like super quick, like especially with like the effects and things like that. Obviously when you come over, you can just like go straight into it and you know where everything is already at already, where as Jack, I think he’s not as, but that means we get to watch the whole process of him trying to find it which is quite good at the same, do you know what I mean? Rather than just like “oh this goes in here and this goes in here and then it’s like boom”, it’s all just gone straight over your head.

Interviewer – Did you all feel like that?

Multiple Students - Yeah

Interviewer – So would you suggest that Frazer and I teach too fast? Because I think the same criticism came from yesterday as well.

Student D – I think sometimes…

Interviewer – You can say anything to me, if you think that’s the criticism.

Student B – I don’t think it’s too fast. I think it’s once you’ve obviously accepted that it’s going to take multiple and multiple times of you doing it before you get it then it’s like, and then… Obviously it’s overwhelming at first and I think it does help with Jack in those specific instances where there is like multiple steps to get to like somewhere where you get to really quickly, like seeing that as a more drawn out process is a lot more informative. But like yeah, as long as you, everyone’s accepted that like it’s going to take a few times before it all like gets cemented into your brain and it’s all sound like, I think it’s fine, I don’t think you go too fast. If anything it alerts you when you see you going super fast, like “oh I need to be sharp here like”, and pay attention to every little bit cause otherwise it’s just going to be like “oh f\*\*k”.

Interviewer – Are you happy then to, so, let me ask you the next question. If we were to roll this peer mentoring system out into other subject areas, would, do you think that would be useful? Like lighting?

Multiple Students – [General agreement]

Interviewer – You’re gaining something? What if we said video?

Student D – Nicer to have a different perspective on it.

Interviewer – And what about you becoming peer mentors? Would you be prepared to do it next year?

Student B – Oh yeah definitely.

Multiple Students – Yeah

Student B – Yeah cause it’s beneficial for the mentor obviously as well, massively, like that’s…

Interviewer – That’s it, you wouldn’t believe how beneficial this is for Jack.

Student B – Yeah

Interviewer – Because, when you teach something, you know, the first time you teach something it’s difficult but the more times you teach something the better you become yourself.

Student B – Yeah

Interviewer – But I’ve learnt a lot today. I’ve learnt how to attach a 2-track and an oscillator to that desk. So that’s been useful for me, I’ve had a good experience from you guys.

Student B – Every day’s a school day

Multiple Students – [All laugh]

Interviewer – You never stop learning, which is good… Well thanks for being part of this, we’re going to try and roll it out in other areas. I think it’s useful because, you know, when you start to get to know these third years as well, you get to know your peers a little bit, then you know they are approachable, you can ask them anything, you know, they’re just a step in front of you at this moment. I think it’s really quite good. I think we’ll start to push you forward to do some peer assessments as well, not this year but later, maybe next year. Perhaps you can talk to some of the first years about your experiences…

[End of interview]

**Group 4 – 557\_089\_01**

Interviewer – So, today’s session, thinking about today’s session. So Jack’s come in, and he’s there as a peer mentor. First of all was it useful?

Multiple Students – Yeah

[Phone rings]

Interviewer – Right, okay. So why was it useful?

[Silence]

Interviewer – What attributes did Jack offer that Frazer and I don’t offer?

Student A – More approachable

Interviewer – More approachable?

Student A – In certain respects yeah. It’s a lot less daunting for me personally to kind of, speak to someone who is obviously still a student than someone who has got a lot more experience, and, you know…

Interviewer – Did you all find that?

Student B – I found that.

Student A – Not that you are not approachable, it’s just this level of authority. So it’s to speak to someone that is on our level, like yeah they’ve got a couple more years’ experience than we have but it’s a lot more.

Interviewer – Did you find him knowledgeable? Does he…

Multiple Students – [General agreement]

Interviewer – Did you all get something out of it? What did you get out of it particularly? What do you think you got out of it in particular?

Student B – Are you asking me?

Interviewer – Yeah go on, I’ll ask you direct. Was there anything you thought “actually, I’ve learnt something there”?

Student C – How to do effects, from the desk. I didn’t know until he showed me and now, I actually know.

Student B – Effects

Interviewer – Effects for all of you?

Student D – He does it really slow.

Interviewer – So, do you… right, this is funny because one of the earlier groups said they preferred this approach, because it was slower that Frazer and I would take it.

Student A – Yeah, I think sometimes, I know you all have the good intentions but it’s kind of like right this, this, this, this and it’s like. It’s quick paced, it’s like right ok.

Interviewer – Do you think that the language that is used is different as well?

Student C – No

Student A – I wouldn’t say the language as such no, I think it’s just a bit slower, and a bit more, not in depth as such, because you do cover it in depth, it’s just quite quick.

Student E – It’s kind of overwhelming like, you know when you just get hit with all this stuff that you need to know, and like it’s a bit overwhelming, you’re like “oh”. So you don’t really take it in because there is so much to take in.

Student A – And especially cause we are all coming into it at all different levels of like experience and knowledge. Like there are some people who obviously much more experienced than others, so trying to kind of get on to the same page as everyone else is, quite challenging at times.

Interviewer – Do you think the peer mentoring would benefit you in other areas? Do you think if we peer mentor lighting, would that be useful?

Multiple Students – [General agreement]

Student E – I think it’s all the same principle.

Student A – Yeah, it depends on the individuals as well, cause obviously some people are more versed in sound, and some lighting, and some visual. So, it depends on the individual, you know, primarily, but I can’t see it not being beneficial.

Interviewer – So if I asked you to find a negative now about peer mentoring, could you find one? With your experience that you had today could you go well…?

Multiple Students – [No]

Student C – Not really, cause it’s like having an extra person in the room to help.

Student F – Just another helping hand.

Student A – The thing is it wasn’t like he wasn’t hands on either. He was getting involved, helping us and, you know… I wouldn’t say there was any negatives.

Interviewer – So there was nothing negative that you could recall?

Student A – I think that the only negative possibly is that obviously, cause we’ve never really met him before, that it’s kind of like “oh, this is a new person”, but apart from that.

Student C – It’s just how it is really isn’t it.

Student F – It’s not like he were trying to control any of the situation at all, he was just there if you needed him.

Student A – There to kind of watch and help out. Yeah, was good.

Interviewer – Well thank you for persevering. It gives Frazer and I a lot of food for thought this, because, every group has said, that you have made similar comments. This is not just with Jack, because prior to Jack, yesterday we had another third year student, and tomorrow will be a different third year student. So, it is nice to trial this, and this really is an interesting trial. But you’ve all as groups made the similar points which is; it’s useful for it being slowed down, some of the language that is used, it’s really quite slow when it’s being operated, leads to a much slower pace. More approachable, often because you are not going to embarrass yourself in front of the peer, where as sometimes you might be a little bit indifferent of coming to Frazer and I and going “I still don’t understand that”, it could be a little more nerve wracking to say that to us. We hope it isn’t because we like to think that we’re approachable, but we take it on board… and we will try and roll it out in other areas, it’s been a really useful exercise.

[End of interview]

**Jack – 557\_090\_01**

Interviewer – So, tell us your feelings about tutor mentoring, what do you think about it?

Jack – I mean I were quite nervous about it. I didn’t know the level of, like what level everyone was at. I feel like I’m getting a bit more nervous now with both of you sat there…

Interviewer – No, no, no, this is really, I’ll tell you…

Frazer – I’ll tell you what, I’m going to go out of the room. I’m going to get another piece of paper to fill in Brian and then…

Interviewer – Here, there is one here.

Frazer – You got one?

Interviewer – Yeah, fill it in after this Jack. So, thinking about… let me just give you a little context because this is not a grilling about anything you’ve done, because what we’re, the feedback we’re getting is positive feedback, so it’s been a positive experience. But one thing that we, umm, what they say about tutor mentoring, is that, the tutor, mentor or peer, the tutor is often gains as much from the process of tutoring, as they do, from being the tutor, if that makes sense? So, have you gained anything today? What do you think you’ve gained?

Jack – I think I’m more confident with like, how to actually set up stuff. I know we had a few hurdles in terms of like patching and stuff. I think what you did earlier with the, like, doing the auxiliary and stuff, that actually helped me figure out what it all meant really. Patch Bay were one of things what kept throwing me off.

Interviewer – But, that aside, do you think you’ve learnt anything yourself? I’m talking about the experience; do you think it’s aided your ability then? Not particularly what I’ve talked about…

Jack – Yeah

Interviewer – I’m talking about just, you getting involved in that, do you think that you’ve become…?

Jack – What, like more experienced?

Interviewer – More experienced, more challenged?

Jack – More challenged? Err, I don’t really, I mean I did try me best to sort of help them a bit, but. I mean there were some people who, like that one who just were in there who had missed quite a few sessions and stuff but I didn’t know really what to say I suppose. I don’t have that kind of knowledge and how to guide them that way, I just tried to help them any way I could really.

Interviewer – You see, for them it’s been a really positive experience.

Jack – I feel like I’m a master at doing auxiliary effects now I’ve done them [Laughs]. Think I’ve done about ten times today.

Interviewer – So the practice side of…

Jack – Yeah, just like repetition, repeating it. I mean there were that Josh, he kind of, like he would sort of taking control of his part but I was showing him odd bit. Cause he’d never used like that oscillator thing before, he didn’t even know that it were on that desk, and he says he works with it all time, so I’m like “umm, do you really?” [Laughs]. But he said he never uses, never had to use it and stuff, so, and I were trying to show some other guys like how to do the effects and stuff, cause that were one thing I’ve become confident in now.

Interviewer – So, is it fair to say you’ve grown in confidence from the experience?

Jack – Yeah

Interviewer – From where you were last week?

Jack – Yeah

Interviewer – So you think you’re more confident in…

Jack – I don’t want to see them microphones again after today [Laughs]. I think, I were looking through them. I had to look, and I’m like “no this isn’t this one” or “it’s this one” and stuff. I’ve got to know the microphones more as well.

Interviewer – Good

Jack – I’m still a bit, like, I think I’m just, a bit wary on like, the whole monitor thing, but I think even that, if I actually did it by myself, I think I’d be able to do it now.

Interviewer – Yep, I think

Jack – I think it has helped me a bit, it’s just

Interviewer – Pushed you a bit further down the track. I think it has. That’s my opinion and I’m not really interested in my opinion.

Jack – Oh, I’m interested.

Interviewer – The feedback that we’ve got has been really positive about the process of peer mentoring. And, particularly, you know, you, as a peer mentor, there’s been no one, we ask a question as to whether there was any negatives and nobody has come up with any negatives. I’m saying “look, it won’t get back to Jack anyway”, you know I’m not…

Jack – Go on, you’ll have to tell me now, I’m going back in [Laughs].

Interviewer – Well there’s been no negatives so I can tell you. But there has been no negatives and everyone’s said it’s been really positive, and one of the positive things that they found was that you slowed everything down and spoke in more of their language.

Jack – I mean, I tried to like, when I were, I’m going back to the effects because that’s what I seemed to be doing then. But, like I showed them how to do it and then said to them “right”, I said “you have a go then…”. Even that Josh, he doesn’t use, he hasn’t used Avid Venue. He knows much, so even I was showing him how to do effects and again, you know that kind of stuff, and how to add them and change stuff.

Interviewer – Good, right on that note you can finish. Thank you very much.

[End of interview]

**Group 5 – 557\_092\_01**

Interviewer – Alright, anyone got any thoughts or feelings about peer tutors, about how today went? Was it better or worse than having a lecturer led session?

Student A – I think it was quite helpful having both alongside because you have lecturers, obviously their knowledge is a lot broader, where as you’ve got an actual student helping you with a similar sort of base knowledge, it sort of works out a little bit better when you’re asking them questions. It’s not that you’re not approachable, it’s that, sometimes having someone who is on the same level as you can become more approachable, if that makes sense?

Interviewer – Perfectly, yeah. I know sometimes I’m not approachable, especially on a morning.

Multiple Students – [Laugh]

Interviewer – That’s good, yeah brilliant. Anybody else got any comments on that or things around that ilk?

Student B – I think it was helpful to have like, as well as you, having two other people, so that you could all spread out, and like, if somebody was having a problem over there and somebody was having a problem somewhere else, you can, you know, divide and conquer, and you can keep an eye on everything.

Interviewer – Good, anybody got something similar or any negatives about today?

Student C – I think what I learnt from Scott and Ben stuck in. It went in easier than it would if it was from you or Brian.

Interviewer – So why do you think that is? What, pace or just the way that we deliver our expectation, or…?

Student A – I think for me it just felt a little bit more casual.

Interviewer – I think there is something to be…

Student D – You’re intimidating! [Group laugh]

Interviewer – There’s sommat to be said about, like, working with peers, and there’s just, even if I don’t intend it, or if lecturing, Brian and I don’t intend it, there seems to be an expectation on you that we want you to get it right, which we do. But, with students there appears to be more, kind of if you make a mistake it doesn’t matter, you just, you work through it together till you get to the fix which is really interesting, really good.

Another question then is, do you think this should be rolled out across all the technical disciplines, lighting, video as well?

Multiple Students – [General agreement]

Interviewer – So you think the other courses, somebody said about Gabriel’s course, sometimes it’s a bit too quick and a bit, yeah… so having some third years... And when do you think that should be introduced in the module? In the beginning? Halfway through?

Student E – Do it throughout?

Student F – I’d say like halfway through. The first like few weeks is just learning the basics from the lecturing, the lecturers, and then after that, it is when you need more help, I think.

Student A – Once you’ve had all the initial practical stuff and you actually have a chance to form the questions. Once things start to get a little bit more confusing.

Interviewer – Yeah, because day one it might be a bit, some people can do a lot of it already, so day one you wouldn’t have any questions or anything to ask, umm, and you need just for that kind of more tutor led. But, by halfway through the module, when we kind of expecting you to start doing stuff by yourself, then really having those in. And then the other question is in the future as second and third years, would you consider becoming peer tutors like these third years?

Multiple Students – [Mostly yes and couple of no’s]

Interviewer – Brilliant, I’ll have that in writing… [Said in jest]

Multiple Students – [Laugh]

Interviewer – Awesome, alright thank you, I’ll collect the forms in.

Student D – It’s good to tutor as well because, me I like to be able to explain something and learn. I learn more when I explain it. Do you know what I mean?

Interviewer – Oh yeah, that’s how I learn, like, I learn a new topic by teaching it. Once I’ve taught it, I’m like “alright”, because you find everything that people can break or do wrong with it, or…

Student D – Exactly

Interviewer – Or people explain it in different languages

[End of interview]

**Group 6 – 577\_094\_01**

Interviewer – How did everybody feel that session went and how was it using peers instead of a tutor led session?

Student A – It felt more comfortable with them teaching us because I like their way of teaching.

Student B – It’s more relaxed.

Multiple Students – [General agreement]

Interviewer – Is there just less pressure, I guess, is there? Compared to a teacher standing being, obviously we don’t mean to be intimidating, but I think it comes across that…

Student C – No, I think it feels like, it’s sort of like you’re chatting to your mate in that sense as opposed to someone with authority or what not. So, it’s more relaxed in that sense.

Interviewer – That’s really interesting because when I started teaching a few years ago, I would never have said that I’m someone of authority, I’m just somebody who teaches technical stuff. But, actually everybody says, when you are a teacher no matter kind of what you think, you become some kind of authority figure in some sense, or there’s some pressure. So, does everyone agree with that? Does everyone think that the format they did it, the style they were delivering it in, was a lot less formal and pressurised?

Student D – Yeah, you could also tell, but also, I feel like, yourself, you know how to explain things more simpler, like sometimes you know how to explain it better. So, they were like almost, like, going back on themselves if they were experiencing “oh yeah, this is because that” if you get what I mean? Like they knew how to explain better than [correction]… You know how to explain it better than they did, because that’s just you’re a lecturer as well.

Student A – It’s because they’ve been there, done that. They’ve done it recently; they’re doing it all the time so they are probably the best people to speak to.

Interviewer – And so, that’s interesting with language cause most of the consensus so far has been almost the other way around, in that, when I explain, or Brian explains it, it is over, it’s not over the top, but it’s elaborate. We use like, Brian will say like “calibrate the gain”, whereas they’d probably say “set the gain”, “do the gain” right. So it’s, there is a, maybe, I guess is that the delivery of how they deliver it is not as polished but the language may be more understandable? Has anybody got any thoughts on that?

Student B – I mean the language isn’t less understandable, it’s just a bit more, less formal.

Student E – We know what you mean when you say calibrate, it’s just…

Student C – I personally, I don’t really find that much of a difference like in that sense, I still learn both ways, it doesn’t mean... If someone says calibrate it as opposed to set it, it’s the same thing to me. It’s like you might get an occasion when I’m like “what does that mean?” but, on the whole it’s…

Interviewer – It was just an example, it’s one that Brian… He calls it “calibrate” and I’ve always just said “set”, so it’s just an interesting, kind of, thought between us how some people may perceive that as different. Has anyone else got any thoughts on like the pace? Just the general session and how it went?

Student A – I think it went well cause with the two teams, pretty much it went quite swiftly.

Student D – I think because it was a bit smaller.

Student B – It was quite nice to just get on with it.

Student A – We got asked “everyone, do you know what this area is? Do you know this?”. Everyone’s gone “yes”, the people that have gone “no”, then obviously explained it to them so everyone knows what they are doing, which is good.

Interviewer – Brilliant. Alright, another question on the peer side, so using second or third years to help out. Do you think this is something that should be spread out across lighting and video as well?

Multiple Students – [All agree]

Interviewer – Unanimous there, okay. And when do you think would be a good time in a module to start rolling that out? The beginning, the middle or the end as we have done today?

Student B – In the middle.

Student D – Yeah, so we would have like a basic understanding, so that they are not like teaching us proper stuff.

Student F – I’d probably say from like all the way through. Something at the start so they can explain from their experience what they’ve done and how they found it, and like once we know more then like in the middle, then we can like… Once we know more, then we can like go back to them and ask them like different questions, and then at the end we’d know even more so we can ask like further questions, which I think like throughout may be even more beneficial.

Interviewer – Yeah if it was the same set I guess you can always talk to them outside of uni, outside of lessons and say “I’m really struggling with this, can I have a bit of help?” or something.

Multiple Students – [Agreement]

Interviewer – Do you find them easier to approach than a lecturer like myself? Is it easier to ask them something that you’re not sure of compared to myself?

Student C – Not necessarily. I’m comfortable with asking you the same question. Like if I’m stuck I’ll come and ask you a question as I would ask them a question, but it’s more of like, I dunno. It’s more of just a like a friendly chat about whatever if you know what I mean like?... You know what I mean, I still speak to you in the same sense, it’s just, it’s different but not too much different. There is nothing that stops me from learning because I feel like I’m held back or anything. It’s not that, it’s just I find it all quite equal, you know what I mean?

Student E – It kind of feels like there’s less pressure to know stuff. I don’t know if that makes sense or not?

Interviewer – Oh yeah, because a lot of people said when there are lecturers or teachers stood next to you, they feel an expectation you should know it already, and compared to a student whose been on the same journey as you, you kind of feel, like “if I make a mistake it’s fine. If I don’t know, it’s fine, I can just ask them”. So some people find it quite, just the same, be it, a student or a teacher and some people find it quite intimidating having a teacher stood over them, as it were.

So, talking about rolling it out in sound, lighting and video would be a really good idea. Stuff like Gabriel, where he’s trying to get through really, a lot, if you had some third years there or second years to help you.

What about something like 4107, so the Academic and Crew Skills? Do you think it, there would be benefit for having some tutoring from students about the academic skills as well as the practical?

Multiple Students – [General disagreement]

Student A – Not necessarily.

Interviewer – Alright, that’s fine. And then, in the future, would you all consider becoming a peer tutor for first years?

Multiple Students – [General agreement]

Interviewer – Alright, thank you very much.

[End of interview]

**Scott and Ben – 577\_0093\_01**

Interviewer – How do you feel that went? Was it kind of what your expected, or was it completely different?

Ben – Yeah I liked it

Scott – Yeah it was good

Ben – I liked it cause it was sort of informal, not us teaching them really, it was just sort of like obviously peer to peer isn’t it. Our group were pretty on it anyway.

Scott – I think the only thing I didn’t enjoy about it was effects on the board.

Interviewer – That’s something we’d highlighted before we went in wasn’t it?

Scott – But once, I dunno, everyone who was unsure just individually came to the desk and they had a go at going through each thing. I feel like, well Sasha said she understands it now.

Ben – Yeah, it’s the little techniques that we can give them. Things like your three of four columns for the stage-box thing worked really well. Even I… that’s something new for me as well, I never use that.

Scott – B1, B2, it just makes the board look confusing…

Ben – I’m going to start using that now.

Interviewer – So even like peer to peer with yourselves, the two of you have learnt new things from each other? That’s really interesting. Umm, anything you are going to do different for this afternoon?

Ben – Just we’re a little bit more prepared I say. Cause like we’ve done a few more bits on the board ready for that, cause I wasn’t a hundred percent knowing what we were actually doing today.

Scott – I think for the drumkit as well, saying to label up the cables as well because they all plugged it in, but the person that plugged it in didn’t realise what kick in and kick out were, so them two were swapped over. It’s not like a big issue, but like we had to swap two. It made it harder because it wasn’t labelled, well the patch box was labelled but the actual cables weren’t, so they were unsure and followed the cables back.

Interviewer – So this afternoon, how are you going to approach that with your new group? Are you just going to inform them that it would be worth labelling?

Ben – Yeah, it’s err…

Scott – Yeah they did well at labelling everything else so…

Ben - …just like housekeeping really innit. Little things that you need to keep on top of, that just keeps it tidy. Saves you a massive ball-ache in the long run.

Interviewer – Cool, I think umm, from what I observed, is the biggest thing, is trying to help people fault find, which really difficult, even for ourselves, trying to fault find. But it’s trying to encourage them to think through that process.

Ben – I was saying that with err… like when you are troubleshooting like start at one end and just basically work your way through. Like chop it into blocks. Like if they’ve made… like when we had them in, sound system not working, start at the desk and make sure everything’s running, make sure you haven’t got… I usually do it, I have like, there’s usually a mute button on somewhere that I forget to turn off or something, and then just work your way back along. See that it’s like, no signal coming into the amps, so it’s somewhere in between the desk and the amp. So it’s just troubleshooting that way.

Interviewer – Good yep. Also, just a bit less hands on unless they really get stuck, that was my only thing just to… It really helps, help them develop and learn. Cause it’s easy just to say ‘do this’ and then they can repeat that on the exam, but when they get to their first gig and it’ll be an M7 with an active system and it won’t work the same. It’s just really developing problem solving skills. Alright cool, thank you very much.