The Informatics Tutoring Network

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What is the Informatics Tutoring Network?

• A network of School of Informatics undergraduate and postgraduate students who tutor young people at exam level (National 5, Higher, Advanced Higher) in schools in deprived areas of Scotland.

• The tutoring sessions are delivered online allowing any high school in Scotland to participate.
Key Objectives

• To support young people in deprived areas to achieve in their CS exam-level courses

• To encourage young people to aspire to university-level education

• To provide Informatics students with outreach opportunities that will allow them to gain transferrable skills. They can work towards an Edinburgh Award.

• To provide a number of Informatics students with a work opportunity that they can fit around their studies (particularly aimed at students from a WP background)
Anticipated outcomes

- **Tutees:**
  - Improved confidence in their computing skills
  - Improved grades
  - Increased interest in progressing to university

- **Tutors:**
  - Confidence and skills development
  - Improved understanding of the barriers to education
Evaluation

• Crucial to project
• Theory of change co-produced with tutors: what change did they want to see in themselves and their tutees?
• Tutors and tutees surveyed at the beginning and end of tutoring
• Interviews with participants pending
Year 1 (AY 2020/21)
Achievements

• Funding: PTAS award
• 50 students signed up
• Mandatory online tutors’ training by Deborah Holt from Moray House
• Mandatory theory of change workshop
• PVG required (established a route through STEM Ambassadors)
• 20 students met the requirements
• Appointed one senior co-ordinator and 5 local coordinators
• Codes of conduct for all participants developed
• Formal network framework developed
• Local version of Edinburgh Award established
Challenges

- Delays due to the Disclosure Scotland application system moving online
- Recruiting students to paid posts is time-consuming
- Phased return to schools - no capacity to engage in other activities
- No exams
- Teams/Zoom fatigue
- No tutoring occurred!

Thumbs down icon
Year 2 (AY 2021/22)
Achievements

• 70 students signed up
• Mandatory online training as in Year 1, refreshed theory of change developed
• 15 interested schools, five identified as needing the scheme most
• 20 students did at least one session of tutoring
• Up to 10 hour-long sessions a week (2-to-2 or 2-to-1) between end of Feb and end of May
• Additional School of Informatics funding to employ three project coordinators on ad hoc basis from end of Feb (one still in place)
• MS Teams solutions for delivering sessions online established (by student coordinators)
Challenges

• Engaging schools/teachers is time-consuming
• Delays in completing consent forms by parents
• Creating rotas is time-consuming (and occasionally impossible)
• Tutees’ absences with a short/no notice
• Very low tutee participation in evaluation questionnaires
• Student tutors are bad at keeping in touch
Lessons learnt
• Continuous admin support required – project coordinators were helpful but did not solve the workload issues
• Timetabling during school hours seemed to lead to greater engagement than timetabling out of school
• Further research into poor attendance required (multiple reasons)
• Good relationship with a responsive teacher is a must
• Timing is of essence: start recruiting tutors and engaging schools early in semester 1
• Manage expectations: the scheme is likely to finish after the university exam diet!
Future plans
• School of Informatics to decide whether to continue the project in the next academic year

• Admin support (UoE DS outreach admin post PT on this project) might have to be sourced

• Happy to support other schools to develop similar schemes and use our experience to avoid some of the pitfalls
Thank you!

Any questions?