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Aspiration & Inspiration - A pilot study of  
mentoring in schools

Michael Sanders, Ariella Kristal, Farooq Sabri and Alex Tupper

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## Aspiration & Inspiration - A pilot study of mentoring in schools

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### Abstract

We report the results of a pilot study to test the impact of a short talk on pupils' stated intentions to attend university. In this study, conducted over a single day in a single school, we test first the effect of mentoring vs no mentoring, and a variation in the form of the mentoring. We find increases in stated likelihood of applying to both university in general (0.8s.d.) and the University of Bristol particularly (0.0s.d.). We find no impact of varying the length of the talk.

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### Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the ESRC, the CMPO and Yale for their financial and logistical support in this research. We are also grateful to Andrew Whitby and Trish Rosevear, as well as their students, for facilitating this study, to the mentors who delivered our intervention. As ever, Sanders remains thankful to his supervisor, Sarah Smith, for her encouragement and support. Any remaining errors are our own.

# Aspiration & Inspiration - A pilot study of mentoring in schools\*

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October 4, 2013

## Abstract

We report the results of a pilot study to test the impact of a short talk on pupils' stated intentions to attend university. In this study, conducted over a single day in a single school, we test first the effect of mentoring vs no mentoring, and a variation in the form of the mentoring. We find increases in stated likelihood of applying to both university in general (0.8s.d.) and the University of Bristol particularly (0.0s.d.). We find no impact of varying the length of the talk.

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# 1 Introduction

Increasing rates of university enrollment has long been a goal of successive British governments. The general trend for the last two decades has been upward, only slightly upset when fees have been nearly tripled, and then tripled again. Despite this, some groups, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, remain significantly less likely to attend university than their grades would imply, and, conditional on applying, apply to systematically less prestigious universities than their more wealthy cohorts.

This paper reports the results of a small mentoring pilot study conducted over a single day in a school in the South West of England. Students from the University of Bristol gave a series of short talks to secondary school pupils, who were surveyed, some before, and some after, about their beliefs about their own likelihood of applying both to the University of Bristol and to university in general.

Previous studies have shown modest effects of mentoring on desirable education outcomes. Carrell & Sacerdote (2013), find that offering cash incentives and mentoring to female students increases college attendance by 15 percentage points, although they observe no significant effect for men. They also find that financial incentives alone do nothing to increase attendance. Bettinger and Baker (2011) find similarly that mentoring can have a positive effect on the likelihood of students from ‘non-traditional college backgrounds’ remaining in college. Other evidence is more equivocal - Wheeler, Keller and

Dubois (2010) find in their meta analysis that modest effects of mentoring can be found across a number of outcomes, such as truancy and perceived academic ability, but not in actual academic performance per se.

Although this is an important consideration when designing mentoring interventions, actual grades may not automatically be the variable such programmes seek to influence. As Anders (2012) identifies, pupils from poor backgrounds, or whose parents are less educated, are significantly less likely to attend a prestigious university, even conditional on their attainment at school. Moreover, Anders finds no evidence of discrimination by these institutions, suggesting that the driving cause is an aspiration gap, where young people with suitable grades but less advantaged backgrounds are simply not applying to prestigious universities. This is found elsewhere, for example Hoxby and Avery (2013) report the surprising lack of supply of ‘High-Achieving, Low Income Students’ - despite the fact that due to scholarships, attending a more prestigious university may be cheaper for poor students than attending a less prestigious one.

Student mentoring programmes, such as the one trialled in this paper need not necessarily be primarily concerned with increasing academic attainment, but rather aspiration and the understanding by poorer students that ‘people like me’ can attend excellent academic institutions. In this paper, we test whether even a short talk, appropriately timed, can have a substantive impact on pupils’ reported aspirations to attend a highly ranked local university. In addition we attempt (crudely) to test whether the delivery of

the mentoring - as a mainly passive process of listening, or a more engaged process where pupils have more chances to question the mentors - is more effective. We find large and statistically significant increases in stated intention to apply both to University in general and to the University of Bristol in particular. However, we find no significant effects of the variation in delivery we impose.

The structure of this paper is as follows: In the next section we describe our experiment design. This is followed by our data and results, and finally by a discussion, and extensive appendices containing notes on our experimental procedure.

## **2 Experimental Design**

As described previously, this is a pilot study, aimed at developing our understanding of potential logistics of a larger trial testing the effect of mentoring and support on university attendance decisions. This study was conducted in a single school over a single morning (1st July 2013). Our experimental environment is a secondary state school in Bristol. In 2011, 78 percent of Year 13 students (18 year olds) of this school went straight to university, 13 percent went directly into employment and apprenticeships, 5 percent took a gap year, and 3 percent returned to the sixth form for further studies. Although this is higher than the national average, it is not exceptional. The school's location in a rural area may also contribute to its interest.

## 2.1 Treatments

Our interventions formed a part of a broader week of activities outside of the university curriculum, and followed immediately after a session on personal statements (a document used as part of the university applications system in the UK, in which prospective students articulate their virtues to their chosen universities). All prospective students were randomly allocated to one of four groups, which varied across two dimensions -the type of mentoring they received (T1 and T2), and the timing at which some questions were answered. All participants were given a diagnostic survey at the beginning of the session in which they were asked a series of questions about their identity, what subjects they were studying at A-level, and what they were considering studying at University. This survey, as well as a ‘cheap talk’ script read out at the beginning of the study, can be found in Appendix A.

**EA: Pre-Mentoring ask:** Participants assigned to this treatment received the same preliminary survey as other participants, but questions 6.01 and 6.02 from the post-mentoring survey, regarding their *current* university plans were asked before the mentoring had taken place. This allows us to gain a baseline measure perceived likelihood of university attendance (it is therefore analogous to a control group for these measures).

**EP: Post-Mentoring ask:** This group is identical to the previous group, except that questions about likelihood of attending university are asked *after* mentoring talks.

**T1 - Short Talk, Long Questions:** The total length of the session is 20

minutes. In this treatment, mentors (randomly assigned) gave a talk of 10 minutes about their university experience, with 10 minutes allowed for questions. Although this talk is not scripted or heavily prescribed, participating mentors received training the week before the study. In this training, they are told how long they will be speaking for, and given a list of talking points to cover which describes the structure their talk should take (this suggested structure can be found in Appendix C). Although this laissez faire approach necessarily adds noise to the quality and nature of talks, it adds to the external validity of our design, as precisely controlling the talks given by different mentors is impossible in a wider context.

**T2 - Long Talk, Short Questions** Participants assigned to this treatment receive a longer talk, of 15 minutes, and a shorter question and answer session. Mentors are instructed to follow the same talk structure as had they been given a shorter talk.

## 2.2 Participants

Our sample contains 53 pupils at our chosen school, aged between 16 and 18 (year 12). These students have completed the first year of their A-levels, and will be applying to university (or not) in the next academic year.



### **2.2.1 Recruitment**

The school was recruited by convenience sampling - it is the secondary school attended by one of the authors<sup>1</sup>. The school was contacted by telephone by a different author, and asked if they would be willing to take part in the pilot of a new mentoring scheme. They were made aware that a larger scale programme would likely be rolled out in the subsequent year, for which they may or may not be eligible.

## **2.3 Mentors**

We have a sample of 4 mentors, who were recruited and trained over the weeks leading up to the experiment (see the Appendices for details of recruitment). These mentors were second and third year students at the University of Bristol, and were paid £36 for taking part in the programme.

## **2.4 Assignment**

### **2.4.1 Mentors**

Our 4 mentors were assigned, one to each of our 4 cells, at random. This was conducted using simple randomisation by Samuel Nguyen<sup>2</sup>, for which we are grateful.

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<sup>1</sup>Many moons ago

<sup>2</sup>Mr Nguyen is a member of the Cabinet Office Behavioural Insights Team with extensive experience of randomised controlled trial methodology and independent randomisation. His contact details are available on request from the authors

### **2.4.2 Participants**

We did not know in advance of the study precisely how many students would be available, and hence pre-randomisation was not possible in this case. Instead, participants were randomly distributed a University of Bristol branded card with a number from 1-4 on it, showing the group to which they had been assigned. These cards were distributed during the reading of the cheap talk script. 60 cards in total were in this deck, 15 for each group, and they had been thoroughly shuffled. Balancing tests may be found in the next section.

## **3 Results**

### **3.1 Data**

For each participant we observe which treatment they were assigned to, and the responses which they made to our survey. . For reasons of expedience and to protect the anonymity of our participants, no further data is gathered.

### **3.2 Balance**

We conduct post-hoc balancing tests to confirm the validity of our randomisation. Table 1, below, reports the results of these tests for the 3 reported characteristics of participants in our sample - their gender, whether or not they have a family member who attends/attended university, and whether or not they have a friend who attends/attended university. We test for balance

both in assignment to the before/after measurement, as well as the long/short talk treatment. We find no significant evidence of balance in t-tests on any of these assignments.

After					Long				
Variable	Sample	T0	T1	P	Variable	Sample	T0	T1	P
Gender	0.491	0.500	0.481	0.587	Gender	0.491	0.571	0.400	0.255
	0.505	0.510	0.509			0.505	0.504	0.500	
Family Uni	0.755	0.654	0.852	0.145	Family Uni	0.755	0.821	0.680	0.598
	0.434	0.485	0.362			0.434	0.390	0.476	
Friend Uni	0.673	0.640	0.704	0.799	Friend Uni	0.673	0.679	0.667	0.812
	0.474	0.490	0.465			0.474	0.476	0.482	

### 3.3 Empirical Strategy

In a study of this size, our empirical strategy is necessarily parsimonious. As described previously we have two dimensions across which individuals vary - when we measure their self-reported likelihood of attending university, and the length of the talk they receive. Hence, we estimate two models - the first of which exploits variation in the timing of the asks:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 T_i^1 + \beta_2 T_i^2 + u_i \quad (1)$$

Where  $\alpha$  captures baseline levels of intention to attend, and  $T^1$  and  $T^2$  capture self reported likelihood of attending among those who were asked after their talks and were assigned to treatments 1 and 2, respectively. Our second model uses the full sample of response for the question ‘Do you think you

are more likely to attend university as a result of this talk?', and estimates:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta_1 T_i^2 + u_i \quad (2)$$

Where in this case the control ( $\alpha$ ) is T1 - hence, we estimate whether one form of mentoring (more talk/less questions) is better than another (less talk, more questions). This measure is more likely to be biased by experimental artefacts, but is likely to be more powerful.

### 3.4 Regression Analysis

Table 2, below, shows the results of the empirical strategy described above. Columns 1 and 2 report the results of model 1. The outcome measure in column one is stated likelihood (on a 10 point Lickert scale) of attending Bristol, while in column 2 is stated likelihood of attending University more generally. Columns 3 and 4 estimate model 2, where stated increases (rather than differences relative to the counterfactual group), are used as the outcome measure, again with column 3 reporting the results for Bristol attendance and column 4 reporting the results for University attendance. This variable is coded as a 5 point scale (we will discuss this later in the discussion section). As is clear from the table of results, and from Figures 1 and 2, we observe a significantly higher score on both likelihood of attending Bristol and likelihood of attending university generally in the after group than the before group. This suggests that our talk has had the desired effect.

	(p(bris))	(p(uni))	(m(bris))	(m(uni))
After	1.984*	2.331**		
	(0.775)	(0.739)		
Long · After	-0.798	-1.100		
	(0.920)	(0.883)		
Long			0.071	0.114
			(0.243)	(0.195)
Constant	3.231***	7.269***	2.929***	3.286***
	(0.459)	(0.447)	(0.167)	(0.134)

S standard errors in parentheses, \*\*\* $p < 0.0001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \* $p < 0.05$

Interestingly, we find no significant difference in either specification between groups that had a long talk with short questions and those with a short talk and long questions. This might suggest that the presence of an inspirational young person talking about university education is sufficient to encourage others, but the length of that exposure is not relevant, at least among the short durations studied. More research is required to determine whether more intensive mentoring, which could add value to students through their grades, is more effective than a purely inspirational form of mentoring.

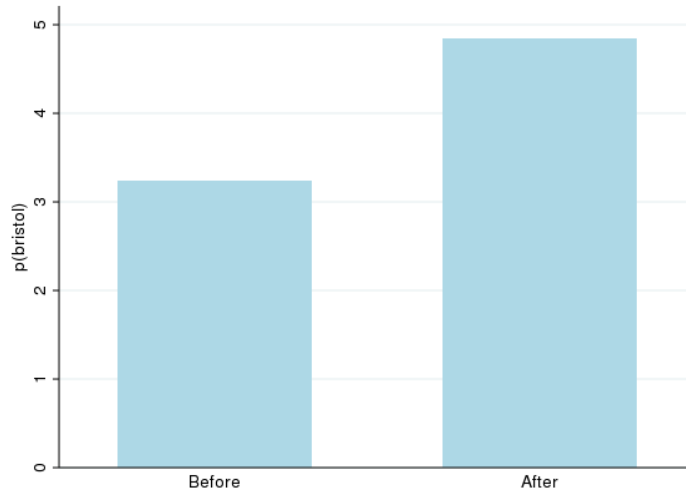


Figure 1: Score on 'are you planning to apply to bristol'

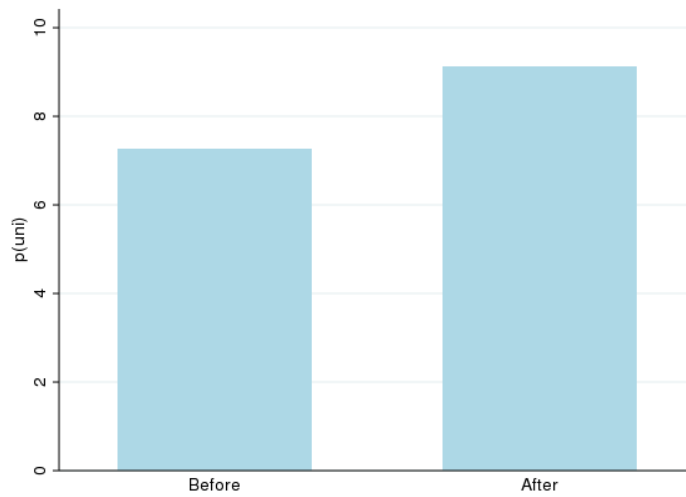


Figure 2: Score on 'are you planning to apply to university'

## 4 Discussion & Conclusions

Although our results are striking, they are far from conclusive, particularly as they are based on stated, self report values, and not realised behaviour. As everyone in our study receives the intervention at some point, we are unable to conduct follow up measurement to determine longer term effects.

However, we can begin to draw out some indications. First, the benefit of mentoring, at least, is large, positive and significant. Although it could be that this effect is weaker than stated (as we expect it to be), and short-lived, this at the very least suggests that a timely and salient intervention can have a substantive impact. Perhaps less surprisingly, we find no significant impact of the length of the talk/Q&A session on our findings. We should not rule out however that different doses, not tested here, will have larger or smaller effects.

Most importantly, even if the effects of this intervention are short-lived, this time of a young person's life may represent a 'teachable moment' at which their behaviour can be positively (or negatively) influenced by a small and low cost intervention. If nothing else, our findings produce a strong case for further study. To this end, the feedback gathered on our talks is presented in our appendices.

## **Appendix A: Sample Surveys and Cheap Talk Script**

Cheap Talk: “We’re hoping to do this kind of talk at more schools, including this one, next year, and we’re really keen to make sure that it’s as good as possible. In front of you you’ll find some surveys, which ask you a few questions about yourself, then what you think of the talk. It’s really important to us that we make this as good as possible, and your feedback is an important part of that - we’d be very grateful if you could fill the surveys in as completely and honestly as possible.”





## Questionnaire A

Please place a cross against all options that apply

### 1. Gender

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
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### 2. A-Level subjects currently taken and predicted grades, if known

\*disclaimer: answers are confidential and anonymous – they cannot affect your university application

Art and Design	<input type="checkbox"/>	Geography	<input type="checkbox"/>
Biology	<input type="checkbox"/>	History	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>	ICT	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chemistry	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>
Citizenship	<input type="checkbox"/>	Media Studies	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design Technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music	<input type="checkbox"/>
Drama	<input type="checkbox"/>	Photography	<input type="checkbox"/>
Economics	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electronics	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physics	<input type="checkbox"/>
English Language	<input type="checkbox"/>	Psychology	<input type="checkbox"/>
English Literature	<input type="checkbox"/>	Politics	<input type="checkbox"/>
French	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Further Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sociology	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others (please specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

### 3. Did any of the following people among your family and friends go to university?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Mother	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Father	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brother or sister	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Aunt, uncle or cousin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
At least one friend from home/school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. In the following section, you will be asked to think about reasons that may make you consider going to university. Please cross the answer that best represents your response.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Nether Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4:01	I want to study a subject that really interests me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4:02	My family wants me to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4:03	I want to train for a specific type of job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4:04	All my friends are going to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4:05	I want to improve my job prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4:06	I enjoy learning and studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4:07	I don't want to get a job straight away	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4:08	I want to gain greater independence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4:09	I want to take advantage of the social experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4:10	I want to take advantage of the great range of opportunities that university offers (societies, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Assuming that you are likely to apply to university, which universities are you considering applying for?

\*disclaimer: answers are confidential and anonymous – they cannot affect your university application

Please cross the answer that best represents your response to the following questions, where 1 indicates that you will definitely NOT and 10 indicates that it definitely WILL.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
6:01	How likely are you to apply to university?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6:02	How likely are you to apply to the University of Bristol?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Please cross the answer that best represents your response to the following statements.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7:01	Now that I have attended the talk, I am more likely to apply to university.					
7:02	Now that I have attended the talk, I am more likely to apply to the University of Bristol.					
7:03	Overall, I feel that I have enough information to make an informed choice about which university I apply to.					

7. The following statements concern the quality of the talk. Please cross the answer that best represents your response to the following statements.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
8:01	The talk has taught me more about university					
8:02	I found the Q&A session useful					
8:03	The talk was delivered well					
8:04	I felt that I was able to relate to the speaker					
8:05	I feel more aware of the benefits and costs of university than I did before the talk					
8:07	The information provided in this talk is likely to affect my decision about which university I go to					
8:08	Overall, I found this talk useful					

If you feel that the talk could have been improved or if you have any further comments, please comment below:

**We are Researchers:**

This survey, and the talk it accompanies, is part of the University of Bristol's "Bristol Bridges" mentoring scheme, run and organised by the CMPO. In addition to your information and enjoyment we hope to use the talk and survey to understand student attitudes to the talks, and how they might be improved in future. By filling in the survey and handing it back, you consent to having your answers analysed for this purpose. Your anonymity will be protected, and all data from survey responses will be held securely.



**Questionnaire B**

1. Please cross the answer that best represents your response to the following questions, where 1 indicates that you will definitely NOT and 10 indicates that it definitely WILL.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1:01	How likely are you to apply to university?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1:02	How likely are you to apply to the University of Bristol?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please place a cross against all options that apply

**2. Gender**

Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>
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**3. A-Level subjects currently taken and predicted grades, if known**

\*disclaimer: answers are confidential and anonymous – they cannot affect your university application

Art and Design	Geography	
Biology	History	
Business Studies	ICT	
Chemistry	Mathematics	
Citizenship	Media Studies	
Design Technology	Music	
Drama	Photography	
Economics	Physical Education	
Electronics	Physics	
English Language	Psychology	
English Literature	Politics	
French	Religious Education	
Further Mathematics	Sociology	
Others (please specify)		

4. Did any of the following people among your family and friends go to university?

	Yes	No	Don't know
Mother			
Father			
Brother or sister			
Aunt, uncle or cousin			
At least one friend from home/school			

5. In the following section, you will be asked to think about reasons that may make you consider going to university. Please cross the answer which best represents your response.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5:01	I want to study a subject that really interests me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5:02	My family wants me to go to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5:03	I want to train for a specific type of job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5:04	All my friends are going to university	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5:05	I want to improve my job prospects	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5:06	I enjoy learning and studying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5:07	I don't want to get a job straight away	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5:08	I want to gain greater independence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5:09	I want to take advantage of the social experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5:10	I want to take advantage of the great range of opportunities that university offers (societies, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Assuming that you are likely to apply to university, which universities are you considering applying for?

\*disclaimer: answers are confidential and anonymous – they cannot affect your university application

7. Please cross the answer that best represents your response to the following statements.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
7.01	Now that I have attended the talk, I am more likely to apply to university.					
7.02	Now that I have attended the talk, I am more likely to apply to the University of Bristol.					
7.03	Overall, I feel that I have enough information to make an informed choice about which university I apply to.					

8. The following statements concern the quality of the talk. Please cross the answer that best represents your response to the following statements.

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
8.01	The talk has taught me more about university					
8.02	I found the Q&A session useful					
8.03	The talk was delivered well					
8.04	I felt that I was able to relate to the speaker					
8.05	I feel more aware of the benefits and costs of university than I did before the talk					
8.07	The information provided in this talk is likely to affect my decision about which university I go to					
8.08	Overall, I found this talk useful					

If you feel that the talk could have been improved or if you have any further comments, please comment below:

We are Researchers:

This survey, and the talk it accompanies, is part of the University of Bristol's "Bristol Bridges" mentoring scheme, run and organised by the CMPO. In addition to your information and enjoyment we hope to use the talk and survey to understand student attitudes to the talks, and how they might be improved in future. By filling in the survey and handing it back, you consent to having your answers analysed for this purpose. Your anonymity will be protected, and all data from survey responses will be held securely.



## Appendix B: Talking Points

- Academics
  - Freedom to study what you really care about, to pick your own schedule and courses, only 2-3 hours of lectures and flexible hours, need to manage your own schedule/workload
  - Opportunities opens the doors to cooler and higher paying jobs, ability to work with university staff members on projects if you want
  - Support from personal tutors and lecturers if struggling, career-oriented support from tutors and student advice services
- Social Life
  - Independence - Living away from home for the first time, schedule, social
  - Culturally Enriching - Different people, new people, interesting people and different societies can try for free to discover new interests and hobbies. Can start new societies
- Financial
  - Explain the ease and flexibility of the loan system
  - How money should not be a reason to stop them from going to university how it works



## Appendix C: Qualitative Feedback

Students were asked to provide feedback on the talk and suggest ways in which it could be improved. Their thoughts have been summarised here:

**Students wanted more information on study times (i.e. the average timetable for a university student and how one spends one's free time) and the concept of lectures (i.e. how long do they last? How many hours should students study after?).**

Notes: This was included in the script used in the trial - perhaps more anecdotes could be used. A “day in the life of...” type presentation might be useful here.

**Students wanted more information on costs (i.e. living costs, tuition costs).**

Two hand-outs could be useful here - one breaking down the average monthly cost of living (depending on city and lifestyle) and another giving clear funding options for coverage of tuition fees and living costs.

**Students wanted more information on the type of support that is available at university.**

This is included in the script - perhaps a more informed breakdown of the salient support services would be useful.

**There should be more information about the accessibility of universities - i.e. success rates and likelihood of getting into universities upon applying.**

Speakers could include a note about success rates when applying for universities in general if this statistic is more favourable than expected. However, success rates of students applying to Bristol may be a deterrent.

**Some students wanted more information about the courses provided at the University of Bristol**

There are too many to mention here. In the broader study, mentors could refer to the website.

Positive feedback was received about mentors' delivery and engagement. It was also suggested that hand-outs and power-point presentations could be used.

## **Appendix D: Mentor Recruitment**

### **Email 1- first email to WP Manager**

Dear X

Further to the very brief discussion of a widening participation project that I mentioned to you earlier last week, I am in need of some volunteers.

The widening participation pilot project is run by a number of researchers (and supported by UoB) where a number of university students go into a selected state school in Bristol to talk to A-level student about their university experience so that they can make a more informed choice about their post-schooling options (many of them will be writing their personal statements). The talk will be no more than 20 minutes to a group of approximately 10 students. The pilot is meant to represent a relatively small intervention and the objective is to see whether these talks result in any difference in attitudes to university.

This will be a one-off event that takes place from 10am on 1st July (I believe that transport is arranged, though will confirm this).

If you know of any students who might be interested in giving a talk or anybody that you think I should talk to, please let me know.

Thank you in advance for your help.

Best wishes,

Farooq

### **Email 2- second email to WP Manager; confirmation of details**

Hi X,

Volunteers will be picked up at 9:00 on Monday 1st July from Priory Road by taxi (paid for) and should be dropped back by 11:15.

We will need them to talk to Year 12 students for a total of 20 minutes to include a discussion of their own university experience (academics, society, social life etc), including a 10 minute QA. Students do not need to prepare a presentation and we will provide further details of the talk beforehand.

Many thanks,

Farooq

**Email 3- third email to WP Manager; update on compensation**

Hi X,

I know that you have probably already sent out that earlier email but I have now been told that we can compensate students at a rate of £9/hour for three hours (9-12pm).

Apologies for this.

Best,

Farooq

**Message 1- Facebook message to students; post confirmation of compensation**

Hi X,

I have a small proposition for you and it involves payment!

I am currently participating in a widening participation pilot project where a number of university students go into a selected state school in Bristol to talk to school leavers about their university experience so that they can make a more informed choice (many of them will be writing their personal statements); with the talk being to a group of approximately 10 students for no more than 20 minutes. This will be a one-off event that takes place from 9:00-12:00pm on Monday 1st July (we have arranged transport so you do not have to worry about this). For participating in the project you will be paid at a rate of £9/hour for three hours (9-12pm).

Let me know if this interests you.

Thanks,

Farooq

**Email 4- follow up email to students who responded to message 1 (with “Mentor Talking Points” attached)** Dear X,

I am glad to hear that you are keen to get involved!

I have attached a brief guide for the kind of thing that you should look to cover during the talk. The key point is to draw from your own experience with the mentioned topics.

You will notice in the attachment that your talk could take one of two forms:

- 1) 15 minute talk/5 minute QA
- 2) 10 minute talk/10 minute QA

We have done this to test which intervention is more effective (students will

be asked to fill in surveys).

I will get in touch with you soon to confirm which format your talk will cover.

We might also arrange a very brief practice session later this week, again something that I will confirm very soon.

If you have any more questions, feel free to email me.

Thanks once again.

Best wishes,

Farooq