

## The pros and cons of using a Student Mentoring Service

Studying at college or University can be very difficult, and it is certainly a shock to the system to move up to these new educational institutions. The difference in study from GCSE to AS or A' Level is large, as is the jump up from A' Level study to degree level study. And similarly, post-graduate students can find it tricky to move on from completing a degree to completing a Masters or a PhD.

Some colleges and Universities offer a mentoring service, to help students understand their course information and texts, and to improve the way that students respond to essay questions or coursework requirements. There are also independent organisations or individuals who can offer a similar mentoring or support service, but who sit external to a particular college or university.

There are lots of benefits to using a student mentoring service if you're about to start studying at an A' Level, degree or post-graduate level. There are however also some drawbacks. Let's start with the drawbacks first!

### The downsides...

- Letting someone else read your essays or coursework when they are in a very draft stage can be a difficult thing to do. You're lining yourself up for criticism and that can be hard to face time and time again, especially if you already feel vulnerable academically.
- If you opt for a service that isn't provided by the college or university, it may well be costly...potentially fine if the parents are paying, not so fine if you are!
- Using a mentor doesn't guarantee successful grades at the end of the school term or year.
- Using a mentor requires you to show some real commitment to your study. You will have set days and time for when you need to meet with your mentor and produce some work for them to review or be ready to discuss with them the subjects that you are currently studying. This means that sticking to deadlines is very important.

### The benefits...

Having said all of that, there are some real benefits to accessing a student mentoring service. These include;

- A unique opportunity to receive one-on-one guidance from a professional; someone who is either an expert in this field that you are studying, is a teacher or an academic advisor.
- Being forced to give some structure to your studying and essay production. It's actually a very good thing to be made to produce work against an internal deadline, as this stops you leaving essays until the very last minute.

- Accessing ongoing mentoring support can help keep alive your enthusiasm for your course. It can also provide support when you hit a low (and we all do...), or if you receive a bad grade, or can't understand something that's been explained in class.
- Receiving ongoing essay editorial advice can make you a better essay writer, that's absolutely true.

So, if you are studying or are about to start studying a new course, think about using a mentor to help you achieve the very best grades possible.