UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL
INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

Presentation on:

Annual Academic Advisor report on the impact of the Academic Monitoring and Support (AMS) program: “Perception of an Academic Mentor”

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Overview

Introduction

- The increasing disconnect between secondary education and higher education calls for innovative student support models to enhance student success.
- Institutions and academic departments dedicate significant resources to aid undergraduate students both in and out of the classroom
- Student support encompasses academic monitoring and support programs that involve a variety of student-centred support systems and learning environments to minimize dropout rates

Source: (Wang, 2013; Paideya & Dhunpath, 2018; TLO, 2013)

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Introduction

- The University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) offers the Academic Monitoring and Support (AMS) system to help bridge the gap.
- The role of academic mentors is pivotal in shaping the educational experiences of students in higher education
- The importance of academic mentoring for university students can be understood through several key aspects: academic performance, personal development, social integration, and overall retention and success .

Source: (Wang et al., 2018; Monnapula-Mapesela, 2015; Abbot, Graf, & Chatfield, 2018; Andrews & Clark, 2011

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AMS Program

Academic Monitoring and Support Benefits

- Academic monitoring and support (AMS) is a tool used to facilitate students' access to support programs and to ensure that they all have an equal chance to succeed academically.
- The AMS program could be used as a vehicle to help students stay and finish their studies in ways that lead to powerful and meaningful learning
- Mentors provide guidance and support and help students navigate the complexities of academic life, including understanding course material, preparing for exams, and developing effective study habits
- Mentoring programs have shown positive effects including academic performance, reduced drop-out rates and better social integration

Source: (Mudaly & Mtshali, 2018; Ravanipour & Bahreini 2015; Robinson & Niemer 2010; Leidenfrost et al., 2011; Abbot, Graf, & Chatfield, 2018; Andrews & Clark, 2011)

Statement of the Problem

Problem Statement

The academic mentorship program at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has revealed significant challenges faced by both mentors and mentees, which impede the effectiveness of the mentoring process and the academic success of undergraduate students.

These challenges highlight the need for improved support mechanisms, training, and resources to enhance the mentoring experience and academic outcomes. Addressing these issues is crucial for developing a robust and effective academic mentorship program that can better meet the needs of both mentors and mentees.

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Aim & Objectives

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"The aim of this report is to identify and address the key challenges faced by both mentors and mentees in academic mentorship within the Academic Monitoring and Support program at UKZN ."

To identify challenges faced by both mentors and mentees

To identify methods and strategies employed by the academic mentors to address these difficulties

To develop targeted strategies and support mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of the academic mentoring process for the AMS program

Methodology

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Methodology

The Design

The study employed a longitudinal qualitative design. Data were collected using open-ended questionnaires administered to the same group of participants over a period of three months.

The population

There are 46 academic mentors in the School of Health Science (SHS) who participated in the survey.

These mentors are final year students appointed from various degrees within SHS, including Audiology, Dental therapy, Occupational therapy, Optometry, Oral hygiene, Pharmacy and Physiotherapy, Speech and Language Therapy, and Sports sciences

Data Collection Methods & Tools

Data collection

There was a total of 112 responses from the academic mentors. The survey included open-ended questions designed to capture detailed responses about the:

- The difficulties mentees faced “expressed to” or “observed by” the mentor
- The academic mentor's challenges experienced or observed in self-introspection
- The methods and strategies employed by the academic mentors to address these difficulties

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Data Analysis

The data contained in the questionnaires were transferred to Excel (n =113). The open-ended sections of the questionnaire were analysed using thematic analysis.

The quantitative items are expressed in percentages separately from the qualitative items.

The following steps were followed for the qualitative analysis:

1. Data preparation
2. Coding
3. Thematic Analysis
4. Longitudinal Analysis
5. Synthesis and intepretation

Source: (Lapadat, 2010; Braun, V., & Clarke, V, 2006).

Results

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Results

Mentee Challenges

Table 1: The difficulties mentees faced "expressed to" or "observed by" the mentor

Row Labels	***Count of codes***	***Count of codes2***
Application of concepts	13	12%
Clinical adjustment report writing	5	4%
Requesting for mentors in other modules	2	2%
Understanding and Grasping Concepts	26	23%
Time Management and Workload	13	12%
Exam and Assignment Preparation	36	32%
Other	6	5%
No Challenges	12	11%

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Student Voices

Mentees asked for practice exercises and past papers. They needed help with how to answer the questions holistically and how to structure the answers.

Many students struggled with understanding complex pharmaceutics concepts such as drug formulation and release mechanisms. There was difficulty in connecting theoretical knowledge to practical applications, especially in lab work. Balancing study time with other commitments was a common issue.

Most of my mentees struggle with balancing their academic workload, PHRM 245 often delve deeper into pharmaceutics. They find certain topics challenging and lack foundational knowledge needed to grasp them. So we as mentors had to start from the foundation in order for them to understand certain concepts.

They wanted practice questions for the sections that they covered. They wanted some clarity for certain sections.

Results

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Strategies for Mentee Challenges

Table 2: The methods and strategies employed by the academic mentors to address their difficulties

Row Labels	*Number*	*Percent*
Active Feedback	4	4%
Advice on Academic Skills	22	19%
Clarification and Simplification	30	27%
Group Sessions and Workshops	2	2%
Increased Duration of the Sessions	5	4%
One-on-One Guidance	4	4%
Refer to Additional Resource	17	15%
Used Technological Learning Platforms	9	8%
Other	9	8%
None	11	10%

Results

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Mentor Challenges

Table 1: The academic mentors' challenges experienced or observed in self-introspection

	Number	***Percent***
Attendance	19	17%
Boundaries	8	7%
Difficulty with content	6	5%
Participation	8	7%
Time Management	17	15%
Other	13	12%
No Challenges	41	37%

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Student Voices

"Attendance from mentees is poor. They do not respond to requests to have a meeting. Only 1 or 2 students participate. "

Mentees are not asking questions as new concepts are introduced , but rather towards test dates this puts alot of pressure on us as mentors because we are flooded with queries all at once on the weekend before tests at irregular hours by panicky mentees

Explaining complex pharmaceutics concepts to students who are still building their foundational knowledge was be challenging. Some students struggle with motivation or find the module challenging.

Difficulties I experienced as an academic mentor in this period is time management, as in my year of study there is a clinic for almost every day of the week and also a huge amount of admin that I am required every week, thus making it hard for me to set time for queries and assisting my mentees, and also individually assisting those who require individual assistance.

Results

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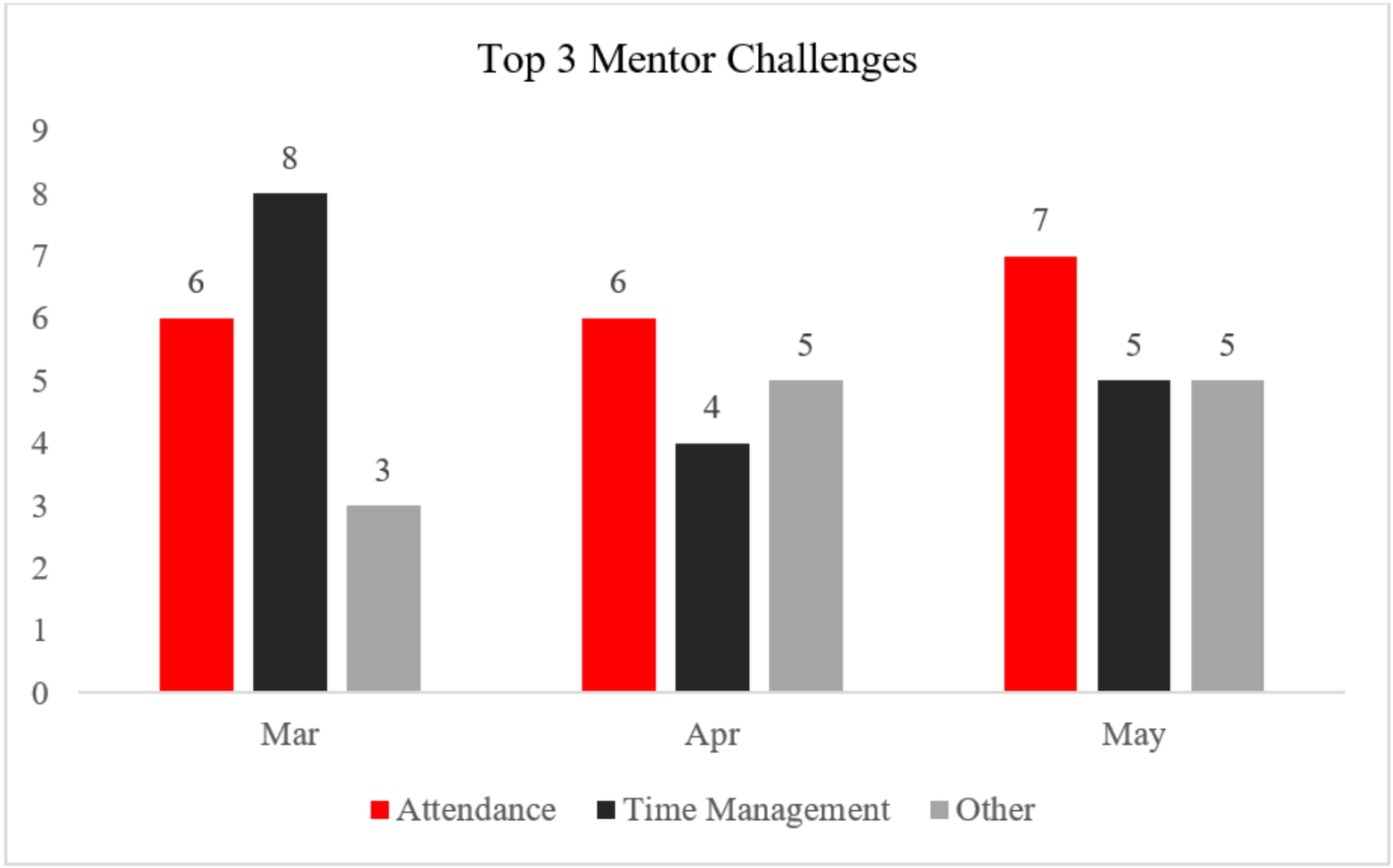

Figure 1: Total of the Top 3 Challenges Each Month

Results

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Strategies for Mentor Challenges

Table 2: The methods and strategies employed by the academic mentors to address their difficulties

	Number	***Percentage***
Adjusted Strategy to Meet the Needs of the Mentees	6	5%
Adopted A Time Management Strategy	3	3%
Communication	12	11%
Early Preparation	5	4%
Explaining Importance of the Academic Mentorship	8	7%
Involved the Academic Advisor	11	10%
One-on-One Sessions	3	3%
Set Boundaries	10	9%
No Challenges	36	32%
Other	14	13%
Not Addressed	4	4%

Enhancing Academic Monitoring and Support:

Insights from Mentor and Mentee Challenges

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Mentee Challenges and Support Strategies

Academic Advisors can:

- Implement supplementary tutoring sessions, study groups, and access to online educational resources to aid understanding.
- Offer workshops on exam techniques, assignment planning, and effective study habits.
- Create and distribute time management tools, such as planners and scheduling apps, and offer workshops on setting priorities and managing academic workload.
- Advisors can also coordinate with discipline to increase the availability of lab sessions, internships, and practical workshops can help students develop necessary skills.
- ·Improve access to academic resources by educating mentees on how to access library collections, providing access to online databases, and ensuring adequate laboratory and technical resources.

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Mentor Challenges and Support Strategies

Academic Advisors can:

- Implement more flexible scheduling options and promote the importance of regular participation.
- Provide training sessions for mentors on establishing and maintaining boundaries, ensuring mentors understand the limits of their roles and responsibilities.
- Facilitate access to additional training and resources for mentors to improve their content knowledge.
- Develop engagement strategies, such as interactive workshops, peer study groups, and motivational sessions, to encourage active participation from mentees.
- Providing mentors with time management tools and training, as well as recognizing their contributions through academic credit or incentives, can help mitigate these challenges.
- Regular feedback sessions and open communication channels between mentors and academic advisors can help identify and address these challenges promptly

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Q&A Session

Thank you for listening!

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