

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP Language Mentoring Programme at The Grey Coat Hospital

Background

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) is committed to playing a meaningful role in the communities where it operates in the UK, by developing sustainable relationships that meet the needs of its local communities and the firm.

PwC's Community Affairs programme encompasses a broad range of corporate strategic relationships and local initiatives which provide opportunities for staff involvement and skills development. The firm's well-established programme is also reflected in being placed fourth in the "Giving Something Back" category of the Sunday Times Best Big Companies survey 2009.

The firm has a close partnership with The Grey Coat Hospital (GCH) in Westminster. Since 2001, PwC has been running a student mentoring programme for Year 9 students. In 2006, PwC and GCH established a language mentoring programme where 'A' level students learning French and German (and in 2007, Spanish) receive one to one mentoring support from a PwC volunteer. The scheme is one of several ways in which PwC supports GCH through its community investment programme.

GCH is a Specialist Language College and Training School and believes that a proficiency in foreign languages will open doors for students of every discipline.

Aims and Objectives

The aims of the language mentoring programme are two-fold:

- to provide the student with mentoring support
- to help the student develop their skills and confidence in speaking a foreign language

Specifically, the language support aims to:

- improve the student's confidence and ability in speaking the language
- practice topics that the students would discuss in their oral exam
- give students access to cultural knowledge of a particular country
- expose the students to business language

Criteria for mentors

Language mentors should be native or fluent speakers of either French, German or Spanish.

Mentors should also be:

- approachable
- a good listener
- non-judgmental
- open to challenges



- reliable and committed

Training is given to all mentors before the programme begins and support is given by PwC throughout the academic year. Mentors have the opportunity to discuss best practice, share ideas and given feedback at various times during the year.

One of the language teachers at GCH has specific responsibility for liaising with PwC and ensures that the programme runs smoothly.

Ages of students

Year 13 students

Type of mentoring

Mentoring is face-to-face. Mentors and mentees communicate using E-mentor Pro, a safe and secure web based system which allows the pairs to communicate and set up meetings.

Mentor time commitment

The mentors are asked to volunteer approximately 40-60 minutes every week or every fortnight (depending on the requirements of the mentee) during term time, for one academic year. Mentoring takes place during working hours and forms part of PwC's Community Affairs programme.

Impact

The language mentoring programme is now in its third year and continues to go from strength to strength. The first programme began with four mentees and mentees (French and German) and now grown to 13 mentors and mentees (French, German and Spanish). The teaching staff at GCH have commented on how the mentoring programme is making a marked and significant difference to the confidence and speaking abilities of those students who have a mentor.

The students are invited to visit PwC at the end of the academic year for a celebration event to mark the end of the programme and mentors and mentees all receive certificates of participation.

PwC mentors gain invaluable experience as a result of being a mentor and develop new skills, both in a professional and personal sense. Volunteers also develop an understanding of the needs and challenges facing local communities.

Feedback from a language mentor

"I am enjoying meeting my mentee who is a very motivated student and is willing to work hard in order to improve her French. We sometimes meet every week. My student was very open to talk (in French) about her school life and exams and the stress she was going through when preparing some universities entry exam. I tried to coach her and provide her with some advice how to prepare herself for her French exams."

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