Birkbeck alumni are sharing their knowledge and expertise in a range of innovative mentoring programmes.

Volunteering on working with current students, or they only interact with applicants at open days,” said Luisa Barbaro, Birkbeck’s Alumni Engagement Manager. “This one-to-one bespoke approach, particularly with prospective students, is incredibly popular. Birkbeck alumni are also enthusiastic volunteers for the ‘Business at Birkbeck’ mentoring programme, a partnership between the College, the East London Business Alliance and a number of London companies. It pairs final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students in the School of Business, Economics and Informatics and the School of Law with alumni from those industries and with Birkbeck’s corporate volunteers at Credit Suisse and PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The programme recognises that Birkbeck students are typically older and many have aspirations to work in the corporate world. While some students simply want guidance about CVs and interview skills, others are keen to take advantage of the opportunity provided by Birkbeck to network and to learn from working professionals already employed in these environments in a capital city as vibrant and international as London. Some 15% of the 50,000 alumni on Birkbeck’s database have offered some sort of assistance to the College, a figure far higher than the average for the university sector. “This means we have a fantastic pool of graduates to call on. Birkbeck alumni are so passionate about their experience, they want to give something back,” Luisa Barbaro added. Both alumni mentors and mentees are given training before their sessions start, to help them make the most of the programme. Trainer Stephanie Peckham explained: “We encourage the mentees to be really clear about what they want to get out of it, and explain that the mentor is not there to give the mentee a job.”

“When training the mentors, we talk about the difference between mentoring and coaching, and we model conversations to help them deal with certain situations. We make the point that they are there to listen and ask questions – not just talk about how great their university experience was! Both sides find the training really useful – and we get great feedback at the end of the programmes as well.”

Birkbeck alumni Rick Payne is a first-time mentor with the Business at Birkbeck scheme. A qualified chartered accountant now working in management research at the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, he completed an MSc in Organizational Behaviour at Birkbeck in 2008.

He said: “I’d been to a few alumni events, and when I heard about the mentoring scheme I thought this would be a good way to give something back. I believe lifelong learning is fundamentally important, and that Birkbeck is one of the few places, in my view, that really delivers on this.”

“I am also a qualified coach, although I don’t practise any more, so this is an ideal opportunity to keep those skills fresh. My mentor has already sent me her objectives, so I’m looking forward to getting started. She is also a coach, so our similar backgrounds may make for some interesting dynamics!”

“Doing my MSc at Birkbeck gave me the research bug, and changed my way my career can develop in London. I want, challenging their mindsets and making the most of new opportunities.”

His mentor this year is Joed Armando, who recently moved to London from her native Argentina and is studying for a Master’s in Learning Technologies. She said: “I have worked in learning technologies in my university role in Argentina, but I am new to the industry here and looking to deepen my knowledge and gain new skills. I hope the mentoring will clarify what I want and give me time to think about the way my career can develop in London.”

Talking to a person experienced in my field here in London will be a fantastic opportunity.”

‘Get Talking’ and ‘Business at Birkbeck’ are two examples of how alumni can get involved and volunteer at Birkbeck. To find out more, or to offer your assistance, visit: www.bbk.ac.uk/alumni/help

Passing on the Birkbeck baton

Birkbeck alumni understand just how challenging it can be to combine evening study with a demanding working day or busy family life. It’s because of this that so many of them become involved in Birkbeck’s innovative, and rapidly growing, mentoring programmes offered to applicants and current students at the College.

One such initiative, now in its third year, is the ‘Get Talking’ programme. Alumni are paired with prospective students – people who want to talk to others who have studied at Birkbeck, ideally on the same course or in the same academic department. The pairs meet for an informal coffee and chat over the summer months, before the applicant commits to enrolling on a course. The programme has had a success rate of 75% enrolments for the last two years. “Many universities focus their alumni approach, particularly with prospective students, is incredibly popular. This one-to-one bespoke

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