

STUDYING { WITH PEERS }

Peer Tutoring
and the Relational
University

Research, Practice
and Institutional Change
in the Peer-EDU Project

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PREFACE:

THE PEER-EDU JOURNEY

The Peer-EDU project began with a relatively simple question: how can universities create conditions in which students are able not only to receive support, but also to become responsible and well-prepared partners in the learning of others?

This question emerged from conversations among colleagues from the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta during a meeting at Kiel University within the SEA-EU community. Although our universities differ in their academic traditions, organisational structures and systems of student support, we recognised a shared challenge: how to make students' transition into university life more supportive, inclusive and educationally meaningful. Peer tutoring became one possible response to that challenge.

From the outset, Peer-EDU was not intended to transfer a ready-made model from one university to another. Instead, we chose to learn together. The project combined a review of international research, diagnostic studies among students and academic staff at the three partner universities, the joint development of educational materials, international training for future peer tutors, and the preparation of academic tutors who could support them in practice. This work allowed us to examine peer tutoring not only as a form of student support, but also as a question of student agency, educational responsibility, relationships and institutional conditions.

This book is the result of that shared work. It brings together the knowledge and experience accumulated during the project and reflects on what Peer-EDU enabled us to understand about studying with others, the possibilities and limits of student responsibility, and the conditions universities need to create if peer tutoring is to remain a meaningful educational relationship.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all members of the Peer-EDU project team from the University of Gdańsk, the University of Malta and the University of Split. My particular thanks go to **Jarosław Jendza, Dorota Jendza, Michelle Attard Tonna, Charmaine Bonello, Antonela Marić, Nikica Mihaljević, Grzegorz Grzegorzczuk, Adriana Ruta-Wojciechowska, Dorota Godlewska-Werner, Wojciech Glac, Ilona Kamińska and Anna Osińska**. Their different disciplinary perspectives, institutional experiences and educational traditions were an important strength of the project.

I would also like to thank the external experts who contributed their experience and critical perspectives to the development of Peer-EDU: **Isabel Murillo Wilstermann from Kiel University and Rick Huizinga from the University of Groningen**. Their contributions during international project meetings helped us confront our initial assumptions with experience developed in other European higher-education contexts.

Special thanks are due to **Professor Maksymilian Chutorański** for his thoughtful and perceptive review of the manuscript. His comments helped sharpen several arguments and strengthen the final form of the book.

Above all, I would like to thank the students who took part in Peer-EDU. Forty-six students from our three universities participated in the international training programme in Gdańsk. Their openness, readiness to reflect and willingness to question the solutions proposed by the project team shaped Peer-EDU in ways that could not have been anticipated at the outset. Special thanks are also due to the fifty-one academic teachers from our three partner universities who took part in locally delivered eight-hour mentor workshops in February and March 2026.

Finally, I would like to thank the **Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA)** for supporting Peer-EDU through the Strategic Partnerships Programme. The project was coordinated by the University of Gdańsk in partnership with the University of Split and the University of Malta and was implemented between September 2024 and August 2026.

Peer-EDU has not provided a final answer to the question with which it began. Nor should it. Instead, it has shown that responsible peer tutoring requires preparation, trust, clear boundaries, support and institutional responsibility.

PREFACE

The Peer-EDU Journey

I hope that this book will encourage other universities not simply to reproduce the solutions developed within Peer-EDU, but to ask similar questions in their own contexts: what kind of support do our students need, what responsibilities can they meaningfully assume, and what must the university itself continue to provide so that studying with peers becomes a genuine educational opportunity?

Ewa Szymczak

Project Leader, Peer-EDU
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INTRODUCTION

STUDYING WITH PEERS AND RETHINKING THE UNIVERSITY

1. The Question at the Heart of This Book

“Do you remember the feeling of excitement and uncertainty when you were starting university?” asks Aleksandra Szypryt, a student participant in Peer-EDU, at the beginning of an essay written after the project’s international training (Szypryt 2026). The question is disarmingly simple. It does not begin with a model, an indicator or an institutional strategy. It returns the reader to a moment in which a familiar educational world has been left behind, while the new one has not yet become intelligible. A student has been admitted, enrolled and given access to courses, but may still be unsure how to inhabit the university: what independence means in practice, which questions can be asked, how academic judgement works, whom to approach when difficulty arises and whether needing help places one’s membership in doubt.

This book began from that *uncertainty*. Representatives of the University of Gdańsk, the University of Malta and the University of Split were concerned about students’ transition into higher education, academic disengagement, insufficient integration and the limited visibility of approachable forms of support. Peer tutoring appeared as one possible response. Students already explain ideas to one another, interpret assignments, compare ways of approaching a text and help newcomers navigate institutional life. The project asked whether some of these relations could be prepared, supported and made more widely available without destroying the informality and mutuality that give them value.

The inquiry soon became larger than the design of a support programme. To ask what a peer tutor may responsibly do is also to ask who may speak with educational authority. Questions of tutor selection concern which

forms of knowledge, confidence and experience a university recognises. Decisions about matching shape whether students meet around a shared educational purpose or are classified through presumed deficits. Supervision, in turn, brings into view the limits of student responsibility and the continuing obligations of academic teachers and institutions. A relatively modest practice therefore opens fundamental questions about knowledge, relation, authority, equality and responsibility.

The central question of the book can be stated as follows: what becomes possible, and what responsibilities become visible, when students are invited to support one another's study within the university? This formulation is deliberate. The book does not ask only whether peer tutoring "works". Evidence concerning effects is important, but the question of effectiveness is incomplete until the purpose, form and context of the practice have been specified. A programme may increase participation while narrowing study to assessment performance. It may receive high satisfaction ratings while leaving tutors uncertain about boundaries. It may widen access to explanation while transferring work from academic staff to unpaid students. Outcomes cannot be interpreted independently of the educational arrangement that produces them.

The phrase studying with peers marks the book's orientation. It resists the tendency, criticised by Biesta, to translate *education* into a language of *learning* in which questions of content, purpose, teaching and responsibility disappear (Biesta 2010; 2012). Studying is always study of *some-thing*: a text, concept, practice, problem, discipline or world that is not reducible to the preferences of either participant. The tutor and tutee are related to one another, but their relation becomes educational because it is also directed towards a matter that demands attention. Peer tutoring is therefore not valued merely because two students interact. Its educational meaning depends upon what their interaction makes possible in relation to knowledge.

This orientation also prevents the book from presenting peer tutoring as an alternative to teaching. Academic teachers retain responsibility for curriculum, explanation, assessment and the intellectual integrity of programmes. A peer tutor is not a junior lecturer, counsellor, examiner or administrative adviser. The tutor occupies a bounded and temporary role: helping another student engage with academic study while recognising the

limits of their competence and authority. A relational university recognises students' capacity to contribute to the educational environment while remaining institutionally present, responsible and answerable.

The title *Studying with Peers* consequently names both a practice and a perspective. Peer tutoring is the concrete subject of the project, but it is also a lens through which the university may be reconsidered. Small encounters can disclose large institutional assumptions.

The moment in which one student says, "I do not understand," and another responds, may reveal whether uncertainty is treated as an ordinary condition of study or as evidence of deficiency; whether knowledge is guarded as a personal asset or made available for common attention; and whether responsibility is shared in ways that strengthen the university or dispersed until no one remains accountable.

2. The Contemporary University and the Need for Peer Support

The practical need for peer support is often explained through the language of massification, student diversity, retention and wellbeing. These concerns are real, but they require careful handling. Contemporary universities receive students with varied educational biographies, linguistic resources, work and caring commitments, financial circumstances, disabilities, expectations and degrees of familiarity with academic life. Admission may be formally equal while access to the tacit codes of study remains uneven. Students must learn how arguments are constructed within a discipline, what counts as evidence, how independent work is judged, how feedback should be interpreted and when assistance may legitimately be sought. Much of this academic grammar is communicated indirectly.

The first year is particularly revealing because institutional membership precedes educational familiarity. Students may be told to become autonomous before the conditions for autonomy have been created. They can be surrounded by information while lacking a person with whom that information can be interpreted. Disengagement may become visible only when

attendance falls, work is not submitted or a student withdraws, yet its history can begin much earlier: in repeated confusion, the fear of asking what appears to be a basic question, an inability to recognise oneself in the academic environment or the gradual conviction that one's presence does not matter. Engagement is therefore not a possession located entirely within the student. It emerges at the interface between personal histories and institutional conditions (Kahu 2013; Kahu and Nelson 2018).

Szypryt's essay offers a situated account of how transition may be experienced by a student. It should not be read as evidence that Peer-EDU improved wellbeing. She connects uncertainty with help-seeking, social adjustment and the availability of safe, credible support (Szypryt 2026). Her formulation points towards a problem that universities can easily individualise. When students hesitate to ask for help, the response may be to train them to become more resilient or proactive. Such capacities can matter, but the institutional question remains: what kinds of relationship make asking possible without humiliation, exposure or the fear of being judged as incapable?

Research on belonging and engagement similarly shows that academic and relational participation cannot be separated neatly (Thomas 2012; Kahu and Nelson 2018). A student does not first acquire knowledge and then, in a separate process, become a member of the university. Membership is formed through encounters with subjects, teachers, peers, feedback, institutional routines and possibilities for contribution. Peer relations are not an optional social supplement to "real" academic work. They are among the conditions through which academic practices become visible, interpretable and inhabitable.

Yet the language of support is not innocent. It can construct students as deficient recipients while leaving teaching and institutional arrangements beyond examination. It can convert complex educational, financial and social difficulties into a problem of individual adjustment. In a university increasingly governed through indicators, support may also be valued primarily for its anticipated contribution to progression, retention or throughput. Zepke's analysis of student engagement in neoliberal times warns that practices associated with participation and agency can be captured by managerial imperatives and detached from wider questions of education

and democracy (Zepke 2017). Peer tutoring can become another technology for keeping students in the system at low cost.

These tendencies warrant criticism, but critique alone does not adequately describe contemporary universities. Alongside managerial and competitive pressures, universities contain multiple and sometimes conflicting cultures of work, development, encounter and public responsibility (Jendza 2020a). The same institution can also host different modes of meeting: encounters governed by domination or instrumental exchange, but also encounters oriented towards development and appreciative mutual understanding (Jendza 2020b). Peer tutoring does not possess one mode in advance. It can become a transactional repair service, a stage for tutor superiority or a meeting in which participants attend to a shared matter while recognising one another's capacity. The Peer-EDU materials document fragmented structures, concerns about time and recognition, uneven technological provision and the risk of institutional withdrawal. They also document serious pedagogical work, willingness among students and academic staff to assume responsibility, curiosity about different university traditions and sustained attempts to prepare more thoughtful forms of support.

A post-critical orientation helps hold these realities together. It does not suspend criticism of exploitation, hierarchy or exclusion. Rather, it asks what educational practices and common matters deserve to be affirmed, renewed and protected instead of allowing critique to end in disbelief (Hodgson, Vlieghe and Zamojski 2017; 2018). The point is neither to recover an imagined harmonious university nor to celebrate every relational initiative. It is to notice existing possibilities without detaching them from the conditions that make them defensible. Peer support is one such possibility: already present in ordinary academic life, unevenly distributed, capable of generosity and distortion, and worthy of more careful educational attention.

The idea of the university developed in this book is therefore relational without being sentimental. Rutkowiak's account of university friendship does not demand private intimacy as an institutional norm; it names what is lost when academic relations are reduced to contract, competition and performance (Rutkowiak 2010). Barnett's ecological university similarly directs attention to interdependence and institutional responsibility across human, knowledge and social ecologies (Barnett 2018). Masschelein and Simons

understand the university as a pedagogical form in which *matters* can be made public and available for *common study* (Masschelein and Simons 2018). Zamojski similarly treats publicness as something enacted when educational practices make a shared matter available to heterogeneous participants, rather than as a quality guaranteed by public ownership alone (Zamojski 2015). These perspectives matter here because peer tutoring is not inserted into an empty space. It enters a university already organised through particular relations to knowledge, time, authority and others.

The need for peer support should consequently be stated in modest but demanding terms. Universities cannot guarantee that every student will feel at home, eliminate uncertainty or resolve the causes of withdrawal through one programme. They can, however, refuse to treat transition as a solitary test. They can create additional routes through which students encounter knowledge, ask for assistance, contribute to one another's study and reach professional support when a difficulty exceeds the peer role. The educational test is not whether peer tutoring makes the university appear caring. It is whether it changes the conditions under which participation, questioning and responsibility become possible.

3. Why Peer Tutoring?

Peer tutoring belongs to a broad and heterogeneous field. The literature includes reciprocal and fixed-role arrangements, same-level and cross-level tutoring, subject-specific and transition-oriented models, one-to-one and group formats, and face-to-face, online and hybrid provision (Topping 1996; 2005; Jendza et al. 2026). This diversity is not a minor terminological complication. It means that "peer tutoring" does not name a single intervention with one stable mechanism or predictable result. What tutors do, who becomes a tutor, what is studied, how roles are organised and how the institution remains involved all shape the educational practice.

The attraction of peer tutoring is often explained through cognitive and social congruence. A student who has recently encountered a difficulty may remember forms of confusion that have become less visible to an experienced academic. They may use examples and language closer to the tutee's

present understanding. A peer relationship may also lower the perceived risk of disclosing uncertainty. Research suggests that these forms of proximity can matter, although their definitions and relationships to outcomes remain more complex than a simple causal formula implies (Loda et al. 2019). Formal peer status does not automatically create trust, and accessible explanation can become inaccurate simplification.

Peer tutoring is also attractive because responsibility does not flow in only one direction. Tutors may reorganise their own knowledge through explanation, acquire a sharper awareness of how they ask questions and encounter themselves differently when they become responsible for another person's conditions of study. This possibility appears in the literature on peer learning and communities of practice (Boud, Cohen and Sampson 2001; Wenger 1998), and it became visible in the reflective contributions produced around Peer-EDU. Róża Stosik describes entering the programme with an understanding centred on helping others, then noticing how active listening, deliberate questioning, feedback, feedforward and boundary-setting affected her everyday communication. She calls the reflective use of these practices in relation to herself "autotutoring" (Stosik 2026).

Stosik's essay should not be read as evidence that the training transformed all participants. It is a situated account of how one student interpreted her experience. Its significance lies precisely in its specificity. It shows that becoming a tutor may involve more than acquiring a set of techniques. A student may begin to reconsider what it means to listen, when a question opens thought rather than directs it, and how responsibility can be exercised without taking over another person's problem. Marginson's account of student self-formation is useful here: higher education can create occasions in which students act reflexively upon themselves through relations with knowledge, others and institutions (Marginson 2024).

The conference contributions of Adrianna Mojsa and Wiktoria Pietrzak offer two further, differently positioned interpretations. Mojsa asked how the experience of international Peer-EDU training might extend beyond the programme, affecting understandings of collaboration, education and social relations (Mojsa 2026). Pietrzak, preparing for a future career as a teacher, considered how feedforward, the Question Funnel, the GROW model, goal-setting and growth-oriented conversation might inform her later

educational work (Pietrzak 2026). These abstracts do not establish transfer or professional impact. They show students using the public space of a higher-education conference to interpret what the programme had placed before them.

This is one reason peer tutoring matters pedagogically. Students are not only ‘users’ of an educational environment. They can become co-authors of some of its relations, vocabularies and practices. Co-authorship does not erase asymmetry or make all participants equally responsible for everything. The peer tutor assumes a limited facilitative responsibility; the tutee remains responsible for their academic work; academic teachers remain responsible for teaching and assessment; the institution remains responsible for preparation, coordination, supervision and referral. Responsibility is shared only when its distribution makes each obligation more visible rather than allowing it to disappear.

The same practice also carries substantial risks. Tutors can present partial knowledge with unwarranted confidence, reproduce directive teaching, judge tutees or cross emotional boundaries. Selection based mainly on grades can turn the tutor role into an elite distinction and reinforce the idea that some students naturally give support while others receive it. Informal expectations may conceal unpaid labour, especially when students are asked to compensate for inaccessible teaching or insufficient professional services. Certification and micro-credentials may recognise work, but they can also transform mutual assistance into another competitive asset. Colvin’s research demonstrates that peer roles involve social dynamics, resistance and ambiguity rather than an automatic equality among students (Colvin 2007).

Institutionalisation is therefore both necessary and dangerous. Preparation, clear boundaries, referral procedures, supervision and recognition can protect tutors and tutees, while excessive scripting, surveillance and measurement may weaken agency, trust and responsiveness. A light but dependable architecture is needed: sufficient structure to make responsibility real, combined with space for judgement, mutuality and the unpredictability of genuine study.

Throughout the book, peer tutoring denotes an organised and bounded form of shared academic study in which one student temporarily assumes

a facilitative responsibility towards another. Chapter 2 specifies the boundaries of this working definition; at this stage it is enough to note that design and educational meaning cannot be separated.

4. The Peer-EDU Project: Origins, Partners and Ambitions

Peer-EDU began with a shared concern rather than a finished model. Conversations during a SEA-EU Staff Week in Kiel in November 2023 brought together representatives of the University of Gdańsk, the University of Malta and the University of Split around questions of transition, disengagement, integration and the limited visibility of structured peer support. Those conversations developed into the project Competence Transformation in the University: Peer tutoring as a Key Element in Supporting Student Development. Part II reconstructs its institutional history in detail (Attard Tonna et al. 2026).

The partnership was deliberately comparative. The University of Gdańsk contributed an established academic tutoring tradition, the University of Malta a comparatively centralised environment with several forms of mentoring and student support, and the University of Split a more decentralised setting in which relevant responsibilities were distributed across faculties, student organisations and specialist services. These differences became part of the inquiry rather than noise to be removed from it.

The project proceeded through a literature review, comparative diagnosis, co-design and preparation. Report 1 mapped models, reported benefits and recurrent implementation challenges; Report 2 examined institutional contexts and surveyed students and academic staff across the three universities. The findings were used formatively: they informed later programme design rather than evaluating an already functioning shared intervention (Jendza et al. 2026; Attard Tonna et al. 2026).

Two connected preparation pathways followed. Students undertook online work and an intensive international course in Gdańsk, representing 50 hours of workload and 2 ECTS, while separate eight-hour workshops delivered at the three partner universities in February and March 2026

prepared academic teachers for prospective mentoring and supervisory responsibilities. The two strands linked the formation of the peer tutor role with the institutional support expected to surround it (Peer-EDU 2025a; Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026; Mihaljević and Marić 2026).

These activities made the project's ambition more precise. Peer-EDU did not seek only to certify students in conversational techniques. It attempted to connect student agency with an institutional 'safety net'. The preparation of tutors without the preparation of those who would support them would have individualised responsibility at the very moment the project claimed to share it. Conversely, a supervision structure without student agency could have converted peer tutoring into a closely managed extension of academic teaching. The project therefore worked within a constitutive tension between authenticity and structure.

Post-training feedback sharpened the same problem. Respondents valued facilitation, communication, practical rehearsal and the international character of the course, but also asked for further practice, shadowing, local procedures and access to consultation (Jendza and Jendza 2026). Positive experience and readiness for unsupported practice were therefore not treated as equivalent.

The planned pilot implementation did not take place. This absence is methodologically and conceptually important. Peer-EDU did not generate systematic evidence from authentic, sustained tutor–tutee relationships. It cannot show how recruitment, matching, supervision or referral would have operated over time, nor whether the model affected attainment, progression, retention, graduation or wellbeing. The implementation ecology and roadmap developed later in the book are therefore project-derived and theoretically informed proposals, not a universally validated model.

The project nevertheless developed a public life beyond its internal reports. At the fifth “Viva Dydaktyka” Conference in Gdańsk in May 2026, the Peer-EDU session, *Peer Tutoring as a Transformative Academic Culture: From Experience to Institutional Design*, placed student reflections alongside a University of Split case analysis and comparative findings from the three institutions (CDDiT 2026a). Szypryt, Mojsa and Pietrzak spoke not as illustrative recipients of a programme but as interpreters of transition, uncertainty,

educational techniques and possible consequences of participation. Stosik's essay extends this public reflection in written form (Stosik 2026).

This public presence should not be confused with impact. A conference session, article, website or institutional announcement demonstrates visibility and the circulation of ideas, not sustainable implementation or educational effect. Its deeper significance is different. Project materials and participant interpretations became available for questioning by wider academic communities. Dissemination was not simply the final packaging of a successful intervention; it was another phase of inquiry in which Peer-EDU ceased to belong only to its coordinators.

The project's ambitions were both practical and intellectual. Practically, it aimed to develop a research-informed basis for peer tutor preparation, mentor support and future institutional implementation across three universities. Intellectually, it tested whether peer tutoring could be understood as part of a relational and public university rather than merely as an efficient support service.

5. Sources, Materials and Forms of Evidence

This book is both a scientific monograph and a final scholarly account of an international project. As such, it distinguishes clearly between different forms of evidence and the claims each can support, rather than simply assembling project outputs into a single narrative. The manuscript therefore treats the Peer-EDU corpus not as one homogeneous dataset, but as a set of sources produced for different purposes, at different moments and with different epistemic status.

The first source is the project literature review. Report 1 analysed more than fifty publications and supplied the initial map of concepts, models, reported outcomes, risks and implementation conditions (Jendza et al. 2026). It provides evidence about the existing field as represented in the selected literature. It does not establish that findings from one discipline, country or programme will be reproduced in Peer-EDU. The book returns to primary studies where their design and context are important and avoids using the existence of positive findings elsewhere as proof of local effectiveness.

The second source is the comparative diagnostic study reported in Report 2. Its parallel questionnaires gathered responses from students and academic staff at the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta, combining descriptive closed items with open commentary (Attard Tonna et al. 2026). The instruments were designed for formative diagnosis rather than as psychometrically validated readiness scales. The samples were voluntary and uneven in size and disciplinary composition; language, timing and prior familiarity also differed. The findings illuminate awareness, expectations, perceived barriers and declared willingness among participating groups. They do not measure actual institutional capacity or the effects of peer tutoring.

The third group consists of design materials. The student training handbook documents the intended curriculum and pedagogical architecture of the programme: its role definitions, values, activities, cases and conversational tools (Peer-EDU 2025a). The mentor materials similarly document how academic support for peer tutors was conceived. These sources show what was designed and delivered. They are not evidence that participants acquired every intended competence or later enacted the role in practice.

The fourth source is immediate post-training feedback. The survey completed by nineteen student participants provides evidence about their retrospective evaluation of the programme, perceived confidence, meaningful experiences and continuing support needs (Jendza and Jendza 2026). Its quantitative ratings describe this respondent group; they do not represent all forty-six participants automatically. Its open answers are valuable for identifying tensions between confidence and readiness, but the design includes no matched baseline, behavioural assessment, tutee perspective or longitudinal follow-up. Satisfaction is treated as experience, not as efficacy.

The academic mentor preparation materials occupy a related position. Separate eight-hour workshops were delivered at the three partner universities in February and March 2026, involving fifty-one academic teachers in total: sixteen at the University of Gdańsk, thirty-one at the University of Split and four at the University of Malta. The workshops used a common set of materials developed within Peer-EDU. The available evidence from these workshops is institution-specific. Godlewska-Werner and Jendza (2026) provide detailed post-training feedback from the University of Gdańsk group,

while Mihaljević and Marić (2026) report findings from the teacher training programme at the University of Split. These sources document preparation and participants' interpretations of the prospective role; they are not evidence that supervision subsequently operated in sustained tutoring relationships.

Participant essays and conference abstracts form a fifth, deliberately differentiated body of material. Szypryt, Mojsa, Pietrzak and Stosik write from within the project, but they do not speak for the cohort as a whole. Their accounts are not treated as outcome evaluation. They are situated interpretations of what transition, uncertainty, training and the tutor role came to mean for particular students (Szypryt 2026; Mojsa 2026; Pietrzak 2026; Stosik 2026). Their inclusion matters because students should not appear only as survey respondents or objects of expert interpretation. They also produce concepts, questions and public accounts of educational experience.

Project websites, announcements, conference materials and administrative documents provide chronology, institutional context, stated intentions and evidence of dissemination. They are used cautiously. A communication describing an ambition is evidence that the ambition was publicly articulated, not that it was realised. The number of participants in the student training, for example, should not be confused with the number who completed the feedback survey. The digital platform was completed and usability-tested by Polish students participating in the international training, while the tutoring pilot itself had not yet been implemented at the time covered by the project evidence. The platform can therefore be described as a completed project output, but its use in routine university-wide peer tutoring should not yet be presented as established practice.

Finally, the book contains authorial interpretation and recommendations. The theoretical account of studying with peers, the model of sustainable implementation and the institutional roadmap are syntheses constructed from literature, project evidence and higher-education theory. They are arguments offered for scrutiny rather than findings derived directly from a single instrument. This distinction is especially important in the final chapters, where the absence of implementation data requires restraint.

No single method could answer all the questions raised by Peer-EDU. The literature can identify mechanisms and precedents; the diagnostic

study can reveal expectations and perceived barriers; training feedback can illuminate immediate experience; reflective essays can disclose meanings that a questionnaire may not capture; and institutional analysis can show why a practice changes when it enters a different ecology. Their combination creates a richer account, but it does not cancel their limitations. Triangulation here means comparing forms of evidence and noticing where they converge or remain in tension, not treating accumulation as proof.

The most important evidentiary boundary is therefore stated plainly: this book does not report the effects of an implemented Peer-EDU tutoring programme. It reports what was known from literature, what was diagnosed in three universities, what was designed and delivered as preparation, how a subset of participants interpreted that preparation, how academic mentors imagined their role, and what institutional framework the authors propose for future testing. Preserving this boundary is not a weakness of the monograph. It is a condition of making its contribution trustworthy.

6. The Argument and Structure of the Book

The argument developed across the book is that peer tutoring should be understood neither as a universal remedy nor as a minor technique added to student services. It is an institutional configuration of roles, knowledge, relations, resources and responsibilities. Its educational value depends upon how these elements are brought together and upon the kind of university they enact. Studying with peers may open access to disciplinary practices, normalise help-seeking, contribute to student formation and create occasions for common study. It may also reproduce hierarchy, misinformation, exclusion, unpaid labour and managerial capture. These possibilities cannot be separated from programme design or institutional culture.

A second argument concerns the place of students. Students are not simply *consumers* of provision, *beneficiaries* of support or *resources* for institutional targets. They can contribute to the educational environment and become *responsible participants* in one another's study. This contribution should not be romanticised as spontaneous community, nor used to release teachers from their obligations. Co-authorship requires preparation,

recognition, boundaries and the right to decline. It also requires institutional responsiveness: recurring difficulties disclosed through tutoring should become questions for curricula, teaching and support structures, not merely additional tasks for tutors.

A third argument concerns the university itself. Peer tutoring reveals that educational quality cannot be secured only through procedures, content delivery or measurement. The Peer-EDU project repeatedly brought these tensions into view. Expectations expressed by students and academic staff, the design of the training programme and participants' post-training reflections all pointed towards situations in which no single principle could determine the educationally responsible course of action. Educational quality rests on tensions that cannot be resolved through a single rule. Relations make knowledge accessible, but without that intellectual focus, support becomes empty. Authority remains necessary, yet it need not be monopolised or exercised as domination. Similarly, informality can foster trust while excluding those without networks, just as institutional structures protect quality at the expense of authenticity and agency. These tensions call for continuous educational judgement rather than permanent solutions.

The four parts of the book follow a movement from educational problem to institutional possibility. Part I, *Peer Tutoring and the Pedagogy of Higher Education*, establishes the conceptual and normative foundations. Chapter 1 begins with transition into university, disengagement, belonging and the movement from transmission towards shared study. Chapter 2 maps the heterogeneous field of peer tutoring, clarifying models, boundaries and what the practice is not. Chapter 3 develops the book's pedagogical framework around knowledge, dialogue, authority, equality, care, inclusion and the tensions between autonomy and responsibility, informality and institutionalisation.

Part II, *The Peer-EDU Project as an International Inquiry*, turns to the project's history and evidence. Chapter 4 reconstructs the movement from the Kiel conversations to literature review, diagnosis, co-design, training and dissemination, while keeping the unrealised pilot visible. Chapter 5 compares the three partner universities as distinct educational ecologies rather than positions on a single scale of readiness. Chapter 6 examines the methodology and limits of the diagnostic research. Chapters 7 and 8 interpret

expectations across universities and respondent groups, identifying both convergences and productive tensions.

Part III, *Becoming a Peer Tutor*, shifts from institutional expectations to the formation and support of a role. Chapter 9 examines competence, identity, authority and responsibility without turning the tutor into a miniature teacher. Chapter 10 analyses the design of the student preparation programme and the educational reasoning embodied in its activities. Chapter 11 reads post-training feedback cautiously, distinguishing satisfaction, confidence, perceived readiness and unresolved needs. Chapter 12 addresses those who support peer tutors, developing supervision as a formative, normative and restorative practice while acknowledging that the proposed system was not tested in implementation.

Part IV, *From Training to Institutional Practice*, asks what would be required for the project to continue responsibly beyond preparation. Chapter 13 develops the idea of a sustainable peer tutoring ecology: purpose, institutional diagnosis, recruitment, matching, recognition, coordination, supervision, ethics, infrastructure, equity and evaluation. Chapter 14 translates the book's findings into a staged Peer-EDU framework and roadmap. The framework contains decision points and failure signals rather than promising a frictionless route to scale. It is intentionally adaptable and provisional because the project did not validate a universal model.

The *Conclusion* returns from the project to the question of the university. It asks what studying with peers reveals about knowledge, authority, relation and responsibility, and why the limits of institutional intervention matter. Its post-critical orientation avoids both denunciation and celebration. Peer tutoring is approached as a small practice that may be worth sustaining when it keeps knowledge in view, enlarges participation and makes responsibility more rather than less visible.

Readers may approach this book as a study of peer tutoring, an account of international project work, a contribution to higher-education pedagogy or a reflection on institutional change. These routes are connected by one proposition: the university is made not only through statutes, curricula and strategic plans, but also through the quality of encounters in which people turn towards matters of study together. Peer-EDU does not prove that such

encounters can be engineered, scaled or made effective through a checklist. It does show why they deserve institutional attention.

The invitation of the book is therefore both practical and reflective. It asks universities to design carefully, evaluate honestly and resist delegating their responsibilities. It also asks readers to look again at an ordinary academic scene: one student admits uncertainty; another does not seize the opportunity to display superiority, but helps place a question, text or problem between them. What kind of university is enacted in that response? The chapters that follow begin there.

PART

PEER TUTORING AND THE PEDAGOGY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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I

CHAPTER 1. FROM TRANSMISSION TO SHARED STUDY: WHY PEER
TUTORING, WHY NOW?

CHAPTER 2. MAPPING THE FIELD: CONCEPTS, MODELS AND BOUNDARIES

CHAPTER 3. THE PEDAGOGY OF STUDYING WITH PEERS

CHAPTER 1

FROM TRANSMISSION TO SHARED STUDY: WHY PEER TUTORING, WHY NOW?

Chapter 1 returns to the educational problem that preceded the project: what happens when entry into university is treated not merely as administrative admission but as a passage into unfamiliar practices, expectations and relations? Peer tutoring entered Peer-EDU as one possible response to that problem, not as an established solution (Attard Tonna et al. 2026).

Entering university involves more than gaining access to courses, lectures and assessment procedures. Students encounter unfamiliar forms of knowledge, language, judgement and authority. They must learn how to read within a discipline, how to recognise what counts as a relevant question, how to respond when they do not understand, and how to seek help without interpreting the need for support as evidence that they do not belong. These expectations are often tacit, while students' opportunities to 'decipher' them are unequally distributed. Research on peer-assisted education suggests that peer relationships may contribute not only to academic progress but also to students' social and academic integration, although these different outcomes should neither be conflated nor assumed in advance (Byl et al. 2015; Yomtov et al. 2017; Bengesai et al. 2023).

The diagnostic stage of Peer-EDU was designed precisely to examine how students and academic staff at the three partner universities understood peer tutoring, what benefits they expected, what barriers they anticipated, and what forms of training, organisational support and technological infrastructure they considered necessary. The study did not begin from the assumption that peer tutoring was intrinsically beneficial. It treated its implementation as an educational and institutional *question*. Across the three universities, respondents associated peer tutoring with accessible explanation, mutual exchange, academic confidence, social integration and the

development of communication and collaborative capacities. At the same time, they identified the lack of trained tutors, insufficient coordination, limited institutional recognition, uneven motivation and unclear role boundaries as significant threats to its quality and sustainability (Attard Tonna et al. 2026).

These findings place peer tutoring within a tension that runs through the entire book. Studying with peers creates an educational proximity distinct from traditional student–teacher relationships. Students are often more willing to expose uncertainty to someone who has recently encountered similar problems, while explanations draw on language and experiences closer to their own. Asking for assistance becomes less stigmatising, making implicit academic practices open for discussion and fostering a more accessible academic environment.

This proximity, however, does not automatically produce equality, educational value or trust. Tutors can reproduce inaccurate knowledge, imitate directive teaching, acquire informal authority or become burdened with responsibilities that belong to academic staff. Indeed, peer relations can involve misunderstandings, power struggles and attempts to perform competence rather than acknowledge uncertainty (Colvin 2007). Far from automatically widening participation, peer support risks reproducing existing inequalities if those with greater confidence and resources become tutors, while more constrained students remain excluded.

Peer-EDU addressed these tensions in its diagnostic research and subsequently in the design of the international training programme. The programme sought to prepare students to move away from the position of the person who simply supplies an answer and towards a facilitative role based on listening, questioning, reflection and respect for boundaries. Participants valued experiential practice, structured conversational tools and opportunities to work across institutional and cultural contexts. Yet their evaluations also revealed that satisfaction with training was not identical to readiness for independent practice. They asked for clearer local procedures, mentoring, shadowing, supervision and support in responding to emotionally demanding situations (Jendza and Jendza 2026). The project thus made visible that peer tutoring is not produced by goodwill alone. It requires an educational ecology in which roles, responsibilities and limits are carefully negotiated.

The chapter approaches peer tutoring as an educational practice whose purpose cannot be reduced to predefined learning outcomes. Such a framing would risk reproducing what Biesta describes as the learnification of education: the tendency to replace questions about content, purpose, teaching and responsibility with an abstract language of individual learning (Biesta 2010). The expression shared study is used here to retain the presence of something that students study together. The educational significance of peer tutoring lies in participants turning together towards a subject matter, problem or academic practice that makes demands on both of them.

The movement from transmission to shared study does not abolish teaching, expertise or academic authority. It asks how authority might be exercised without monopolising every legitimate explanation, question or interpretation. It also asks what happens when students are recognised not only as recipients of education but as contributors to the educational situations in which they take part. The experience of Peer-EDU provides the concrete setting for these questions. The project began as a response to problems of transition, disengagement and insufficient support, but it gradually opened a wider inquiry into how knowledge, responsibility and recognition circulate within the university. The chapter asks, therefore, what kind of university becomes imaginable when students are invited to study with and support one another, and what institutional, ethical and pedagogical conditions are necessary for this invitation to become more than a delegation of responsibility.

1.1. Entering University as an Educational and Social Transition

Entering university is often described through the administrative language of admission, enrolment and commencement. A candidate satisfies formal requirements, receives a place, registers for a programme and becomes a student. Institutionally, the boundary appears clear: one status ends and another begins. Educationally and socially, however, the transition is considerably less definite. Admission grants access to the university, but it does not automatically enable a person to inhabit it. Becoming formally enrolled

is not the same as becoming able to study within a new academic environment, understand its expectations, establish meaningful relationships or recognise oneself as a legitimate member of its community.

This distinction was among the concerns that gave rise to Peer-EDU. Rather than treating transition as a matter of individual adjustment, the project asked how peer relationships might make unfamiliar academic practices more interpretable without displacing the responsibilities of teachers and institutions.

Entry into university is a passage between educational environments that may be governed by significantly different cultures. Many, although by no means all, first-year students enter university directly from upper-secondary schools. They bring with them dispositions, routines and expectations formed through their previous educational experience. These may concern the organisation of time, the accessibility of teachers, the structure of the curriculum, the frequency of assessment, the degree of supervision, the meaning of independence, and the ways in which successful studying is demonstrated. Such prior experience forms the educational world through which students have learned what teaching, studying, achievement, difficulty and support mean.

The transition therefore does not take place from a generic “school” to a generic “university”. Secondary schools differ internally and nationally, just as universities, faculties and disciplines do. The educational cultures encountered by students in Poland, Croatia and Malta cannot be assumed to be identical. Nor can the expectations of a medical programme, an engineering degree and a humanities course be reduced to one academic culture. Nevertheless, the transition frequently involves a significant reorganisation of the relationship between the student, knowledge, time and institutional authority. Research on the fit between secondary and university education indicates that the extent of continuity or discontinuity between pedagogical approaches matters for first-year achievement. Differences in the degree of student-centredness, independent work and teaching organisation may affect how successfully students adjust to university study (Torenbeek, Jansen and Hofman 2010; 2011).

At school, expectations may have been communicated regularly, reinforced through repeated contact and embedded within a relatively stable

timetable. At university, students can encounter larger groups, more fragmented schedules, fewer contact hours, several teachers operating with different assumptions, and longer periods during which their work remains largely invisible. They may be told that they are now responsible for their own studying without necessarily being shown what that responsibility entails. “Independence” can consequently become an institutional demand before it becomes an educational capacity.

The problem is not simply that students do not yet possess enough information. They must interpret an environment whose important conventions are often tacit. They need to discover what counts as an adequate contribution during a seminar, how closely a text should be read, how an argument differs from a personal opinion, how assessment criteria are interpreted, when asking for help is legitimate, and what teachers mean when they ask for analysis, criticality or independent study. Collier and Morgan’s research shows that success in higher education depends not only on academic ability but also on understanding and enacting the role of the university student. Their comparison of faculty expectations with students’ interpretations revealed substantial incongruities, particularly for students without inherited familiarity with university conventions (Collier and Morgan 2008).

The academic literacies perspective helps to understand why these difficulties should not be reduced to a set of individual study-skills ‘deficits’. Reading, writing, speaking and producing knowledge at university are social and epistemic practices. Their forms differ between disciplines and are connected to questions of identity, authority and legitimate knowledge. Students are not simply asked to transfer a universal ability to write or reason from one setting to another. They encounter new genres, criteria and relations between writers, readers and disciplinary communities. Lea and Street therefore argue that university literacy practices cannot adequately be understood through a model in which students merely acquire generic techniques and then apply them to academic tasks (Lea and Street 1998).

This insight is important for Peer-EDU. A student who struggles during the first months at university may not be academically incapable. The difficulty may arise from the distance between educational cultures, from limited access to their unwritten conventions, or from uncertainty about how previously successful ways of studying should be transformed. A student

accustomed to carefully delimited tasks may find an open-ended university assignment disorientating. A person who achieved excellent results through memorisation may encounter a discipline that values interpretation, proof, problem formulation or the critical examination of evidence. Someone who associated asking teachers for clarification with diligence may enter an environment in which seeking assistance seems to expose inadequacy. Conversely, a student who learned to remain silent in a strongly teacher-directed school culture may struggle in a seminar where speaking is treated as evidence of engagement.

These experiences are not uniform. The landmark study by Terenzini and colleagues showed that transition to university is composed of diverse stories rather than a single predictable sequence. Students arrive through different educational, social and biographical routes and possess unequal knowledge of how universities work. The extent of discontinuity between previous experience and the new institution therefore varies, as do the resources available for interpreting it (Terenzini et al. 1994). The challenge for the university is to create conditions in which students with different backgrounds can enter academic practices without having to decipher the institution entirely alone.

Transition as Passage

The anthropological concept of the rite of passage offers a useful, although necessarily incomplete, way of interpreting this movement. Arnold van Gennep used the term to describe rituals accompanying changes in social position. Despite their cultural diversity, such rites frequently display a threefold structure: separation from a previous status, an intervening transitional or liminal phase, and incorporation into a new social position (van Gennep 1960). Victor Turner later developed the idea of liminality to describe the ambiguous condition of those who are no longer fully located in their former position but have not yet been securely incorporated into the new one (Turner 1969).

Applied to the transition from school to university, the first phase involves some form of separation from a familiar educational order. Students leave behind known teachers, established routines, recognised measures of

achievement and social positions built over several years. This separation may be spatial, involving a move to another city or country, but it need not be. Students who continue living at home can experience an equally significant change in educational identity. The decisive separation occurs when previous assumptions no longer provide reliable guidance for acting within the new institution.

The second phase is liminal. The student has entered the university but does not yet know how fully to inhabit it. Formal membership coexists with practical uncertainty. During this period, formal expectations of autonomy and adulthood can exceed students' familiarity with how academic responsibility is actually practised. Even students with substantial subject knowledge may remain uncertain about how that knowledge should be expressed and judged. Liminality thus names a condition in which an old educational identity has become insufficient while a new one is still being formed.

The third phase, incorporation, would involve more than surviving the first assessment period. It would mean gaining a workable sense of how to study, participate and seek assistance; developing relationships within the institution; and beginning to see oneself as a legitimate member of an academic community. Incorporation does not require complete conformity. Indeed, a university that understands education as the production of identical academic subjects would contradict its own intellectual purpose. Nevertheless, participation requires enough orientation, recognition and confidence for the student to act within the institution rather than remain permanently at its edge.

Clark and Lovric explicitly proposed the rite-of-passage model to interpret the secondary–tertiary transition in mathematics. Their work shows how students may cross not only an institutional boundary but also a disciplinary one: university mathematics introduces different forms of abstraction, reasoning, proof and responsibility from those many students encountered at school (Clark and Lovric 2008; 2009). Subsequent research has used this framework to examine the cognitive, affective and sociocultural crises that may accompany the transition. The significance of the model lies partly in its recognition that difficulty is not necessarily evidence that the student is unsuited to university. Crisis may be an integral part of encountering a genuinely different educational world (Di Martino, Gregorio and Iannone 2023).

This metaphor must nevertheless be used cautiously. Entry into university is not a single, culturally uniform ceremony with a clearly defined beginning and end. Nor do contemporary universities necessarily provide effective rites through which students are collectively separated, accompanied and incorporated. Orientation days, welcome events, matriculation ceremonies and first-year courses may symbolically mark entry, but they do not guarantee educational incorporation. The transition can extend far beyond the opening weeks and may recur when students enter a new discipline, undertake their first independent research project, begin clinical or professional practice, move abroad, or progress to postgraduate study.

Moreover, the linear sequence of separation, liminality and incorporation can obscure interruptions, reversals and multiple affiliations. Students do not necessarily leave school culture completely behind, nor should they. They may move between home, employment, university and other communities, inhabiting several identities simultaneously. Gale and Parker therefore distinguish between approaches that treat transition as a relatively linear induction, approaches that conceptualise it as development through identifiable stages, and approaches that understand it as becoming: an open, lived process in which students continuously negotiate changing identities, relationships and possibilities (Gale and Parker 2014).

The latter perspective is particularly valuable here. It prevents the language of transition from becoming a subtle form of blame. When universities interpret transition primarily as a matter of students adapting to fixed institutional expectations, difficulties are easily attributed to insufficient preparation, motivation or resilience. The institution remains unquestioned while newcomers are required to transform themselves. Transition understood as becoming directs attention to both sides of the educational relationship. Students change as they enter university, but the university also creates, facilitates or obstructs the conditions of their entry.

The concept of a rite of passage should not be used to naturalise student suffering. Disorientation need not be treated as a necessary test of membership, and crisis should not be romanticised as educationally desirable. Some discontinuity can be intellectually productive because university study introduces students to new questions and modes of thought. Yet avoidable opacity, isolation and institutional indifference are not pedagogical virtues.

The educational task is to support students in crossing the boundary while preserving the genuine intellectual differences between school and university study.

Peer Relationships in the Liminal Space

Turner's development of the concept of liminality also drew attention to *communitas*: forms of connection that can arise among people sharing an in-between condition. Without transferring this anthropological category uncritically to contemporary higher education, it helps illuminate why relationships with other students can matter during transition. Peers may not possess the formal authority of academic teachers, but they often possess temporal and experiential proximity. A more experienced student can remember the first encounter with a disciplinary convention that has long since become self-evident to an academic teacher. A same-level peer can recognise uncertainty because both are attempting to interpret the new environment.

Peer tutoring can therefore function within the *transitional space* between school and secure participation in university. It can make parts of the institution more readable. A peer tutor may explain not only a concept but also how to approach a problem, prepare for a particular form of assessment, organise independent study, interpret feedback or decide when specialist assistance is required. Such support can disclose academic practices that remain invisible when teachers assume that students already understand them.

The literature review undertaken during the first phase of Peer-EDU, drawing on fifty publications, identified academic, social and emotional contributions associated with peer tutoring. It also showed that the practice has developed beyond a simple model in which a knowledgeable student transmits correct information to a less knowledgeable one. The reviewed literature included cross-level, reciprocal, embedded and online arrangements and repeatedly emphasised the importance of interaction, trust, training and role definition. In several of the programmes examined, senior students worked specifically with first-year students, supporting both academic work and adjustment to university expectations (Jendza et al. 2026).

The review includes, for example, the programmes investigated by Arco-Tirado and colleagues. In one intervention, trained senior and postgraduate students supported first-year students through a structured series of tutoring sessions addressing planning, time management, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, motivation and the use of academic resources. The results indicated advantages for participating students in academic performance and study strategies, while tutors also developed social and metacognitive capacities (Arco-Tirado, Fernández-Martín and Fernández-Balboa 2011). A later randomised study of a structured peer tutoring programme reported significant differences in first-year academic performance in favour of participating students (Arco-Tirado, Fernández-Martín and Hervás-Torres 2020). These studies help explain why the first year has become a significant setting for structured peer support, although their findings should not be generalised to every peer tutoring model.

The diagnostic research conducted in Peer-EDU adds an important contextual dimension. Students and academic staff at the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta associated peer tutoring with more approachable explanation, collaboration, confidence, integration and a less formal atmosphere. Students emphasised its potential to reduce stress and isolation, particularly during the first year, while staff also recognised its possible contribution to inclusion and supportive academic communities. At the same time, both groups identified the lack of trained tutors, insufficient organisational support, unclear roles and weak technological infrastructure as significant barriers. Approximately 70 per cent of student respondents expressed willingness to participate in or recommend peer tutoring, but actual experience of it remained limited (Attard Tonna et al. 2026).

The Peer-EDU diagnostic study provides evidence about perceptions and expectations rather than causal effects on continuation, grades or wellbeing. It shows that members of all three university communities recognised the transition into higher education as both an academic and relational challenge. Their responses extended beyond assistance with difficult content to integration, communication, confidence, motivation, stress and the need to understand how the institution works. In doing so, they implicitly challenged any sharp separation between academic and social transition.

Kahu and Nelson conceptualise student engagement as emerging within an educational interface where student characteristics and institutional conditions encounter one another. Self-efficacy, emotions, belonging and wellbeing mediate this relationship; they are not external additions to the academic experience (Kahu and Nelson 2018). Similarly, Thomas's research on retention and success places engagement and belonging at the centre of institutional responsibility. Supportive peer relationships, meaningful interaction with staff, confidence and identity as a university student are presented not as peripheral services but as part of the educational conditions through which continuation becomes possible (Thomas 2012).

Peer tutoring can intervene within this interface because it joins work on knowledge with work on relationship. Peer tutoring can connect social welcome with the interpretation of academic expectations and address academic difficulty without separating it from its emotional and relational dimensions. Studying with a peer can connect explanation, reassurance, modelling, feedback and institutional navigation. In its strongest form, it helps students understand both what they are studying and how participation in the practice of studying is organised.

Yet the rite-of-passage perspective also warns against imagining the tutor as someone who simply escorts an unprepared newcomer into an unchanged institutional order. Peer tutoring can become conservative if its only function is to teach students to comply with opaque conventions. It may reproduce the *hidden curriculum* rather than expose it to examination. A tutor who has successfully adapted to institutional expectations can present those expectations as natural, even when they are unnecessarily exclusionary. The practice may also generate a new hierarchy in which certain students are recognised as competent guides while others are marked as dependent recipients of help.

There is a further institutional danger. If transition is treated as a problem to be solved by students for other students, universities may withdraw from their own responsibilities. Peer tutors cannot compensate for incoherent curricula, inaccessible teaching, inadequate feedback, unmanageable workloads, discriminatory cultures or insufficient professional support. They should not become inexpensive substitutes for academic teachers, advisers, disability services or psychological care. The Peer-EDU reports themselves

demonstrate that participants expected clear procedures, trained tutors, supervision and reliable institutional backing. Peer support requires the university's presence rather than its retreat (Attard Tonna et al. 2026).

The educational significance of peer tutoring lies in creating an intermediate relational space in which differences between school and university cultures can be articulated and worked through. Within such a space, a student can ask questions that might otherwise remain unspoken: Why is this form of argument expected? What does independent work look like here? How should I interpret this feedback? Is everyone else struggling with this? What can I reasonably expect from my teacher, and what is now my own responsibility?

These are not trivial questions. They concern the meaning of becoming a university student. When they remain unanswered, students may interpret cultural discontinuity as personal failure. When they can be examined with others, the transition becomes an educational process rather than a solitary test of adaptation. Entering university is best understood as an extended educational and social transition involving separation from familiar practices, uncertainty within a new institutional environment and the gradual formation of relationships, capacities and identities through which studying becomes possible. Peer-EDU began from the recognition that universities cannot assume this passage will occur automatically. Peer tutoring is one possible way of accompanying this transition. It does not remove the intellectual demands of higher education; rather, it helps students enter into a relationship with those demands, with other students and with the institution to which they now formally belong.

1.2. Disengagement, Isolation and the Question of Belonging

Disengagement is often noticed only when it becomes administratively visible. A student stops attending classes, fails to submit work, does not respond to messages, interrupts their studies or formally withdraws from the university. By that stage, however, disengagement may already have a long history. It can begin while the student continues to attend, completes

assignments and remains formally enrolled. A person may be physically present in a lecture hall yet experience little connection with the subject, the people around them or the institution in whose records they appear. Disengagement can therefore be *quiet*: a gradual reduction in curiosity, confidence, participation and the expectation that one's presence matters.

This is one reason why disengagement should not be treated simply as an individual student's failure to display sufficient motivation. The concept itself is multidimensional. Behavioural indicators, including attendance, participation, submission and persistence, are important, but they do not exhaust the educational experience. Engagement also has emotional, cognitive, relational and sociocultural dimensions. It concerns how students encounter a subject, whether they recognise value in what they are studying, whether they can act within the educational environment and whether that environment recognises them as legitimate participants. Kahu's analysis of the higher education literature demonstrates the limitations of frameworks that isolate student behaviour from institutional practices, psychological experience and wider social conditions (Kahu 2013). From this perspective, disengagement cannot be located entirely "inside" the student. It emerges in a relationship between a person and an educational environment. Students bring different histories, commitments, resources and expectations to university, while institutions organise curricula, timetables, assessment, communication, support and interpersonal relations in ways that make participation more possible for some students than for others. Financial pressure, paid work, caring responsibilities, disability, commuting, linguistic insecurity, discrimination and previous experiences of education may all shape what looks institutionally like willingness or unwillingness to engage. The category of the "disengaged student" can therefore conceal the conditions through which disengagement is produced.

The Peer-EDU Project arose partly from the recognition that the first-year experience cannot be understood only through the quality of course content or the academic abilities of individual students. Representatives of the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta identified academic disengagement, insufficient integration and difficulties in adapting to university life as interrelated challenges. The diagnostic study subsequently examined how students and academic staff understood

the potential of peer tutoring to address academic, social and institutional needs. Participants associated peer tutoring not only with better understanding of course material, but also with collaboration, confidence, inclusivity, more approachable assistance and the development of supportive academic communities (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 4–8, 108–114).

These expectations require careful interpretation because they provide no evidence of an effect on disengagement or access among the most isolated students. At the same time, respondents clearly understood disengagement as extending beyond cognition to communication, relationships, confidence and help-seeking. Their responses repeatedly connected studying with communication, relationships, confidence and the possibility of asking another person for help. The academic and the social appeared not as separate spheres, but as dimensions of the same university experience.

The Crowded University and the Isolated Student

Isolation is easily associated with literal aloneness. Yet a student may be surrounded by hundreds of people and still remain educationally and socially isolated. Large lectures, busy corridors and “crowded” digital platforms do not necessarily generate meaningful connection. Proximity does not itself create recognition, trust or a relationship in which uncertainty can be exposed without fear. It is therefore useful here to distinguish social isolation from loneliness, although the two can overlap. Social isolation refers more directly to the scarcity or weakness of social contact and relationships. Loneliness describes a subjective experience: the painful discrepancy between the relationships a person has and those they need or desire. A student may have frequent contact with classmates and still feel lonely; another may spend considerable time alone without experiencing loneliness. Both experiences can be educationally significant because they affect whether students feel able to seek assistance, participate in collective work and interpret difficulties as ordinary features of studying rather than as evidence of personal inadequacy.

A systematic review of interventions addressing loneliness among university students confirms that loneliness is a serious concern within higher education, while also revealing how limited and heterogeneous the

intervention evidence remains. Programmes have included social-support groups, opportunities for increased interaction, reflective exercises, psycho-education and interventions directed at social cognition or skills. Some reported reductions in loneliness, but differences in designs, populations and measurements make broad conclusions difficult. The review's central implication is therefore not that any increase in student interaction will resolve loneliness, but that institutions need better-targeted, theoretically grounded and methodologically credible approaches (Ellard, Dennison and Tuomainen 2023).

This caution is relevant to peer tutoring. Pairing students or placing them in a group does not automatically create *connection*. A tutoring encounter may remain functional and emotionally distant. It may also intensify discomfort if the tutee feels judged, labelled as deficient or dependent on someone perceived as more successful. Peer relationships become educationally supportive when participants experience sufficient safety, continuity and mutual recognition to disclose uncertainty and continue working together.

Isolation may also result from the organisation of university education itself. Students often move between separate modules, lecturers and groups without a stable educational community. They can be expected to manage fragmented schedules and contradictory demands while having few opportunities for repeated, substantive encounters with the same people. Digital systems may provide access to materials and communication but can also make contact predominantly transactional: downloading a file, submitting a task, receiving an automatically generated notification. In such environments, students may know where information is stored without knowing whom they can approach.

The problem is not solved by adding social events beside the “real” academic work. Social integration and academic engagement are often separated in institutional structures: teaching occurs in one place, while belonging is delegated to induction weeks, student societies, accommodation, counselling or extracurricular activities. Deil-Amen's concept of socio-academic integrative moments offers a more promising way to understand how connection can arise. In her study of students in career-related programmes, academic and social integration occurred through encounters in

which relationships, practical assistance and engagement with educational work became intertwined. This challenges the assumption that students must first develop a social life and then become academically engaged, or vice versa. Sometimes connection to people is produced through work on a shared educational problem (Deil-Amen 2011).

This is precisely where peer tutoring may become important. It creates the possibility of a relationship organised around something to be studied. The subject matter gives the encounter a purpose, while the encounter can make the subject matter more accessible. A student does not have to choose between academic assistance and human connection: the two may be experienced together.

What Does It Mean to Belong?

Belonging is frequently invoked as though its meaning were self-evident. Universities promise to build inclusive communities, students are encouraged to become involved, and belonging is presented as a desirable condition associated with wellbeing and continuation. Yet the concept is less straightforward than this language suggests. A recent systematic review encompassing 150 higher education studies found substantial variation in how belonging was defined and measured. Depending on the study, it referred to perceived acceptance, interpersonal connection, identification with an institution or group, fit with academic culture, a sense of being valued, or a combination of these dimensions. The review also showed that belonging cannot be considered independently of ethnicity, generation status and the institutional positioning of historically underrepresented groups (Dias-Broens, Meeuwisse and Severiens 2024).

For the purposes of this book, belonging extends beyond comfort or identification with the institution. A student may belong while remaining critical of university practices. They may experience strong connection within a course, student group or disciplinary community while feeling alienated from the wider institution. Conversely, participation in university rituals and organisations does not necessarily produce a sense that one is intellectually recognised.

Belonging should therefore be understood as a relational judgement: Is there a place for me here, and does my presence count? This judgement is made through ordinary encounters. Are students' names known? Are their questions treated seriously? Is confusion met with curiosity or impatience? Can they contribute without already mastering the language and habits of the discipline? Do difficulties appear survivable, or do they seem to confirm that they have entered a world intended for someone else?

Research among first-year students suggests that belonging operates at more than one level. Freeman, Anderman and Jensen found that students' sense of belonging within a particular class was associated with academic self-efficacy, intrinsic motivation and the perceived value of educational tasks. Classroom belonging was also related to students' perceptions of instructor warmth, openness, organisation and encouragement of participation. Campus-level belonging, meanwhile, was associated more strongly with perceived social acceptance (Freeman, Anderman and Jensen 2007).

This distinction does matter. A student does not belong to "the university" in the abstract. Belonging is mediated through seminars, laboratories, tutorials, corridors, spaces, things, assessment encounters and informal conversations. It can be stronger in one place and weaker in another. The institution is encountered through multiple local worlds, and it is within these that students learn whether their participation is expected, tolerated or welcomed.

Belonging is also dynamic. A daily-diary study by Gillen-O'Neel found that students with a stronger general sense of belonging tended to report higher emotional and behavioural engagement, but also that day-to-day fluctuations mattered. On days when students experienced more belonging than was usual for them, their engagement also tended to be higher. Some dimensions of engagement among first-generation students were especially sensitive to such daily variation (Gillen-O'Neel 2021).

This finding complicates the idea that belonging is a stable personal characteristic possessed by sociable or confident students. It can be strengthened or weakened through particular experiences. A dismissive response, exclusion from a group or an incomprehensible institutional message may suddenly make membership uncertain. A serious conversation, an invitation to contribute or recognition from another person may restore

it. Belonging is therefore continuously enacted rather than permanently acquired. Evidence also connects belonging with persistence. Hausmann, Schofield and Woods found that first-year students' sense of belonging predicted their intentions to persist after other relevant factors were taken into account. Their study also documented a decline in belonging and persistence intentions during the academic year, while an intervention designed to support belonging reduced the decline in the former (Hausmann, Schofield and Woods 2007).

National evidence from the United States similarly indicates that belonging varies across institutions and student groups. At four-year institutions, stronger belonging was associated with better engagement, mental health and persistence after adjustment for a broad set of background characteristics. The patterns were not uniform, however: first-generation and racialised minority students reported different levels of belonging depending on institutional context, cautioning against the assumption that a single model applies to all sectors or populations (Gopalan and Brady 2020). Experimental studies offer further evidence that belonging is not merely correlated with educational outcomes. Walton and Cohen's intervention encouraged students to interpret difficulties in social and academic adjustment as common and temporary rather than as proof that people like them did not belong. The intervention produced longer-term academic and health effects among African American students at a selective university (Walton and Cohen 2011). A later intervention, carefully adapted to the specific context of a broad-access university, increased continuous two-year enrolment among socially disadvantaged students by nine percentage points (Murphy et al. 2020).

These findings concern context-sensitive belonging interventions and should not be transferred directly to peer tutoring. Their relevance lies in showing that experiences of non-belonging can be consequential and, under some circumstances, open to change. They also demonstrate the importance of interpretation: the same difficult grade or awkward interaction can be understood as a temporary feature of entering university or as confirmation that one has no legitimate place within it.

Belonging without Conformity

There is a danger in treating belonging as a demand placed on students. Universities may describe certain ways of speaking, socialising, dressing, writing or displaying confidence as evidence that a student has successfully integrated. Those who do not adopt these forms can then be represented as detached, deficient or unwilling to participate. Belonging becomes conditional upon resemblance to an imagined “normal student”. This is particularly problematic because academic cultures are not neutral. Their norms have histories, and the ease with which they can be inhabited is unequally distributed. Some students enter university already familiar with its language, assumptions and forms of interaction. Others must translate between educational, linguistic, social or cultural worlds. The latter may be described as lacking belonging when the deeper issue is that the institution offers recognition only on restrictive terms.

A relational university cannot make belonging synonymous with assimilation. Educational belonging must accommodate difference, criticism and disagreement while recognising students as capable of questioning and contributing to the practices of the community to which they belong. It includes being recognised as someone capable of interpreting, disagreeing, contributing and changing the shared situation.

This distinction is important for understanding disengagement. Withdrawal from participation does not always indicate indifference. It may be a response to repeated experiences of not being heard, to uncertainty about the risks of speaking, or to a belief that one’s contribution will be judged through stereotypes. Silence can be a form of self-protection. Apparent lack of interest can conceal vigilance, exhaustion or the expectation of exclusion. A strong evidence base on belonging should therefore not be used to develop more sophisticated techniques for making students conform. It should direct attention towards the conditions under which participation becomes possible without requiring students to conceal significant parts of themselves.

Voices from Peer-EDU

The diagnostic research in Peer-EDU did not directly measure loneliness or sense of belonging with validated psychological scales. It would therefore be methodologically incorrect to use its results to estimate the prevalence of either phenomenon across the three partner universities. The surveys investigated awareness, expectations, perceived benefits, barriers and willingness to engage in peer tutoring. Within those limits, however, the results offer insight into the relational qualities that students and academic staff associated with the practice. Across the universities, respondents repeatedly emphasised collaboration, informal and approachable guidance, social integration, inclusivity and confidence. The University of Malta data particularly highlighted positive atmosphere and community building, while respondents across all three institutions stressed the importance of face-to-face human relationships. Students also identified communication skills, interpersonal sensitivity, feedback, motivation and stress management as important elements of tutor preparation (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 108–129).

The later evaluation of the international Peer-EDU training programme provides more direct participant voices. These responses came from a small, self-selected group of nineteen prospective peer tutors rather than from a representative sample of students experiencing disengagement. They must therefore be treated as situated accounts of the training environment, not as evidence of the effects of peer tutoring on belonging across the three universities.

Yet, even with that limitation, the language used by participants is revealing. When asked about the most meaningful moments of the programme, one participant from the University of Gdańsk referred to: *the ability to use English and that we could feel that we're not judged. That we were able to talk about real life scenarios. And of course meet people from a different culture* (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14).

The absence of judgement appears here as a condition of speaking. The value of using English was not merely linguistic practice; it was connected to being able to speak imperfectly, address authentic situations and remain accepted within the group. Another participant described the meaningful aspect simply as “making friends with people from other countries”, while

a student from the University of Split pointed to “bonding with other colleagues and friends” (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14).

A participant from the University of Malta connected the international composition of the group directly with the educational process:

One participant described the mixed-university role play as especially meaningful because unfamiliar partners brought different perspectives into the same exercise (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14). The significance of the comment lies less in internationality as an achievement than in the experience of having one’s assumptions interrupted by another person’s way of approaching the situation.

Belonging in this account did not arise because differences disappeared. It emerged through working with unfamiliar people and discovering that those differences could become educationally productive. Collaboration created the relationship, while the relationship widened what participants were able to notice and understand.

Some of the most illuminating comments referred to moments outside the formally planned activities. One participant identified the breaks as especially meaningful “because then I talked to the new friends I made” (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14). This short comment reminds us that educational communities are not produced only through curricular design. Informal time, unstructured conversation and the availability of shared space can be as important as the formal session. A programme may provide excellent content and still leave little room for relationships to develop if every minute is organised around predefined outcomes.

The sense of recognition is expressed most explicitly in another response: *I felt accepted and understood in my group. I hope the whole peer-edu training groups would have an opportunity to meet again in May or on another module that further educates us on how to be a tutor* (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 15).

Acceptance and understanding are linked here with continuity. The participant does not simply report satisfaction with a completed course; they ask for the relationship to continue. This matters because belonging is difficult to sustain through one-off contact. Encounters may open a possibility, but communities develop through repetition, memory and the expectation that people will meet again.

The quantitative feedback is consistent with this relational reading within the limited respondent group. The training environment was evaluated very positively in terms of inclusion and support, and most respondents also reported greater confidence afterwards (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7). These results do not establish long-term transformation; they show that participants experienced practical preparation, international collaboration and interpersonal safety as connected features of the course.

A different pattern appeared when participants looked beyond the course towards actual tutoring. Requests for mentoring, shadowing, access to academic consultation, clearer procedures and opportunities to discuss difficult cases remained prominent (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–16). A supportive temporary group had been created, but participants still anticipated the need for a durable institutional ecology in which the role could be practised.

Can Peer Tutoring Create Belonging?

Peer tutoring may contribute to belonging because it can create repeated socio-academic encounters. A student meets another person not only to receive information but to work on a question, difficulty or practice. The tutor can acknowledge confusion without treating it as exceptional, make hidden conventions more visible and demonstrate that seeking assistance is compatible with being a legitimate university student. The relationship can provide continuity within an otherwise fragmented educational environment.

Its relative informality may also reduce the perceived risk of exposure. Students can be reluctant to ask a lecturer a question when they fear that it reveals a basic misunderstanding or confirms an unfavourable judgement. A peer who has recently faced a similar difficulty may offer a different kind of proximity. This does not mean that students always prefer peers or that peer explanations are necessarily better. It means that the social conditions under which a question can be asked are educationally consequential.

Peer tutoring may also offer tutors a form of belonging. Being entrusted with responsibility, contributing to another person's studying and participating in a shared practice can alter the tutor's own relation to the institution. In the Peer-EDU feedback, participants repeatedly associated the

international course with reciprocity, exchange and mutual support rather than with a simple division between those who give help and those who receive it (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 17–19).

But peer tutoring does not automatically reach those who are most disengaged. Programmes dependent on voluntary self-referral may disproportionately attract students who already possess enough confidence, time and institutional familiarity to seek assistance. Students who feel that they do not belong may interpret a targeted invitation as confirmation that they are deficient. Others may be unable to attend because of work, caring, transport or accessibility constraints. A programme can therefore claim openness while reproducing unequal participation.

Nor should a peer tutor be expected to resolve loneliness, psychological distress or exclusion. A participant in the Peer-EDU training asked how a tutor should respond when a tutee experiences a “mental breakdown”, noting that referral to a specialist may be appropriate but that sometimes the person “just want[s] to talk about it with someone they trust” (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 13). The question captures both the importance and the limit of peer relationships. Trust may enable a student to disclose distress, but it does not transform the tutor into a counsellor. The programme must protect the human possibility of listening while maintaining clear boundaries and referral pathways.

Belonging cannot be delegated to peer tutors any more than transition can. If students encounter inaccessible teaching, contradictory expectations, discrimination, inadequate feedback or an absence of professional support, peer tutoring cannot compensate for institutional failure. Indeed, asking students to repair the relational consequences of such failures may place an unjust burden on them. Peer tutoring becomes defensible when it adds a distinctive form of reciprocal educational support, not when it substitutes for the responsibilities of teachers, programme leaders or specialist services.

Belonging should therefore not be treated as an output that a tutoring programme can simply deliver. The more defensible question is whether the university creates conditions in which recognition can emerge: time, continuity, accessible spaces, meaningful shared work, prepared tutors,

non-stigmatising routes into participation and reliable support when the peer role reaches its limits.

Within such conditions, peer tutoring may interrupt disengagement before it becomes disappearance. It may provide a student with one person who notices an absence, one relationship in which a question is safe, or one repeated encounter through which academic difficulty becomes manageable. These are modest claims compared with promises of improved retention or transformed institutional culture. Yet they may describe precisely how belonging is ordinarily built: not through a singular feeling of attachment to “the university”, but through cumulative experiences of being recognised while studying something with others.

Disengagement, isolation and belonging are therefore not peripheral concerns surrounding the academic work of the university. They shape whether such work can be undertaken at all. The findings and experiences of Peer-EDU suggest that studying becomes more possible when students encounter one another as sources of explanation, recognition and responsible support. The challenge is to create these encounters without romanticising peer equality, stigmatising those who receive assistance or relieving the institution of its own educational obligations.

1.3. Students as Co-authors of the Educational Situation

To describe students as *co-authors* of the educational situation is to make a claim that is stronger than the familiar assertion that students should be active. Activity can take many forms without altering the fundamental organisation of education. Students can answer questions, complete tasks, contribute to discussion and cooperate with one another while the purposes, meanings and permissible directions of their activity remain almost entirely predetermined. Co-authorship implies something more: students do not merely perform within an educational situation created for them; through their questions, interpretations, decisions, relationships and initiatives, they participate in shaping what that situation becomes.

This does not mean that students write the curriculum alone, determine the standards of a discipline or possess the same responsibilities as academic teachers. The metaphor of authorship must not conceal differences in knowledge, authority and institutional accountability. Nor should it turn education into the sovereign self-expression of individuals whose preferences determine what is worth studying. An educational situation has many authors, but their contributions are neither identical nor interchangeable. Teachers remain responsible for opening access to a field of knowledge, exercising pedagogical judgement and ensuring the intellectual and ethical integrity of education. Institutions establish material and organisational conditions. A subject matter places demands upon everyone involved that cannot be reduced to what either teachers or students happen to want.

Yet none of these ‘qualifications’ changes the central proposition: students affect the course, quality and meaning of education. They do so even when institutions refuse to acknowledge their agency. Their silence, questions, resistance, interpretations, mutual assistance, withdrawal and initiative alter the situation in which teaching and studying occur. The real choice is therefore not between an educational process authored by teachers and one authored jointly with students. It is between institutions that recognise, cultivate and take responsibility for students’ contribution and those that treat it as accidental, disruptive or invisible.

From Recipients to Contributors

The image of education as transmission assigns relatively stable positions. The teacher possesses knowledge and conveys it; the student receives, retains and reproduces it. Paulo Freire’s critique of the “banking” model exposed the political and pedagogical consequences of treating students as containers into which knowledge is deposited. His alternative was not education without teachers or without content. It was a dialogical, problem-posing practice in which teachers and students become jointly responsible for investigating a reality that neither party can claim to possess completely in advance (Freire 2005: 71–86).

The language of co-authorship follows this movement but also attempts to retain something that can disappear from less demanding versions of

student-centred education. A student is not a customer whose satisfaction defines the value of the educational encounter, nor an abstract “learner” privately constructing outcomes. Students become co-authors by entering a shared relationship with knowledge, other people and the conditions under which study proceeds. Their contribution has substance because it concerns something beyond themselves.

Research on student agency helps clarify this distinction. Reeve and Tseng proposed agentic engagement as a dimension of engagement alongside behavioural, emotional and cognitive involvement. Agentic engagement refers to students’ constructive contribution to the flow of the instruction they receive: asking questions, expressing preferences, communicating what they need and attempting to influence how an educational activity develops (Reeve and Tseng 2011: 257–267). In this formulation, students are not merely responding more energetically to teaching. They are acting upon the educational environment and inviting it to respond to them.

This does not imply that every student intervention should determine what happens next. Agency is not equivalent to control. A student may ask for an easier task when the educationally responsible response is to help them remain with its difficulty. Another may request a definitive answer when the more valuable response is a question that returns the problem to them. Co-authorship means that such interventions become part of pedagogical judgement rather than being dismissed as noise surrounding the real work of teaching.

The concept is therefore *relational*. Students become capable of affecting education when their contributions are noticed, interpreted and answered. A question asked into an environment that consistently ignores it is formally an act of agency but does not yet establish co-authorship. Authorship emerges when a contribution becomes consequential when it changes an explanation, directs attention towards a neglected problem, introduces another perspective, reshapes a task or prompts reconsideration of an established practice.

Recent research on co-creation in higher education provides a useful, although not identical, conceptual field. Co-creation generally refers to students and staff collaborating to develop aspects of curricula, pedagogical approaches, assessment or educational resources. Partnership has been

defined as a reciprocal process in which participants can contribute equally, though not necessarily in the same ways, to educational conceptualisation, decision-making, implementation and inquiry (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten 2014: 6–7). A conceptual systematic review of 222 articles identified dialogue, positioning, voice and agency as the four central, interconnected concepts through which co-creational interaction has been analysed (Omland et al. 2025: 1017–1047).

The expression co-authors of the educational situation is deliberately broader. Most students will not formally co-design their curriculum or become members of a pedagogical partnership project. Yet every seminar, laboratory, tutorial and tutoring session is partly constituted through what participants do with the possibilities available to them. Co-authorship can take place within ordinary educational encounters: when a student formulates a problem that redirects discussion, offers an explanation that becomes available to others, connects disciplinary knowledge with an experience previously excluded from the classroom, or helps another student approach a difficulty differently.

The distinction also prevents co-authorship from becoming another institutional programme available only to a selected minority. Much of the literature on students as partners has documented valuable ‘outcomes’, including increased confidence, motivation, responsibility and transformed relationships. At the same time, systematic reviews have raised concerns about the small scale of many initiatives, the predominance of already engaged students and the uneven representation of students in both partnership practice and published accounts of it (Mercer-Mapstone et al. 2017: 15–37). In other words, partnership can challenge educational hierarchy while remaining accessible chiefly to those already recognised as confident and institutionally fluent. Co-authorship should therefore be understood as an educational principle, not merely a special role awarded to selected students.

Peer Tutoring as a Practice of Co-Authorship

Peer tutoring offers a particularly revealing setting in which to examine this principle. A student who becomes a peer tutor moves from being positioned

exclusively as a recipient of university education to becoming someone who contributes directly to another student's engagement with knowledge. The role does not transform the student into an academic teacher, but it does interrupt a simple division between those who provide education and those who receive it.

The literature review conducted during the first stage of Peer-EDU, drawing on fifty publications, documented a movement away from a strictly unidirectional understanding of tutoring. In the simplest model, a more knowledgeable student transfers information to someone who has not yet mastered it. More reciprocal models emphasise that tutors themselves reorganise knowledge, test explanations, interpret another person's reasoning and encounter the limits of their understanding. The distinction between tutor and tutee remains operationally important, but educational benefit does not necessarily flow in only one direction (Jendza et al. 2026: 43–45).

This reciprocity matters for *co-authorship*. The tutee is not simply the object of a tutor's assistance. The questions they ask, the misunderstandings they reveal and the connections they make change what the tutor must notice and how the subject matter must be approached. The tutor cannot fully script the encounter in advance because its course depends upon another person's thinking. At its best, the tutoring session becomes a jointly composed response to a problem, even though the two participants occupy different positions within it.

The Peer-EDU diagnostic study shows that students and academic staff across the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta frequently understood peer tutoring in these reciprocal terms. One member of the academic staff described it as a "mutual benefit" through which both participants could develop creativity, communication, teamwork and knowledge. Another emphasised that a tutee should not only receive simplified explanations but "question, make connections" and use appropriate intellectual tools. Students similarly referred to gaining a deeper understanding "both as the student and as the tutor presenting the material" and to seeing a problem from a different perspective (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 84–85, 90–92).

These statements do not yet describe observed tutoring practice. They are expectations and interpretations offered before the full implementation

of the programme. Nevertheless, they reveal an important alternative to a remedial model. Respondents did not imagine the tutee solely as a deficient student to whom missing knowledge would be delivered. They described a relationship in which explanation, questioning and perspective-taking could change both participants' understanding.

The post-training feedback later reinforced this orientation. Asked what had mattered, participants repeatedly contrasted facilitation with simply supplying answers and linked the role with acknowledgement of one's own limits: *For the argument here, the significance lies less in the wording of those comments than in the shift of criterion they express: helpfulness is judged by whether the other student can continue thinking and acting, not by how completely the tutor resolves the difficulty* (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 11–12).

Co-authorship therefore requires restraint as well as initiative. The tutor may open a route into the problem, offer an explanation or challenge an assumption, but the intellectual work cannot simply be transferred from one student to another.

Epistemic modesty belongs to the same stance. A tutor who can acknowledge uncertainty is less likely to imitate omniscient authority and better able to keep knowledge itself, rather than the performance of expertise, at the centre of the encounter. Chapter 11 returns to these comments as evaluation evidence; here they clarify what educational co-authorship asks of the helping student.

Participants also valued rotating among the roles of tutor, tutee and observer. Mixed-university practice exposed them to different assumptions about helping, authority and communication, while role rotation made the same encounter visible from more than one position (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 10, 14, 17). The programme thus gave participants opportunities to interpret and refine the emerging role through experience rather than receive it only as a predefined model.

The training itself was therefore partly co-authored by its participants. Their role plays generated cases that trainers could not fully predict. Their responses revealed which activities produced insight, which felt repetitive and which forms of support remained absent. Their requests for more difficult scenarios, clearer institutional procedures, shadowing and supervision became evidence about what preparation for peer tutoring should

include. Co-authorship did not mean that participants designed the entire programme, but their engagement changed what the programme could be understood to have accomplished and what would need to be redesigned.

The Self-Authoring Personality

A related, though conceptually distinct, way of thinking about authorship appears in Kazimierz Obuchowski's theory of [osobowość autorska], which may be translated as the authorial or self-authoring personality. This concept does not concern authorship of a course or educational activity. It describes a mode of personal functioning in which an individual increasingly understands themselves as a source of intentions, interpretations, evaluative standards and responsible action.

In the account developed by Aleksandra Błachnio and Kazimierz Obuchowski, the authorial personality is structured around three broad dimensions: subjectivity, being a person, and a subjective evaluative standard. Such a person does not merely conform to roles and standards received from outside. They construct and revise a conception of themselves and of the world, distance themselves reflectively from immediate desires and experiences, formulate purposes and assume responsibility for the actions through which those purposes are pursued (Błachnio and Obuchowski 2011: 168–175). This is not freedom from all external influence. Authorial functioning develops through an active relationship with culture, knowledge, other people and the changing conditions of life.

Beata Bednarczuk employed this theoretical framework in her research with graduates of Montessori classes. Her study, conducted between 2013 and 2016, included 69 graduates of a Montessori school in Lublin (south of Poland), aged between 16 and 21. Using Obuchowski's POA questionnaire, she examined the overall level and internal structure of their authorial personality. The participants obtained scores significantly above the theoretical scale average across its major dimensions, and almost all displayed what the author described as an optimal level of authorial characteristics (Bednarczuk 2018: 105–119).

These findings should be interpreted with appropriate caution. The study was diagnostic, involved graduates of one school and did not include

a comparison group. It therefore cannot establish that Montessori education caused the measured characteristics. The selection of participants, the institutional history of the school and other educational, familial or social influences may also have shaped the results. Bednarczuk's study nevertheless matters because it connects a theory of *personal authorship* with *identifiable educational conditions* rather than presenting autonomy as an isolated psychological possession.

In her concluding interpretation, Bednarczuk argues that conditions within the Montessori classrooms enabled students to use their own minds and creative capacities in order to form views, revise them through negotiation with others, interpret materials and circumstances, develop an understanding of themselves and other people, assist others, and acquire tools for discovering themselves and the world (Bednarczuk 2018: 119). These are not simply attributes that children either possessed or lacked. They describe opportunities repeatedly made available within an educational environment.

This argument is particularly relevant to the idea of students as co-authors. Authorial personality does not emerge because adults withdraw and leave children entirely to themselves. Montessori environments are carefully prepared; materials, norms, time and adult responsibilities remain present. What changes is the child's position within this structure. The environment is intended to make choice, sustained activity, self-correction, cooperation and responsibility possible. Freedom is therefore neither unlimited choice nor release from educational demands. It is the opportunity to become increasingly capable of giving direction to one's activity within a meaningful and ordered environment.

The analogy with peer tutoring must not be overstated. Bednarczuk researched graduates of Montessori classes, not university peer tutors, and her findings cannot be transferred directly to Peer-EDU. Moreover, self-authorship and co-authorship are not synonymous. The first concerns the formation of a person capable of directing and evaluating their own life; the second concerns participation in shaping a shared educational situation.

Nevertheless, the two ideas illuminate one another. A person capable of co-authoring education needs some capacity to take a position, formulate a judgement, revise it through dialogue and act responsibly upon it. Conversely, personal authorship does not develop in social isolation.

Bednarczuk's interpretation explicitly includes negotiation with others, assistance to other people and the use of an educational environment that permits individual initiative. The self-author is not a sovereign individual writing life without constraints or relationships. Authorship is exercised through engagement with a world that both enables and resists one's intentions.

Peer tutoring can create comparable opportunities at university. The tutor must decide how to approach a difficulty, listen to another interpretation, revise an explanation that has failed and accept responsibility for the limits of the support they provide. The tutee must articulate uncertainty, test ideas and determine whether an explanation makes sense. Both must take a position towards the knowledge under consideration. In this limited but important sense, the tutoring relationship can support not only acquisition of content but also the development of people who experience themselves as capable of initiating, judging, revising and contributing.

Authorship without Sovereign Control

The language of authorship carries risks. It can reinforce an individualistic narrative in which students are told that they alone are responsible for creating their education and future. Within such a narrative, institutional inequalities and failures disappear. Students who do not flourish are interpreted as insufficiently agentic authors of themselves, while universities present whatever opportunities they happen to provide as a neutral field of choice.

This is particularly dangerous in contemporary higher education, where demands for autonomy can accompany reduced teaching contact, fragmented support and the transfer of responsibility from institutions to individuals. Inviting students to become peer tutors may be educationally empowering, but it can also become a means of delegating academic and pastoral labour to them. Co-authorship must not become a euphemism for institutional withdrawal.

The students-as-partners literature offers repeated warnings against such romanticism. Co-creation can encounter resistance, entrenched institutional norms and unequal access. It requires transparency about roles and decision-making, as well as deliberate attention to whose voices are present

and whose participation is made possible (Bovill et al. 2016: 195–208). More recent systematic work similarly shows that dialogue, voice, positioning and agency are not automatic consequences of inviting students into a project. They are interactional achievements shaped by existing power relations (Omland et al. 2025: 1017–1047).

Peer tutoring contains its own asymmetries. A tutor may possess more experience, stronger academic results or greater familiarity with institutional expectations. The role itself may confer authority. The tutee can feel obliged to accept an explanation, conceal disagreement or perform gratitude. Tutors may begin to regard themselves as representatives of correct knowledge, while tutees become positioned as recipients of remediation. Co-authorship is lost when one peer writes the situation for the other.

The solution is not to deny asymmetry. A tutoring encounter is usually initiated because the participants do not possess identical knowledge or experience. Pretending otherwise can make power more difficult to discuss. The educational task is to prevent difference from hardening into domination. Tutors should have enough competence to offer meaningful support, but their role should be organised around enabling the tutee to think, question and act. The tutee must retain epistemic agency: the right and capacity to ask for clarification, challenge an explanation, introduce another interpretation and determine what they still do not understand.

The institution also remains a co-author. It recruits participants, defines the role, provides or withholds time and space, recognises or ignores tutors' work, establishes procedures and decides whether academic staff will supervise the programme. The requests recorded during the Peer-EDU training, including requests for mentoring, consultation, shadowing and clear referral routes, demonstrate that students did not interpret authorship as independence from the university. They wanted to act, but within a structure that made responsible action possible (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–16).

This is consistent with the broader findings of the Peer-EDU diagnostic study. Students and staff valued the student-led authenticity of peer tutoring, but also expected training, organisational support, recognition and safeguards. The project's challenge was therefore not to choose between student agency and institutional structure. It was to create a structure that

protects and enlarges agency rather than replacing it with procedural control (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 113–133).

Conditions for Educational Co-Authorship

Students cannot just be instructed to become co-authors. An invitation to participate does not remove the histories, hierarchies and risks that shape their willingness to speak. Some students have learned that initiative will be welcomed; others have learned that visibility exposes them to judgement. Some can devote unpaid time to partnership and tutoring; others combine study with employment, care or long commutes. Treating all students as equally free to participate can reproduce inequality under the language of empowerment.

Educational co-authorship therefore requires specific *conditions*. First, there must be *some-thing* substantive to co-author. Dialogue detached from subject matter easily becomes a celebration of participation for its own sake. Students need access to meaningful questions, disciplinary practices and problems that resist immediate resolution.

Second, contributions must be capable of producing *consequences*. Collecting student feedback without showing how it informs decisions positions students as sources of data, not as partners. Likewise, asking peer tutors to evaluate training without allowing their accounts to alter future programmes reduces voice to consultation.

Third, *roles* and *limits* must be transparent. Co-authorship does not require identical responsibility. Academic teachers remain accountable for curriculum, assessment and standards; tutors do not certify knowledge; tutees are not passive clients; institutions remain responsible for professional support and safeguarding.

Fourth, students need *resources* with which to contribute. Agency without knowledge, time, preparation or support can become exposure to failure. The Peer-EDU training provided conversational tools and repeated practice, but participants' requests for supervision showed that an initial course could not complete the process of becoming a tutor.

Fifth, the *educational environment must permit revision*. Bednarczuk's interpretation of Montessori conditions is especially suggestive here: authorial

development involved not simply forming one's own views, but being able to change them through negotiation with others (Bednarczuk 2018: 119). Authorship is not demonstrated by defending every initial position. It appears in the capacity to subject one's position to experience, argument and dialogue.

Finally, co-authorship requires *recognition*. A student's contribution must be treated as potentially meaningful without being romanticised as automatically correct. Recognition means granting students the status of persons capable of understanding, interpreting and influencing education. It also means recognising the labour involved when they assume responsibility for supporting others.

Students as co-authors of the educational situation are therefore neither 'sovereign designers' nor 'assistants' enlisted to maintain an institution created elsewhere. They are participants whose actions help determine whether a lecture becomes an encounter with knowledge, whether a seminar develops into shared inquiry and whether tutoring becomes transmission or collaborative study.

Peer-EDU offers a concrete setting in which this authorship begins to take form. Its prospective tutors learned that supporting another student does not mean supplying a ready-made solution. They practised moving between positions, discovered the limits of their knowledge and contributed their own experiences to the redesign of the programme. These are still early and bounded forms of authorship. They do not by themselves transform institutional power or prove that tutoring practice will realise the aspirations expressed during training.

They do, however, disclose another possibility for university education. Students can be recognised not only as people whose development the university seeks to support, but as people through whom the educational environment itself is created. To study with peers is, in this sense, to participate in writing a shared situation whose course no single participant can fully determine, and for whose quality teachers, students and institutions remain differently but genuinely responsible.

1.4. Agency, Responsibility and Educational Freedom

The language of agency has become increasingly prominent in higher education. Students are expected to take ownership of their studies, make informed choices, manage their time, seek feedback, participate actively and assume responsibility for their development. In Peer-EDU, agency appears in an especially tangible form. A student is invited to move beyond managing their own studies and to become capable of supporting another person's engagement with knowledge.

The peer tutor is expected to listen, ask questions, exercise judgement, recognise limits and act without waiting for an academic teacher to determine every next step. Agency cannot be considered separately from responsibility and freedom. Students need sufficient scope to exercise judgement, but that scope only becomes educationally meaningful when they understand what they are responsible for and have the competence and support needed to act. Otherwise, calls for agency may result either in compliance with decisions made elsewhere or in students being left with responsibilities they are not prepared to carry. The three concepts therefore qualify one another: agency concerns the capacity to initiate and influence action; responsibility concerns answerability for what one does, omits or undertakes; educational freedom concerns the meaningful space in which judgement and action become possible.

This relationship is central to the argument of Peer-EDU. The project did not aim simply to give students more tasks. Nor did it seek to replace academic teachers with less expensive student assistants. It explored whether students could assume a *distinctive educational role* while remaining supported by the institution and while preserving the freedom and agency of the students with whom they worked. The resulting tension between student initiative and institutional responsibility, between freedom and boundaries, and between helping another person and taking over their work runs through both the diagnostic research and the evaluation of the training programme.

Agency as Situated Capacity to Act

Agency is sometimes presented as an individual possession: a relatively stable capacity that enables a person to set goals, make decisions and act upon the world. This view captures an important dimension of human action, but it can obscure the extent to which agency depends upon relationships, recognition and institutional conditions. Students may possess intentions and capabilities yet find few legitimate opportunities to exercise them. Conversely, a university may repeatedly demand initiative while withholding the information, time, security or authority required for meaningful action.

The research on agency in interprofessional education illustrates this multidimensionality. Across the literature, agency has been variously conceptualised as an individual capacity to act intentionally, a relational capacity to work with others towards shared purposes, and a collective or contextual capacity to influence a wider environment. Students experienced agency most clearly when they were trusted with authentic responsibility, treated as legitimate participants and able to act within a supportive structure. It was weakened when hierarchical cultures, ambiguous roles or institutional arrangements positioned them as passive observers or dependent performers.

Although interprofessional medical education differs substantially from peer tutoring, the comparison is useful. In both contexts, students are asked to act in a role that is real but not yet fully professional. Their agency depends neither on being left entirely alone nor on having every action predetermined. Research in interprofessional education suggests that carefully scaffolded challenge, reflective practice, iterative feedback, stable peer relationships and facilitative educators can support agency. When educators reassert control at every moment, students' action becomes simulated; when they withdraw too far, responsibility exceeds students' preparation (Krystalidou et al. 2024: 1607–1624; Spence et al. 2025: 972–982).

This relational and contextual account is consistent with the earlier understanding of students as co-authors of educational situations. Agency is not exercised in a vacuum. The peer tutor acts in relation to a tutee, a subject matter, an academic programme and an institutional framework. Their

contribution can change the educational situation, but what they can responsibly do depends upon the conditions established around them.

Self-determination theory provides one way of explaining these conditions. Richard Ryan and Edward Deci distinguish autonomy from mere independence. Autonomy concerns volition: experiencing one's conduct as meaningfully endorsed rather than as externally compelled. A person may act autonomously while relying upon others, accepting guidance or participating in a structured practice. Conversely, someone apparently acting alone may remain governed by fear, coercion or expectations they have not meaningfully accepted. Within self-determination theory, autonomy is considered together with competence and relatedness. Environments that support all three needs are more likely to foster sustained motivation, internalisation and responsible involvement than environments based primarily on control or reward (Ryan and Deci 2000: 68–78; Deci and Ryan 2000: 227–268).

This threefold framework is particularly relevant to Peer-EDU. (1) Autonomy concerns whether students enter the tutoring relationship voluntarily and can exercise judgement within it. (2) Competence concerns whether they possess sufficient knowledge, conversational resources and practical preparation to act effectively. (3) Relatedness concerns whether they experience themselves as supported by tutees, other tutors, trainers and academic staff.

Removing structure does not necessarily support any of these needs. A tutor who is told to “be autonomous” but receives no role description, supervision or referral pathway may experience exposure rather than freedom. Likewise, a tutee who is told to take responsibility for their studies but is left to decipher academic conventions alone has not necessarily been granted meaningful agency. The Peer-EDU evaluation makes this point especially clearly. After the international training, sixteen of nineteen participants reported feeling more or much more confident, yet only seven considered themselves fully prepared to begin tutoring; nine felt mostly prepared and three not yet prepared. Participants valued role play, practical exercises and conversational structures, but also asked for shadowing, mentoring, consultation and clearer information about local procedures (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7, 12–16).

Their responses show that confidence, agency and independence are not interchangeable. Participants asked for opportunities to observe more experienced tutors, access to an academic for consultation and support with the uncertainty of beginning practice (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12). These requests do not express reluctance to assume agency. They identify the relational conditions under which agency can become responsible action.

Responsibility as Answerability

The word responsibility is often given an attractive but historically simplified interpretation as response-ability: the capacity to respond. This formulation can be pedagogically suggestive, but it should not be mistaken for a complete etymology. The history of the term reaches through the Latin *respondēre*, meaning to answer, reply, pledge or answer for something, and through legal and political traditions of answerability and obligation. The modern noun developed within a much more complex history than a straightforward combination of “response” and “ability” (Mantovani 2022: 27–42). Nevertheless, the connection with answering remains conceptually intriguing. To be responsible is not merely to cause an event or perform an assigned duty. It is to be placed in a relation in which one may be called upon to account for an action: why it was undertaken, what values guided it, what consequences were foreseeable, and whether the person could and should have acted otherwise.

Roman Ingarden’s analysis in his “Booklet on Man” [Książeczka o człowieku] is particularly useful because it distinguishes several situations that are often compressed into the single word “responsibility”. He examines: bearing or being responsible for something; assuming responsibility; being held responsible or called to account; acting responsibly.

These situations are connected but not identical. A person may bear responsibility without fully acknowledging it. They may voluntarily assume responsibility for a task. They may later be asked to answer for what occurred. They may also act responsibly before any external judgement takes place, because their conduct is guided by recognition of relevant values and consequences (Ingarden 1987: 71–169). The distinctions allow the responsibility of the peer tutor to be described more precisely.

A tutor assumes responsibility when they voluntarily undertake the role. This requires more than being selected or certified. The person must understand, at least provisionally, what the role entails and what its limits are. The tutor bears responsibility for the quality and integrity of their own conduct: preparation, honesty, confidentiality, respect, appropriate use of knowledge and willingness to acknowledge uncertainty. The tutor may be held responsible when they violate agreed boundaries, present unreliable information as certain, misuse their position or fail to follow a necessary referral procedure. Finally, the tutor acts responsibly when they exercise judgement before a problem has become a formal violation, for example when they notice that a conversation exceeds their competence, resist the temptation to perform expertise, ask for consultation or refer a tutee to a more appropriate source of support.

This does not mean that the tutor becomes responsible for the tutee's academic success, emotional wellbeing or life decisions. Such an expansion of responsibility would be both unrealistic and ethically hazardous. The tutor is responsible to the other person and for the manner in which they enact the tutoring role, but not instead of the other person.

The tutee retains responsibility for their studying, choices and use of the support offered. The academic teacher retains responsibility for curriculum, assessment, disciplinary standards and the quality of teaching. The programme coordinator retains responsibility for recruitment, preparation, supervision and procedures. The institution retains responsibility for ensuring access to professional academic, disability and psychological services. Responsibility in peer tutoring is therefore distributed, but it is not dissolved. Distribution must make it clearer who is answerable for what.

This is an important correction to interpretations of student agency that silently transfer institutional duties to individuals. The literature review undertaken in the first stage of Peer-EDU identified this danger explicitly. Brzezińska and Appelt warn that peer tutoring can lead to the delegation of responsibility for the educational process and its outcomes to the student tutor.

Academic teachers may lose contact with students or withdraw from necessary oversight; institutions may subsequently respond to the resulting uncertainty with excessive control. The movement can thus resemble

a pendulum: first responsibility is abandoned, and then autonomy is restricted in an attempt to regain control (Brzezińska and Appelt 2013: 13–29). The ethical problem is not solved by choosing either complete teacher control or complete student independence. Responsible peer tutoring requires an arrangement in which different actors remain present and answerable without attempting to perform one another's roles.

The Freedom Not to Give the Answer

The clearest expression of educational freedom in the Peer-EDU material appears in a participant's description of the tutor's task: "I don't need to give answers; I should instead offer a situation in which my tutee comes up with the solution themselves". A participant formulation cited earlier becomes relevant here for a different reason: it locates the tutor's freedom in not having to prove competence by supplying an answer immediately (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 11).

The sentence is significant because it attributes freedom to both sides of the relationship. The tutor is freed from the expectation that competence must be demonstrated by immediately providing a correct answer. The tutee retains both the freedom and the responsibility to think, test possibilities and arrive at an understanding that is not simply borrowed from another person. This is not a passive form of non-interference. The tutor does something: listens, asks, redirects attention, offers a structure, challenges an assumption or helps divide a problem into manageable parts. Yet the tutor refrains from occupying the other person's place. Their agency is exercised in order to preserve and support the agency of the tutee.

Acknowledging the limits of one's knowledge matters for the same reason (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12). Educational freedom includes the possibility of saying that something needs to be checked, discussed with an academic or referred elsewhere. Without that possibility, responsibility becomes performance: the tutor feels compelled to appear certain because the role has been associated with superior knowledge and status.

Freedom within Limits

Educational freedom is sometimes imagined as the absence of restrictions. From this perspective, every boundary appears as a limitation imposed upon agency. Yet education cannot exist without forms, distinctions and demands. A field of study has concepts, evidence, methods and standards of argument. A tutoring relationship has ethical limits. A university has responsibilities concerning academic integrity, confidentiality, accessibility and safety.

A more adequate formulation is therefore freedom within limits, understood not as a restricted space granted within an otherwise controlling system, but as freedom made possible by boundaries that give educational activity a recognisable form. Such limits are familiar in academic life. Disciplinary methods constrain what counts as an adequate claim while making rigorous inquiry possible; confidentiality supports trust by restricting the circulation of information; and referral boundaries allow tutors to remain attentive without assuming responsibilities that belong to professional services.

Limits become educationally defensible when they are relevant to the purpose of the practice, visible and intelligible to participants, proportionate to the risks involved, open to discussion and revision, applied without arbitrary domination, and designed to enlarge rather than suppress responsible action.

This distinction is clearly visible in the Peer-EDU evaluation. Participants did not ask simply to be released from rules. They requested clearer boundaries, difficult scenarios, procedures for emotionally demanding situations and access to people who could help them decide what to do. The ratings for ethical boundaries and professionalism were positive but lower than those for communication and practical work, while open responses repeatedly called for further preparation in handling boundary violations and distress (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–7, 12–16).

Their requests indicate that freedom and structure were not experienced as opposites. Unclear limits restricted agency because participants did not know what decisions they were authorised or prepared to make.

Clearer boundaries could enlarge freedom by allowing tutors to act without either paralysis or overreach.

The project's emerging principle of a lightweight-but-structured model follows the same logic. Peer tutoring should remain student-led, relational and adaptable, but it requires visible scaffolding: transparent selection, preparation, supervision, referral pathways, recognition and opportunities for reflection. Too little structure exposes students and permits the institution to withdraw. Too much structure turns the peer tutor into an implementer of scripts and administrative procedures. Educational freedom lies between these failures, though not as a simple compromise. Its quality depends on whether the structure enables students to exercise judgement.

Academic Freedom and the University as a Place of Study

The question of educational freedom also belongs to the intellectual history of the university. In the German university tradition, academic freedom was associated with *Lehrfreiheit*, the freedom to teach and pursue inquiry, and *Lernfreiheit*, the student's freedom to study. These concepts did not imply that teachers and students could simply do whatever they wished. They concerned freedom from inappropriate external interference in the pursuit of knowledge and the organisation of one's intellectual work. Wilhelm von Humboldt's unfinished memorandum on the organisation of the University of Berlin offers a particularly relevant formulation. Higher education, in his account, differs from school because knowledge is no longer presented only as complete and settled. The university approaches science or scholarship (*Wissenschaft*) as a problem that has not been finally resolved. Consequently, the relation between teacher and student changes: "the former does not exist for the latter, both exist for science" (Humboldt 1970 [1810]: 244).

The statement should not be read as diminishing the teacher's educational responsibility. It relocates the relationship. The teacher is not simply a service provider whose task is to satisfy the student, while the student is not merely an object upon whom instruction is performed. Both are oriented towards something that exceeds their immediate preferences:

a question, a discipline, a reality that remains open to inquiry. Humboldt also associates intellectual work with both freedom and collaboration, describing inquiry as continuously renewed through the ways in which one person's work stimulates that of others (Humboldt 1970 [1810]: 242–250).

Peer tutoring can be interpreted as a modest contemporary enactment of this idealistic and utopian principle. Tutor and tutee do not occupy identical positions, but neither is reducible to a supplier or recipient of answers. Both exist, for the duration of the encounter, in relation to something being studied. The tutor's experience may allow them to open a path; the tutee's questions may reveal assumptions that the tutor has ceased to notice. Knowledge mediates the relationship without belonging exclusively to either participant.

This interpretation also helps resist the 'learnification' of peer tutoring. If the practice is justified only because it improves individual learning outcomes, freedom is easily reduced to choice of strategy and responsibility to self-management. The Humboldtian tradition recalls that academic freedom concerns participation in a collective pursuit of knowledge. Its object is not merely the optimisation of the individual learner but the possibility of inquiry. At the same time, the Humboldtian ideal cannot simply be reproduced as though contemporary universities still provided unrestricted freedom of study. Modular programmes, tightly specified outcomes, assessment regimes, timetables, financial constraints and unequal access all condition what teachers and students can do. Peer tutoring takes place within these structures rather than outside them. It can create small spaces of inquiry and intellectual reciprocity, but it cannot substitute for the broader academic freedoms that institutions must protect.

Freedom, Knowledge and Power

From this perspective, freedom should not be romanticised as a space that appears once authority withdraws. Tomasz Szkudlarek's analysis of knowledge and freedom in postmodern pedagogies is useful precisely because it unsettles the assumption that emancipation can be achieved by simply removing traditional forms of control. Knowledge is local, partial and entangled with processes of social regulation and dispersed relations of power.

Educational subjects do not first exist as entirely free individuals who are later constrained by institutions; they are formed within discourses, practices and relations that both enable and limit action (Szkudlarek 1993).

This matters for peer tutoring because “peer” does not mean power-free. The tutor may possess stronger academic results, greater linguistic confidence, more institutional knowledge or a socially privileged position. Selection and certification can intensify these differences by formally recognising one student as capable of helping and another as needing help. Even the conversational tools used during training can become techniques of control if the tutor employs them to lead the tutee towards a predetermined answer while maintaining the appearance of choice.

Agency therefore requires critical attention not only to whether students can act but also to the forms of action made available to them. Who defines the problem? Whose interpretation counts as legitimate? Can the tutee reject advice? Can the tutor question institutional procedures? Are students invited to shape the programme itself, or merely to deliver a model designed elsewhere?

The Peer-EDU diagnostic study shows why these questions cannot be solved through a universal template. Students and staff at the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta operated within different educational and institutional cultures. They expressed shared support for peer tutoring but differed in their prior experience, available infrastructures and assumptions about formalisation. The programme therefore has to preserve common ethical principles while allowing local academic communities to participate in designing its forms (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 108–136).

Teresa Bauman’s analysis of innovation in academic teaching reinforces this point. She criticises reforms introduced through uniform, top-down instruction, arguing that imposed standardisation can deactivate the innovative potential of academic communities and destroy the distinctiveness of local institutions. Innovation cannot be reduced to implementing something previously designed by an external authority; it requires conditions in which those affected can interpret, adapt and co-create change (Bauman 2011: 267–276).

Peer-EDU should therefore not become a fixed ‘package’ transported unchanged from one university to another. Its agency-supporting potential depends partly on whether students, tutors, supervisors and local coordinators can modify the programme in response to their educational contexts. The project itself must embody the agency it seeks to foster.

Responsibility without Institutional Withdrawal

Emphasising student agency can serve radically different institutional purposes. It can recognise students as capable *participants* whose judgement and contribution matter. It can also legitimate the withdrawal of institutional support: students are told to become autonomous because the university no longer intends to accompany them.

This distinction is decisive for Peer-EDU. Peer tutoring cannot be ethically justified as a means of transferring teaching, advising or emotional care to unpaid students. The tutor’s responsibility must be limited by the continued responsibility of the institution. Training alone is not enough. If students are expected to respond to difficult situations, they need clear escalation pathways. If they are asked to commit time and relational labour, that contribution requires recognition. If mistakes can have consequences, supervision and opportunities for case discussion must remain available.

Evidence from interprofessional education supports this contextual understanding of agency. Authentic responsibility can develop confidence and professional recognition, but only where students are prepared, trusted and supported. Hierarchical workplace cultures and structural pressures can rapidly suppress agency developed within educational programmes. The problem is therefore not only whether individuals have acquired the right competences; it is whether the environment permits those competences to be responsibly exercised.

The same principle applies to peer tutors. A programme may cultivate listening, questioning and reflective judgement during training, yet these capacities will remain fragile if the local implementation offers no room, time, supervision or recognised status. The gap observed in the Peer-EDU evaluation between confidence and complete readiness should not be interpreted

as a deficiency that students must overcome individually. It signals the transition from simulated agency to institutionally situated responsibility.

Supported Agency as a Principle of Peer-EDU

The relationship developed across this section can be condensed in the idea of supported agency. Supported agency is not controlled action. Students must have a genuine space for judgement, initiative and interpretation. Nor is it unsupported independence. The institution remains present through preparation, resources, recognition, supervision and clearly distributed responsibilities.

For Peer-EDU, supported agency entails at least the following principles:

- The tutor role is undertaken voluntarily and with an informed understanding of its demands. Students should be able to refuse or leave the role without educational penalty.
- Tutors receive preparation that develops not only techniques but judgement. Knowing when a question, difficulty or disclosure exceeds the tutor's role is part of competence rather than evidence of failure.
- Tutees retain epistemic and practical agency. The tutor does not complete their work, make decisions for them or treat the relationship as an opportunity to display superiority.
- Boundaries are explained through cases and practice, not merely listed in a code. Students need to experience how competing responsibilities emerge in ambiguous situations.
- Responsibility is distributed explicitly. Tutors, tutees, academic supervisors, coordinators and specialist services should know what each can be expected to do.
- Support remains available after initial training. Shadowing, consultation, supervision and peer case discussion create a gradual passage from preparation to independent practice.
- Tutors have a voice in the continuing development of the programme. Their experience should be treated as evidence capable of changing procedures, training and institutional policy.
- Academic teachers and universities do not withdraw. Student initiative supplements and transforms the educational ecology; it does not

absolve the institution of responsibility for teaching and student support.

These principles describe freedom within limits, but they also mark the limits of those limits. Structures are justified only insofar as they protect people, academic integrity and the possibility of responsible study. When procedures become ends in themselves, they suppress precisely the judgement the programme seeks to develop.

Agency, responsibility and educational freedom thus converge in the tutoring encounter. The tutor must be free enough to respond to a person rather than merely execute a script, competent enough to make meaningful judgements, and responsible enough to recognise the boundaries of their role. The tutee must remain free to think, question and decline assistance. The institution must create and protect the conditions under which both can act without transferring its own obligations onto them.

Peer-EDU (or any other peer tutoring model) does not resolve these tensions once and for all. Its significance lies partly in making them visible. It shows that students can take meaningful responsibility for one another's studying, but also that such responsibility becomes educationally valuable only when it remains relational, bounded and institutionally supported. Agency is not what remains after structure disappears. It is what becomes possible when structure, freedom and answerability are placed into a responsible relationship.

1.5. Peer Tutoring as Support, Educational Practice and Institutional Arrangement

Peer tutoring has three interconnected dimensions: it provides support to students experiencing academic or social difficulties; it constitutes an educational practice through which students study with and teach one another; and it requires an institutional arrangement encompassing recruitment, preparation, coordination, recognition, supervision, infrastructure and evaluation. None of these dimensions adequately describes the practice on its own.

Reducing peer tutoring to support risks obscuring its educational character and positioning tutors mainly as providers of assistance. Treating it simply as a teaching method, by contrast, leaves the material and organisational conditions of the encounter largely invisible. An exclusively institutional perspective creates another risk: procedures may begin to dominate the relationships they were designed to support. The challenge is therefore to keep these three dimensions connected without allowing any one of them to dominate the others.

This question became increasingly important during Peer-EDU. The project began from the recognition that the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta lacked sufficiently developed structures for implementing peer tutoring, despite recognising its potential contribution to first-year transition, academic engagement, integration and student development. The aim was therefore not merely to encourage students to help one another. Informal peer assistance already existed, as it does in most universities. Peer-EDU sought to investigate how such assistance might be transformed into a deliberately prepared and institutionally supported practice without destroying the relational proximity and student initiative from which much of its value derives (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 8–12).

The resulting problem is more complex than the establishment of another student service. Peer tutoring is located at the intersection of personal assistance, academic work and institutional responsibility. Its quality depends on the relationship between these dimensions.

Support: Assistance without Deficit-Making

The language of support appears generous and uncontroversial. Universities offer academic support, transition support, language support, well-being support and support for particular groups of students. Peer tutoring seems to fit naturally within this landscape: a student who has mastered a subject, completed a course or learned how to navigate university life supports another student who is still struggling.

The asymmetry embedded in this formulation should not be ignored. To be identified as someone needing support can imply that one lacks something already possessed by the ordinary or successful student. The tutee is

easily positioned as academically weak, insufficiently independent or inadequately prepared, while the institutional conditions contributing to the difficulty remain unexamined. Peer tutoring can then become a remedial mechanism directed towards supposedly deficient individuals rather than an ordinary element of an academic community.

This risk is especially pronounced when support is attached to particular categories of students. Programmes intended for first-generation, international, disabled or otherwise underrepresented students may widen access to valuable relationships and knowledge. They may also publicly *mark* or *label* those students as requiring correction or special assistance before they can participate on equal terms. A non-deficit approach therefore begins not by asking which students need to be 'repaired', but by examining where access to academic practices, relationships and institutional knowledge is unevenly distributed.

One way of reducing stigmatisation is to organise peer support around educational situations rather than deficient populations: demanding introductory courses, difficult transition points, unfamiliar assessment formats or disciplinary practices that are commonly experienced as challenging. The Arqus guidelines for inclusive peer tutoring similarly frame peer tutoring as part of an inclusive learning environment intended to support transition, academic integration and engagement rather than as a service reserved exclusively for students classified as weak (Arqus European University Alliance 2023).

The Peer-EDU diagnostic findings support this broader understanding. Across the three partner universities, students and academic staff associated peer tutoring not only with improved academic performance but also with confidence, communication, social integration, inclusivity and a less intimidating route to assistance. Students described peer tutoring as more informal, flexible and psychologically accessible than some teacher–student encounters. At the same time, both students and staff expressed concern about whether tutors would possess sufficient subject knowledge and pedagogical competence to offer reliable support (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–114, 126–129).

These concerns show that support is never simply the transfer of something helpful from one person to another. It is an educational relationship

requiring trust. The tutee must have reason to believe that the tutor's contribution is credible and that admitting uncertainty will not result in humiliation, dependency or the inappropriate circulation of personal information. Trust cannot be assumed from the fact that both participants are students. Research on near-peer teaching has linked its accessibility to social congruence, referring to the perceived interpersonal proximity between tutor and tutee, and cognitive congruence, referring to the tutor's capacity to express disciplinary ideas in language and steps that remain accessible to a less experienced student (Lockspeiser et al. 2008: 361–372).

This proximity can be educationally valuable. A student who recently encountered the same course, concept or assessment may remember difficulties that have become invisible to a more experienced academic teacher. The tutor may know which explanation first made sense, which misunderstanding is common and which institutional expectation is likely to remain tacit. Yet proximity does not guarantee pedagogical judgement. A tutor can confidently reproduce a misconception, offer an effective shortcut that prevents deeper understanding or interpret their own successful strategy as universally appropriate.

Support therefore needs an orientation. Is the aim to provide an answer, complete an immediate task, enable understanding, support future independence, strengthen belonging or help the student reach another service? These purposes are related but not identical. A session organised around preparation for an examination may differ significantly from one addressing academic writing, time management, disciplinary orientation or transition into university life. The expression peer tutoring can conceal these differences if it is used as a generic name for every form of student-to-student assistance.

The distinction between peer tutoring and peer mentoring is relevant here. Peer tutoring is usually organised around academic content, tasks or practices, whereas mentoring often encompasses transition, navigation, identity and psychosocial support. Actual programmes may combine both, and tutoring conversations frequently extend beyond the initial academic question. Nevertheless, role clarity matters. A tutor who believes they are responsible for solving every problem disclosed by a tutee can quickly move beyond their competence. Conversely, a programme designed so narrowly

that tutors must ignore the relational and institutional context of academic difficulty may fail to recognise what the student actually needs.

Peer-EDU participants articulated this uncertainty with particular force in relation to emotional distress. They understood that referral to professional support might be necessary, but also recognised that a tutee may first disclose difficulty to someone they trust. Their questions did not indicate a desire to become counsellors. They revealed the inadequacy of a rigid division in which academic support is imagined as entirely cognitive and emotional experience is assigned elsewhere. The tutor needs to be able to listen humanely while recognising when the continuation of the conversation requires another form of expertise (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–13).

Peer tutoring as support should therefore not be reduced either to remediation or to unbounded care. It is a situated response to another person's difficulty, offered within a clearly understood but relationally enacted role. Its purpose is not to make the tutee dependent upon a more successful peer, but to make continued study more possible.

From Supportive Relationship to Educational Practice

Not every helpful encounter between students constitutes peer tutoring. Students explain concepts to one another, exchange notes, discuss assignments and offer advice without naming these interactions as formal educational practices. Such assistance can be significant, and institutions should not assume that only organised activity has educational value. Yet a peer tutoring programme entails a degree of intentionality that distinguishes it from spontaneous help.

To describe peer tutoring as an educational practice is to ask about its purposes, content, roles, forms of interaction and standards of judgement. It means recognising that the tutor is doing something pedagogical, even though they are not a professional academic teacher. The tutor selects examples, sequences questions, notices misunderstanding, offers feedback and decides when to intervene or wait. The tutee interprets, tests, responds, resists and reformulates. Something is being studied, and the relation between participants affects how access to it is opened or closed.

The literature reviewed in the first Peer-EDU report demonstrates the diversity concealed beneath the singular expression peer tutoring. Topping's influential typology differentiated programmes according to curricular content, participant characteristics, differences in ability or experience, continuity of roles, group size, setting, time, voluntariness and reinforcement. Same-level reciprocal tutoring, cross-level near-peer tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, embedded tutoring and online programmes are not interchangeable versions of one stable method. Each creates different relations of knowledge, authority and responsibility (Topping 1996: 321–345).

A systematic review of challenges in higher education similarly found that the organisation of roles matters. Equal-status reciprocal arrangements generate different difficulties from programmes in which a senior student occupies a relatively stable teaching role, and cross-institutional forms introduce additional questions of cultural interpretation, coordination and accountability (Widoro, Situmorang and Chaeruman 2024: 68–87). The Peer-EDU literature review therefore did not identify one universally effective model. It mapped practices whose educational value depends on how the relation among tutor, tutee, subject matter and institution is arranged (Jendza et al. 2026: 3–12, 43–44).

This point protects our book from a somehow common conceptual shortcut. Peer tutoring cannot be justified merely by citing evidence that some form of peer-assisted education has improved some outcome in another context. A structured programme supporting first-year engineering students in a demanding course, a reciprocal writing activity, an online language-tutoring scheme and a cross-year clinical skills programme may all be described as peer tutoring. Their educational mechanisms, participants and purposes differ. Evidence must therefore be interpreted with attention to the design through which an effect was produced.

The critical review conducted by Stigmar identified thirty higher education studies in which students took teaching roles. It reported benefits for both tutors and tutees but also significant variation in design, theoretical framing and research quality. Social constructivism was the most common theoretical orientation, while much of the evidence relied on relatively limited pre- and post-intervention or quasi-experimental designs (Stigmar 2016: 124–136). A systematic review of medical students acting as peer

tutors likewise found substantial perceived benefits but mixed evidence concerning the accuracy of peer assessment and no strong basis for concluding that tutoring necessarily improved tutors' own examination performance (Burgess, McGregor and Mellis 2014).

The evidence supports serious interest in peer tutoring, but not universal claims about its effectiveness. It also shifts attention from the mere presence of peer interaction to its pedagogical quality. The question is not simply whether students teach students, but what they are enabled to do together.

For instance, Boud, Cohen and Sampson argue that the educational potential of peer studying does not lie in leaving students to interact spontaneously while teachers retreat. Informal peer learning can be made more visible and deliberately incorporated into the design of higher education, but doing so requires attention to tasks, expectations, group processes, assessment and facilitation (Boud, Cohen and Sampson 2001). Peer tutoring thus occupies an intermediate position between informal interaction and professional teaching. It retains some of the proximity and mutuality of peer relationships while introducing an explicit educational purpose.

The Peer-EDU training programme attempted to give practical form to this purpose. Participants encountered conversational structures such as the Question Funnel and the GROW model, practised active listening and rotated through the positions of tutor, tutee and observer. They repeatedly identified role play and mini-scenarios as especially valuable because these activities allowed them to "see how it really looks like" rather than merely discuss tutoring abstractly. Communication skills and practical exercises received some of the highest ratings in the post-training evaluation (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–11).

This emphasis on practice is very telling. Tutoring competence does not consist simply in possessing subject knowledge or memorising a sequence of questions. A tutor must notice the particular situation: what the tutee understands, where reasoning changes direction, whether silence expresses thinking or withdrawal, and when an explanation should be offered, revised or withheld. Structured tools can support such judgement, but they cannot replace it.

The same applies to the repeated formulation that the tutor should *guide* the tutee towards a solution rather than *provide* one. As an educational principle, this protects the tutee's agency. As a rigid technique, however, it can become artificial. There are moments when direct explanation is educationally appropriate, just as there are moments when another question would only frustrate the student. Facilitation should not be turned into a ritual in which the tutor secretly knows the answer but forces the tutee to discover it through an extended sequence of hints. The educational question is not whether the tutor speaks or remains silent, but whether their intervention supports the other person's growing relation to the subject matter.

Peer tutoring is therefore also a practice of judgement rather than the application of a script. Preparation matters because it expands the tutor's repertoire and helps them recognise the consequences of different responses. Supervision matters because judgement develops through reflection on actual and simulated cases. The participant who wanted to shadow another tutor was not asking for a substitute for agency. They were asking for access to practice as something observable, discussable and gradually inhabited.

The programme also revealed that the educational practice extends beyond the dyad. During role play, observers noticed patterns that participants inside the conversation could not see. Debriefing transformed individual experience into shared inquiry. Cross-university groups exposed participants to different interpretations of the same situation. In this sense, preparation for tutoring became itself a form of peer study. Participants were not simply trained to implement a model; they contributed to clarifying what the model would need to become.

The Institution Is Already Present

Peer tutoring is often contrasted with formal academic teaching. Its value is associated with informality, authenticity and student ownership. This contrast can create the impression that institutional involvement begins only when the university decides to formalise an otherwise natural relationship. In reality, the institution is already present.

It is present in the curricula that define what students are expected to know, the assessments around which many tutoring requests arise, the

timetables determining when students can meet, the buildings and digital systems through which contact becomes possible, and the academic hierarchies affecting whether a peer's explanation will be trusted. It is present in inequalities of time, money and familiarity that shape who can volunteer as a tutor and who can attend sessions. Even informal peer help takes place within conditions the university has helped to create. Once an activity is publicly named as a university peer tutoring programme, institutional responsibility becomes more explicit. Someone decides:

- who may become a tutor;
- whether subject knowledge will be assessed;
- what preparation is required;
- how tutors and tutees are brought together;
- where meetings occur;
- what confidentiality means;
- how concerns are escalated;
- whether tutors receive payment, credit or recognition;
- who responds when the relationship fails;
- what information is collected;
- how quality and equity are evaluated.

These are not administrative details added after the educational design has been completed. They partly determine what kind of educational practice becomes possible. Ross and Cameron's planning framework for peer-assisted learning makes this point through a sequence of questions concerning rationale, outcomes, participants, recruitment, training, resources, faculty support, evaluation and sustainability. Its value lies less in prescribing one model than in showing that a credible programme must connect educational theory with operational decisions and local context (Ross and Cameron 2007: 527–545).

The Peer-EDU diagnostic research similarly asked respondents not only whether they valued peer tutoring but what forms of support they believed necessary for its implementation. Across the three universities, students and academic staff consistently prioritised trained tutors, communication and interpersonal preparation, organisational coordination and visible institutional endorsement. They identified insufficient time, weak infrastructure, lack of clear responsibility, limited recognition and low programme visibility

as significant barriers. Technological readiness was perceived as particularly uneven at the University of Gdańsk and the University of Malta, while respondents at the University of Split drew attention administrative clarity (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 102–107, 120–133).

These findings show why goodwill is not an implementation strategy. Students may be willing to support one another, but willingness cannot provide a booking system, an accessible meeting room, protection of personal information or a contact person available when a situation exceeds the tutor's role. Nor can voluntary enthusiasm alone ensure that the programme continues after the most committed individuals graduate. The voices of participants after the Peer-EDU training make the institutional dimension especially concrete. Asked what additional support they needed, students referred to: "how the program will look like in practice" and to knowing whom to contact when problems arose – the "technical stuff" surrounding the work (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12).

Others wanted a lecturer whom they could consult or an opportunity to shadow an experienced tutor. Their uncertainty was not principally about whether peer tutoring was valuable. It concerned the passage from an intensive and supportive international training environment to actual practice within their home institutions. This passage cannot be achieved through individual confidence alone. Training creates a possibility; institutional arrangements determine whether it can become sustainable and safe practice.

The Paradox of Institutionalisation

Some degree of institutionalisation is necessary if peer tutoring is to remain accessible, safe and sustainable. Without preparation, coordination and continuity, programmes may depend on informal networks and on the unpaid commitment of a small number of students. At the same time, institutionalisation can alter the character of the practice when standardisation, reporting requirements and performance indicators begin to determine how tutoring is conducted.

On the other hand, too much institutional involvement can produce another failure. Peer tutoring may become a *standardised service* governed by

rigid scripts, compulsory reporting and performance indicators. Tutors can be transformed into quasi-employees expected to deliver predetermined interventions, while tutees become clients processed through a support system. The spontaneity and mutual recognition associated with peer relationships may be displaced by certification, surveillance and bureaucratic accountability.

Falchikov's analysis of peer tutoring in higher education repeatedly attends to this tension between informal peer interaction and organised educational schemes. Formalisation can provide purpose, preparation and continuity, but it can also alter status relations and generate role conflict (Falchikov 2001). Peer-EDU respondents expressed a similar ambivalence. Students valued the authenticity and relative informality of peer relations, yet wanted tutor competence and university backing. Some respondents at the University of Split worried that systematising something "naturally interpersonal" might deprive it of its meaning, while Maltese participants raised concerns that hierarchy, competition or uneven recognition could undermine collaboration (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 123–129).

The distinction should therefore not be drawn between supposedly authentic informal relations and inherently bureaucratic formal programmes. Informal networks may reproduce social privilege and exclusion, while well-designed institutional arrangements can improve transparency, protect boundaries and provide resources unavailable through spontaneous peer support.

The more useful distinction is between institutional arrangements that support the educational relationship and arrangements that attempt to own it. A supportive institution creates the conditions for tutors and tutees to exercise judgement. It prepares participants, explains roles, provides spaces and contact points, recognises labour and remains available when problems arise. It does not prescribe every utterance or require tutors to treat each encounter as identical.

An owning institution defines success so narrowly that the relationship becomes an instrument for delivering its *targets*. It may focus on the number of sessions, pass rates or retention indicators while overlooking what participants are actually doing and experiencing. It may use the language

of student agency while requiring students to implement decisions made elsewhere.

This distinction is also visible in research with undergraduate peer tutors. Abbot, Graf and Chatfield found that tutors' experiences were shaped by relationships with academic staff, clarity of expectations and their ambiguous position between student and teacher. Tutors valued meaningful autonomy but also needed to know what faculty expected and how their contribution related to the wider course (Abbot, Graf and Chatfield 2018: 245–261). Institutional absence and institutional domination can therefore produce similar confusion: in both cases, tutors are uncertain about the meaning and limits of their role.

Coordination without Pedagogical Capture

A sustainable programme requires coordination. Someone must organise communication, respond to participants, maintain records, arrange training and ensure continuity. Yet coordination should not be confused with pedagogical control.

The coordinator's role is not to determine the content of every tutoring conversation. It is to hold together the conditions within which conversations can take place responsibly. This includes ensuring that tutor preparation remains connected to the educational purpose of the programme, that support is accessible and that patterns emerging across cases can inform institutional change.

This last function is crucial. If several tutees seek help with the same assessment, the appropriate response may not be simply to recruit more tutors. Repeated difficulty may indicate unclear instructions, inaccessible teaching, curricular overload or a mismatch between assessment and prior preparation. Peer tutors can make such patterns visible because they encounter student difficulties at close range. An institution committed to improvement should therefore treat tutoring not only as a mechanism for helping individuals cope, but also as a *source of knowledge about the educational environment*.

The information must be handled carefully. Tutors should not become informal 'surveillance agents' reporting personal details to academic staff.

Confidentiality is essential to trust. Nevertheless, anonymised and collectively discussed patterns can illuminate where academic practices remain opaque or where particular student groups encounter barriers.

This gives supervision a double function. It supports the tutor in reflecting on practice, but it can also create a channel through which the institution learns from the programme. Regular case discussions, tutor communities of practice and consultation with academic staff can reveal both pedagogical issues and gaps in institutional support. The Peer-EDU training participants' wish to meet again, discuss difficulties and continue their development indicates that tutoring should not be conceptualised as solitary work undertaken after one completed course (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14–19).

Supervision should remain developmental rather than punitive. Tutors need to be able to acknowledge uncertainty and mistakes without fearing that every difficulty threatens their certification. If oversight is experienced primarily as inspection, students will conceal precisely the cases from which most can be learned.

The same applies to quality assurance. Some evaluation is necessary: institutions need to know who is reached, whether access is equitable, whether participants feel safe and whether educational purposes are being served. But quality cannot be captured solely through satisfaction surveys, session counts or grade comparisons. A popular programme can still reproduce inequality; an academically effective programme can burden tutors; a highly structured programme can undermine the tutee's agency.

Wise evaluation should therefore examine several layers:

- reach and accessibility;
- the quality of tutoring interactions;
- the experiences of tutors and tutees;
- the adequacy of supervision and referral;
- changes in academic confidence, participation or relevant course outcomes;
- unintended consequences;
- the continued responsibility of academic staff and institutions.

The Peer-EDU diagnostic study provides evidence of expectations and institutional readiness, not of programme impact. The training evaluation shows high satisfaction, improved confidence and remaining support needs, but

it does not establish what happened during sustained tutoring practice. Maintaining this distinction is itself an institutional responsibility. Universities should not turn promising perceptions into claims of proven effectiveness.

Recognition, Reward and the Meaning of Voluntary Action

One of the most difficult institutional questions concerns *recognition*. Peer tutoring demands time, preparation, emotional attention and intellectual work. Leaving this work entirely unrecognised may communicate that the contribution is valued rhetorically but not materially. It may also restrict participation to students able to volunteer without financial or scheduling consequences.

Recognition can take several forms: payment, ECTS credit, micro-credentials, certificates, references, formal acknowledgement in academic records or access to professional-development opportunities. Each option sends a different message about what the tutoring role is.

Payment recognises labour and can widen participation, but it may move the relationship closer to employment and require clearer *accountability*. Academic credit may acknowledge tutoring as an educational experience, but it also raises questions about *assessment* and whether supporting another person should become a means of accumulating points. Micro-credentials can make competences visible but risk turning a relational practice into another item in a *competitive portfolio*. Pure voluntarism may protect an ethos of mutual contribution while *obscuring inequalities* in who has time to contribute.

The Peer-EDU findings do not provide a universal answer. Respondents differed in their preferences, but both students and staff recognised that motivation, workload and lack of formal acknowledgement could threaten sustained involvement. The implication is not that every university should adopt the same reward system. It is that the meaning and consequences of recognition must be considered explicitly rather than left to accident (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 102–114, 130–133).

Recognition should also include the academic staff who support tutors. Supervision, consultation and programme development require time. If this work remains invisible within workload models, the programme will depend on exceptional individual commitment and remain vulnerable to exhaustion or personnel change.

Technology as Infrastructure, Not Pedagogy

The Peer-EDU project included the development of digital resources and an e-learning platform designed to support knowledge exchange, tutor matching and longer-term implementation. The platform was subsequently completed and tested by students participating in the international training. This component responded to a real need. Respondents across the partner universities reported limited awareness of existing technological support, inconsistent infrastructure and uncertainty about which platforms could be used for tutoring (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 100–107, 120–127).

However critical one may be of the digitalisation of education, technology can still serve ordinary organisational purposes: booking, matching, communication, resource sharing, online meetings and programme evaluation. Hybrid participation may make tutoring more accessible to commuters, working students or people unable to remain on campus. A shared platform can also support cooperation among the three universities.

Yet technology does not constitute the educational practice. A sophisticated platform cannot create trust, prepare tutors or determine whether an explanation is pedagogically responsible. It may even introduce barriers if systems are inaccessible, difficult to navigate or associated with institutional monitoring. Informal tools may be easier for students to use but raise concerns about privacy and continuity. The appropriate technology is therefore not necessarily the most elaborate. It is the technology that remains sufficiently reliable, accessible and unobtrusive to support the relationship. The platform should reduce organisational friction rather than become the centre of the programme.

A Differentiated Institutional Arrangement

The comparative character of Peer-EDU makes a *uniform model* especially inappropriate. The three universities share the ambition of supporting students through peer relationships, but they differ in institutional history, academic culture, technological infrastructure and existing support practices.

At the University of Gdańsk, responses drew attention to the need for visible institutional endorsement and better technological and organisational support.

At the University of Split, administrative clarity and the preservation of interpersonal authenticity were particularly salient.

At the University of Malta, respondents highlighted workload, competitiveness, recognition and the risk that formal structures might affect collaboration. These findings do not justify essentialising national or institutional cultures. They do show that implementation is an act of translation rather than replication (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–129).

A Peer-EDU framework should therefore establish shared principles while leaving room for local forms. Common commitments might include:

- voluntary and informed participation;
- adequate tutor preparation;
- clear boundaries and referral pathways;
- accessible coordination;
- continued academic responsibility;
- equitable recruitment and access;
- recognition of participants' work;
- reflective supervision;
- evaluation proportionate to the programme's claims.

How those commitments are enacted may differ. One faculty may embed tutors within demanding introductory modules. Another may organise open cross-disciplinary support. One institution may compensate tutors financially; another may offer academic recognition. Digital provision may be central in one context and supplementary in another. Adaptation should not become an excuse for abandoning standards, just as common standards should not require identical programmes. The task is to distinguish

principles necessary for educational and ethical integrity from organisational features that can be locally negotiated.

The Institution as Host

The relationship among support, educational practice and institutional arrangement can finally be expressed through the idea of the university as host. A host does not simply provide a room and disappear. Hosting entails preparation, welcome, attention and responsibility for the conditions of an encounter. At the same time, a host does not determine every exchange among those who meet. The encounter must retain a life that exceeds its organisation.

To *host* peer tutoring means creating a place for students to support one another's studying while acknowledging that this support belongs within, not outside, the university's educational responsibility. It means preparing tutors without turning them into substitute academics, protecting tutees without defining them through deficiency, and coordinating the programme without capturing every relationship in procedure.

Peer-EDU can therefore be understood neither as the creation of a new support service nor simply as the introduction of an innovative teaching method. It is an attempt to reorganise part of the university's educational *ecology*. Students take on real but bounded responsibility. Academic staff remain present, though not as controllers of every interaction. Institutions provide structure, recognition and protection while allowing the peer relationship to retain its distinctive proximity.

This formulation also clarifies why peer tutoring cannot succeed through training alone. The training programme may develop communication skills, ethical awareness and facilitative judgement. Whether these capacities become practice depends upon what participants encounter afterwards: accessible tutees, workable timetables, spaces, supervision, legitimacy and clear procedures. The institutional arrangement is not the background of the educational practice. It enters into its very possibility.

At the same time, the arrangement must continually answer to the practice it supports. Procedures should remain open to revision in response to tutors' and tutees' experience. Evaluation should help institutions understand

how the programme functions, while recognition and technological provision should primarily support participation and contact rather than becoming ends in themselves.

Peer tutoring becomes educationally defensible when all three dimensions remain visible. Peer tutoring becomes educationally defensible when support, educational practice and institutional organisation remain connected. Students can receive assistance without being defined by deficit, tutors can undertake pedagogical work without becoming substitute teachers, and institutional structures can protect the practice without determining every interaction.

The challenge for Peer-EDU is thus not simply to establish peer tutoring programmes at three universities. It is to create arrangements in which students can study with and support one another while the university remains responsibly present. The success of such an arrangement will depend less on how completely peer tutoring is formalised than on whether institutional structure protects the freedom, trust and shared attention through which peer study becomes possible.

1.6. The Promise and Danger of Mobilising Students as Educational “Resources”

Peer tutoring is frequently promoted through a vocabulary of *abundance*. Students possess knowledge, experience, communicative capacities, cultural familiarity and proximity to one another that universities have not yet fully recognised. They are described as an ‘untapped resource’, a source of institutional ‘innovation’ or an available ‘capacity’ that can be mobilised to improve academic performance, strengthen belonging and extend support beyond what academic staff can provide. Within this vocabulary, peer tutoring appears to offer an elegant response to several problems at once: students receive more individualised assistance, tutors develop transferable competences, teachers gain support, and institutions improve engagement without reproducing the costs of professional one-to-one teaching.

There is truth in this promise. Students bring forms of knowledge and experience that academic teachers do not possess. They know what it has recently felt like to encounter a particular course, assessment practice or institutional difficulty for the first time. They often speak to one another in ways that make uncertainty less risky and unfamiliar conventions more intelligible. Peer-EDU was founded partly upon the conviction that these capacities should not remain marginal to the educational life of the university.

Yet the language of “resources” is not innocent. A *resource* is something identified in relation to a purpose *for* which it can be used. It becomes visible because someone recognises its potential utility, organises its availability and seeks to convert it into an effect. When students are described as educational resources, attention can shift subtly from what they experience, need and create towards what an institution can obtain from them. Their knowledge becomes capacity, their relationships become infrastructure, their willingness becomes supply, and their time becomes an available contribution to organisational goals.

The difficulty does not disappear when the word is placed in quotation marks. Peer tutoring genuinely depends upon mobilising students’ knowledge and capacities. The critical question is therefore not whether mobilisation occurs, but within which rationality, for whose purposes and under whose control. The same peer tutoring practice can embody a humanistic commitment to persons, relations and shared study, or it can be absorbed into a neoliberal logic of efficiency, human-capital development and institutional cost transfer. Often, both possibilities coexist within one programme.

Peer-EDU must therefore ask not only how universities can make better use of students’ capacities, but how those capacities can enter the educational community without students themselves being reduced to resources.

The Grammar of the Resource

Calling a person a *resource* does not necessarily express disrespect. In ordinary institutional language, academic staff, technical infrastructure, time, funding and expertise are all at times described as resources. The expression can direct attention towards capacities that have previously been ignored and towards the need to provide material support for their use. A university

that regards peer tutors as part of its educational infrastructure may be more likely to invest in their preparation, recognise their contribution and include them in programme planning.

The problem lies in what the *grammar of the resource* makes easier to see and what it makes more difficult to perceive. Resources appear as assets capable of being allocated, developed, measured and deployed. Their value is established by what they enable another actor or system to accomplish. A resource does not normally determine the purposes for which it is used, question the conditions of its deployment or refuse the meanings assigned to its contribution. Persons, by contrast, interpret purposes, form relationships, experience burdens and possess a legitimate claim to participate in decisions affecting their activity.

The distinction becomes especially important when universities describe students simultaneously as *beneficiaries* and *resources*. A programme may be presented as developing the tutor while also relying upon the tutor to improve another student's experience, reduce pressure on academic staff or contribute to institutional indicators. These aims are not inherently incompatible.

Supporting another person can be deeply formative. The tutor may reorganise knowledge, acquire confidence, develop judgement and experience themselves as a consequential member of an academic community. The danger begins when the developmental benefits attributed to the student are used to obscure the value of the work performed for the institution.

The first Peer-EDU report reflects the ambivalence of the wider literature. It identifies strong evidence and repeated claims concerning academic achievement, communication, responsibility, inclusion, community and the development of tutors. At the same time, some of the reviewed publications explicitly describe peers as educational resources and present peer tutoring partly through the language of scalability, cost-effectiveness and resource management. The literature also records recurring problems of unequal role relations, insufficient preparation, logistical pressure, institutional dependence on student motivation and the difficulty of sustaining programmes over time (Jendza et al. 2026: 3–10, 43–44).

This combination should not be dismissed as merely terminological. A practice may retain the same surface form while acquiring a very different

educational *meaning*. Two students may meet in the same room, use the same conversational model and work on the same academic problem, while the institutional *rationality* surrounding their encounter changes what the activity is for and how the participants are positioned within it.

Peer Tutoring within Different Paradigms

Anna Sajdak-Burska's reconstruction of paradigms in academic didactics helps clarify why a method does not carry a single educational meaning within itself. Her analysis differentiates behavioural-technological, humanistic, constructivist and critical-emancipatory ways of conceptualising university education. Each paradigm connects a particular image of the student and academic teacher with assumptions about knowledge, development, educational purpose and legitimate forms of intervention. A practice such as tutoring may therefore be incorporated into very different projects of education (Sajdak-Burska 2013).

Within a behavioural-technological logic, peer tutoring can be designed as an efficient intervention intended to generate predefined outcomes. Tutors are trained to apply validated procedures, tutees are diagnosed according to measurable needs, sessions are standardised and success is calculated through performance indicators (KPIs). The educational situation is organised from outside as a sequence expected to produce a specified result. The student tutor may appear active, but their agency is constrained by the role of an intervention-delivery mechanism.

Within a humanistic paradigm, tutoring begins from a different image of the person. The student is not primarily a carrier of deficits or a unit of productive capacity, but a developing person whose experience, meaning-making, autonomy and relationships matter. The tutor does not execute a procedure upon the tutee. They accompany another person, attend to their perspective and help create conditions in which the tutee can find an individual path through an educational difficulty. Sajdak-Burska identifies academic tutoring as one of the practices through which the humanistic paradigm may acquire concrete expression in mass higher education, provided that it remains genuinely attentive to individual development rather than being reduced to a managerial technique (Sajdak-Burska 2017: 13–26).

A constructivist orientation shifts attention towards students' active construction and negotiation of meaning. Peer tutoring becomes a setting in which interpretations are articulated, tested and revised through interaction. Neither participant is simply the carrier of a finished package of knowledge. Even when one student is more experienced, the encounter depends upon the activity of both.

The critical-emancipatory paradigm introduces questions that neither personalised support nor collaborative knowledge construction can answer on their own. It asks how *power* enters the definition of educational needs, how institutional hierarchies shape whose knowledge is recognised, and whether student participation transforms existing arrangements or helps sustain them more efficiently. Under this paradigm, the relevant question is not simply whether peer tutoring develops tutors and supports tutees. It is also whether students gain *meaningful influence* over their education or become enlisted in maintaining an institution whose priorities they did not determine.

These paradigms should not be treated as 'boxes' into which whole programmes can be placed once and for all. Peer-EDU contains elements of several of them. Its training programme uses structured tools and competence frameworks; it values experiential, collaborative and reflective activity; and its underlying aspiration is strongly humanistic and relational. At the same time, its location within a funded international project brings requirements concerning outputs, indicators, dissemination, sustainability and institutional implementation. The tension is not external to the project. It is already present within it.

These elements do not have equal normative status within Peer-EDU. Their educational justification depends on whether they sustain shared study, student agency and responsibility, and keep knowledge open to serious common inquiry.

Even the official phrase competence transformation can be read in contrasting ways. It may describe a formative process through which students become more capable of responsible action, dialogue and care. It may also be interpreted as the production of additional human capital whose value can be demonstrated through credentials and employability. The wording

does not decide between these interpretations. The educational and institutional practices built around it do.

The importance of Sajdak-Burska's analysis lies precisely here. Peer tutoring is not humanistic merely because it is individualised, friendly or conducted between students. A personalised relation can still be instrumental. A student can be treated warmly while being mobilised towards purposes defined entirely by the institution. The question of paradigm concerns the deeper rationality through which persons, purposes and relationships are understood.

The Neoliberal University and the Productive Student

Neoliberalism is often used so broadly that it risks becoming a general name for everything undesirable in contemporary universities. A more precise account treats it not only as a set of policies favouring markets and reduced public expenditure, but as a governing *rationality* that extends economic categories into domains previously organised through other values. Competition, investment, performance, risk, return, entrepreneurship and measurable productivity become models for understanding institutions and persons.

Wendy Brown argues that neoliberal reason recasts individuals as forms of human capital expected to appreciate their own value through continuous investment and competitive positioning. Education is consequently reorganised around the production of economically valuable capacities, while political, ethical and democratic questions are translated into calculations of growth, investment and performance (Brown 2015: 17–45).

Within higher education, this rationality is visible when universities justify themselves primarily through economic contribution, graduate productivity, innovation capacity and labour-market responsiveness. Mark Olssen and Michael Peters describe the movement from conventional market liberalism towards knowledge capitalism, in which universities become central economic institutions charged with producing and circulating commercial and strategically valuable knowledge (Olssen and Peters 2005: 313–345).

Henry Giroux's critique is more explicitly political. He argues that the neoliberal university increasingly values students as human capital, treats

courses as products responsive to consumer demand and models governance upon corporate management. Against this, he defends the university as a public good and a democratic sphere in which students can acquire not only economically usable skills but the critical capacities required to understand and transform their world (Giroux 2015: 5–16).

Peter McLaren radicalises the argument by connecting educational reform to the production of labour-power. Education does not merely respond to an already existing economy; it contributes to the formation of capacities, dispositions and forms of subjectivity that can later be converted into economic value. The language of human capital expresses, in this reading, the reduction of human capacities to their potential function within capitalist production (McLaren 2005: 14–16).

Peer tutoring can be drawn into this rationality with remarkable ease. It promises to activate capacities the institution already contains. Students possess subject knowledge, social proximity, language skills, digital competence, cultural understanding and time. Instead of increasing professional teaching or support provision, the university can organise these capacities so that students support one another. Tutors simultaneously acquire communication, leadership and teamwork competences, thereby increasing their own employability. Tutees receive support. The institution potentially gains improved performance, continuation and satisfaction. Presented in this way, everyone benefits and no conflict appears.

The very smoothness of this account should make us cautious. It may be entirely true that several participants benefit, but a language of universal benefit can conceal unequal burdens and institutional savings. The tutor's time, emotional attentiveness and intellectual labour do not cease to be labour because they are educationally meaningful. Nor does the tutor's personal development automatically constitute adequate recognition for work from which the university benefits.

The danger is not that peer tutoring has economic effects. Universities require resources, and educational programmes must be organised sustainably. The problem arises when economic usefulness becomes the primary measure through which the relationship is valued and when responsibility for structural problems is transferred to students under the language of agency.

Mobilising What Students Hold in Common

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri offer a conceptual vocabulary that allows us to describe the promise of peer tutoring without immediately translating students into resources. They use the common to refer not only to natural wealth but also to socially produced knowledges, languages, affects, images, codes, practices and relationships. Such forms of wealth are generated through cooperation and communication. They are not produced by isolated individuals and do not remain unchanged when shared (Hardt and Negri 2009: 139, 153–160).

Peer tutoring can be understood as a practice of making and enlarging the common. A student's explanation does not simply transfer a finite possession. In attempting to make an idea intelligible, tutor and tutee may re-organise knowledge, create a new example or discover a distinction neither had previously formulated. Trust, shared language and mutual recognition also emerge through the encounter. The result is not only that one student possesses more knowledge than before; the academic community acquires a stronger capacity to study together.

This perspective changes the central metaphor. Students are not individual 'reservoirs' from which the university extracts useful *capacities*. They participate in co-creating forms of educational wealth that exist in relationships among people. Their knowledge and care are not institutional raw materials. They belong to a common process whose participants should retain meaningful power over its purposes and organisation.

Hardt and Negri's analysis also helps identify the danger. Commonly produced knowledge, affect and social relations can be captured, segmented and subordinated to external accumulation. Institutions may depend upon the common while simultaneously restricting and deforming it through hierarchy and control. They may encourage cooperation, then appropriate its results as organisational performance (Hardt and Negri 2009: 153–176).

Applied to peer tutoring, capture occurs when a university treats student relationships as a pool of labour to be harvested, translates mutual assistance into institutional indicators and retains control over programme purposes while transferring delivery to students. The relational form remains, but its value is redirected. What participants create together becomes

something the institution *reports, brands or uses* to compensate for inadequate provision.

The concept of the *common* does not romanticise every peer relationship. Shared practices may contain exclusion, misinformation, competition and hierarchy. Nor does it imply that institutional organisation should disappear. The common requires *forms* capable of sustaining it. The question is whether those forms remain answerable to the people and relationships through which educational value is produced.

What Peer-EDU Respondents Make Visible

The Peer-EDU diagnostic research provides no evidence that any of the three partner universities has already used peer tutoring to replace academic staff or systematically exploit unpaid student labour. The project was still investigating readiness and developing a model. It would therefore be methodologically and ethically wrong to describe neoliberal capture as an established outcome of Peer-EDU.

The surveys do, however, reveal conditions under which such *capture* could occur. Students and academic staff identified insufficient time, limited organisational support, inadequate funding, lack of recognition and difficulty recruiting volunteers. Respondents at the University of Malta noted that many students combine their studies with paid work, making participation in tutoring a genuine trade-off. Across the three institutions, participants considered financial compensation, academic credit or other forms of recognition as possible conditions for sustained engagement (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 100–114, 127–133).

One academic respondent expressed the recruitment problem through the language of altruism: Above all, there is a lack of student interest, as I believe there are not enough students with the skills to effectively transfer knowledge and who are altruistically motivated. This likely means that this form of teaching would need to be incentivised in some way (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 114).

The statement contains the tension in concentrated form. Tutoring is expected to arise from altruistic motivation, yet the anticipated scarcity of altruism leads to the search for incentives. The institution seeks people willing

to offer competent educational labour but remains uncertain whether that labour should be treated as voluntary contribution, developmental opportunity, academic activity or paid work.

Altruism is not itself problematic. A university community would be impoverished if every act of assistance required contractual exchange. Students frequently support one another because they care, because cooperation makes study more meaningful or because they remember receiving similar help. Peer-EDU participants often described the course in terms of reciprocity and exchange, which points towards common study rather than a purely instrumental transaction (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14–19).

The problem begins when an institution designs a recurring programme on the *assumption* that *altruism will supply the labour* required for its operation. Voluntarism can then become an organisational subsidy. Students with fewer financial pressures provide what the university needs, while students who work, commute or care for others are less able to participate and therefore less able to access the developmental benefits and credentials attached to tutoring.

This produces a double inequality. Students with more available time are more likely to become visible as leaders, contributors and partners. They gain relationships, recognition and experience that may later strengthen academic or professional opportunities. Students whose circumstances prevent unpaid contribution remain positioned primarily as recipients of education or may be judged as insufficiently engaged. Payment or academic credit can reduce this inequality, but neither automatically resolves it. Compensation may recognise genuine labour and make participation possible for a wider group. It may also intensify institutional control, introduce competitive recruitment and encourage tutors to measure the relationship through deliverables. Academic credit can place tutoring within the educational mission, yet it may transform help into a strategy for accumulating credentials. The issue is therefore not whether recognition should exist, but what form of recognition preserves the educational purpose and the dignity of participants.

Another academic respondent questioned the need for the programme more fundamentally: There is no real need to introduce student tutors, as teachers are already available and very approachable. A better concept

would be to provide students with scheduled times and dedicated spaces for learning and teamwork outside formal teaching hours. Also, very few students are actually qualified to tutor others at this level (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 114).

This dissenting voice matters. It interrupts the assumption that mobilising students is necessarily the correct response to every support problem. Perhaps students need better access to academic teachers. Perhaps programmes need more coherent teaching, clearer assessment and spaces for collective study. Peer tutoring should not become an automatic institutional answer merely because it appears innovative, participatory or economical.

The Peer-EDU evidence also indicates that prospective tutors did not want to be treated as ready-to-deploy resources after a short training programme. Although satisfaction and confidence were high, participants asked for shadowing, mentoring, consultation, clear procedures and access to an academic staff member. Their requests express a desire to take responsibility without being abandoned to it (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7, 12–16).

The Substitution Problem

The most important ethical boundary for Peer-EDU may be formulated simply: Peer tutoring should add a distinctive educational relation to the university; it should not substitute student labour for responsibilities that remain institutional and professional.

Substitution can occur in several ways. Peer tutors may replace access to academic teachers for students struggling with course content. They may be expected to explain assignments that teaching staff have not communicated clearly. They may become informal advisers because institutional procedures are difficult to navigate. They may absorb emotional disclosures because professional support is inaccessible. They may be asked to sustain student engagement without influence over the curriculum, workload or assessment practices producing disengagement.

In each case, the tutor appears to solve an individual problem while the structural source remains intact. The more successful the tutor becomes at helping students cope, the less visible the need for institutional change may

become. Peer tutoring can therefore function as a *buffer protecting the institution from the consequences of its own arrangements*.

This is why the project should never evaluate peer tutoring only by asking whether tutees improve. A rise in grades or continuation may indicate educational value, but it may also show that unpaid or under-recognised student labour is compensating for weaknesses elsewhere. Evaluation must ask what the programme makes possible and what it permits the institution to avoid changing.

The same caution applies to tutors' development. Evidence that tutors improve their communication, metacognition or confidence is significant, but it does not settle the question of substitution. A person can develop through work that is nevertheless unfairly organised. The educational benefit received by a tutor should not function as a universal answer to questions about workload, recognition and institutional gain.

This distinction is familiar in other parts of university life. Internships, service-learning initiatives, student representation, volunteering, research assistance and partnership initiatives can all be formative. They can also rely upon students' aspiration and commitment to obtain labour that would otherwise require payment or professional staffing. The fact that an activity is meaningful does not make its material conditions irrelevant.

Peer-EDU should therefore protect the continued visibility of academic teachers and professional services. Tutors may help students understand a concept, but teachers remain responsible for the quality and accessibility of the course. Tutors may notice distress, but the institution must provide appropriate specialist support. Tutors may reveal recurring difficulties, but programme leaders must decide whether curricular or organisational changes are required.

Metrics and the Conversion of Relations into Outcomes

Neoliberal rationality does not operate only through funding reductions. It also operates through *measurement*. Practices become institutionally real when they can be rendered as indicators: number of tutors trained, sessions

completed, students reached, credits earned, satisfaction ratings, pass rates and continuation statistics.

Peer-EDU obviously cannot avoid evaluation. The project has public responsibilities, and universities need evidence concerning accessibility, quality, safety and educational consequences. The problem is not measurement itself. It is the displacement of educational judgement by what can be measured most easily. The risk is especially pronounced when peer tutoring is linked to retention. A programme that helps students remain enrolled may be valuable. Yet retention is not a transparent educational good. A student may continue because they have found a meaningful relation to study, because a tutor helped them negotiate a temporary difficulty, or because institutional pressure made departure feel impossible. The same administrative outcome can contain very different educational realities.

The supplementary analysis supplied for the project rightly treats retention as a hypothesis to be tested through a specified pathway rather than a promised effect. It distinguishes mechanisms such as confidence, belonging and help-seeking from proximal outcomes such as course completion and distal outcomes such as re-enrolment or graduation. It also stresses that voluntary participation creates a serious selection problem: students who attend tutoring may already differ in motivation, preparation or institutional knowledge from those who do not (Jendza 2026).

This methodological caution is also an ethical safeguard. When institutional success is defined by a *distal indicator*, the tutor can become an instrument for producing it. The tutee becomes a potential non-completer to be retained. The relationship is then interpreted retrospectively according to whether it contributed to the university's target.

A humanistic evaluation asks additional questions. Did participants feel recognised? Did the encounter preserve the tutee's agency? Was the tutor's workload manageable? Did the programme reach students who lacked informal networks? Did tutors feel able to acknowledge uncertainty? Did recurring cases reveal changes needed in teaching or support provision? Did the institution learn from students, or merely count their activity? These questions are more difficult to aggregate, but they are closer to the educational meaning of the programme.

Recognition without Commodification

A critical account of neoliberalism can itself become reductive if it treats every form of compensation, certification or evaluation as corruption. A critical response to neoliberalisation should not lead to the assumption that payment, recognition or formal procedures necessarily undermine peer relations. Unpaid participation may itself reproduce inequality when only financially secure students can afford to contribute. Similarly, the absence of recognition can make substantial educational labour invisible, while insufficient procedures may leave tutors unsupported. The more important question is how student contribution can be organised in ways that remain educationally meaningful, equitable and open to participation.

Recognition should begin by acknowledging that peer tutoring involves several kinds of labour. There is intellectual labour: preparation, explanation, interpretation and feedback. There is organisational labour: arranging meetings, communicating and documenting activity. There is relational and affective labour: listening, creating trust, managing frustration and attending to another person's uncertainty. Not every tutoring session contains all these elements equally, but none should be treated as costless simply because students perform them.

Compensation may therefore be justified. It can communicate that the university values the time and responsibility involved, and it can enable participation by students who cannot afford to volunteer. The amount and form should be transparent, fair and consistent with the role. Compensation should not purchase unlimited availability or transform the tutor into a low-cost replacement for professional staff.

ECTS credit or academic recognition may also be appropriate when tutoring includes structured preparation, reflection, supervision and demonstrable educational development. But credit should not be awarded solely for hours of service, as though another student's difficulty were material through which the tutor earns points. The educational object of assessment should be the tutor's reflective and pedagogical development, not the tutee's performance or dependence.

Micro-credentials carry a similar ambivalence. They can make complex work visible and give students a portable account of what they have

undertaken. They can also encourage a portfolio logic in which relationships become occasions for accumulating competitive distinctions. Peer-EDU should use credentials to recognise contribution, not to divide students into increasingly stratified categories of credentialed helpers and ordinary recipients.

No single recognition system will be appropriate across the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta. The diagnostic research already shows differences in workload, infrastructure, institutional tradition and expectations. What should be common is not the reward but the principle that students' contribution must not be treated as freely available simply because it occurs within education.

From Mobilisation to Democratic Participation

The verb 'mobilise' deserves scrutiny. It suggests movement from latent capacity to organised action. Something previously inactive becomes aligned with a purpose. This can be emancipatory: people discover that they possess capacities denied or ignored by hierarchical institutions. Mobilisation can create solidarity, collective voice and new forms of participation.

The same mobilisation can also become managerial. An organisation identifies underused capacity, activates it and directs it towards strategic objectives. Students become a workforce whose engagement is secured through motivation, incentives and identity. The language of empowerment then disguises the fact that purposes and rules remain institutionally controlled.

The difference lies partly in governance. Were students involved in defining what peer tutoring should accomplish? Can tutors influence training, procedures and evaluation? Can tutees challenge the programme's assumptions? Are participants able to refuse tasks or propose that an institutional practice, rather than an individual student, needs to change?

Peer-EDU offers some early indications of participatory development. The diagnostic study gathered student and staff expectations before implementation. The international training programme allowed participants to experience, interpret and criticise the proposed approach. Their requests for

more realistic scenarios, local procedures, continued meetings, shadowing and supervision provide concrete directions for redesign.

Yet consultation is not the same as shared authority. Students become co-authors of the programme only when their contributions alter decisions and when they can participate in its continuing governance. Otherwise, voice serves as another resource: an institution collects student perspectives to improve implementation while retaining exclusive authority over purpose.

The critical-emancipatory dimension identified by Sajdak-Burska requires more than encouraging active participation. It requires examining how students are *positioned* within the structures they are invited to support. A programme may be highly interactive while leaving institutional power untouched. It may allow tutors considerable autonomy within sessions while denying them influence over recruitment, recognition, workload or the use of data.

Democratic participation therefore concerns both the micro-level of the tutoring conversation and the macro-level of programme governance. The tutee should have space to question an explanation. The tutor should have space to question a procedure. The student community should have space to question the institutional purposes attached to peer tutoring.

Conditions for Mobilising Capacities without Reducing Persons to Resources

Several principles follow for Peer-EDU model.

First, educational sense must precede organisational efficiency. The programme should begin by identifying a meaningful educational need and asking whether peer tutoring offers a distinctive response. It should not begin with the assumption that student capacity is available and then search for tasks to which it can be applied.

Second, peer tutoring must supplement rather than substitute. Every implementation plan should state what remains the responsibility of academic teachers, programme coordinators and professional services. Where tutoring repeatedly compensates for unclear teaching, inaccessible

assessment or inadequate support, the institution must address those conditions directly.

Third, participation must be genuinely voluntary. Voluntariness requires more than the absence of formal compulsion. Students should not feel that tutoring is necessary to secure favour, demonstrate commitment or remain competitive for future opportunities. They should be able to decline or leave the role without academic disadvantage.

Fourth, recognition must respond to unequal conditions of participation. Payment, credit and credentials should be considered not only as motivational tools but as questions of justice. Recognition should widen access to the tutor role and acknowledge labour without purchasing control over the person.

Fifth, students must participate in governance. Tutors and tutees should contribute to programme design, evaluation and revision. Their experience should be treated not merely as feedback data but as knowledge capable of changing institutional arrangements.

Sixth, workload and boundaries must remain visible. The programme should monitor not only the number of tutees reached but the preparation, time and emotional demands placed upon tutors. Students should not be praised for exceeding reasonable limits or carrying cases that require professional intervention.

Seventh, evaluation must remain plural. Academic outcomes and continuation may be examined, but they should not displace questions of relationship, agency, equity, tutor development and institutional learning. No single indicator should determine the programme's value.

Finally, the institution must invest its own resources. A programme that relies on student contribution still requires coordination, supervision, accessible spaces, technological support, training and academic staff time. Mobilising students should not become a rationale for institutional disinvestment.

Students Are Not the University's Reserve Capacity

Peer tutoring contains a genuine promise. Students can become consequential participants in one another's education. They can make academic

conventions more accessible, redistribute some forms of educational authority, create relationships of recognition and contribute knowledge that would otherwise remain dispersed or invisible. Tutors can develop through the responsibility of supporting another person, while tutees can gain forms of assistance that differ meaningfully from professional teaching. None of this requires describing students as resources.

As indicated earlier, the 'resource' metaphor becomes dangerous when the university treats students as reserve capacity: a population whose knowledge, relationships and care can be activated whenever existing provision proves insufficient. Under neoliberal rationality, the apparent empowerment of students may coincide with a transfer of cost and responsibility. The tutor is offered development, employability and recognition; the institution acquires additional educational labour. The tutee receives help, but the conditions producing the need for that help may remain unchanged.

A humanistic and relational interpretation begins elsewhere. Students are persons, participants and co-authors. Their capacities matter because they belong to people who can decide, respond, refuse and create meaning with others. A similar principle has been articulated in the context of institutional teaching development: drawing on people's capacities and commitment requires creating conditions in which they can also derive meaning and development from participation, rather than treating them primarily as organisational resources (Szymczak 2025). The relationships they form are not merely instruments for generating institutional effects. They are part of the educational good the university exists to make possible.

Hardt and Negri's already mentioned notion of the *common* allows the promise to be retained without accepting the reduction. Students' knowledge, language, attention and cooperation can produce a shared educational wealth that grows through use. The university has a legitimate role in supporting and sustaining this common, but it does not own it. Its task is not to extract maximum value from student relationships. It is to establish conditions in which those relationships can remain educationally meaningful, equitable and open to collective direction.

This is the challenge that Peer-EDU must carry forward. The project should make use of students' knowledge and capacities without treating students themselves as institutional reserves. Their contribution requires

CHAPTER 1

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recognition, while the structures supporting it should preserve meaningful student agency and the relational character of tutoring. The university nevertheless remains responsible for teaching, student support and the conditions under which peer participation takes place.

The distinction may determine whether peer tutoring becomes another technique through which the contemporary university does more with less, or one of the practices through which it begins to imagine itself differently.

CHAPTER 2

MAPPING THE FIELD: CONCEPTS, MODELS AND BOUNDARIES

Peer tutoring appears deceptively easy to define. One student helps another; one knows something that the other is trying to understand; both belong to approximately the same educational world. Once actual programmes are examined, however, this apparent simplicity disappears. The participants may be in the same year or several years apart. Their roles may remain stable or alternate. They may meet individually, in groups, online or within a course. The focus may be disciplinary knowledge, academic practices, transition to university, professional identity or emotional and social support. Academic staff may remain at a distance, supervise the work or embed tutors directly within teaching.

These differences are not merely organisational. They alter the educational relation and determine what can reasonably be expected from it. Evidence generated by a course-linked Supplemental Instruction programme cannot automatically support claims about individual mentoring. Findings concerning near-peer clinical teaching cannot be transferred without qualification to reciprocal tutoring among students at the same level. Improved examination performance, greater belonging and stronger continuation are distinct outcomes produced, if at all, through different mechanisms.

The first Peer-EDU report reviewed fifty publications and identified peer tutoring as a heterogeneous field encompassing reciprocal, cross-level, supplemental, embedded and online models. The comparative research conducted at the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta revealed similar terminological fluidity. Respondents referred interchangeably to tutoring, mentoring, peer support, collaboration and teaching, often combining academic, social and developmental expectations

within a single description (Jendza et al. 2026: 3–12, 43–45; Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 84–114).

The official project description reflects this breadth. Peer-EDU presents peer tutors as students who support younger colleagues in adapting to university both academically and socially. At the same time, the project includes tutor preparation, training for those who support tutors, a digital platform and pilot implementation. It is therefore narrower than undifferentiated peer support, but broader than tutoring confined to one course or academic task (Peer-EDU 2026).

The purpose of this chapter is not to impose perfect terminological order upon a field whose forms necessarily overlap. It is to establish distinctions precise enough to prevent conceptual drift and inflated claims. The most useful approach is to treat the categories below not as competing labels but as intersecting dimensions of programme design.

2.1. Peer Learning, Peer Tutoring and Peer-EDUcation

Peer learning is the broadest of the three terms. It refers to educational processes in which people of broadly comparable status study with and from one another. It encompasses informal discussion as well as deliberately organised practices such as cooperative work, peer assessment, reciprocal teaching and peer tutoring. Its defining feature is not the absence of teachers but the educational significance attributed to interaction among peers (Boud, Cohen and Sampson 2001; Topping 2005: 631–645).

The term has an advantage: it avoids assuming that one participant must reproduce the position of a teacher. Yet it also carries the danger already discussed in Chapter 1. When every educational relation is described as learning, questions concerning what is being studied, who remains responsible for teaching and how knowledge structures the encounter can disappear. In this book, peer learning is therefore used as an umbrella category, while studying with peers names the more substantive educational orientation.

Peer tutoring is a more specific arrangement. It involves an identifiable educational purpose, some differentiation of roles and a focus upon subject matter, an academic task or a practice of studying. One or more students temporarily assume responsibility for supporting the work of another student or group. The tutor is not a professionally qualified teacher, although the role includes pedagogical actions such as questioning, explaining, modelling, listening and giving feedback. Roles may remain stable or alternate (Topping 1996: 321–345).

This definition excludes neither reciprocity nor benefit to the tutor. Indeed, one of the major developments identified in the literature is the movement away from imagining tutoring as a one-way transfer from the capable to the deficient. Preparing an explanation, responding to another person's reasoning and encountering the limits of one's knowledge can transform the tutor's own understanding. The phrase "to teach is to learn twice" captures part of this mechanism, although it should not be converted into the assumption that tutors and tutees always benefit equally (Topping 2005: 631–645; Jendza et al. 2026: 43–45).

Peer-EDUcation is wider in purpose but often more directive in form. It commonly describes organised activity in which students educate other students about health, safety, inclusion, wellbeing, citizenship or institutional life. The content may be academic, but it need not be. A Peer-EDUcator may facilitate workshops, share information, organise campaigns or model particular practices. The relationship is frequently group-based and oriented towards awareness or behaviour rather than sustained work on a disciplinary problem.

The three concepts therefore overlap without becoming synonyms. All Peer-EDU tutoring is intended to create peer learning, but not all peer learning is tutoring. Some aspects of the project, especially transition, intercultural communication and awareness of available support, approach Peer-EDUcation or mentoring. The name peer tutoring remains justified because the central relationship is organised around helping another student engage more effectively in academic life and study.

2.2. Peer Tutoring, Mentoring, Academic Tutoring and Advising

The boundary between peer tutoring and peer mentoring is especially porous. Both rely upon relative proximity and may support confidence, belonging and institutional navigation. Their centre of gravity is nevertheless different.

Peer tutoring is normally organised around something to be studied: a concept, task, course, disciplinary practice or strategy for academic work. Peer mentoring is generally broader and more longitudinal. It can include transition, professional orientation, social integration, identity, motivation, career planning and psychosocial support. Terrion and Leonard define peer mentoring as a helping relationship between people of similar age or experience that fulfils some combination of career-related and psychosocial functions (Terrion and Leonard 2007: 149–164). Reviews of mentoring in higher education similarly show that academic, emotional, professional and role-modelling functions are often combined (Crisp and Cruz 2009: 525–545).

A tutoring relationship may become mentoring-like when it extends over time or when an academic problem reveals difficulties concerning belonging, transition or confidence. A mentor may also tutor when helping a mentee understand a particular academic practice. The distinction should therefore guide role design rather than ‘police conversation’. It becomes crucial when claims are made. A course-linked tutoring programme may plausibly affect understanding or course completion; a sustained mentoring relationship may have a more direct route towards belonging or institutional navigation.

Academic tutoring introduces another complication because the term has a particularly rich meaning, for instance in Polish higher education. It usually refers to a sustained and individualised relationship between an academic teacher and a student, directed towards intellectual development, personal formation and increasing independence. Drawing on the Oxford tutorial, liberal education and the master–student tradition, its Polish variants may be predominantly scholarly-centred on reading, writing and

disciplinary inquiry or developmental, with greater attention to the student's purposes, capabilities and educational biography. In practice, these orientations frequently overlap. This diversity is also visible in institutional practice. Research among academic tutors at the University of Gdańsk documents scholarly, developmental, individual and group-oriented forms of tutoring, with considerable variation in methods, topics and reported outcomes (Kowalkowska and Przybylska 2023).

Polish scholarship has described academic tutoring not simply as an instructional method but as a relational and institutional response to the massification of higher education. Karpińska-Musiał presents it as a possible reconstruction of the master–student relationship and a means of restoring personal dialogue within the contemporary university (Karpińska-Musiał 2012: 55–70). Szala emphasises that tutoring depends upon the continuing process of becoming a tutor, involving attentiveness, self-reflection and ethical judgement rather than the mechanical use of conversational techniques (Szala 2015: 62–88). Sarnat-Ciastko, in turn, distinguishes tutoring from mentoring and coaching while locating it within wider attempts to personalise academic education (Sarnat-Ciastko 2015: 141–152; 2017: 78–83). The comprehensive study by Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Karpińska-Musiał and Sarnat-Ciastko demonstrates that tutoring in Polish universities functions simultaneously as a method, developmental relationship and institutional programme, while also facing tensions between personalisation, accessibility and organisational sustainability (Dziedziczak-Foltyn, Karpińska-Musiał and Sarnat-Ciastko 2020).

This tradition differs from peer tutoring because the academic tutor remains a member of staff who carries formal intellectual, pedagogical and institutional responsibility. Peer-EDU does not transfer that responsibility to students. It can nevertheless draw on the Polish tutoring tradition's insistence that educational support cannot be reduced to procedure: the person, the relationship and the shared object of study remain central (Sajdak-Burska 2017: 13–26).

In the United Kingdom, personal tutoring often combines academic development, transition, institutional connection, referral and elements of pastoral support. The personal tutor is typically a member of academic staff attached to a group of students throughout part of their programme.

Research shows considerable variation in how the role is understood and practised, but its institutional and staff-based character distinguishes it from peer tutoring (Grey and Osborne 2020: 285–299).

Academic advising, particularly in the North American tradition, concerns the student's relationship with a programme of study: curricular choices, progression requirements, educational purposes and connections between studies, aspirations and future plans. Advising can be educational rather than merely administrative, but advisers usually possess institutional authority and access to official information that peer tutors do not. NACADA accordingly presents academic advising as part of the teaching and learning mission of higher education and as a process through which students interpret their educational experience and membership of the institution (NACADA 2006).

These distinctions protect both students and programmes. A peer tutor may help a tutee understand available options but should not provide authoritative advice on regulations without verification. They may listen when personal difficulty enters the conversation but should not assume the role of counsellor. They may support academic planning but cannot replace the staff member responsible for formal decisions.

2.3. Same-Level, Cross-Level and Near-Peer Tutoring

The word 'peer' suggests equality, but peers are never identical. Students may share institutional status while differing in age, experience, achievement, language, confidence and social position. Programme design must therefore specify what kind of proximity is intended.

In same-level tutoring, participants belong to the same year or stage of study. They may be enrolled in the same course or possess broadly comparable experience. Such arrangements can reduce social distance and make uncertainty easier to expose. Yet same-level status does not guarantee equality. One student may be selected because of stronger academic performance, formally trained and recognised by the institution. This creates an unequal role even where formal study status is shared.

In cross-level tutoring, the tutor is further advanced: for example, a third-year student supports someone in the first year. The difference can provide useful experiential knowledge and greater familiarity with the curriculum. It can also strengthen hierarchy. The senior student may be treated as a substitute authority or may assume that their own successful approach should be reproduced by the tutee.

Near-peer tutoring is a particular form of cross-level arrangement in which the distance remains limited and both participants still inhabit substantially the same educational pathway. Ten Cate and Durning define a near-peer teacher as a student who is more advanced, usually by one or more years, within the same curriculum (Ten Cate and Durning 2007: 546–552). Nearness is therefore not sameness; it is a carefully bounded distance.

The educational promise lies in the coexistence of *difference* and *proximity*. Near-peer tutors know more, or at least have encountered the relevant demands earlier, but can still remember what those demands looked like from the position of a newcomer. This supports the cognitive and social congruence discussed in the preceding chapter. The danger is that proximity may be presumed rather than experienced. Students separated by only one year can still differ substantially in disciplinary background, language, social confidence and institutional belonging.

Peer-EDU model and project was conceived primarily as a near-peer and cross-level initiative. Its website describes tutors as supporting “younger colleagues”, while recruitment for the international training focused on students sufficiently advanced to support others but still enrolled within undergraduate or early postgraduate programmes. The regulations nevertheless did not prescribe one fixed matching formula; the eventual relationship had to be adapted to local contexts and participants (Peer-EDU 2025b; Peer-EDU 2026).

The distinction between same-level and cross-level arrangements should not be used to predict effectiveness in advance. The first Peer-EDU report includes evidence of benefits and difficulties in both. A systematic review analysed four role configurations by combining level and equality of status, showing that challenges arise from the organisation of roles rather than from age difference alone (Widoro, Situmorang and Chaeruman 2024:

68–87). The relevant question is what difference between participants enables and what kind of authority it creates.

2.4. Reciprocal, Supplemental and Embedded Models

The categories in this section describe different dimensions and should not be treated as mutually exclusive alternatives.

Reciprocal peer tutoring concerns role organisation. Participants alternate between tutor and tutee, either within one session or across a sequence of meetings. Reciprocity makes explanation part of everyone's work and can prevent the permanent division of students into those who know and those who lack. It is especially appropriate where participants possess comparable experience and where the purpose includes metacognition, communication and collaborative reasoning.

Alternating roles does not remove asymmetry. Students may still differ in confidence or achievement, and one person may dominate both positions. Nor is reciprocity always educationally appropriate. A student seeking support from someone with substantially greater experience may not benefit from a formally equal exchange in which both must spend equivalent time teaching. Reciprocity is a design principle, not a moral requirement.

Supplemental Instruction, often adapted under names such as *Peer-Assisted Study Sessions*, describes the programme's relation to the curriculum. It provides voluntary, course-linked group sessions led by a trained student who has previously succeeded in the course. The focus is usually a demanding or high-risk course rather than a category of "at-risk" students. Sessions combine work on content with ways of studying it.

This distinction matters. Supplemental Instruction does not replace the course, repeat the lecture or offer private remediation. It creates an additional setting in which students work collaboratively on course demands. A systematic review of twenty-nine studies found generally positive associations with grades, failure and continuation, but also substantial methodological limitations, including self-selection into voluntary participation (Dawson et al. 2014: 609–639).

Embedded peer tutoring concerns institutional placement. The tutor is connected directly to a module, classroom, programme or teaching team rather than operating through a separate support centre. They may attend classes, facilitate group work, hold supplementary sessions or help students interpret disciplinary expectations. Embedding can increase visibility, alignment and access. It also creates the greatest danger of role substitution. The tutor can gradually become an inexpensive teaching assistant while lacking the authority, remuneration and preparation associated with that role.

A programme can therefore be reciprocal and embedded, or near-peer, group-based and supplemental. Peer-EDU should resist selecting one label as though it described the entire model. Its design is better understood through several questions:

Are roles stable or alternating?

How far apart are participants?

Is tutoring attached to a course?

Is the tutor located inside or outside formal teaching?

Each answer changes both the educational mechanism and the ethical risk.

2.5. Individual, Group, Online and Hybrid Formats

Format is not a neutral container. It changes what participants can notice, how relationships develop and which students can participate.

Individual tutoring offers concentration and adaptability. The conversation can follow one student's reasoning, pace and uncertainty. It may be especially useful for academic writing, complex conceptual difficulties or transition questions that a student is reluctant to discuss publicly. Its limitations are equally clear: it is resource-intensive, potentially dependent, and vulnerable to interpersonal mismatch. The intimacy of the dyad also makes boundaries and supervision particularly important.

Group tutoring enables participants to encounter several ways of understanding a problem. One student's question may make another's uncertainty speakable. Explanation and feedback circulate rather than remaining confined to a fixed tutor-tutee line. Groups can nevertheless reproduce

familiar hierarchies, with confident students dominating and quieter participants becoming spectators.

Supplemental Instruction is usually group-based, whereas mentoring is frequently organised through dyads. Reciprocal tutoring may occur in pairs or small groups. No format belongs exclusively to one model.

Online tutoring may be synchronous, through video or chat, or asynchronous, through discussion boards, shared documents and recorded feedback. It can reduce geographical and scheduling barriers, extend cooperation across universities and allow participants more time to formulate responses. It can also make trust harder to establish, narrow access for students with weak infrastructure and obscure forms of hesitation or withdrawal that would be visible in physical presence.

A review comparing online and face-to-face peer learning suggests that online arrangements can sometimes perform at least as well and may benefit from flexibility, anonymity and extended time for response. The same review stresses variation in programme quality and warns that trust and social connection can be more difficult to establish online (Topping 2023). Such findings do not justify declaring one format superior. They show that format interacts with purpose, participants and design (Topping 2023).

Hybrid can mean several things: alternating between online and face-to-face meetings, allowing participants to choose between modes, or combining synchronous encounters with asynchronous work. These arrangements can widen access but also create an unequal centre and periphery if one mode is treated as primary.

Peer-EDU itself has operated across formats. The international training combined an online preparatory component with intensive on-campus workshops, while the Peer-EDU Support Platform was developed to support tutors and trainers across the three partner universities. The official training regulations specified six hours of online preparation followed by four days of face-to-face workshops. This combination reflected the project's international structure, but it should not be turned into a universal prescription for later tutoring practice (Peer-EDU 2025b).

The appropriate format follows from the educational purpose. A complex emotional disclosure requires different conditions from collaborative revision. A cross-university exchange requires different infrastructure from

embedded course support. Format should be chosen after the relationship and task have been defined, not before them.

2.6. Tutor, Tutee and Academic Teacher: Distinctions between Roles

The peer tutor assumes temporary pedagogical responsibility without becoming the academic authority responsible for the course. The tutor prepares, listens, asks, explains, models, challenges and gives feedback. They help make disciplinary practices and institutional expectations more visible. They do not certify knowledge, determine grades or guarantee outcomes.

The tutee is not the passive recipient of this activity. They bring the problem, attempt explanations, decide what remains unclear and retain responsibility for their own academic work. The tutee's agency is not an additional benefit of good tutoring; it is one of its defining conditions. When the tutor completes tasks, makes decisions or performs understanding on the tutee's behalf, tutoring has failed even if the immediate product improves.

The training feedback later condensed these distinctions into three expectations: tutors should support another student's own reasoning, remain candid about the limits of their knowledge and have access to consultation when a situation exceeds the peer role (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 11–13). The three belong together: facilitation without epistemic humility is unsafe, while humility without an available support structure can leave the tutor stranded.

The academic teacher retains responsibility for the curriculum, disciplinary standards, assessment and accessibility of teaching. Peer tutoring does not permit the teacher to retreat from students who experience difficulty. Nor should teachers control every tutoring conversation. Their role is to ensure that the programme is educationally aligned, that tutors have reliable routes for consultation and that recurring problems revealed through tutoring inform teaching and programme design.

This distribution of responsibility explains why tutor preparation cannot be reduced to subject expertise. Academic strength may support credibility, but it does not automatically produce listening, judgement or the ability to

explain. Conversely, strong interpersonal skills cannot compensate for unreliable knowledge. Peer-EDU respondents identified both dimensions: tutors need communication, empathy and boundary awareness, but participants also worried about variability in academic capability and the accuracy of advice (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–107).

The three roles are therefore connected but non-interchangeable. The tutor does not become the teacher; the tutee does not become a client; the teacher does not become a remote programme sponsor. The quality of the arrangement depends upon each actor remaining present in a recognisable form.

2.7. What Peer Tutoring Is Not

Peer tutoring is not simply any *occasion* on which students help one another. Informal assistance is educationally important, but an organised tutoring relationship involves an acknowledged purpose, differentiated responsibility and at least minimal boundaries.

It is not *private* or *commercial tuition*. Peer tutors act within a shared university context and do not sell privileged access to educational advantage. Payment or institutional recognition may be justified, but remuneration does not convert the relationship into a private service whose only obligation is to the purchaser.

It is not identical to *friendship*. Trust and warmth may develop, and existing friends may tutor one another. Friendship alone, however, does not provide role clarity, reliable knowledge or protection from dependency.

It is not *counselling*, *psychotherapy* or specialist *wellbeing support*. Tutors may listen and help a student identify an appropriate service. They should not diagnose, treat or assume continuing responsibility for distress beyond their competence.

It is not *academic advising* in the authoritative sense. A tutor may help a student formulate questions about regulations or choices, but official guidance must come from those responsible for the programme.

It is not *assessment authority*. Peer feedback and peer assessment can be valuable educational practices, but a peer tutor should not normally

determine formal grades or certify competence. Combining support and high-stakes judgement can undermine the trust on which tutoring depends.

It is not *surrogate teaching*. The presence of tutors does not reduce the responsibility of academic staff to explain, respond, provide feedback and design accessible educational conditions. When peer tutors repeatedly repair deficiencies in formal provision, the programme should generate institutional questions rather than merely additional sessions.

It is not *inherently reciprocal, inclusive, democratic or effective*. These qualities depend upon how students are recruited, matched, prepared, recognised and supported. A peer relation can reproduce hierarchy, misinformation and exclusion as readily as it can interrupt them.

Finally, peer tutoring is not *one intervention with one predictable outcome*. Course performance, belonging, confidence, tutor development and institutional continuation are different phenomena. Claims must remain attached to the model, population, task and evidence through which they were produced.

Against these distinctions, the book uses a deliberately bounded working definition: peer tutoring is an organised and bounded educational relationship in which students of broadly comparable institutional position, though potentially different experience, work together on academic study, with one participant temporarily assuming responsibility for facilitating another's engagement with knowledge or academic practice. Roles may be fixed or reciprocal, and academic, transitional and relational concerns may intersect.

This working definition is sufficiently broad to encompass the forms developed through Peer-EDU project, but narrow enough to protect the project from becoming a generic name for every student-support activity. It also establishes a principle that will guide the rest of the book: the design of peer tutoring is not an administrative detail added to an otherwise stable idea. The design is the idea in practice.

CHAPTER 3

THE PEDAGOGY OF STUDYING WITH PEERS

Peer tutoring can be introduced as a model, organised as a programme and evaluated through indicators. Yet none of these operations is sufficient to explain what makes it educational. A university may recruit capable students, provide them with conversational tools, arrange meetings and record high levels of satisfaction without yet answering the more fundamental question: what kind of educational situation is created when students study with and support one another?

This chapter develops the *pedagogical framework* through which the Peer-EDU Project is interpreted in the remainder of the book. It moves beyond the catalogue of definitions and models established in Chapter 2 and asks what happens to knowledge, authority, responsibility and relation when a student temporarily assumes a tutoring role. Its concern is not to provide another general theory of peer interaction. It is to clarify the educational commitments implicit in a project that invited students from the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta to prepare themselves for supporting the studies of others.

The first Peer-EDU report located peer tutoring within a field dominated by social-constructivist and collaborative approaches. The reviewed literature repeatedly associated peer interaction with the articulation of reasoning, mutual explanation, feedback and the reorganisation of knowledge. It also documented risks of power imbalance, role ambiguity, weak preparation and institutional overreach (Jendza et al. 2026: 3–10, 43–45). The project's comparative study added another layer. Students and academic staff expected peer tutoring to provide academic explanation, confidence, social integration and accessible support, but they disagreed at times about the balance between informality and structure, student autonomy and institutional oversight (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–136). These tensions are not

obstacles surrounding an otherwise uncomplicated method. They belong to its *pedagogy*.

The training programme made these questions concrete. Participants valued role rotation, practice with students from other universities and an environment in which imperfect performance could be exposed without immediate judgement. Their feedback also joined a facilitative understanding of the tutor role with requests for clearer boundaries, mentoring, shadowing, supervision and guidance in difficult situations (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7, 11–16). The same experience could therefore be read simultaneously as an encounter with knowledge, a negotiation of responsibility and a test of the institutional conditions surrounding student agency.

The chapter therefore begins with knowledge. Peer proximity, mutual support and psychological safety become pedagogically significant only when they help participants turn towards a matter that requires attention. Section 3.1 develops this claim; the opening point is simply that relation alone is not yet an account of education.

This emphasis connects the argument to Magnússon and Rytzler's recovery of pedagogy and Didaktik in higher education. Their work challenges the reduction of university teaching to techniques aligned with predetermined outcomes and restores questions about content, purpose, teaching and intellectual emancipation (Magnússon and Rytzler 2019: 190–202; 2022). For Peer-EDU, this means that the tutor cannot be understood simply as a facilitator of generic learning. Tutoring always concerns a relation among at least three elements: the tutor, the tutee and something that demands their attention. The educational relationship is mediated by the world they are attempting to understand.

Yet knowledge is never encountered outside relations of authority and recognition. The tutor may be a peer, but the role itself introduces asymmetry. Greater experience, successful completion of a course, selection by the institution and participation in training can confer epistemic and social authority. The question is not whether this authority can be abolished, but how it can be exercised without depriving the tutee of intellectual agency. Studying with peers redistributes educational authority; it does not remove the responsibility of academic teachers or make knowledge a matter of equal opinion.

The chapter therefore distinguishes *equality* from *sameness*. Tutor and tutee may be equal as persons and members of an academic community while differing in knowledge, experience and responsibility. Their equality is not established by denying these differences. It is enacted when both are treated as capable of thought, questioning and contribution, and when difference does not harden into domination.

This relational structure also explains why peer tutoring cannot be understood solely through *cognition*. Entering academic worlds involves tacit conventions, disciplinary identities, emotional exposure and the risk of being judged. Students need more than explanations; they need opportunities to participate, make mistakes, ask for help and experience themselves as legitimate contributors. Communities of practice, adult experience, reflection, care and psychological safety therefore form part of the framework developed here. They are not alternatives to knowledge but conditions under which a relationship with knowledge can become possible.

Throughout the chapter, these theoretical perspectives remain tied to the empirical and practical experience of Peer-EDU. The project does not prove that peer tutoring necessarily creates dialogue, equality, belonging or inclusion. Its reports document expectations, tensions and the experiences of a small training cohort. These materials nevertheless provide concrete educational situations through which larger questions can be examined: how students enter academic practices; how authority circulates; how recognition is granted or withheld; and how institutional structure may protect or undermine the informality that makes peer relationships valuable.

The framework developed here treats studying with peers as a relational and content-oriented practice situated within the institutional conditions of the university. Knowledge is approached through encounters between persons, but the purpose of those encounters extends beyond interpersonal comfort or generic skill development. Their possibilities are also shaped by curricula, hierarchies, spaces, recognition, supervision and access to support.

Peer tutoring therefore brings together tensions that cannot be finally resolved: equality and asymmetry, autonomy and responsibility, informality and institutionalisation. Pedagogical analysis therefore needs to make these

tensions visible and examine how they can be negotiated without undermining knowledge, human dignity or the possibility of shared study.

3.1. Knowledge as Something Studied Together

Peer tutoring begins with a relationship, but the relationship alone does not make it educational. Two students may offer one another encouragement, exchange experiences or reduce the sense of isolation associated with university study. These encounters can be valuable. Yet peer tutoring becomes a pedagogical practice only when the participants turn their attention towards some-thing: a text, concept, problem, case, argument, method, experiment or form of academic work. The tutor and tutee do not merely face one another. They gather around a matter that neither of them should be permitted to possess completely in advance.

This proposition may appear obvious. Peer tutoring is, after all, commonly justified as a means of supporting students' understanding of academic *content*. Nevertheless, much of the language surrounding contemporary higher education directs attention away from knowledge itself. Courses are described through *intended outcomes*, students through *competences*, and educational interventions through *measurable effects*. Knowledge remains present, but often as material to be *delivered*, *acquired* and *demonstrated* rather than as something capable of raising questions and *interrupting* established understanding.

Magnússon and Rytzler identify this displacement as one consequence of the increasingly instrumental organisation of higher education. The prominence of constructive alignment, standardisation and outcome-oriented course design may help teachers make purposes and expectations visible. It may also reduce pedagogy to the efficient coordination of predetermined results. Their recovery of Didaktik restores questions that cannot be resolved through alignment alone: Why should this content be studied? What educational possibilities does it carry? How should the relationship among teacher, student and subject matter be formed? Education, in this

account, is not a direct transaction between a provider and a recipient. It is a gathering around something held in common, though never understood in precisely the same way by all participants (Magnússon and Rytzler 2019: 190–202; 2022).

The same triangular relation can be extended to peer tutoring. The tutor does not stand in place of the academic teacher, and the tutee is not simply a recipient of assistance. Both enter into a relationship with a subject matter whose meaning cannot be reduced to the tutor's explanation. The tutor may know 'more', possess greater experience or recognise a path through the problem. Yet knowledge does not become their *private property* merely because they have completed the course before.

This is where the dominant social-constructivist interpretation of peer tutoring is both useful and insufficient. It is useful because it rejects the image of knowledge passing intact from one mind to another. Students formulate, test, clarify and revise their understanding through language and activity. Explaining something to another person makes reasoning *public*. Questions disclose gaps, assumptions and connections that may have remained unnoticed. The first Peer-EDU report accordingly describes a movement from a simple transfer model towards a reciprocal process in which tutors and tutees can both reorganise their understanding (Jendza et al. 2026: 3–10, 43–45).

The constructivist vocabulary becomes insufficient, however, when the assertion that knowledge is socially constructed is interpreted as meaning that whatever a group agrees upon becomes true. A conversation may produce *confidence without accuracy*. Students may reinforce one another's misunderstandings, reproduce disciplinary clichés or settle too quickly upon an explanation that feels intuitively satisfying. *Consensus is not yet understanding*.

Knowledge is something studied together, but it is not created solely by the relationship between those who study. The text says something that may disturb an initial interpretation. The evidence resists a preferred conclusion. A mathematical proof fails at a particular step. A patient case complicates a familiar diagnostic category. A historical source refuses to fit the narrative brought to it. Subject matter has a certain *resistance*: it makes demands upon the participants and limits what they can responsibly claim.

Biesta's defence of teaching is helpful here. Teaching need not be understood as control or the transmission of predetermined content. It can also be an interruption through which students are directed towards something that was not simply produced by their existing preferences. Education becomes possible when people encounter a world that is neither entirely of their own making nor fully subject to their wishes (Biesta 2012: 35–49).

Peer tutoring should preserve this element of *interruption*. The tutor does not merely affirm the tutee's present understanding or adapt everything to their preferred way of studying. Sometimes the educationally responsible response is to say that an interpretation does not yet follow from the evidence, that a distinction has been overlooked, or that an argument must be reconstructed. Proximity should make such correction more approachable, but it should not make knowledge infinitely negotiable.

At the same time, the tutor's own understanding remains open to 'disturbance'. One of the educational strengths of tutoring lies in the need to return to what has become familiar. A student who can solve a problem may discover that they cannot yet explain why the solution works. A definition remembered well enough for an examination may prove inadequate when another student asks where its boundaries lie. Knowledge that appeared *settled* becomes questionable again.

This is not merely 'learning by teaching' in the sense of acquiring the same content more effectively. The tutor is required to establish a *new relation* to it. They must decide what is essential, distinguish a principle from an example, recognise another person's reasoning and sometimes admit that their own explanation has failed. The tutee's questions can therefore return the tutor to the position of someone who studies.

Participants in the Peer-EDU diagnostic research frequently anticipated this reciprocal movement. Students at the three universities referred to reinforcement of knowledge, deeper understanding, personalised explanation and the possibility that tutors would reconsider familiar material from another perspective. One respondent distinguished peer tutoring from traditional approaches through its "accessibility, equality and mutual benefit", while others emphasised that preparing to teach another person demands a more careful engagement with the material (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 76–92, 117–119). These are expectations rather than observed outcomes,

but they reveal that respondents did not understand tutoring simply as the distribution of pre-existing answers.

The training feedback gives this orientation a practical form: participants described good support as leaving the tutee with an answer they could claim as their own (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 11). This does not mean that the tutor must never explain, demonstrate or correct, nor that every academic problem should be treated as if no established knowledge existed. It means that the tutor's intervention should deepen the tutee's relation to the problem rather than substitute for it.

The distinction can be expressed through two different images of tutoring. In the first, knowledge is *a possession* located on the tutor's side of the relationship. The session succeeds when enough of it has been transferred to the tutee. In the second, knowledge is treated as a *common object of attention*. The tutor brings experience, partial mastery and possible routes of access; the tutee brings questions, previous knowledge and attempts at interpretation. Both are answerable to what is being studied.

Masschelein and Simons describe the university as a pedagogical form organised around public and collective study. Matters are taken out of their immediate circulation and made available for shared attention. Study is not simply production and does not always move directly towards a predefined use. It involves care, hesitation and the willingness to return to something rather than consume it rapidly (Masschelein and Simons 2018: 47–61, especially 52–54).

Peer tutoring cannot reproduce the full public form of the university within every individual encounter. Yet it may create a modest version of such a gathering. A problem that previously belonged to the lecturer, textbook or assessment becomes something students can place between themselves, inspect and work upon. A peer tutor can make knowledge more accessible without making it private. The purpose is not merely to help the tutee cross an assessment threshold, although that may matter. It is to make participation in the activity of study more possible.

The official Peer-EDU website presents the project through several practical goals: preparing tutors and their trainers, supporting academic and social adaptation, developing transversal competences, establishing a knowledge platform and reducing the risk of withdrawal. These aims explain the

project's institutional rationale. They do not by themselves specify its pedagogy. The argument developed here is that the project's activities become educational when knowledge remains more than a resource used to generate those outcomes (Peer-EDU 2026).

This also establishes a limit. Peer tutoring should not become a parallel system through which students receive simplified versions of academic teaching. A tutor who merely repeats lecture content may make it more digestible, but leaves the basic transmission model intact. Nor should a tutoring session be reduced to generic coaching in which the content is interchangeable and the central concern is always the student's goal. At university, purposes and strategies matter, but there must also be something worth studying.

Knowledge as *some-thing studied together* therefore means neither that knowledge is transferred unchanged nor that it is freely invented in interaction. It means that understanding develops through a relationship in which reasoning becomes visible and revisable, while participants remain answerable to a subject matter that exceeds them. The tutor's task is to help *open* that relation. The tutee's task is to *enter* it actively. The academic teacher and institution remain responsible for ensuring that what is opened is intellectually worthwhile, accessible and connected to the wider practices of the discipline.

The central pedagogical promise of Peer-EDU lies here. Students can become mediators of access to knowledge without becoming its owners. In supporting another person's study, they may also rediscover that knowledge is never finally possessed, but repeatedly returned to, questioned and made public among those willing to give it their attention.

3.2. Dialogue, Encounter and Shared Inquiry

Peer tutoring is commonly described as dialogical because it involves conversation rather than a one-directional lecture. Yet not every exchange of words is dialogue, just as not every question opens inquiry. A tutor may speak informally while controlling every step of the encounter. A tutee

may answer repeatedly without being invited to think. Conversation may be friendly, efficient and... entirely closed.

Dialogue should therefore not be defined by the amount of speech exchanged or by the absence of visible hierarchy. Its educational significance lies in the kind of relationship that becomes possible through speaking, listening, questioning and responding. Participants must be able to affect the course of the encounter, and what they say must remain answerable to the matter under examination.

Burbules describes dialogue not as a single instructional method but as a family of relational practices. Dialogue may take the form of conversation, inquiry, debate or instruction, and each form creates different relations among participants and knowledge. It can foster discovery and understanding, but it can also fail through domination, ritualised participation, misunderstanding or the inability to sustain trust across difference (Burbules 1993). His account is especially relevant to peer tutoring because it prevents us from equating informality with openness. A tutor can dominate without possessing formal authority; a tutee can comply while appearing actively engaged.

Dialogue begins when the other person's response cannot be treated merely as the next expected element in a script. This requires a *readiness to be surprised*. The tutor may enter the session believing that they understand the problem, only to discover that the tutee is struggling with something different. The tutee may ask for a correct answer while gradually recognising that the deeper difficulty concerns how evidence is interpreted or how a disciplinary question is formulated.

Gadamer's hermeneutic account of conversation is useful here. Understanding develops through a movement of question and answer in which participants do not fully control what emerges. A genuine conversation has a direction, but its outcome cannot be decided completely beforehand. Participants are drawn towards the subject matter (some-thing), and their initial positions may be altered through the encounter (Gadamer 2004: 360–379).

This does not require pretending that tutor and tutee know the same things. The tutor may have good reasons for anticipating where a particular misunderstanding will lead. They may know which concepts must be distinguished or which method is academically accepted. Dialogue is not

destroyed by this knowledge. It is destroyed when the other person's contribution is interpreted only as evidence of how far they remain from the answer already held by the tutor.

The distinction is important for the 'conversational tools' used in Peer-EDU. The Question Funnel and GROW model were among the most highly valued elements of the training. Participants appreciated their practical structure and the way they gave names and order to conversational actions that some had previously used intuitively. Communication skills, including listening, questioning and rapport, received an average rating of 4.74 out of 5, while the tools themselves received 4.68 (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–6).

These tools can create movement from broad exploration towards greater precision. They can help tutors resist the urge to offer immediate solutions and enable tutees to articulate purposes, possibilities and next steps. But *no conversational structure is dialogical in itself*. A Question Funnel can become a disguised interrogation. The tutor may ask apparently open questions while silently rejecting every response that does not approach the conclusion they have chosen. GROW can reduce study to goal attainment when the subject matter itself requires hesitation, uncertainty or the revision of the initial goal.

The educational value of these tools therefore depends upon the tutor's stance. Are questions used to discover what the tutee is thinking, or to 'manoeuvre' them towards compliance? Is listening an attempt to understand, or a pause while the tutor prepares the next intervention? Can the conversation reveal that the tutor's initial interpretation was wrong?

Shared inquiry differs from *guided answer-finding* precisely at this point. Inquiry begins from the recognition that something remains genuinely *open*. The openness may concern the answer, the meaning of a question, the reasons supporting a claim or the most appropriate way of approaching a problem. It need not imply that all outcomes are equally plausible. An inquiry into a mathematical problem remains constrained by mathematics; an inquiry into a historical event remains answerable to evidence. What remains open is the *path* through which understanding will be reached and the possibility that participants will need to revise what they thought they knew.

Wells describes dialogic inquiry as a sociocultural practice through which knowledge is developed in collaborative activity. Language does not merely communicate conclusions produced elsewhere. It helps participants plan, coordinate, examine and revise their action. Inquiry is therefore not simply a technique for eliciting individual cognition; it is a disposition towards questioning and constructing understanding with others (Wells 1999: 98–166, 293–334).

This perspective is visible in the design of the Peer-EDU training. Participants did not only hear descriptions of effective tutoring. They moved through all three roles in simulated encounters and then compared what became visible from each standpoint. Tutoring itself became the object of inquiry: what listening requires, when assistance begins to control the other person, and how an encounter changes when it is experienced from another position.

Role rotation and mixed-university practice were especially useful because they unsettled assumptions participants brought to the course. Working with unfamiliar peers introduced different expectations about helping, authority and communication, making those differences available for collective examination (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 10, 14). Internationality therefore mattered pedagogically through comparison rather than through cultural variety alone.

The evidence must remain proportionate to its source. These comments concern nineteen participants' experience of a short international training programme. They do not demonstrate that subsequent tutoring encounters were dialogical or that cultural difference always enriched inquiry. They do show, however, that participants experienced perspective-taking, role rotation and collaborative interpretation as central to their preparation.

Dialogue is also an encounter. This term adds something that can be lost when tutoring is described only through communication skills. A tutor does not meet a generic "tutee" or an instance of a predefined problem. They meet a particular person whose history, language, uncertainty and response to assistance cannot be known entirely in advance.

Encounter does not mean limitless emotional intimacy. The peer tutor role remains bounded, and the tutor is not expected to enter every dimension of the other student's life. It means that techniques must remain

responsive to the person rather than turning the person into the material upon which a technique operates.

This point is reflected in participants' descriptions of *psychological safety*. They valued an environment in which they felt "not judged" and "accepted and understood". Such experiences do not constitute dialogue by themselves, but they can make it possible. Students who expect humiliation may speak only to protect themselves. They may conceal confusion, agree prematurely or avoid asking the question that matters most (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 6–7, 14–15).

Safety should not, however, be confused with permanent comfort. Dialogue can expose disagreement, error and incompatible interpretations. A tutoring encounter in which no claim can be challenged for fear of disturbing the relationship may be kind but educationally weak. Psychological safety is valuable because it allows participants to take intellectual risks, not because it removes every form of difficulty.

Brookfield and Preskill's work on discussion similarly connects dialogue with democratic participation while attending to the unequal distribution of voice. An invitation to speak does not ensure that everyone can enter the conversation on equal terms. Confidence, language, gender, social status and previous educational experience affect who speaks, who is interrupted and whose contribution acquires authority. Dialogical practice therefore requires active attention to silence and domination rather than the simple creation of an open floor (Brookfield and Preskill 2005).

This is particularly relevant to peer tutoring because the label 'peer' can conceal difference. The trained tutor may speak more confidently, know the institutional vocabulary and be recognised as academically successful. The tutee may feel that asking for assistance already places them in an inferior position. Dialogue does not abolish this asymmetry. It creates a possibility that the asymmetry will not determine in advance whose thought matters.

The tutor can support this possibility by making their reasoning visible rather than presenting conclusions as self-evident, by inviting disagreement, and by acknowledging uncertainty. The tutee can be treated as someone whose account of the difficulty matters, not merely as someone to be diagnosed. Both participants can return to the text, evidence or problem when interpersonal authority becomes too strong.

Silence also belongs to dialogue. A tutor trained to maintain conversational flow may experience silence as failure and fill it with another question or explanation. Yet silence may indicate that the tutee is thinking, gathering courage or attempting to formulate something not yet clear. Shared inquiry needs pauses in which the demand for immediate performance is suspended. The tutor must learn to distinguish productive silence from withdrawal, without assuming complete access to what it means.

The institutional arrangement affects whether such dialogue is possible. Sessions organised under severe time pressure encourage rapid correction. One-off drop-in encounters may not allow enough trust to develop for a student to disclose *uncertainty*. Extensive reporting requirements may make participants cautious about what can be said. A lack of supervision may make tutors retreat into scripts because they have nowhere to discuss ambiguous encounters.

This dialogical openness also creates a requirement beyond the immediate encounter: tutors need somewhere to take questions that dialogue itself cannot resolve. In Peer-EDU, supervision and continuing support were therefore conceived as conditions around the relationship rather than as instructions governing every exchange (Peer-EDU 2026).

Dialogue, encounter and inquiry therefore name related but distinct dimensions. Dialogue concerns a responsive relation in which participants' contributions can alter what happens.

Encounter concerns attentiveness to the person who cannot be reduced to a *role* or *case*. Inquiry concerns the shared orientation towards a question or matter that remains open to examination.

Peer tutoring is strongest when all three remain present. These dimensions depend upon one another. Dialogue that loses its orientation towards a matter of study may remain supportive without becoming educational, while inquiry conducted without attentiveness to the person can become technically effective but relationally impoverished. Peer tutoring therefore requires both responsiveness to participants and sustained attention to what they are trying to understand.

No training manual can guarantee this conjunction. Peer-EDU can prepare for it by offering structures for questioning, opportunities to experience different roles, realistic cases, reflective debriefing and continuing

supervision. What follows depends upon tutors and tutees entering conversations whose course cannot be fully scripted while remaining oriented towards something they are willing to study together.

3.3. Cognitive and Social Congruence

One of the most frequently cited explanations for the educational value of peer tutoring concerns the relative proximity between tutor and tutee. A student who has recently encountered the same course, assessment or disciplinary difficulty may be able to explain it in ways that remain accessible to someone still trying to enter the problem. The same student may also appear more approachable than an academic teacher. This double proximity is commonly described through the concepts of cognitive and social congruence.

The concepts were initially developed in research on tutors working in problem-based curricula. Cognitive congruence referred to the tutor's capacity to communicate in language understandable to students, to recognise their present level of understanding and to connect explanation with the reasoning they were already attempting. Social congruence concerned the tutor's willingness and ability to relate to students informally, authentically and with attention to their lives and difficulties. Schmidt and Moust's study of 524 tutorial groups indicated that neither subject expertise nor interpersonal proximity was sufficient alone. Effective tutoring depended upon the relationship among expertise, cognitive congruence, social congruence and the quality of group functioning (Schmidt and Moust 1995: 708–714).

Research on near-peer teaching later applied these concepts more directly to relations among students. Lockspeiser and colleagues found that learners valued peer tutors partly because they remembered the difficulties involved in encountering the material and could translate complex content into more accessible language. Their relative social proximity also reduced the perceived risks of questioning and admitting uncertainty (Lockspeiser et al. 2008: 361–372). The first Peer-EDU report similarly associates peer tutoring with accessible explanation, communication, trust and the possibility

of reducing distance, while also noting that trust may initially be weak, particularly in culturally diverse groups (Jendza et al. 2026: 3–6).

Congruence should not, however, be confused with *sameness*. Tutor and tutee do not need to possess identical biographies, abilities or educational experiences. Cognitive congruence does not mean that both know the same amount. It names the tutor's ability to move between their own, relatively more developed understanding and the tutee's present way of approaching the matter. A tutor who merely reproduces the lecturer's vocabulary may know the subject well but remain cognitively distant. Another who simplifies everything may appear accessible while depriving the tutee of entry into the actual language and complexity of the discipline.

The pedagogical work lies in moving between these positions. The tutor must remember enough of the difficulty to recognise it, but also understand enough to open a way beyond it. Their proximity is valuable precisely because it coexists with a limited difference in experience.

This creates an important tension. The recent learner/student may remember confusion that an experienced academic teacher has ceased to notice. Yet the recent learner may also possess a 'fragile' or 'incomplete' understanding. What makes an explanation familiar can also make it inaccurate. A tutor may repeat shortcuts that once helped them pass an assessment without understanding the conceptual limits of those shortcuts. Cognitive congruence therefore requires more than speaking simply. It requires the judgement to distinguish an accessible route into knowledge from a distortion of it.

At the same time, a scoping review of research on cognitive and social congruence confirms that the concepts are widely used to explain peer-assisted education but are defined and measured inconsistently. The review found broad support for their relevance while also showing that the relationship between the two forms of congruence and educational outcomes remains more complex than a simple causal formula suggests (Loda et al. 2019). The concepts are most useful as analytical questions rather than as guaranteed qualities of every peer relationship:

- Can the tutor recognise how the tutee is currently thinking?
- Can they express disciplinary ideas without making them intellectually empty?

- Can the tutee disclose uncertainty without fear of humiliation?
- Does interpersonal proximity support study, or does it replace critical engagement with agreement?

The Peer-EDU diagnostic research shows why both forms of congruence mattered to respondents. Students and academic staff at the three partner universities repeatedly associated peer tutoring with explanations adapted to individual needs, greater informality, confidence, collaboration and more approachable assistance. Respondents also worried about tutor competence, inaccurate information and the possibility that students might not treat a peer tutor seriously. Cognitive and social proximity were therefore imagined simultaneously as strengths and as sources of risk (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–114).

The project's international training made this relationship more concrete. Participants rated communication skills, particularly active listening, questioning and rapport, highly, with an overall mean of 4.74 out of 5. They also valued the Question Funnel, GROW and repeated opportunities to practise explaining, listening and responding from different positions. Nearly all described the training environment as inclusive, safe and supportive (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–8).

Their qualitative comments illuminate social congruence more clearly than the ratings alone. Participants referred to being able to speak without feeling “judged”, to feeling “accepted and understood”, and to the value of working with people from other universities who brought different perspectives to the same situation (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14–15). Social congruence did not arise here from cultural or institutional sameness. The group included students from the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta, working in a shared language that was not the first language of everyone involved. What mattered was not the disappearance of difference, but the creation of *conditions in which difference did not prevent participation*.

This complicates the common image of social congruence as naturally produced by peer status. Students may be formally close while remaining socially distant. Language, age, discipline, confidence, academic achievement, disability, class, nationality and cultural expectations concerning authority can all affect the relationship. A trained and institutionally certified

tutor may also acquire a status that differentiates them from the student seeking assistance. The category 'peer' does not neutralise these differences.

The international composition of Peer-EDU made such differences particularly visible. Participants described mixed-university role play as a source of alternative perspectives and collaborative interpretation (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14). Congruence, from this perspective, need not precede the encounter as an already existing similarity. It may develop gradually through shared activity as participants construct a sufficiently common language around the tutor role, questioning, boundaries and difficult situations.

The same point applies to cognitive congruence. It is not simply a structural feature resulting from the tutor being one or two years ahead. It is enacted through attention. A near-peer tutor may be cognitively distant if they fail to listen, assume that their own route through the course is universal or use terminology the tutee does not understand. An academic teacher may sometimes achieve considerable cognitive congruence by attending carefully to how students are interpreting a problem. *Peer tutoring has no monopoly on accessibility.*

Its distinctive possibility lies instead in the combination of *proximity* and *recent experience*. Tutors can often recall not only what they eventually understood, but the sequence of misunderstandings, anxieties and informal strategies through which they reached that understanding. This gives them access to a kind of *transitional knowledge*: knowledge of what it is like to move from not yet understanding towards partial participation in a field.

That transitional knowledge is especially significant for Peer-EDU model because the project concerns adaptation to university life as well as support with academic study. The tutor may help explain not only disciplinary content but the practices surrounding it: how to approach an assignment, interpret feedback, ask a lecturer a question or recognise what independent work means in a particular context. Social and cognitive congruence can thus make the university more readable.

There is nevertheless a danger in treating *readability* as *conformity*. The tutor may explain how the institution works while presenting its existing conventions as natural and unquestionable. They may help the tutee adjust to an inaccessible practice instead of recognising that the practice itself

could change. Congruence can therefore support entry into academic life while also reproducing its exclusions.

For this reason, Peer-EDU requires the continued presence of academic teachers and mentors. Their role is not to correct every tutoring conversation, but to provide consultation, disciplinary assurance and a space in which tutors can examine recurring difficulties. The final Peer Tutors' Trainers report is significant here. Academic mentors participating in the University of Gdańsk workshop described themselves as supervisors, sources of expertise and facilitators rather than controllers. They also emphasised the need for a 'safety net': supervision and urgent consultation when tutors encounter situations they cannot responsibly resolve (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

Cognitive and social congruence therefore describe possibilities, not inherent properties of peer tutoring. Proximity can make explanation intelligible and uncertainty speakable. It can also produce overconfidence, collusion or the uncritical reproduction of familiar practices. The task of preparation is not to instruct tutors to behave as though they are similar to every tutee. It is to develop their capacity to notice both proximity and distance. Peer tutoring becomes pedagogically valuable when the tutor is *close enough to remember difficulty, sufficiently knowledgeable to move beyond it, and sufficiently attentive to avoid treating their own experience as the measure of another person's study.*

3.4. Communities of Practice and Entry into Academic Worlds

Students do not enter university only by acquiring information. They enter practices. They learn how questions are asked, evidence is handled, texts are read, arguments are criticised and uncertainty is displayed. They also encounter less visible conventions: when speaking is expected, what counts as independent work, how authority is addressed and which forms of knowledge receive recognition.

These practices differ between universities, disciplines and programmes. There is no single academic world into which all students are incorporated in the same way. A laboratory, a clinical ward, an education seminar and an engineering design studio organise participation differently. Even within one institution, students move among several partially connected worlds.

The concept of a community of practice provides one way of understanding this movement. Lave and Wenger developed the idea of legitimate peripheral participation to describe how newcomers enter social practices not principally by receiving abstract instruction, but by taking part in activities whose meaning is organised through a community. Their initial participation may be limited, but it is legitimate: newcomers have access to people, language, tools and forms of action through which fuller participation can gradually become possible (Lave and Wenger 1991: 29–37, 95–100).

Wenger later described communities of practice through the interrelation of meaning, practice, community and identity. Participation is not merely a means of acquiring a competence located elsewhere. Through participation, people come to understand what matters, how work is conducted and who they may become within a particular social world (Wenger 1998: 4–5, 72–85, 149–163).

This perspective extends the argument made in Chapter 1 about transition between secondary school and university. A first-year student is not simply missing a collection of academic skills. They are a *newcomer* attempting to understand practices that more experienced members may no longer perceive as requiring explanation. The conventions of academic work often appear *obvious* to those already inhabiting them because they have become part of ordinary participation.

Peer tutoring can create an intermediate relation between newcomers and these academic worlds. Near-peer tutors are neither complete *outsiders* nor *fully established academic authorities*. They have recently participated at the margins of the same practices and have begun to acquire their language, routines and standards. This position allows them to make visible elements that may remain tacit in formal teaching.

A tutor may explain why a seminar contribution is valued differently from a school answer, how a disciplinary argument is organised or why feedback that appears negative can function as an invitation to revise a claim. They

may demonstrate how to read an article without understanding every sentence at the first attempt, how to recognise a productive question or how to use an office hour. Such explanations are not supplements to academic content. They concern participation in the practices through which content becomes available for study.

The first Peer-EDU report points towards this wider role by locating peer tutoring within academic, social and emotional development rather than treating it exclusively as content remediation. It associates peer support with communication, collaboration, confidence and community building, while also noting the importance of role preparation and sustained relational networks (Jendza et al. 2026: 3–6). The comparative report similarly shows that respondents expected tutoring to support both understanding and entry into academic life, particularly through informal guidance, integration and the development of confidence (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 108–119).

Yet the language of communities of practice must be used cautiously. Universities are not naturally *coherent communities* united around shared purposes. Academic worlds contain competition, exclusion, hierarchy and disagreement over what constitutes legitimate knowledge. Some newcomers are invited to participate more readily than others. The designation of certain practices as central and others as peripheral is itself connected to institutional power.

Legitimate peripheral participation therefore names a possibility, not a description of every student's experience. Peripheral participation becomes educational only when it offers meaningful access to the practice. Students can remain permanently peripheral: allowed to observe, perform routine tasks or reproduce approved language without gaining influence over the questions and standards organising the community.

Peer tutors may help widen access, but they can also become gatekeepers. Because they have learned how to succeed within existing arrangements, they may present those arrangements as the only legitimate way of being a student. Their advice may include tacit judgements about who appears academically serious, confident or capable. Entry into an academic world can then become adaptation to its *dominant cultural style* rather than *participation in a practice open to change*.

The concept of community should therefore not conceal questions of recognition and authority that will be developed in the following sections. A community of practice is not necessarily inclusive, and participation is not necessarily emancipatory. Students may become highly engaged in practices that are competitive, exhausting or organised around narrow definitions of success. Zepke's critique of engagement in neoliberal higher education is relevant here: institutional calls for participation can support meaningful belonging, but they can also align students more efficiently with performance, employability and retention objectives (Zepke 2017).

Peer-EDU should therefore distinguish entry into academic worlds from compliant incorporation. The tutor's role is not simply to socialise a newcomer into whatever the university already demands, but to make practices available for examination: the reasons behind a convention, the educational purpose of an assessment, the difference between disciplinary expectations and an individual teacher's preference, and the routes through which students can legitimately question what they encounter.

Such questions enable entry without presenting the academic world as complete or beyond criticism. Newcomers do not merely acquire practices; their questions can expose the exclusions, contradictions and forgotten purposes within those practices. A community remains educationally alive when entry changes both the newcomer and, at least potentially, the practice entered.

The Peer-EDU training itself offers a small example of this process. Participants did not become tutors solely by receiving descriptions of the role. They entered simulated tutoring practices, rotated among tutor, tutee and observer positions, used shared conversational tools and discussed what they had experienced. The most highly valued activities were role plays, mini-scenarios and opportunities to compare perspectives. Participants described how practice became easier over successive days and how inhabiting several roles allowed them to notice changes in the interaction (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 10–14).

In Wenger's terms, the programme began to develop elements of a *shared repertoire*: the Question Funnel, GROW, role descriptions, cases, ways of giving feedback and a vocabulary for boundaries. These tools did not constitute a community by themselves. They became meaningful

because participants used, interpreted and sometimes questioned them together.

The international group also generated mutual engagement around a shared enterprise: preparing to support other students. Participant accounts suggest that the meaning of tutoring was negotiated collectively through practice, discussion and comparison rather than acquired as an individual credential alone (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14–19).

Nevertheless, a four-day intensive face-to-face course cannot by itself establish a durable community of practice. Communities require continuity, repeated participation and the possibility of carrying experience from one encounter into another. Participants' requests for future meetings and consultation reveal precisely this incompleteness. One participant hoped that the group would have "an opportunity to meet again", while others asked to observe more experienced tutors or consult an academic mentor before difficult conversations (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–15).

Peer-EDU's architecture acknowledged this need. According to the project timetable and website, the initial training was intended to be followed by a pilot period in the three home universities, with continuing support and monitoring from project teams. The project also included preparation of peer tutor trainers (mentors) and a digital platform supporting resources and exchange across the three partner universities. The platform was completed and tested by Polish students participating in the training, including through profile creation and trialling the matching mechanism and other functionalities. The tutoring pilot itself was not implemented during the project period, so evidence concerning sustained tutor–tutee practice remains prospective rather than observed (Peer-EDU 2026).

The final Peer Tutors' Trainers report adds an important institutional layer. The 16 academic mentors participating in the University of Gdańsk training imagined their role as providing supervision, a safe space for consultation and reflection, and assistance in defining ethical and institutional boundaries. They also saw themselves as co-creators of the framework and promoters of peer tutoring within faculties. Their requests for continuing supervision and consultation suggest that mentors themselves need a community in which their practice can develop (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

Our claim is therefore that the Peer-EDU approach can be understood as attempting to create several connected communities:

- local communities of peer tutors within each university;
- relationships among tutors, tutees and academic mentors;
- an international network connecting the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta;
- a wider institutional conversation about peer tutoring within the SEA-EU context.

These should not be assumed to form *one harmonious community*. Local curricula, languages, organisational structures and understandings of tutoring differ. The international dimension is valuable not because it dissolves these differences, but because it allows practices to be compared and questioned.

Nor should the digital platform be mistaken for the community itself. A repository, discussion board or booking system can support participation, but it cannot produce shared practice merely by connecting users. A community develops when participants have reasons to return, recognise one another's experience and address problems that matter to their work. Experience from teaching-development work at the University of Gdańsk points in the same direction. Szymczak (2025: 63) argues that "a teaching community does not create itself": it depends on relationships, regular encounters and the sharing of practice. This observation is particularly relevant to Peer-EDU, where the durability of a tutor community would similarly depend on repeated participation rather than on training completion alone.

For Peer-EDU, the most promising organising practice may be the collective examination of actual tutoring cases. A tutor brings a difficult encounter; peers and mentors consider what happened, what knowledge and responsibilities were involved, and what another response might have made possible. Such meetings would connect practice, reflection, supervision and institutional improvement. They would also prevent the tutor role from becoming solitary work undertaken after certification.

The movement into academic worlds therefore occurs on more than one level. Tutees enter disciplinary and institutional practices with the support of peers. Tutors enter an emerging educational practice of supporting others. Academic mentors enter a supervisory practice that differs from lecturing or

controlling student activity. The project partnership itself enters a process of translating peer tutoring across three institutional environments.

Communities of practice help make these movements visible, but they should not be romanticised. Entry can include and exclude; communities can preserve knowledge and reproduce hierarchy; shared repertoires can support judgement or harden into procedure. The pedagogical task is not merely to bring newcomers into existing practices. It is to create forms of participation through which academic worlds become more accessible, more reflective and open to transformation.

3.5. Academic Hierarchies and Recognition: How Studying with Peers Redistributes Educational Authority

Universities are hierarchical institutions. Their hierarchies are visible in academic titles, employment positions, assessment rights and access to institutional decision-making. They are also present in less formal distinctions: who can speak with confidence, whose interpretation is treated as credible, who knows how to approach an academic teacher and who possesses the language through which uncertainty can be expressed without appearing incompetent.

Not every hierarchy is educationally illegitimate. Academic teachers possess knowledge, experience and responsibilities that students do not yet share. They design courses, introduce disciplinary traditions, evaluate work and remain answerable for academic standards. A university that denied every difference in knowledge and responsibility would not become more democratic; it would obscure where authority is located and who can be held accountable for its exercise.

The problem arises when necessary differences harden into relations in which only one side is recognised as capable of thought. Educational authority then ceases to open access to knowledge and begins to protect its own distance. Students may learn that academic success requires reproducing accepted language, anticipating the preferences of those who assess

them and concealing questions whose apparent simplicity might reveal that they do not yet belong.

Bourdieu's analysis of the academic field is important here because it shows that universities do not distribute authority solely according to neutral differences in knowledge. Academic status is connected to forms of cultural, institutional and symbolic capital. The university defines not only which answers are correct, but also which manners of speaking, writing and presenting oneself are recognised as legitimate. Those already familiar with these conventions can appear naturally capable, while others must learn to translate themselves into the language of the institution (Bourdieu 1988: 11–35). The academic field is therefore also a field of struggles over legitimate membership and hierarchy.

Peer tutoring enters this field in an ambiguous position. It appears to flatten hierarchy because both participants are students. A tutee may approach a peer more readily than an academic teacher, expose uncertainty with less fear and ask about conventions that seem too elementary to raise in formal teaching. Yet the tutor role immediately introduces a new difference. The tutor has been selected, trained or recognised as capable of supporting others. They may have completed the relevant course, achieved strong results or acquired institutional knowledge unavailable to the tutee.

Peer tutoring therefore does not eliminate hierarchy. It redistributes educational authority by creating an intermediate position between the academic teacher and the student seeking support.

This redistribution can make the university more accessible. A peer tutor may translate an assessment instruction, demonstrate how a disciplinary problem is approached or make visible assumptions that academic staff no longer recognise as tacit. The tutor's authority is limited but real: the tutee approaches them because they are expected to know something, understand the institution or possess experience worth hearing.

The comparative Peer-EDU study reveals this double expectation. Respondents valued peer tutoring because it appeared more approachable, informal and individualised than some staff-led forms of assistance. At the same time, they repeatedly questioned whether student tutors would possess adequate subject knowledge, communication skills and maturity. Some worried that tutees might not recognise a peer tutor's authority;

others feared that tutors might provide unreliable information or become overly confident in their role (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–114).

These concerns are not secondary implementation issues. They identify the pedagogical structure of the relationship. The tutor needs enough authority for their contribution to be taken seriously, but not so much that the tutee's judgement becomes irrelevant. Too little recognised authority makes the tutor ineffective; too much turns the tutor into a minor academic official.

The concept of recognition helps explain what is at stake. For Honneth, persons develop practical relations to themselves through experiences of recognition in relations of care, legal respect and social esteem. Experiences of disrespect damage not only comfort or confidence but a person's capacity to participate as someone whose needs, rights and contributions matter (Honneth 1995: 92–130).

Within higher education, recognition does not mean praising every contribution or affirming every interpretation as correct. A student can be recognised as capable of thought while still being told that an argument is unsupported. Indeed, serious correction may itself express recognition when it treats the student as someone capable of revising a position rather than as someone from whom little can be expected.

Misrecognition occurs when the difficulty is attached to the person rather than examined as *part of study*. A student is no longer someone who does not yet understand a particular concept; they become someone who is presumed not to belong in the discipline. Their hesitation is read as lack of intelligence, their unfamiliarity with academic language as lack of potential, or their need for assistance as evidence of dependency.

Fraser's status model prevents recognition from becoming a purely interpersonal matter. Recognition concerns whether people can participate as peers in social interaction, not simply whether they feel appreciated. Institutional arrangements may deny parity of participation even where individual relationships remain polite and supportive (Fraser 2000: 107–120).

This distinction is essential for Peer-EDU. A considerate peer tutor cannot compensate for assessment practices that remain opaque, teaching that excludes particular students or support systems that are difficult to access. Recognition within the tutoring relationship should therefore connect with institutional learning. When tutors repeatedly encounter the same difficulty,

the question cannot remain how individual tutees might adapt; the university must also ask what its own practices make difficult to understand or enter. Recognition concerns the tutor as well. Tutors should not be treated merely as deliverers of support but as participants whose experience can disclose features of the educational environment.

Róża Stosik's reflection makes the transformation of authority visible from within the tutor position. She entered Peer-EDU thinking primarily about helping and sharing knowledge with other students. After the training, she understood the role more strongly through active listening, carefully formulated questions, feedback, feedforward and respect for boundaries. Particularly important in her account is the need to allow the tutee to finish speaking and to avoid imposing the tutor's own solution. Authority becomes less a matter of possessing the answer and more a responsibility for the conditions of the conversation (Stosik 2026).

The report from the University of Gdańsk training adds another layer. Participants did not imagine themselves primarily as controllers of peer tutors. They described their role as providing expertise and supervision while also contributing to the programme's ethical and institutional framework (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

Peer-EDU therefore distributes authority across several positions. The academic teacher retains disciplinary and curricular responsibility. The mentor offers supervision and institutional orientation. The peer tutor exercises situated pedagogical judgement. The tutee retains responsibility for their own study and the right to question the support offered.

This distribution should not be confused with the disappearance of authority. Its purpose is to prevent authority from accumulating entirely in one relationship and to create more than one route through which a student can gain access to knowledge and recognition. Studying with peers can therefore alter academic hierarchy without pretending to abolish it.

3.6. Equality among Peers without the Denial of Difference

The word peer suggests that tutor and tutee meet without the formal distance separating students from academic teachers. They share student status, inhabit related institutional conditions and may have recently faced similar difficulties. This relative equality can make questions easier to ask and advice easier to receive.

Yet the relationship begins from a difference. One participant is expected to offer knowledge, experience or support that the other seeks. Peer tutoring therefore contains an apparent paradox as it depends upon *equality* and *asymmetry* at the same time. The difficulty is not resolved by deciding that one of these descriptions is true and the other mistaken. The pedagogical question is what kind of equality can remain intact in a relationship structured by difference.

Here equality concerns something really fundamental. Both participants must be approached as *persons capable of attention*, interpretation and judgement. Difference in present knowledge should not be converted into a hierarchy of intelligence or human worth.

Rancière's account of intellectual emancipation radicalises this distinction. His critique is directed at an educational logic that begins by declaring a gap between the intelligence of the teacher and that of the student and then justifies the teacher's authority through the endless task of closing that gap. Explanation can reproduce the inequality it claims to overcome when the student learns that understanding is possible only through dependence upon the explicator. Rancière proposes instead that equality of intelligence should be treated as a presupposition to be verified in action, not as an outcome postponed until education has been completed (Rancière 1991: 1–18).

Naturally, peer tutoring is not a straightforward enactment of Rancière's argument. The tutor often explains, and the relationship is deliberately organised around a difference in experience. Nevertheless, his challenge is important. If the programme begins by dividing students into capable tutors

and *deficient* tutees, it may reproduce precisely the inequality it seeks to reduce.

An emancipatory tutoring relationship begins elsewhere. The tutee is not assumed to *lack* intelligence but to be encountering a difficulty that can be *studied*. The tutor's role is not to substitute their intelligence for the tutee's but to support attention, persistence and access to relevant knowledge. This is the deeper significance of the Peer-EDU participant's statement that tutors should help tutees reach a solution of their own rather than simply give them one (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 11).

A peer tutoring programme committed to equality must therefore do more than invite diverse participants into the same room. It must examine whether they can participate on terms that do not require some to conceal difference or perform competence according to a dominant cultural style.

Fraser's idea of *parity* of participation is again helpful. Equality does not require the celebration of every difference as an identity, nor does it require their disappearance into formally identical treatment. It requires institutional conditions under which participants can interact as peers. This involves both cultural recognition and material arrangements: time, access, technological provision, understandable information and freedom from forms of status subordination that mark some students as less legitimate participants (Fraser 2000: 107–120).

Equality therefore concerns access to *both* sides of the relationship. Students should not be confined permanently to the identity of tutee. Receiving help at one moment does not define a person's general academic capacity, just as becoming a tutor does not confer comprehensive superiority. Roles may change across subjects and situations. A student who tutors another person in academic writing may later seek support with statistics, institutional navigation or study in another language.

This *reversibility* protects the category of *peer* from becoming a disguised *rank*. It acknowledges that knowledge is distributed unevenly and situationally rather than possessed by one class of students.

The first Peer-EDU report identifies a broader shift from one-directional knowledge transfer towards reciprocal and collaborative models, but it also records concerns about unequal status within tutoring relationships (Jendza et al. 2026: 3–7). Peer tutoring can unsettle established academic

hierarchies while creating new local ones. Preparation must therefore help tutors recognise the *power* attached to apparently ordinary actions: choosing the agenda, interpreting the tutee's problem, deciding which question matters, occupying most of the speaking time or presenting one's own experience as a universal path. Stosik's emphasis on allowing another person to speak fully is significant because it treats equality as something enacted in the 'tiny' details of conversation (Stosik 2026).

In other words, the tutor and tutee are equal not because nothing distinguishes them, but because neither person's *current* position *exhausts* who they are or what they *may become*. Their difference gives the encounter its educational purpose. Equality determines how that difference may be used.

Peer tutoring becomes defensible when difference provides a route into shared study rather than a justification for dependency. The tutor knows or has experienced something that may help, but does not own the other person's path. The tutee seeks support, but does not surrender intellectual agency. Both remain differently positioned and equally answerable to what they are attempting to understand.

3.7. Adult Education, Experience and Self-Direction

University students are adults, although higher education does not always treat them as such. They are expected to organise their time, make decisions, accept consequences and assume responsibility for their studies. At the same time, curricula, assessment, progression and access to institutional resources are largely determined for them. Students are therefore positioned between autonomy and dependence: addressed as self-directing adults while remaining subject to structures over which they exercise limited influence.

Peer tutoring enters this tension directly. The tutor is expected to support another student without taking over their work; the tutee is expected to seek assistance while retaining responsibility for what follows. The relationship presupposes a degree of *self-direction* on both sides. Yet it also

reveals why self-direction should not be understood as an individual capacity that students either possess or lack.

In classical accounts of adult education, experience and self-direction have often been treated as defining characteristics of the adult learner. This distinction has been productive because it challenged educational models that positioned adults as recipients of instruction. It becomes less convincing, however, when adulthood is assumed to guarantee independence, clarity of purpose or the ability to direct one's own educational activity. Adults can be uncertain, inexperienced and dependent upon others. Young university students may have reached legal adulthood while still entering an educational culture whose expectations remain unfamiliar.

Self-direction is therefore better understood as a situated educational possibility. It involves the capacity to identify a problem, formulate a purpose, choose among possible actions and evaluate what follows. These capacities develop through participation in practices, access to knowledge and relationships in which a person's judgement is taken seriously. To ask for help may be an expression of self-direction rather than its failure. Conversely, being left alone with an unfamiliar task does not produce autonomy.

This distinction is central to the Peer-EDU approach. The project does not understand the tutee's independence as the absence of assistance. Its training materials repeatedly ask tutors to avoid supplying solutions too quickly and instead help students clarify what they already know, identify the difficulty, consider alternative strategies and formulate a realistic next step. The Question Funnel, growth-mindset activities and action-planning questions are organised around a movement from narrated experience towards interpretation and action. The intended outcome is not dependence on the tutor but a strengthened capacity to respond to the problem (Peer-EDU 2025a: 13–22).

Alicja Jurgiel-Aleksander's andragogical work is particularly relevant here. Her research treats educational experience as biographical and socially constructed rather than as the simple accumulation of educational events. Adults interpret education through their previous encounters with institutions, family histories, cultural expectations and available ways of explaining success and failure. An experience becomes educational through the meaning attributed to it and through the position it acquires within

a life history (Jurgiel-Aleksander 2013; 2014: 97–111). Her studies also show why accounts celebrating individual determination can remain inadequate. Educational biographies are formed through inequalities of cultural capital, institutional recognition and access to socially available routes of participation. This perspective protects peer tutoring from an overly psychological interpretation. A tutee who appears unmotivated or disorganised brings more than an ineffective strategy to the session. Their way of approaching study may have been shaped by previous educational experiences, expectations concerning authority, economic circumstances and repeated messages about what kind of student they are. The tutor cannot reconstruct an entire biography during a short meeting. They can, however, avoid treating the difficulty as a transparent personal deficit.

Pierre Dominicé's work on educational biography provides another way of understanding this process. Adults become more capable of directing their education when they can recognise how they have been formed through relationships, institutional experiences, disruptions and significant choices. Educational biography does not merely record what a person has studied. It brings into language how education has entered their life and how they have interpreted themselves through it. The adult educator's role is not to impose a definitive explanation, but to create conditions in which experience can be narrated, reconsidered and connected with future possibility (Dominicé 2000).

Peer tutoring is not biographical counselling, and the tutor should not attempt to conduct an educational life-history inquiry. Nevertheless, the biographical perspective changes how a tutoring conversation can be understood. When a student says, "I have never been good at writing", "I am simply not a mathematics person" or "everyone else understands this", they are not only reporting an immediate difficulty. They are locating that difficulty within a story about themselves.

A responsible tutor neither confirms that story nor replaces it with easy positive reassurance. They can ask how the conclusion was reached, whether there have been exceptions, what happened in a particular situation and what might be attempted differently. Such questions open a small distance between the person and the account they have inherited or constructed about their abilities.

The Peer-EDU handbook deliberately creates this movement. Its scenarios include students who describe themselves as “dumb”, believe that everyone else understands, resist feedback or feel unable to organise their studies. Tutors are asked to listen for factual content, emotional meaning, relational messages and appeals for assistance. They must then distinguish what belongs within their role from what requires institutional or specialist support (Peer-EDU 2025a: 5–8, 28–32).

Self-direction is thus not produced by repeatedly telling students to take responsibility. It develops when they can examine the relationship between their *present* actions, *previous* experience and available *possibilities*. The tutor contributes by making this examination more possible, not by defining the tutee’s purposes on their behalf.

John Field’s work further demonstrates that educational transitions and adult agency are embedded in social relationships. Adults navigate change through networks that provide information, recognition, encouragement and practical assistance. Participation in education may extend social connections, but existing networks also shape who enters educational opportunities, how transitions are interpreted and whether change appears sustainable. Social capital can support agency, yet it can also preserve inequality and constrain people who fear that educational change will distance them from valued relationships (Field 2005; 2006: 1–16; 2012). This argument is directly relevant to the relational university envisaged by Peer-EDU. Self-directed study is not solitary study. Students rely upon classmates, teachers, family members, institutional staff and more experienced peers. The relevant question is whether these relationships enlarge or restrict their capacity to act.

Peer tutoring can widen a student’s network of educational support. A tutor may become one additional person from whom academic conventions, practical knowledge and recognition can be obtained. The international Peer-EDU training similarly allowed prospective tutors to build relationships across the three partner universities. Participants valued the possibility of exchanging experience and seeing how students from other universities interpreted the role (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14–15).

The same evidence reveals the limits of an individualistic model. Most respondents stopped short of describing themselves as fully ready for

independent tutoring and asked for mentoring, consultation and clearer local procedures (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7, 12–16). They wanted to act, but within a network of available support; self-direction was not equated with immediate independence after training.

This is not a contradiction. A person can become more agentic while becoming more aware of their dependence upon other people and institutions. Indeed, recognising when consultation is needed is an important form of adult judgement. The academic mentors prepared at the University of Gdańsk expressed a similar understanding (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

The andragogical language of *self-direction* nevertheless carries a danger. Within neoliberal higher education, autonomy can be translated into continuous *self-management*. Students are instructed to optimise their performance, overcome obstacles, acquire competences and remain responsible for the consequences, while institutional conditions disappear from view. The self-directing adult becomes the person who needs the least support and adapts most effectively to changing demands.

Zepke warns that student engagement can be absorbed into precisely this rationality. Engagement becomes a personal responsibility and an indicator of productive participation, rather than a relationship shaped by teaching, knowledge, institutional culture and social conditions (Zepke 2017). A humanistic and relational understanding begins from a different premise. Self-direction means that students increasingly become capable of interpreting and shaping their educational activity, but they do so with others and within conditions for which the institution remains answerable. Experience becomes educational not when it is converted immediately into a competence, but when it can be examined for what it reveals about oneself, knowledge and the world.

Peer-EDU's contribution lies in creating an intermediate setting for this work. The tutor does not *direct* the tutee's life, and the tutee *is not left* to manage every difficulty *alone*. They meet around an experience that has interrupted study and attempt to understand what can follow from it.

Adult education therefore sharpens rather than resolves the central tension of peer tutoring. Students are capable of responsibility, but capability requires support. Their experience matters, but it is neither self-explanatory

nor always liberating. They can direct their studies, but not outside the social and institutional worlds through which study becomes possible.

3.8. Reflection, Formation and the Emergence of Educational Identity

Reflection is one of the most frequently invoked purposes of tutoring. Tutors are expected to reflect upon their practice, tutees upon their difficulties, and both upon the next steps they might take. Yet reflection can refer to very different activities. It may mean recalling what happened, evaluating performance, questioning an assumption, interpreting an experience or reconsidering who one is becoming through participation in education.

Only some reflective activities are formative in this stronger sense. A person may describe an encounter accurately without allowing it to affect their understanding, or complete a reflection template by supplying the responses expected by the programme. Reflection can even become a form of institutional self-surveillance in which students are required to identify deficiencies and produce plans for continuous improvement.

The educational significance of reflection therefore lies not in the fact that a person turns *attention towards themselves*, but in whether this movement changes their relation to experience, knowledge, responsibility and the world we share.

Peer-EDU placed reflection throughout the training rather than confining it to the final evaluation. Before meeting in person, participants were asked what peer tutoring meant to them, what they hoped to understand and how they imagined themselves contributing to another student's academic journey. They could express their reflections through a journal, recording, image, poem, script or other form and were invited to respond to the work of other participants. Reflection was thus introduced as both individual interpretation and shared activity (Peer-EDU 2025a: 1–2).

The face-to-face programme continued this movement. Participants selected an object and used it to say something about themselves as

prospective tutors. They examined the responsibilities, values and possible ethical tensions of the role; rotated among tutor, tutee and observer positions; completed observation sheets; and asked after each simulation what had worked, what felt difficult and what should change. The final journal returned to three questions: what had been learned, what remained challenging and what the participant intended to try differently next time (Peer-EDU 2025a: 3–8, 40).

This architecture suggests that becoming a peer tutor was not understood as acquiring a collection of tools. Participants were invited to interpret a role and locate themselves within it. The question was not only, “Can I use the Question Funnel?” but also, “What kind of tutor am I becoming when I ask questions in this way?”

Donald Schön’s distinction between reflection in action and reflection on action is useful here. Reflection on action occurs retrospectively: the practitioner reconstructs an encounter and considers what might have been done differently. Reflection in action occurs within the uncertain situation itself, often when an expected response fails, something surprising happens and the practitioner begins to reconsider their understanding while still acting (Schön 1983).

Role play can prepare for both. Debriefing supports retrospective examination, while the simulation places participants in moments where a planned technique does not work as expected. The handbook’s observation materials make reflection practical. Observers attend to listening, verbal and non-verbal communication, emotional presence, boundaries, rapport and feedforward. Tutors then examine who spoke more, whether they guided or supplied an answer, whether the tone remained respectful and whether a next step was established. Reflection is directed not only at whether the task was completed, but at how authority and attention were exercised within the relationship (Peer-EDU 2025a: 6–10).

The post-training evaluation suggests that participants experienced this practical rhythm as especially valuable. Role play helped them see what tutoring “really looks like”, while rotating roles enabled them to experience the same situation from the positions of tutor, tutee and observer. The high evaluation of practical exercises, 4.68 on a five-point scale, supports the conclusion that enactment and debriefing were central to the perceived

value of the programme. It does not, however, establish that participants subsequently became ‘reflective practitioners’ in authentic tutoring situations (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 6, 10–14).

This distinction matters. Training can create a language for reflection, but *identity* is formed through longer participation. A person does not become a tutor simply because they have been certified or can describe the role appropriately. The identity emerges through repeated encounters in which they are required to judge, respond, acknowledge limits and live with the consequences of their interventions.

Field’s account of educational transitions helps explain this incompleteness. Transitions involve agency and identity, but their outcomes cannot be known fully in advance. People may occupy liminal positions in which an earlier identity no longer seems adequate while a new one remains uncertain. Such transitions are negotiated through social and cultural relationships rather than achieved by an isolated act of decision (Field 2012).

Dominicé’s educational-biographical perspective further suggests that identity is not constructed only prospectively through goals. It is also formed retrospectively, as people reinterpret their previous experiences in light of a new position. Becoming a tutor may cause a student to return differently to moments when they themselves needed help, felt misunderstood or encountered an effective teacher. Experiences that once appeared private or accidental become resources for understanding the responsibility now assumed (Dominicé 2000).

The introductory Peer-EDU activities purposefully encouraged this return by asking participants to reflect upon occasions when they had felt “thrown into the deep end” and consider how such experiences might help them empathise with future tutees (Peer-EDU 2025a: 1). The educational biography was not explored systematically, but previous experience was deliberately brought into the formation of the new role.

Simon Marginson’s concept of student self-formation offers a useful higher-education framework for this process. Self-formation concerns reflexive agency through which students consciously develop themselves in relation to disciplinary knowledge and experiences within and beyond the classroom. It is not complete, uniform or available under the same conditions to everyone. It depends upon opportunities for initiative, institutional

and pedagogical support, personal resources and encounters that disrupt established self-understanding (Marginson 2024: 1–12). Peer tutoring can become such an encounter because it requires the student to cross from participation in their own studies towards responsibility for the conditions of another person's study. The tutor must reconsider what they know, how they communicate and what they are entitled to do. The role can therefore contribute to self-formation without making the self the only object of education.

Peer-EDU should resist this reduction. The educational identity of the peer tutor is not valuable primarily because it adds leadership and communication competences to a curriculum vitae. It concerns becoming answerable for how one uses knowledge and authority in relation to another person. Formation in the tutor role involves intellectual, relational and ethical development. Explaining academic material can expose the structure and limits of one's own knowledge; listening requires greater attention to another person's perspective; and difficult decisions bring the boundaries of responsibility into view.

The academic mentors participating in the University of Gdańsk workshop underwent a related process. The programme began with the question, "Who am I as a mentor?"; followed by examination of responsibilities, boundaries and ethical dilemmas. Participants described their emerging role through several images: supervisor, source of expertise, facilitator of potential, ambassador for tutoring and co-author of the institutional framework. They also emphasised that contact with students prompted them to reconsider their assumptions and teaching practices (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

Educational *identity* in Peer-EDU model is thus formed at several levels. Tutees may begin to see themselves as capable of *approaching* a problem rather than *defined* by it. Tutors move from imagined *helpfulness* towards bounded pedagogical *responsibility*. Mentors move from academic expertise towards facilitation and supervision. Institutions may also be required to reconsider whether students are recipients of support or participants in creating the educational environment.

None of these identities should become *fixed*. A tutor who begins to identify too completely with being the *competent helper* may find it difficult

to admit uncertainty or receive assistance. Reflection remains educational when it keeps identity open and when the person can ask not only whether they performed the role successfully, but what the encounter revealed about the role itself and whether another way of acting is possible.

The emergence of educational identity therefore cannot be certified at the end of a course. Certification recognises preparation; it does not complete formation. Peer-EDU's reflective design created a *beginning*. The continuation requires practice, repeated interpretation, dialogue with other tutors and access to mentors who can help transform difficult experience into responsible judgement.

A peer tutor is not formed by acquiring *certainty* about who they are. They are formed through learning how to remain *attentive* to what a situation asks of them.

3.9. Relational Pedagogy, Care and Psychological Safety

Peer tutoring is relational by definition, but not every relationship is pedagogically valuable. As indicated a few times already, students may meet regularly without the encounter necessarily supporting study. Conversely, an academically effective conversation may remain instrumental and indifferent to the person participating in it. A relational pedagogy must therefore hold together two commitments: *attention to the person* and *attention to the matter* being studied.

Care is sometimes treated as an emotional addition to the real academic work of the university. Knowledge, reasoning and assessment are placed at the centre, while care is assigned to pastoral services or understood as a desirable personal quality of particularly empathetic teachers. This division is difficult to sustain. A student's willingness to reveal misunderstanding, risk an interpretation or return after failure depends partly upon how they expect another person to respond. Care enters into the conditions under which knowledge can be approached.

Noddings's ethics of care treats it not primarily as a virtue possessed by one individual but as a relation. Intentions are insufficient. Care must involve

attention to the particular Other and some form of reception or recognition by the person towards whom it is directed. A tutor cannot therefore decide unilaterally that an intervention was caring merely because it was intended to help. Advice may be experienced as control, reassurance as dismissal and persistent questioning as intrusion (Noddings 2013: 15–24, 59–74).

This does not mean that the tutee's immediate satisfaction determines whether the tutor has acted responsibly. A caring response may include correction, refusal or referral. The tutor may need to say that a request exceeds the purpose of the relationship, that an assignment cannot be completed on the tutee's behalf or that a disclosure requires professional support. Care is not the removal of every limit. It concerns how limits are recognised, communicated and held.

The Peer-EDU handbook makes this tension clear. Its observation sheet asks whether tutors show engaged listening, acknowledge emotions appropriately and create trust while avoiding over-involvement and maintaining an academic focus. The scenarios move beyond straightforward academic explanation. Tutors encounter a student disclosing depression, another hiding dyslexia, a tutee arriving under the influence of alcohol, interpersonal attraction, verbal aggression and requests for secrecy. These are not presented as specialist cases that tutors should learn to resolve independently. They are situations through which participants can examine when relational attentiveness must be joined to boundary-setting and referral (Peer-EDU 2025a: 5–9, 34–39).

The scenarios also reveal why care cannot be reduced to being pleasant. A tutor who avoids naming a harmful situation in order to preserve rapport may fail both participants. Laughing along with humiliating gossip, enduring aggression or promising absolute confidentiality in a safety-critical situation would protect the immediate comfort of the interaction while abandoning its ethical conditions. The caring response may be the one that interrupts the encounter.

Relational pedagogy similarly requires more than adding interpersonal warmth to an unchanged educational structure. Gravett argues that relationships in higher education form wider webs involving people, spaces, technologies, materials, institutional discourses and practices of recognition. Her notion of mattering asks not only whether students are connected,

but whether their presence, contribution and circumstances are experienced as consequential within the educational environment (Gravett 2023). Relational pedagogy therefore cannot be confined to the ‘chemistry’ of a successful dyad.

This broader perspective is crucial for Peer-EDU. A tutor may be attentive and generous, but the relationship will remain fragile if no suitable space is available, meetings conflict with paid employment, digital systems are inaccessible or no mentor can be contacted when difficulties arise. Material and institutional arrangements enter the relationship. They affect whether participants can meet, what they are able to disclose and whether support can continue.

Felten and Lambert’s account of relationship-rich education reinforces this institutional point. Significant educational relationships should not be imagined as luxuries available only in small, elite institutions. Universities can deliberately create multiple points at which students are known, challenged and supported by peers, academic staff and other members of the institution. The aim is not to guarantee intimacy with everyone, but to prevent meaningful connection from depending entirely upon chance or upon students’ prior access to academic networks (Felten and Lambert 2020).

Peer tutoring can become one such point of connection. Its value may lie partly in allowing a student to expose uncertainty without doing so immediately before the person who assesses them. Yet the relationship should not become an alternative university beside formal teaching. The tutor’s attentiveness must remain connected with academic teachers, mentors and specialist services that are answerable for their own responsibilities.

The concept of psychological safety helps to specify one condition of this relation, although it must be transferred to higher education with care. Edmondson originally defined psychological safety at the level of work teams as a shared belief that the group is safe for interpersonal risk-taking. Such safety supports behaviours through which people admit errors, ask questions, seek feedback and challenge existing assumptions (Edmondson 1999: 350–383). The construct does not refer simply to individual comfort or general wellbeing.

In peer tutoring, interpersonal risk-taking includes saying that one does not understand, acknowledging an unsuccessful strategy, asking a question

that may appear elementary or disagreeing with the tutor's explanation. For the tutor, it may involve admitting uncertainty, naming a boundary or seeking consultation rather than performing competence. Psychological safety is therefore relevant to both positions.

It should not be interpreted as a promise that the conversation will remain *comfortable* or free from judgement in every sense. Academic work requires judgement: arguments are evaluated, evidence questioned and errors identified. What must become safer is making uncertainty and error available for study without having one's legitimacy as a student withdrawn.

The Peer-EDU evaluation provides limited but meaningful evidence about the training environment. Eighteen of the nineteen respondents described it positively in terms of inclusion, safety and support (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–7, 14–15). These findings concern a short training programme and a self-selected group of respondents; they do not establish that subsequent tutoring relationships achieved psychological safety. They do, however, show what participants recognised as educationally important: the possibility of practising imperfectly and discussing uncertainty with others was part of their preparation, not an incidental atmosphere around it.

The mentor-training report introduced a useful image of a supervisory 'safety net': rapid access to colleagues when unusual or conflictual situations arise (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026). The metaphor is apt because safety cannot be produced by the tutor alone. Tutors can contribute through attentiveness, honesty and respect for boundaries; mentors and coordinators must make consultation possible; institutions must provide credible routes beyond the peer relationship. Psychological safety is therefore relational and infrastructural at once.

Care in Peer-EDU should therefore be understood as relationally enacted and institutionally sustained. A relational pedagogy of peer tutoring neither psychologises every academic difficulty nor excludes emotion from study. It recognises that students encounter knowledge as embodied and socially situated persons. Care and psychological safety can make it easier for students to remain with difficulty and articulate uncertainty. Their educational value, however, depends on clear boundaries that protect tutors from responsibilities exceeding the peer role.

3.10. Inclusion, Equity and the Normalisation of Asking for Help

Universities often describe inclusion in terms of access: who enters, who is represented and what support is formally available. These questions matter, but they do not exhaust the educational problem. A student may be fully admitted to the institution and still learn, through everyday encounters, that some forms of uncertainty are easier to reveal than others, that certain questions expose one to judgement, or that accepting support carries an unwanted identity. Inclusion therefore concerns not only presence but the terms on which one is permitted to participate.

This distinction is consistent with research on inclusive pedagogy, where a recurring tension separates retrospective accommodation from attempts to reconsider ordinary educational arrangements before difference is converted into disadvantage (Stentiford and Koutsouris 2021: 2245–2261). For peer tutoring, the implication is particularly important. Its inclusive potential does not follow from the mere existence of a programme. It depends upon whether students can enter a tutoring relationship without first accepting the position of a *deficient learner*.

The Peer-EDU diagnostic study reveals this ambiguity. Respondents across the three universities associated peer tutoring with accessible explanation, inclusion and a less formal form of academic support, but they also anticipated uneven participation and differences in institutional accessibility (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 123–136). Equity should therefore be understood not as an automatic effect of putting students together, but as a question directed back at the arrangement itself: who is able to use it, under what description, and at what symbolic cost?

Academic help-seeking provides a useful way of sharpening this question. Asking for assistance is often imagined as evidence that independence has failed. Yet research has long suggested otherwise. Karabenick and Knapp (1991: 221–230) found that academic help-seeking can operate as an intentional study strategy rather than as its opposite. The decisive issue is not whether help is requested, but what the request enables. Assistance

may return the student to the problem with greater capacity to continue; alternatively, it may remove the intellectual work from them.

This distinction is central to the educational logic of Peer-EDU. The tutor is prepared to resist the seduction of usefulness understood as giving the answer quickly. Questions, clarification and structured conversation are intended to return agency to the tutee rather than demonstrate the tutor's competence (Peer-EDU 2025a: 13–22). Asking for help and acting independently are therefore not opposites. Under appropriate conditions, asking can itself be an exercise of educational judgement: recognising that one has reached an impasse, identifying what kind of assistance is needed and using it without surrendering responsibility for study.

The difficulty is that help-seeking always takes place within a social environment. Ryan, Pintrich and Midgley (2001: 93–114) show that students may avoid assistance when requesting it threatens self-worth or publicly signals low competence. What appears to the institution as reluctance, passivity or lack of engagement may thus be a rational response to a setting in which uncertainty carries status consequences. An invitation to 'ask for help' changes little if the student has already learned that the competent student is the one who does not need it.

Normalisation matters precisely here. It should not mean encouraging constant disclosure or presenting every difficulty as equivalent. It means disturbing the binary distinction between those who give help and those who need it. Academic life is full of changing asymmetries: a student may possess expertise in one context and require explanation in another; may support a colleague today and encounter an unfamiliar method tomorrow. Peer tutoring becomes more inclusive when these movements are possible without a corresponding movement *up or down an informal hierarchy of academic worth*.

There is, however, a danger in the language of normalisation itself. The reassuring claim that 'everyone struggles' may reduce shame while simultaneously obscuring the unequal conditions under which struggle occurs. Difficulties associated with disability, poverty, racialisation, linguistic marginalisation or unfamiliarity with dominant academic conventions cannot be dissolved into a universal story of temporary student uncertainty. Burke, Crozier and Misiaszek (2017) show how participation in higher education is

shaped by misrecognition: apparently open pedagogical spaces may continue to privilege particular ways of speaking, behaving and demonstrating legitimacy.

Peer tutoring is implicated in this process in both directions. A peer may make tacit conventions discussable precisely because they have recently had to decipher them. But the tutor can also reproduce those conventions as natural: interpreting hesitation as poor preparation, linguistic uncertainty as weak understanding, or an unfamiliar way of approaching a task as evidence of incapacity. Inclusion therefore requires more than interpersonal kindness. It asks tutors and, more importantly, the institution that prepares them to examine the standards through which competence becomes visible.

The same question applies to the tutor role itself. If tutors are imagined almost exclusively as the highest-achieving, most confident and institutionally fluent students, peer tutoring may quietly divide the student body into those authorised to help and those expected to receive help. Academic competence matters, but equating it with grades alone risks turning tutoring into another distinction awarded to those who already know how to be recognised. An equitable programme should instead preserve movement between contribution and assistance and resist fixing either role as an identity.

This is why the normalisation of help-seeking cannot be delegated to peer tutors. Tutoring may create encounters in which uncertainty becomes easier to articulate, but the meaning of asking is established across the university. If formal teaching consistently rewards performances of certainty, if questions are treated impatiently, or if recurring confusion is interpreted only as an individual problem, a parallel peer-support scheme will not alter the underlying educational culture.

Indeed, recurring requests for help may themselves constitute knowledge about the institution.

From this perspective, inclusion concerns the terms on which students participate in support relationships. Receiving assistance should not diminish academic standing, nor should becoming a tutor create a superior student identity. Equally important, recurring difficulties disclosed through

peer relations should be capable of informing reflection on institutional practices.

Peer tutoring can contribute to such a culture by making help-seeking part of ordinary academic practice rather than marking it as remediation. Its broader educational significance lies in challenging the assumption that needing assistance signals weak academic belonging.

3.11. Equality and Asymmetry, Autonomy and Responsibility, Informality and Institutionalisation

The argument developed in this chapter does not lead towards an ideal tutoring relationship from which contradiction has disappeared. On the contrary, the closer peer tutoring comes to becoming an educational practice rather than a technique, the more clearly its constitutive tensions come into view. Equality coexists with asymmetry; autonomy depends upon forms of support and responsibility; informality needs institutional conditions that may themselves threaten it. These are not defects awaiting better programme design. They are conditions within which pedagogical judgement becomes necessary.

The first tension concerns equality. Peer tutoring would lose its distinctive character if the tutor were transformed into a minor academic teacher whose knowledge authorised a more general superiority. Yet denying differences in experience, knowledge or responsibility produces only a fictitious symmetry. As Colvin and Ashman (2010: 121–134) show, peer relationships acquire roles, expectations and forms of authority even when participants remain formally equal in status. The educational issue is therefore not how to eliminate asymmetry, but how to prevent it from becoming a fixed hierarchy.

This requires the tutor's authority to remain local, temporary and contestable. The tutor's authority should remain limited to the particular educational situation and should not be converted into a more general judgement about the tutee's ability. It is also provisional: as knowledge

and circumstances change, so may the distribution of authority. Crucially, the tutee must retain the possibility of questioning an explanation, refusing a suggestion or redirecting the encounter. Equality is thus preserved by recognising present differences without allowing a situational imbalance to dictate either participant's potential.

Autonomy presents a related difficulty. Earlier sections have already argued against equating independence with being left alone. Here a further implication becomes important: educational autonomy should be judged by the quality of the decisions a person becomes able to make, including decisions to seek assistance, challenge it, use it selectively or recognise when another form of expertise is required.

The Peer-EDU training makes this particularly visible. Participants generally reported increased confidence while simultaneously asking for shadowing, consultation, mentoring and clearer local procedures (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7, 12–16). Academic mentors, in turn, envisaged their own work as requiring access to colleagues and a continuing supervisory 'safety net' (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026). What appears at first to be dependence can therefore signify a more mature understanding of responsibility. The capable tutor is not the one who no longer needs others, but the one who can distinguish between a situation requiring personal judgement and one requiring consultation.

Partnership does not make responsibilities interchangeable. The tutee remains responsible for their study, the tutor for the integrity of the support offered, academic teachers for teaching and assessment, and the institution for the conditions under which tutoring takes place. The tutoring encounter distributes responsibility, but it does not make responsibilities interchangeable. The tutee remains answerable for their study; the tutor for the integrity of the assistance they offer; academic teachers for teaching and assessment; and the institution for the conditions within which the relationship has been invited to occur. The language of shared responsibility becomes educationally meaningful only when it makes these obligations more visible rather than providing a courteous way of passing them elsewhere.

The third tension concerns informality. Much of the attraction of peer tutoring lies in a relationship that does not reproduce the full symbolic weight of the teacher–student encounter. Language may be less guarded;

uncertainty easier to expose; explanations more closely connected to recent student experience. Yet informality is fragile. Left entirely to spontaneous networks, it privileges those already able to find people, ask confidently and mobilise social resources. Organised too closely, it becomes a student-delivered service governed by scripts, reporting requirements and predefined indicators.

The comparative Peer-EDU findings capture this ambivalence well. Respondents wanted accessibility, authenticity and human contact, but also clearer organisation, preparation, technological support and institutional recognition. The balance differed across the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta, which itself cautions against identifying a single organisational form as inherently appropriate (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 123–136).

The institution must provide a structure for tutoring without attempting to dictate its internal dynamic. Its role is to shape the necessary conditions, ensuring clear access, preparation, supervision and boundaries, while leaving the encounter itself unscripted. Deciding when an explanation becomes useful, how to clarify a difficulty or how to respond in the moment requires situated judgement rather than administrative protocol.

This distinction between framing and controlling the encounter is important. Institutionalisation becomes problematic when procedures designed to protect a practice begin to define its educational meaning. A measurable session is not necessarily a valuable one; a relationship that produces no immediate performance gain may still have altered how a student approaches a problem; a tutor who refers a case rather than ‘solving’ it may have exercised better judgement than one whose intervention appears more successful. The institution needs evidence, but pedagogical quality cannot be inferred from administrative visibility alone.

Here the critique developed by Zepke (2017) remains pertinent. Engagement can be translated into a requirement that students continuously optimise themselves, participate productively and persist in ways aligned with institutional indicators. Peer tutoring is particularly susceptible to such capture because its relational language can coexist easily with instrumental purposes: retention, throughput, employability, workload reduction. None of

CHAPTER 3

The Pedagogy of Studying with Peers

these considerations is automatically illegitimate. The difficulty begins when they become the terms through which the educational relationship is valued.

A pedagogy of studying with peers therefore requires something less comfortable than a definitive model: the capacity to remain within tensions that cannot be removed in advance. Pedagogical judgement is exercised when a tutor decides that this moment requires explanation rather than another question; when respect for autonomy requires more support rather than less; when maintaining rapport gives way to naming a boundary; or when a programme coordinator recognises that further standardisation would protect the organisation at the expense of the practice it was created to sustain.

Judgement is not freedom from principles. It becomes possible because principles have already oriented attention. Equality, autonomy, care, inclusion and responsibility matter precisely because no single one of them can determine every situation. Their significance emerges in relation to one another and to the matter being studied.

The pedagogy proposed in this chapter can therefore be condensed into a less programmatic claim. Studying with peers creates an educational space in which authority remains negotiable, assistance strengthens the student's capacity to continue working, and institutional organisation provides support without determining the course of every encounter.

This is also the point at which a pedagogical argument has to become an institutional inquiry. The following part of the book turns to Peer-EDU itself: to three universities in which these tensions acquired different meanings, to the research through which they became visible and to the attempt to translate a relational idea into a shared international project.

PART

THE PEER-EDU PROJECT AS AN INTERNATIONAL INQUIRY

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II

CHAPTER 4. FROM A SHARED CONCERN TO THE PEER-EDU PROJECT

CHAPTER 5. THREE UNIVERSITIES, THREE EDUCATIONAL ECOLOGIES

CHAPTER 6. RESEARCHING READINESS FOR PEER TUTORING

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CHAPTER 4

FROM A SHARED CONCERN TO THE PEER-EDU PROJECT

Peer-EDU developed from a practical question shared by three universities rather than from a model ready for replication. Its partners were concerned with students' entry into higher education, uneven access to support and the largely informal character of assistance already exchanged among students. The project asked whether some of these practices could be researched, prepared and institutionally supported without reducing peer tutoring to another standardised service. Its development followed a deliberate sequence: review the existing field, examine expectations and institutional conditions, design preparation for students and academic mentors, gather feedback and make the resulting materials available for further use. This chapter reconstructs that process. It is concerned less with establishing the educational argument for peer tutoring, developed in Part I, than with showing how that argument acquired a particular project form across three universities.

4.1. Origins of the Project

The collaboration described in the Introduction took shape in Kiel in November 2023. Representatives of the future partner institutions discovered overlapping concerns about first-year transition, academic disengagement, limited integration and the absence of systematic forms of peer support. Peer tutoring became a subject of interest because it connected accessible academic assistance with a larger question of student participation in university life (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 8).

The resulting project was formally entitled Competence Transformation in the University: Peer tutoring as a Key Element in Supporting Student Development. It was coordinated by the University of Gdańsk in partnership

with the University of Malta and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Split, and funded by the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange under the Strategic Partnerships Programme. The implementation period ran from September 2024 to August 2026 (CDDiT 2024).

None of the three institutions entered the partnership with a complete programme that could simply be transferred elsewhere. Different forms of tutoring, mentoring and student support were already present, but their terminology, institutional location and degree of formalisation differed considerably. Peer-EDU therefore began by constructing a shared basis for inquiry rather than by selecting one partner's practice as the template for the others. This origin shaped the project throughout. Comparison, diagnosis and adaptation were built into its design from the beginning.

4.2. The Challenge of Supporting First-Year Students

Project documents identified students entering university as an important, although not exclusive, group for future peer support. The concern was practical: newcomers encounter unfamiliar forms of assessment, communication, responsibility and institutional organisation, while their access to the informal knowledge required to interpret these expectations varies considerably.

Peer-EDU associated these difficulties with broader concerns about disengagement, isolation, integration and possible withdrawal. It did not, however, treat first-year students as a homogeneous group or assume that peer tutoring could account for the complex causes of continuation or departure. Academic progress is entangled with financial, biographical, social and institutional circumstances that lie well beyond the remit of a tutoring programme.

What the project could address was narrower. Its diagnostic study examined whether members of the three university communities saw value in an additional, approachable form of academic support and what would be required to make such support credible. Respondents associated peer tutoring with accessible explanation, confidence, integration and supportive

relationships, while identifying preparation, coordination, recognition and technological provision as significant implementation concerns (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–127).

First-year support thus provided an initial problem field for Peer-EDU. The project's subsequent development, however, extended beyond transition alone towards the broader design of peer tutoring within higher education.

4.3. The Partnership between the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta

The three partners represented different institutional settings and traditions of student support. The University of Gdańsk brought an established history of academic tutoring and a specialised Centre for the Development of Teaching and Tutoring. The University of Malta contributed experience from a comparatively centralised, English-speaking university with several established forms of student and professional support. The University of Split presented a more decentralised environment in which peer tutoring was less formally developed and institutional change required negotiation across faculties and disciplinary communities. Chapter 5 examines these contexts in detail.

Cooperation developed through successive mobility and co-design activities. In April 2025, project participants and external experts met at the Valletta campus of the University of Malta to discuss preliminary survey findings and their implications for programme development. A Staff Week hosted by the University of Split in October 2025 then concentrated on translating research findings and the literature review into preparation programmes for student tutors and the academic staff expected to support them. The international student training was subsequently delivered in Gdańsk in December 2025.

Working across three systems made certain questions unavoidable. The status of the tutor, appropriate recognition, relationships with academic

teachers, terminology and the boundary between tutoring and mentoring could not simply be standardised without regard to institutional context.

International cooperation consequently functioned as a comparative design process. Difference among the universities became a means of distinguishing principles that could plausibly be shared from organisational choices requiring local resolution.

4.4. Project Aims and Programme Logic

Peer-EDU's formal aims included diagnostic research, preparation programmes for peer tutors and academic mentors, pilot tutoring activity, digital resources, recommendations and international dissemination. The project was intended to support both students seeking assistance and those assuming tutoring responsibilities, while developing conditions that might allow the work to continue beyond the funding period (Peer-EDU 2026).

The project documentation does not present a formal theory-of-change model, but a programme logic can be reconstructed from its sequence of activities.

First, programme design was to be preceded by investigation. The international literature review and institutional diagnosis were intended to identify established models, recurrent risks, expectations and differences among the three universities.

Second, preparation was understood as extending beyond disciplinary expertise. The student programme included communication, questioning, reflection, ethical boundaries, diversity and recognition of the limits of the tutor role.

Third, tutors were not to be prepared in isolation. Academic staff would be 'equipped' to provide mentoring, consultation and supervision as students entered practice.

Finally, sustainable implementation was expected to require organisational resources beyond individual tutor-tutee encounters: coordination, recognition, accessible materials, technological infrastructure, supervision and continuing evaluation.

In its simplest form, the intended sequence was:

diagnosis → co-design → preparation → supported practice → reflection
and evaluation → institutional adaptation

This sequence describes the project's intended logic. It should not be read retrospectively as a demonstrated causal pathway. The project completed substantial research and training activity, but the full sequence was not implemented.

4.5. Diagnostic Research

The research component developed in two stages. Report 1 reviewed more than fifty publications addressing the benefits, risks, models and organisational conditions of peer tutoring in higher education. Rather than selecting a single preferred model, the review mapped a field characterised by considerable conceptual and practical diversity (Jendza et al. 2026).

The review informed two parallel questionnaires, addressed respectively to students and academic staff. They examined familiarity with peer tutoring, previous experience, interpretations of the practice, anticipated benefits, perceived barriers, training needs, technological and institutional support, and willingness to participate. Closed questions enabled comparison across institutions and respondent groups, while open questions allowed concerns and expectations to be expressed beyond the categories established by the research team (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 46–50).

In total, 589 participants completed the surveys: 334 students and 255 members of academic staff across the three universities. The dataset allowed recurrent patterns and institutional differences to be identified, but the samples were neither probabilistic nor evenly distributed. Disciplinary representation, response rates, gender composition, language and institutional reach varied.

The study was therefore primarily formative. It was designed to inform programme development rather than estimate the prevalence of particular attitudes across the complete populations of the three universities. Its empirical scope is correspondingly specific: awareness, expectations,

perceptions, declared needs and willingness to participate. Chapters 6–8 examine the methodology and findings in greater depth.

4.6. Preparing Peer Tutors and Those Who Support Them

Findings from the literature review and diagnostic study informed two connected preparation pathways. One addressed students preparing for the peer tutor role; the other focused on academic staff expected to support them.

The student programme combined online preparation with an intensive international course. Its modules addressed the meaning and boundaries of peer tutoring, ethical principles, communication, active listening, questioning, feedback and feedforward, growth-oriented conversation and difficult situations. Role play was central to the design: participants repeatedly moved among the positions of tutor, tutee and observer, allowing techniques and assumptions about the role to be examined through practice (Peer-EDU 2025a).

Academic mentor preparation addressed a different responsibility. Mentors were expected to provide consultation, help tutors interpret difficult cases, offer disciplinary support where appropriate and recognise situations requiring further referral. Separate eight-hour workshops were delivered at the three partner universities in February and March 2026 using a common set of Peer-EDU materials. Fifty-one academic teachers participated: sixteen at the University of Gdańsk, thirty-one at the University of Split and four at the University of Malta. Detailed post-training feedback from the University of Gdańsk is reported by Godlewska-Werner and Jendza (2026), while Mihaljević and Marić (2026) present findings from the teacher training programme at the University of Split.

The relationship between the two pathways was deliberate. Preparing students to assume a new educational role without simultaneously preparing an institutional layer of support would have left a crucial part of the proposed system undefined.

The student evaluation also indicated that training completion and readiness for practice could not be treated as equivalent. Participants evaluated the programme positively and generally reported greater confidence, but several requested additional practice, shadowing, clearer procedures and continuing access to consultation (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7–16). Chapter 11 examines this evidence in detail.

4.7. Training, the Unrealised Pilot and Monitoring

The international student preparation programme combined preparatory online work with a four-day intensive face-to-face course at the University of Gdańsk in December 2025. The programme as a whole represented a workload of 50 hours and carried 2 ECTS.

Forty-six students took part in the training. Of this cohort, nineteen later returned the anonymous post-training evaluation: eight from the University of Gdańsk, seven from the University of Malta and four from the University of Split. Ratings were consistently positive, particularly for facilitation, communication skills, conversational tools and role play. The same responses, however, showed that completing the course and feeling ready for independent tutoring were not identical (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 4–16).

The next project stage was intended to consist of locally organised tutoring activity supported by university teams and academic mentors. Feedback, consultation and the collection of implementation experience were expected to accompany this work.

The planned pilot was not implemented during the project period. This fact determines the evidential boundary of Peer-EDU. The project does not provide systematic data from sustained tutor–tutee relationships, matching processes, supervision in operation or participant outcomes generated through actual tutoring. Nor can the functioning of the proposed monitoring system be evaluated empirically.

Monitoring nevertheless remained part of the programme design. Tutors were expected to have routes for discussing difficulties, obtaining consultation and communicating recurring issues to project teams. These

arrangements belong to the proposed implementation architecture developed later in the book; they should not be described as tested components of the Peer-EDU intervention.

4.8. Digital Resources and the Peer-EDU Platform

Digital provision formed part of both the project infrastructure and its dissemination. The project website presented aims, partners, recruitment information, the timetable, project staff and outputs, while the student handbook incorporated videos, readings, forms and spaces for reflection. A dedicated Peer-EDU Support Platform was developed to extend these resources and provide digital infrastructure for peer tutoring.

The platform was completed during the project and tested by Polish students participating in the international training. Students created their own profiles and tested the matching mechanism and other core functionalities. This provided an opportunity to identify practical issues before wider implementation. Full operational deployment is planned from the beginning of the 2026/2027 academic year.

The diagnostic study had earlier indicated uneven technological readiness. Respondents valued face-to-face interaction while also identifying needs concerning communication, access to materials, matching and hybrid participation (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 102–107, 130–136). The completed platform should therefore be understood as infrastructure supporting peer relationships rather than as a substitute for them.

4.9. Dissemination, Dialogue and the Public Life of the Project

Dissemination accompanied Peer-EDU throughout its development. Recruitment, international coordination and public communication required the project to become visible before its research and training activities were

complete. The resulting materials also provide a record of how Peer-EDU was interpreted within each partner institution.

At the University of Gdańsk, several channels were used. The Centre for the Development of Teaching and Tutoring maintained a project page presenting the funding framework, partners, target groups and principal activities. A dedicated Peer-EDU website offered bilingual information on recruitment, the timetable, project staff, outputs and the Peer-EDU Support Platform. Central university communications reported the international student training, while recruitment notices circulated through faculties, including the Intercollegiate Faculty of Biotechnology. CDDiT later publicised the preparation of academic mentors and Peer-EDU's presence at the Viva Dydaktyka conference (CDDiT 2024; Intercollegiate Faculty of Biotechnology UG and MUG 2025; CDDiT 2026b).

The University of Malta used its Newspoint service to document successive stages of collaboration. An April 2025 communication described the Valletta meeting, preliminary interpretation of the diagnostic survey and discussion of implementation. An October update reported the design work undertaken in Split and presented the two preparation pathways. Following the student programme, the University's Quality Assurance Committee highlighted communication, role clarity, boundaries and reflective practice (University of Malta 2025a; 2025b; University of Malta Quality Assurance Committee 2026).

At the University of Split, Peer-EDU appeared on the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences' project pages and in communications concerning the October Staff Week. A later announcement identified the eight University of Split students who had completed the international training in Gdańsk, described the six-module structure, 50-hour workload and 2 ECTS recognition, and directed readers to audiovisual material documenting the project and participant experiences (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Split 2025a; 2025b).

These communications were not identical reproductions of a central project narrative. The University of Malta foregrounded international co-design and quality assurance; The University of Split emphasised faculty participation and its student group; The University of Gdańsk situated Peer-EDU within a broader institutional development of tutoring and academic

teaching. Dissemination itself therefore provides a modest record of how an international project was translated into different institutional vocabularies.

The most substantial public event was the fifth Viva Dydaktyka Conference, held at the University of Gdańsk on 21–22 May 2026 under the theme From Transmission to Dialogue: Didactics in Relationship. Peer-EDU formed a distinct conference session. Three contributions presented students' interpretations of the programme, followed by a University of Split case study concerning teacher preparation and role definition and a comparative presentation of findings from the three universities (CDDiT 2026a; Peer-EDU Project Team 2026).

The arrangement of the session is noteworthy. Aleksandra Szypryt, Adrianna Mojsa and Wiktoria Pietrzak appeared not simply as participants described by project researchers but as authors of their own interpretations. Their contributions addressed uncertainty and help-seeking, the significance of the international experience beyond the immediate programme and possible applications of tutoring approaches in future teaching. The conference abstract book placed these accounts alongside institutional and comparative analyses.

The project's public record also includes the reflective essay by Róża Stosik prepared for publication in *Horyzonty Edukacji Akademickiej*. Together, such materials extend the project corpus beyond formal reports and questionnaires. They do not constitute outcome evidence, but they preserve forms of participant interpretation that would otherwise be lost from a conventional project account.

The distinction between dissemination and impact remains essential. Websites, announcements, conference participation and publications demonstrate circulation, visibility and contribution to academic discussion. They do not demonstrate the institutional embedding or educational effectiveness of peer tutoring. Their significance is instead epistemic and public. By making findings, training materials, participant reflections and unresolved questions available beyond the immediate consortium, Peer-EDU exposed its work to interpretation and criticism. Dissemination, in this sense, was not simply the final communication of a completed intervention. It became one of the ways in which the project continued to inquire into its own subject.

CHAPTER 5

THREE UNIVERSITIES, THREE EDUCATIONAL ECOLOGIES

The three partner universities participated in the same project, used parallel diagnostic instruments and collaborated on a shared preparation programme. They did not, however, offer peer tutoring the same institutional environment. Academic traditions, organisational structures, existing support arrangements, forms of student participation and locations of responsibility differed considerably among the three partner universities.

These differences are not background variables to be controlled before comparison begins. They are part of what Peer-EDU was attempting to understand. A practice that appears intelligible within one university may require translation in another because it enters already existing vocabularies, relationships and divisions of responsibility.

This chapter therefore does not reproduce the institutional profiles presented in Report 2. It reads them comparatively, asking what each environment makes easier, what it complicates and how the meaning of peer tutoring changes as it enters a different institutional ecology.

5.1. Why Institutional Context Matters

Peer tutoring can appear deceptively portable. Recruit students, prepare them, arrange matches and provide supervision, and the basic model seems capable of travelling between universities. Yet educational practices do not retain an identical meaning when detached from the settings in which they are enacted.

A tutor may be recognised as a near-peer with useful experience, interpreted as a junior version of an academic teacher, associated with mentoring, incorporated into student services or regarded as part of an informal

culture of mutual assistance. These interpretations depend upon what students and staff already know, which forms of support are familiar, how academic authority is organised and where people ordinarily turn when difficulty arises.

The term institutional ecology is used here to describe this interdependence. Peer tutoring enters a network of curricula, organisational units, student associations, technologies, support services, disciplinary traditions and informal relationships. Its possibilities emerge from the relations among these elements rather than from programme design alone.

The distinction developed in *Kultury uniwersytetu* between formal, informal and deliberately non-formalised dimensions of academic organisation is useful here. Universities are never exhausted by regulations and organisational charts; they also function through habits, tacit expectations, relationships and spaces that communities do not fully formalise (Jendza 2020a: 35–42, 55–69). For peer tutoring, the question is therefore not simply how much structure an institution provides, but where structure is needed and where its extension begins to alter the practice. Institutional context enters peer tutoring before the first tutor and tutee meet.

5.2. The University of Gdańsk

Among the three partners, the University of Gdańsk entered Peer-EDU with the strongest established tradition of formal academic tutoring. Report 2 describes faculty-based and interdisciplinary tutoring, certified preparation for academic tutors and coordination through the Centre for the Development of Teaching and Tutoring. Some forms of participation receive formal recognition, while tutor preparation forms part of wider institutional work on active and personalised higher education (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 16–26).

This institutional capacity developed over a longer period. Earlier initiatives included the creation of a cross-faculty Centre of Tutors, intended to connect and support tutoring practice across the university (Szymczak 2018). Subsequent research documents considerable diversity in academic tutoring at the University of Gdańsk, including scholarly, developmental, individual and group-oriented forms (Kowalkowska and Przybylska 2023).

A ten-year retrospective from the Faculty of Oceanography and Geography further shows how tutoring became an established part of the local educational environment, viewed from the perspectives of students, graduates and tutors (Malinowska 2024).

Together, these developments provided substantial institutional and pedagogical infrastructure for Peer-EDU. The university already has experienced tutors, a developed language for discussing individual educational relationships and an organisational unit capable of coordinating preparation and supporting programme development. Peer tutoring therefore does not enter an institutional vacuum.

Paradoxically, this existing strength also creates one of the distinctive difficulties at the University of Gdańsk. The dominant understanding of tutoring is associated with academic staff working individually with students. Introducing peer tutoring consequently requires differentiation. If the distinction remains unclear, the new role may be understood either as academic tutoring performed by a less qualified person or as a loosely defined student version of an already established practice. Neither interpretation captures what Peer-EDU intended.

The diagnostic findings add another complication. Institutional expertise did not translate automatically into student familiarity with peer tutoring. Many surveyed students reported little or no previous awareness of the practice despite the wider tutoring tradition of the university (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 53–67). Organisational capacity and visibility among students therefore cannot be treated as the same thing.

The University of Gdańsk offers Peer-EDU an unusually rich starting point, but one that requires translation within the institution itself. Central expertise has to connect with faculties and disciplinary environments; peer tutoring has to acquire an identity distinct from academic tutoring; and students have to recognise the programme as something available and relevant to them.

Its central problem is therefore not the absence of tutoring culture, but how a new form of tutoring enters an already populated conceptual and organisational space.

5.3. The University of Split

The University of Split presented a different configuration. At the outset of Peer-EDU, there was no established university-wide peer tutoring programme or recognised preparation pathway for student tutors. Support was distributed instead among several structures, including the Student Council, Student Centre, student associations, counselling and career-development provision, psychological services and support for students with disabilities (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 27–38).

These arrangements cover significant dimensions of university life, but they do not necessarily occupy the space between formal teaching and students' everyday attempts to understand disciplinary work. Peer tutoring therefore enters the University of Split less as a variation on an existing tutoring model than as a possible connection among forms of support that have previously served different purposes.

The organisational character of the university is equally significant. Faculties and other constituent units possess considerable importance, which makes local negotiation unavoidable. A centrally endorsed programme would still require decisions at disciplinary and faculty levels concerning relevance, tutor recruitment, supervision, recognition and relationships with existing practices.

This decentralisation can make university-wide coordination more demanding. It may also be an educational resource. A programme developed close to disciplinary communities can respond more directly to the character of study within them and avoid assuming that identical tutoring arrangements suit every field.

Responses from the University of Split make this ambivalence visible. Participants valued interpersonal authenticity and were attentive to the risk that excessive formalisation might make peer support artificial or bureaucratic (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 123–125). Their concern was therefore not simply whether an institution should organise peer tutoring, but how much organisation the practice could absorb without losing the qualities that made it attractive.

For the University of Split, the problem is consequently one of institutional anchoring without premature uniformity. A viable programme needs a recognisable home, preparation and lines of responsibility, yet may need to develop through locally negotiated forms rather than through a single university-wide template.

5.4. The University of Malta

The University of Malta offers another institutional configuration. It is comparatively centralised, English is the principal language of academic instruction, and a large proportion of Maltese higher education is concentrated within one university. Report 2 describes an institution of approximately 12,000 students, including a substantial international population (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 39–52).

Several existing support practices provide potential points of connection with Peer-EDU. These include mentoring and peer mentoring in particular professional contexts, counselling, provision for diverse student groups, doctoral-development support and student organisations. Mentoring is especially visible in fields such as education and health, where placements and processes of professional formation have established traditions of guidance and accompaniment (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 45–52).

Peer tutoring therefore enters a setting in which some of its relational language is already familiar. This familiarity is useful but cannot be assumed to produce conceptual agreement. Mentoring in professional education carries histories, expectations and forms of authority that do not map automatically onto peer tutoring.

The diagnostic material also reveals concerns specific to the social organisation of student relationships. Maltese respondents drew attention to trust, fairness, workload and the possibility that academic competition or status differences might obstruct cooperation. Conflict resolution, ethical preparation and person-centred support figured prominently among the conditions they regarded as important (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–107, 115–126).

Centralisation may make common communication and coordination easier than in a more dispersed institutional structure, but it does not remove disciplinary variation or social hierarchy. A programme can be organisationally visible while remaining relationally unconvincing to students.

The Maltese case therefore places a different problem before Peer-EDU: how to connect peer tutoring with existing mentoring and support traditions without assuming that organisational concentration creates a common culture of peer collaboration.

5.5. Three Architectures of Support

Placed side by side, the three universities differ less in whether they support students than in how support is distributed and named.

At the University of Gdańsk, tutoring already possesses a comparatively explicit pedagogical identity. It is associated with individual academic work, prepared staff and institutional coordination. At the University of Split, relevant resources are dispersed among welfare, representative, counselling, associative and faculty structures, with less prior formalisation of peer assistance around study. At the University of Malta, mentoring is familiar in several professional contexts and exists alongside central support provision, counselling and student organisations.

These configurations cannot sensibly be ordered from weak to strong. They serve different institutional purposes and emerge from different histories. Academic tutoring, professional mentoring, psychological counselling, student representation and peer assistance address overlapping aspects of student experience, but they are not substitutes for one another.

Peer-EDU introduces something that sits partly between these established forms. It proposes an academically oriented relationship conducted by students, organised sufficiently to be dependable but remaining distinct from teaching, professional advising and specialist support.

This creates a different integration problem in each university. At the University of Gdańsk, peer tutoring needs to sit alongside an established academic tutoring tradition without being absorbed into it. At the University of Split, it needs to connect with dispersed support and faculty structures

without becoming another isolated initiative. At the University of Malta, it must be legible in relation to existing mentoring traditions while preserving the distinctive position of a peer tutor.

The comparison shifts attention from the isolated programme to its institutional neighbours. What matters is not simply whether a university possesses a tutoring scheme, but what other practices surround it, where boundaries are drawn and how students move among them.

5.6. Institutional Traditions and the Location of Responsibility

The three ecologies also differ in where institutional responsibility becomes visible.

At the University of Gdańsk, established structures of preparation, certification and coordination already communicate that tutoring is something the institution can actively host. Yet the diagnostic findings demonstrate that formal infrastructure does not guarantee equal visibility across a large and internally differentiated university. Responsibility may be institutionally recognised while remaining unevenly enacted across faculties.

At the University of Split, responsibility is distributed more widely among constituent units, student organisations and specialised services. Such dispersion can support local ownership, but it makes the question of programme ownership especially important. A practice situated between teaching, participation and student support can easily remain dependent upon particular individuals if no organisational actor is prepared to sustain it.

The University of Malta presents a different risk. More centralised organisation can provide clearer routes for coordination, but formal coherence cannot substitute for participants' willingness to recognise the programme as legitimate. Concerns about workload, fairness and competition show that organisational capacity and relational trust are separate questions.

These descriptions should not be mistaken for three homogeneous university cultures. Faculties, disciplines, units and student communities may

enact very different relations within the same institution. A university can be highly bureaucratic in one setting and strongly collegial in another.

This is precisely why *The Cultures of University* [Kultury uniwersytetu] is useful here. The analytical value of cultural interpretation lies not in attaching one label to an entire university, but in noticing how different modes of academic life coexist and compete (Jendza 2020a: 179–253). Peer tutoring can be drawn into these different logics. It can become an opportunity for encounter, a developmental practice, a credential in a competitive environment or simply another form of work to be allocated.

The institutional question is therefore not exhausted when responsibility for the programme has been assigned on an organisational chart. The more demanding question is what kind of practice the institution enables peer tutoring to become.

5.7. Possibilities and Limits of International Comparison

Working across three universities made differences visible that might have remained unnoticed within a single institutional setting. Even apparently shared terms, such as tutoring, mentoring, peer support, supervision entered different professional and organisational vocabularies. Comparison therefore helped the project identify elements that appeared repeatedly important, such as preparation and continuing support, while exposing other dimensions that could not sensibly be standardised, including recognition, organisational ownership and relationships with existing tutoring or mentoring structures.

The comparison nevertheless has substantial methodological limits. Institutional profiles were constructed from documents available to the project team and do not necessarily represent each university with identical depth. Survey samples were voluntary and differed in size and composition. Data collection was not perfectly simultaneous. Respondents at the University of Gdańsk and the University of Split had access to national-language versions of the instruments, whereas the University of Malta survey was

conducted in English. Prior familiarity with the terminology also varied (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 50–52).

Observed differences should therefore not be transformed too quickly into statements about institutional culture. A difference in response percentages may arise from disciplinary representation, sample composition, translation, previous exposure or the channels through which participants were recruited. International comparison is more useful here as a heuristic than as a ranking device. It makes possible questions such as:

- Where does peer tutoring become institutionally intelligible?
- Which existing practices can provide resources for it?
- Where is responsibility likely to reside?
- Which forms of institutionalisation may protect the practice?
- Which might alter the very qualities participants value in it?

These questions do not combine into a single readiness score. The University of Gdańsk may possess extensive tutoring expertise while facing low student familiarity with peer tutoring. The University of Split may have fewer central structures but strong possibilities for local ownership. The University of Malta may benefit from organisational concentration and recognised mentoring practices while still confronting concerns about competition and status.

The three universities should therefore be understood neither as cases at different stages of the same developmental process nor as representatives of three fixed national cultures. They are three educational ecologies in which the same project encounters different arrangements of history, authority, support and participation. That is the principal contribution of comparison to Peer-EDU. A common framework may be possible, but its educational meaning will depend upon what happens when it enters an actual university.

CHAPTER 6

RESEARCHING READINESS FOR PEER TUTORING

The diagnostic study conducted within Peer-EDU was designed neither to test the ‘effectiveness’ of an existing programme nor to rank the three universities according to a single measure of ‘preparedness’. At the time of data collection, the participating institutions had not yet implemented the shared model developed through the project. The study therefore examined a prior and necessarily more tentative question: how students and academic staff understood peer tutoring, what they expected from it, and what conditions they believed would enable or obstruct its introduction.

This chapter reconstructs the design of that inquiry and clarifies the scope of the knowledge it produced. The survey generated a substantial comparative dataset, combining responses from students and academic staff with open commentary on perceived benefits, risks and institutional requirements. Its value lies primarily in formative diagnosis. It provides evidence about awareness, expectations and declared willingness, but it cannot by itself demonstrate that an institution possesses the material, organisational or cultural capacity to sustain peer tutoring in practice.

6.1. Research Questions

The research was guided by five related questions: how familiar students and academic staff were with peer tutoring; how they understood it and distinguished it from other educational practices; what preparation, institutional support and technological provision they considered necessary; what barriers they anticipated; and what benefits they expected for tutors, tutees, academic staff and universities.

These questions served both an exploratory and a practical purpose. They made visible how peer tutoring was understood before the Peer-EDU intervention and supplied evidence for the student training programme, the preparation of academic mentors, digital resources and subsequent institutional decisions (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 8–11). They did not ask whether peer tutoring had already improved attainment, belonging or retention. Agreement that it could contribute to these outcomes is evidence of expectation, not of effect.

6.2. Development of the Research Instruments

Instrument development began with the review of more than fifty publications undertaken during the first phase of Peer-EDU. Report 1 identified recurring themes in the literature, including academic and relational benefits, inclusion, tutor preparation, role ambiguity, organisational support and implementation difficulties. These themes informed the first set of survey questions (Jendza et al. 2026).

Questionnaire construction was collaborative and iterative. Members of the international team discussed and revised proposed items for relevance across the three institutional contexts. Two parallel questionnaires were prepared, one for students and one for academic staff. Their architecture enabled comparison, while selected questions reflected the different positions of the two groups. Closed items were combined with open questions so that respondents could introduce meanings and concerns not anticipated by the researchers.

The instruments were practical diagnostic tools rather than psychometrically validated readiness scales. Their strength lies in their direct connection with programme design; their limitation is that they do not produce a single standardised measure of readiness (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 46–48).

6.3. Student and Academic Staff Surveys

Each questionnaire contained six thematic sections: background information; familiarity and prior experience; understandings of peer tutoring; expected preparation and institutional support; perceived barriers; and anticipated benefits and willingness to become involved.

After respondents assessed their initial familiarity, the questionnaire supplied a shared definition of peer tutoring as an approach in which students help one another understand and study course material, typically in pairs or small groups. This definition established a common reference point but may also have influenced subsequent responses.

The questionnaires were administered anonymously through Microsoft Forms and were designed to take approximately fifteen minutes. Data were collected at the University of Gdańsk and the University of Split in January and February 2025 and at the University of Malta in March and April 2025. Polish, Croatian and English versions were used, with the University of Malta completing the English questionnaire (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 46–48).

6.4. Participating Groups

The consolidated sample consisted of 589 participants: 334 students and 255 members of academic staff. The distribution is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1. Participants in the Peer-EDU diagnostic survey

Respondent group	University of Gdańsk	University of Split	University of Malta	Total
Students	166	128	40	334
Academic staff	94	109	52	255
Total	260	237	92	589

Source: Attard Tonna et al. (2026: 48–49).

The samples covered several disciplinary areas, but their composition was uneven. Education and the social sciences were particularly prominent

at the University of Gdańsk and the University of Malta, while humanities, arts and engineering accounted for substantial shares of the University of Split student sample. Women were strongly represented in several groups. The findings therefore describe the participating groups rather than statistically representative university populations.

6.5. Quantitative and Qualitative Forms of Analysis

Closed questions were analysed mainly through descriptive statistics: frequencies, percentages and ranked priorities. The comparison was intended to identify patterns across universities and respondent groups, not to establish causal relationships. Report 2 does not document inferential statistical testing.

Open answers were organised into recurring categories and illustrated with selected comments. They were especially useful for interpreting ideas such as trust, hierarchy, authenticity, formalisation and responsibility. The design is best described as a mixed-form diagnostic survey rather than a fully specified mixed-methods study. The report does not document a formal codebook, double coding, intercoder agreement or a separate integration procedure. The qualitative categories should therefore be read as an interpretive organisation of the material, not as an independently validated typology.

6.6. Translation and Cross-Cultural Comparability

The international design required the instruments to function in three linguistic and institutional settings. English served as the shared project language; Polish and Croatian versions were translated and localised by the university teams, while Malta used the English version.

Translation did not remove differences in the histories and associations of terms such as peer tutoring, mentoring, support and readiness. The supplied definition reduced ambiguity but may have framed later responses positively. The report does not document back-translation, cognitive interviewing, formal testing of linguistic equivalence or measurement invariance. Cross-university percentages should therefore be interpreted as indicators of patterns requiring local explanation, not as exact measurements of stable cultural differences (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 50–52).

6.7. Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, the questionnaires did not request names, and responses were collected anonymously through Microsoft Forms. This was appropriate because participants were invited to comment on institutional shortcomings, staff responsibility and possible programme risks.

Anonymity does not remove all ethical concerns. In small disciplinary groups, combinations of role, field, gender and experience may permit deductive identification, while open comments can include distinctive details. Quotations should therefore be selected cautiously and stripped of unnecessary identifying information.

The available report does not specify a formal ethics approval or exemption, approval number, retention period, data-controller arrangements or precise rules for access to the original exports. The final manuscript should state only what can be confirmed by the project team. Until then, the study can be described as anonymous and voluntary, but no stronger claim about formal ethical review should be made.

6.8. Methodological Limitations

The principal limitations are *non-probability recruitment*, unequal sample sizes, uneven disciplinary and gender representation and possible self-selection by people already interested in teaching innovation or student support. The study relied on self-report and positively framed items, which may have

encouraged general approval. Respondents' assessments of institutional provision may also reflect limited awareness as much as actual absence.

Predefined rankings simplified relations among barriers: a lack of trained tutors may itself arise from funding, weak recognition, limited staff time or poor communication. Translation, different collection periods and distinct institutional meanings constrain cross-site comparison. Finally, the study contains no longitudinal, experimental or outcome data. It cannot demonstrate effects on grades, withdrawal, belonging or sustained institutional change. It is a baseline for programme development, not an evaluation of programme effectiveness (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 50–52, 127–129).

6.9. What Institutional Readiness Can and Cannot Mean

The survey captured several dimensions of declared readiness: whether peer tutoring was intelligible, whether students and staff viewed it favourably, what support they expected and whether they expressed willingness to participate. These are necessary but insufficient conditions.

Positive attitudes are not the same as institutional capacity. The study did not directly audit budgets, coordinator workload, rooms, tutor supply, supervision, referral procedures, accessibility, data governance or sustained leadership commitment. Readiness should therefore be treated as multidimensional: conceptual, motivational, pedagogical, organisational, ethical and infrastructural.

These dimensions may develop unevenly. An institution can possess experienced academic tutors but limited student awareness of peer tutoring; strong enthusiasm but no programme owner; or formal procedures without the trust required for students to use them. Critical responses may indicate reflective institutional knowledge, while enthusiasm may underestimate the work involved.

Peer-EDU consequently approached readiness as a developing relation among intention, capacity and experience. The diagnostic surveys documented intention most directly, offered partial evidence about capacity and

preceded authentic implementation. Readiness was not a gate passed before change began, but something to be developed through recruitment, preparation, supervised practice, feedback and institutional revision.

CHAPTER 7

WHAT STUDENTS AND ACADEMIC STAFF EXPECT FROM PEER TUTORING

The diagnostic survey generated a large volume of institution-specific data. Reproducing those findings university by university would add length without improving the argument. This chapter therefore reorganises the material thematically: awareness, meaning, expected benefits, preparation, support, barriers and willingness to participate. Report 2 remains the primary source; Report 1 provides the wider research context. Later project materials are used only as distinct points of comparison, not merged with the diagnostic dataset.

The findings reveal broad approval of peer tutoring but not a simple mandate for implementation. Students and academic staff expected it to improve study, confidence and relationships, while simultaneously questioning tutor competence, institutional commitment and the risk of transferring academic responsibility to students. Their expectations describe a promising educational relation whose credibility depends upon how it is prepared, supported and bounded.

7.1. Awareness and Prior Experience

Awareness varied markedly across the three student groups. The University of Gdańsk combined the lowest declared familiarity with the highest reported prior participation; the University of Malta showed the highest familiarity but a lower participation rate; the University of Split occupied an intermediate position in familiarity and reported the least prior experience. Awareness and experience were therefore related only loosely (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–100). These patterns are summarised in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1. Student awareness and prior experience of peer tutoring (%)

University	Very familiar	Moderately familiar	Slightly familiar	Not at all familiar	Prior participation or observation
University of Gdańsk	3.0	9.0	18.7	69.3	42.2
University of Split	3.9	21.9	37.5	36.7	22.0
University of Malta	15.0	17.0	49.0	20.0	37.0

Source: Attard Tonna et al. (2026: 97–100). Percentages may not total exactly 100 because of rounding.

Academic staff displayed a more even pattern of previous involvement, at approximately 29–32 per cent across the institutions, although their familiarity still differed. Staff responses at the University of Gdańsk were particularly polarised, with 39 per cent reporting no familiarity and 14 per cent describing themselves as very familiar. At the University of Split and the University of Malta, unfamiliarity was lower and most responses clustered between slight and moderate familiarity. The corresponding pattern for academic staff is shown in Table 7.2.

The gap between awareness and participation cautions against treating publicity as implementation. Students can encounter tutoring-like practices without recognising the project’s terminology, while familiarity may result from reading or observation rather than participation. The data establish a need for clear communication, but not for a campaign that presents peer tutoring as wholly unfamiliar or imports one institutional vocabulary unchanged into another.

Table 7.2. Academic staff awareness of peer tutoring (%)

University	Very familiar	Moderately familiar	Slightly familiar	Not at all familiar	Prior involvement
University of Gdańsk	14.0	17.0	30.0	39.0	c. 29–32
University of Split	6.4	21.1	45.0	21.5	c. 29–32
University of Malta	15.0	31.0	33.0	20.0	c. 29–32

Source: Attard Tonna et al. (2026: 97–102). The percentages reported for the University of Split reproduced in the report do not exhaust the full sample; prior involvement is reported comparatively as approximately 29–32 per cent at each institution.

7.2. How Peer Tutoring Is Understood

Across the three universities, respondents generally understood peer tutoring as a *more accessible and collaborative alternative to one-directional explanation*. They associated it with personalised support, reciprocal knowledge sharing and communication at a reduced social distance. Student responses emphasised informality and mutuality, while staff responses additionally highlighted academic standards, role clarity and supervision (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 100–102, 113–114).

The expectation is close to Joanna Rutkowiak’s idea of a *dialogue without an arbiter*: a dialogue in which one participant does not possess an automatic right to deliver the final interpretive verdict merely because of status (Rutkowiak 1984). Peer tutoring can approximate such a relation because the tutor’s contribution remains open to questioning. Yet the analogy has limits.

The subject matter, course requirements and academic integrity do not disappear, and the tutor cannot treat every interpretation as equally adequate. The redistribution of voice is not the abolition of epistemic responsibility.

This helps explain why respondents could value equality and still demand competent tutors. They expected a relationship less intimidating than formal teaching, but not an exchange in which reliability ceased to matter.

Their preferred model was neither miniature lecturing nor unstructured conversation: it was supported study in which authority became more negotiable and knowledge remained consequential.

7.3. Expected Contributions to Study and Academic Development

Students and staff expected peer tutoring to contribute to understanding, knowledge retention, critical thinking and communication. Respondents also anticipated benefits for tutors: explaining material could consolidate disciplinary understanding, develop teaching-related skills and strengthen responsibility. These were expected contributions, not measured outcomes (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 108–113).

The data resist a narrow remedial interpretation. Peer tutoring was not imagined only as help for students who had failed. It was also associated with the capacity to articulate reasoning, compare approaches and become more active within academic work. Report 1 similarly distinguished academic gains from human and social development and warned that outcomes depend on programme design, tutor preparation and continuing support (Jendza et al. 2026).

This broader expectation matters because remedial framing can stigmatise tutees and reduce tutors to compensatory teaching labour. The respondents' language points instead towards a relation in which both positions may be educationally productive. Nonetheless, the benefits were often stated in general terms. The survey cannot show which forms of tutoring, disciplines or students would realise them most consistently.

7.4. Belonging, Confidence and Social Integration

Relational expectations were almost as prominent as academic ones. Respondents described peer tutoring as a means of reducing alienation,

building supportive networks, making it easier to admit uncertainty and strengthening confidence. Participants at the University of Gdańsk explicitly connected it with lower stress and possible support for continuation; responses at the University of Split and the University of Malta placed greater emphasis on collaborative culture, social interaction and community building (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 108–113).

Rutkowiak's reflection on the longing for 'university friendship' offers a useful, restrained interpretation. Her concern is not that universities should become communities of private intimacy, but that academic life loses something when relations are reduced to contractual exchange, competition and performance (Rutkowiak 2010: 53–65). The expectations recorded by Peer-EDU can be read as a search for less transactional forms of academic relation: someone with whom uncertainty can be shared without immediately becoming an assessed deficiency.

Such expectations should not be romanticised. A peer relationship can reproduce competition, exclusion and hierarchy, concerns raised particularly by respondents at the University of Malta. Nor can belonging be manufactured by assigning two students to one another. The survey indicates that respondents valued the possibility of relational access; it does not establish that formal matching would generate trust.

7.5. Expectations Concerning Tutor Preparation

Preparation was the clearest point of convergence. Students and staff prioritised communication and interpersonal skills; subject knowledge, organisation, feedback, motivation, practical teaching methods and ethical boundaries appeared with different emphasis across the universities. Maltese respondents additionally highlighted conflict resolution and person-centred support (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 102–104).

These expectations shaped the Peer-EDU handbook, which combined role clarification, active listening, questioning, feedback, difficult cases and referral boundaries rather than treating tutor preparation as subject

revision alone (Peer-EDU 2025a). A later and analytically separate source, the post-training evaluation completed by 19 participants, provides a useful check.

Communication was among the highest-rated areas (mean 4.74/5), as were conversational tools and practical exercises (4.68), while ethics and professional boundaries, though still positively evaluated, received a lower mean (4.42). Participants continued to request more difficult scenarios, clearer local procedures and access to mentoring (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–16).

The later evaluation does not validate the original survey statistically. It does show that the diagnostic emphasis on communication, boundaries and supported practice anticipated concerns that remained present after training. Preparation should therefore be understood as staged entry into practice, not a one-off transfer of techniques.

7.6. Organisational and Technological Support

Respondents expected the institution to provide visible coordination, documentation, communication, spaces and technological tools. At the University of Gdańsk, only 5 per cent of students judged technological support sufficient; 51 per cent were unaware of relevant tools and 34 per cent were unsure. At the University of Split, students named platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, Moodle and virtual learning environments, while the responses at the University of Malta placed greater emphasis on organisation, documentation and conflict resolution than on technology itself (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 102–104).

Technology was generally treated as infrastructure rather than the educational centre of the programme. Students preferred direct interpersonal contact even when recognising the value of digital booking, resources or hybrid access. The empirical issue was therefore not simply whether platforms existed, but whether respondents could identify and use them.

The later mentor report reinforces the organisational dimension. The sixteen academic mentors participating in the University of Gdańsk workshop asked for a continuing ‘safety net’: supervision, rapid consultation and contact with colleagues facing comparable cases (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026). This later evidence supports the staff expectation that credible peer tutoring requires an institutional host. It should not, however, be used to imply that all requested structures were already operational.

7.7. Perceived Risks and Barriers

The lack of trained tutors was the most consistent barrier across students and staff. Respondents feared inaccurate explanations, insufficient pedagogical judgement and uneven quality. Other recurrent concerns included low motivation, limited time, weak coordination, inadequate funding, insufficient recognition and difficulties sustaining voluntary participation. Students also questioned whether programmes would reach enough subjects and whether peer tutoring might shift lecturers’ responsibilities to capable but poorly compensated students (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 104–108).

Report 1 shows that these concerns are not peculiar to the partner universities. International studies repeatedly identify role ambiguity, unstable engagement, trust, training, logistics and sustainability as implementation problems (Jendza et al. 2026). The diagnostic findings therefore do not simply express resistance to innovation; they identify conditions under which an attractive idea could become irresponsible.

The most important criticism concerns *substitution*. Peer tutoring loses legitimacy when used to compensate for inaccessible teaching, insufficient feedback or understaffed support. Student participation can redistribute educational authority, but it should not conceal institutional withdrawal. Evaluation ranked lower than immediate operational barriers, yet this should not make it optional: without evidence about reach, quality and unintended effects, enthusiasm can become its own justification.

7.8. Motivation and Willingness to Become Involved

Willingness was generally high, but not uniform. Around 70 per cent of students at the University of Gdańsk and the University of Malta described themselves as likely or very likely to become involved; the reported figure at the University of Split was lower. Recommendation rates were 73 per cent at the University of Gdańsk, 75 per cent at the University of Malta and 41 per cent at the University of Split. A majority at each institution viewed benefits as shared by tutor and tutee, although the proportions differed (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 108–113). Selected indicators of student expectations and willingness are summarised in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3. Selected indicators of student expectations and willingness (%)

Indicator	University of Gdańsk	University of Split	University of Malta
Benefits perceived as equal for tutors and tutees	72.0	57.8	56.0
Likely to recommend peer tutoring	73.0	41.0	75.0
Likely or very likely to become involved	71.0	33.0	70.0
Neutral about involvement	18.0	Not reported	24.0

Source: Attard Tonna et al. (2026: 108–113). The University of Split report does not provide all response categories.

Declared willingness should not be read as predicted participation. Voluntary programmes compete with employment, coursework and caring responsibilities. Motivation also depends upon recognition, credible preparation and whether the role is socially valued. The survey responses repeatedly linked engagement with ECTS, certification, remuneration or other visible acknowledgement, but such incentives can also transform a relational practice into another competitive credential.

The later training evaluation again adds caution. Participants reported increased confidence, yet only seven of nineteen felt fully ready to

begin tutoring, nine selected ‘mostly’ and three ‘not yet’ (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7). Interest and confidence thus coexist with an awareness of incomplete readiness.

7.9. Student and Academic Staff Perspectives Compared

The strongest finding is not a simple opposition between enthusiastic students and cautious staff. Both groups expected academic, relational and personal benefits and both identified tutor preparation as essential. Their differences concerned position and scale. Students concentrated on the immediate quality of the encounter: accessibility, communication, trust, useful explanation and face-to-face contact. Staff more often viewed the programme through institutional responsibility: coordination, quality assurance, workload, funding, subject applicability and sustainability (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 113–114). These differences in emphasis are summarised in Table 7.4.

Table 7.4. Comparative emphasis in student and academic staff responses

Dimension	Students tended to emphasise	Academic staff tended to emphasise
Educational value	Accessible explanation, confidence, collaboration and direct usefulness	Academic quality, subject suitability and alignment with teaching
Tutor preparation	Communication, interpersonal skills, practical strategies and approachability	Selection, subject competence, ethics, supervision and consistency
Institutional support	Visibility, easy access, incentives and usable spaces or tools	Coordination, funding, workload recognition, documentation and quality assurance
Principal risks	Poor tutor competence, weak motivation, formalisation and transfer of teachers’ work	Misinformation, limited staff time, unclear responsibility and programme sustainability

Dimension	Students tended to emphasise	Academic staff tended to emphasise
Preferred relation	Flexible, informal and face-to-face where possible	Structured enough to protect standards and institutional accountability

Source: Authors' synthesis based on Attard Tonna et al. (2026: 97–114).

These perspectives are complementary as much as divergent. A programme designed only from the student position may underestimate infrastructure and responsibility; one designed only from the staff position may bureaucratised the very proximity students value. The central design problem is therefore to preserve relational accessibility while making support dependable.

The data also invite a critical reading of engagement. Respondents welcomed participation, community and mutual benefit, but Zepke's warning remains relevant: engagement becomes impoverished when it is treated primarily as measurable student activity serving retention or institutional performance (Zepke 2017). Peer tutoring should not be justified only because engaged students are easier to retain. Its educational promise lies in creating additional relations to knowledge, responsibility and one another.

The expectations recorded in Peer-EDU are best read as a negotiated brief for implementation. Students asked for a human and accessible practice; staff asked for one that could be trusted and sustained. Neither expectation can be ignored without changing what peer tutoring becomes.

CHAPTER 8

CONVERGENCES, DIFFERENCES AND PRODUCTIVE TENSIONS

Chapters 6 and 7 established what students and academic staff said about peer tutoring. This chapter asks what their answers disclose about the organisation of higher education. The comparison is not used to assign stable cultural characteristics to the three universities or to rank them according to readiness. It is used to identify tensions that recur across the dataset but take different forms at the three partner universities.

The most important finding is not that respondents either supported or rejected peer tutoring. Broad support coexisted with demands that tutors be prepared, academic standards protected, participation recognised and relationships kept sufficiently informal to remain approachable. These positions are not mutually exclusive. Together, they describe an educational practice whose value depends upon holding several elements in tension: student ownership and institutional responsibility, proximity and competence, voluntary participation and equitable access, technological enablement and human presence.

The interpretive argument developed here is necessarily more authorial than the descriptive analysis in the preceding chapters. Report 2 provides the empirical basis; Report 1 and the analytical framework concerning authority, equity, belonging, access and withdrawal help clarify what is at stake. The chapter treats these materials as evidence of expectations and institutional imaginaries, not as proof of programme outcomes (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–136; Jendza et al. 2026: 3–6).

8.1. Shared Expectations across the Three Universities

Despite differences in awareness and willingness, the three universities show substantial convergence. Students and staff expected peer tutoring to make academic support more accessible, strengthen understanding and communication, and contribute to confidence and social connection. They also agreed that these benefits would not arise automatically. The lack of adequately prepared tutors was the most consistent perceived barrier, accompanied by concerns about subject knowledge, pedagogical judgement, motivation, coordination and institutional support (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 102–114).

This convergence is important because it moves the discussion beyond a simple preference for peer involvement. Respondents did not ask universities merely to place students together. They imagined a *prepared relationship* with a *recognisable purpose* and *access to assistance* when difficulties exceeded the tutor's role. Students tended to emphasise approachability and flexibility; staff placed greater weight on quality and accountability. Yet both perspectives presupposed that peer tutoring should be student-led without becoming institutionally abandoned.

A second shared expectation concerned *reciprocity*. Respondents frequently described benefits for both tutor and tutee: one receives more individualised support, while the other consolidates knowledge and develops communication, responsibility and confidence. Reciprocity should not be understood as exact symmetry. The two participants undertake different work and may benefit in different ways. It nevertheless challenges a deficit model in which one competent student repairs another who is lacking.

A third point of convergence was the *belief that peer tutoring may contribute to inclusion and belonging*. Here, the data indicate a plausible mechanism rather than an outcome. A more approachable relationship may normalise questions, make academic conventions more legible and create a point of connection within the institution. Whether this subsequently affects attainment, continuation or withdrawal depends upon access, regular participation, programme quality and conditions beyond tutoring itself.

The shared expectations can therefore be condensed into the productive tensions shown in Table 8.1.

Table 8.1. Productive tensions emerging from the comparative findings

Productive tension	What the survey material shows	Interpretive implication
Student ownership / institutional assurance	Students value proximity and flexibility; staff emphasise preparation and quality	Redistribute authority without transferring institutional responsibility
Informality / continuity	Human contact is valued; coordination and support are still requested	Structure protects access and boundaries but should not script dialogue
Voluntary participation / equitable access	Participation should be voluntary, but time and recruitment are constraints	Recognition should make participation feasible without becoming the main motive
Digital enablement / relational presence	Tools help matching and hybrid access; respondents prioritise human interaction	Platforms enable the practice but do not replace relationship
Support / substitution	Accessible help is valued; respondents fear misinformation and lecturer substitution	Peer tutoring supplements teaching and should reveal problems requiring institutional action

Source: Authors’ synthesis based on Attard Tonna et al. (2026: 97–136) and Jendza et al. (2026: 3–6).

8.2. Differences between Three Partner Universities

The differences among the universities concern the form in which these tensions became visible. At the University of Gdańsk, low general awareness coexisted with relatively high reported participation. This suggests not institutional absence but uneven visibility: tutoring-related practices were present, yet knowledge about them was concentrated in particular faculties, programmes or networks. Respondents also expressed uncertainty

about technological provision and internal communication. The problem was therefore less whether support existed than whether students could recognise and locate it (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–107, 123–125).

At the University of Split, lower declared willingness and stronger concern about tutor competence and the transfer of responsibility gave the discussion a more cautious tone. Students valued authenticity and reciprocal support but worried that formalisation could damage a naturally interpersonal practice. Staff were particularly attentive to subject applicability and quality assurance. These responses point to a need for legitimacy to be negotiated close to faculties and disciplinary communities rather than established through a general institutional announcement alone.

At the University of Malta, awareness and willingness were comparatively high, and academic staff were more confident that peer tutoring could operate across disciplines. At the same time, respondents raised questions about competitiveness, trust and hierarchy. This indicates that familiarity with mentoring or student support does not guarantee a peer relation experienced as equal. Programme design must attend not only to organisational clarity but to how status is produced among students.

These differences should not be interpreted as complete institutional cultures. Each sample was voluntary and unevenly composed, and every university contains several educational environments. The comparison is most useful when it reveals different starting problems: visibility and connection in the University of Gdańsk, negotiated legitimacy in the University of Split, and the relational management of competition and hierarchy in the University of Malta. None of these is solved by transferring one uniform model across the three sites.

8.3. Disciplinary Cultures and the Perceived Applicability of Peer Tutoring

Respondents did not assume that peer tutoring would have the same function in every field. Staff at the University of Malta were generally more confident about broad applicability, whereas staff at the University of Gdańsk and

the University of Split expressed stronger reservations about subject-specific limits and the reliability of student explanations. These concerns are consistent with the diversity described in Topping's typologies: peer tutoring is not one method but a family of arrangements whose educational object, role structure and degree of tutor expertise vary considerably (Topping 1996; 2005).

The relevant question is therefore not whether a discipline is suitable for peer tutoring in the abstract. It is which aspects of studying can responsibly be supported by peers. In mathematics or chemistry, students may work on problem-solving processes, common misconceptions and preparation for laboratory tasks. In the humanities, they may discuss texts, arguments and writing. In professional programmes, peers may help interpret cases or prepare for practice, while formal judgement of clinical, legal or safety-critical performance must remain with qualified staff.

Disciplinary difference also concerns what counts as legitimate knowledge. Some fields organise study around cumulative conceptual mastery; others tolerate a wider plurality of interpretations. Tutors need to know when alternative approaches are productive and when a misunderstanding requires correction or referral. High grades alone do not guarantee this judgement.

Peer tutoring should consequently be designed around identifiable academic practices rather than generic promises of support. The stronger unit of design may be a barrier course, transition task, laboratory procedure, writing practice or threshold concept. This also avoids labelling particular students as deficient. The programme responds to demanding points in the curriculum while remaining open to anyone who encounters them.

Disciplinary adaptation should not become a reason to leave each programme entirely isolated. Shared preparation in listening, questioning, boundaries and referral can coexist with local guidance about content, assessment and common difficulties. The balance between common principles and disciplinary specification is one of the clearest lessons of the comparative findings (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 108–125).

8.4. Technology as Infrastructure Rather than an Educational Relation

Technology appeared repeatedly in the survey, but rarely as the central source of educational value. Respondents mentioned booking systems, communication platforms, online materials and hybrid access, while also emphasising that peer tutoring depends upon human contact. At the University of Gdańsk in particular, many students were unaware of available tools or uncertain whether the university possessed adequate technological support. This points to a problem of visibility and integration as much as to the absence of software (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 102–107).

Digital infrastructure can reduce practical barriers. It can help students find a tutor, arrange meetings, access materials, participate from another location and remain connected between sessions. Hybrid provision may be especially important for commuters, disabled students, carers and those in paid employment. In this sense, technology is part of equity: timing, modality and accessibility influence who can participate.

Read against the pedagogical argument developed in Part I, the survey finding is straightforward: technology was expected to remove practical barriers, not to supply the educational relation itself. Booking data or session counts could show use, but respondents' emphasis remained on access to people, explanations and continuing contact. The implication for Peer-EDU was therefore one of proportion: digital arrangements should make matching, scheduling, resources and referral easier without becoming the programme's centre of gravity.

8.5. Student Autonomy and Academic Responsibility

The comparison repeatedly returns to a tension between student autonomy and academic responsibility. Students valued a relationship in which they could ask questions without the distance associated with assessment authority. Staff supported this possibility but insisted upon selection,

preparation, supervision and protection against misinformation. The finding concerns where authority should be located, not whether freedom or control should prevail.

Part I has already distinguished the temporary authority of a peer tutor from the responsibilities attached to academic teaching. The comparative data add a practical point: staff willingness to support peer tutoring depended on confidence that this boundary would remain visible within local courses and disciplines.

Students' expectations add the other side of the arrangement. Approachable help was valued precisely because it allowed them to retain ownership of their work while drawing on another person's experience. In the survey, independence and help-seeking were therefore not presented as simple opposites.

The survey makes the distribution problem visible. Students worried about the transfer of lecturers' work, while staff worried that insufficient oversight could damage quality. Both concerns become credible when institutions invoke student agency without specifying what teachers, supervisors and services will continue to provide (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 113–129).

8.6. Informality and the Danger of Over-Formalisation

The appeal of peer tutoring is closely connected with informality. Students expected ordinary language, reduced distance, flexibility and a setting in which questions could be asked without immediate judgement. Respondents at the University of Gdańsk warned against poorly designed formal structures, while those at the University of Split feared that institutionalising something naturally interpersonal might make it artificial. Respondents at the University of Malta additionally expressed concern that hierarchy and competition could enter the peer relation (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 123–129).

Informality, however, is not the absence of organisation. Unstructured support usually depends upon friendship networks, free time and confidence in approaching others. It may therefore be most available to students who already possess social and cultural resources. A programme that relies

only on spontaneous goodwill can remain invisible to those who need an accessible route into support.

The tension established in Chapter 3 therefore reappears here as a design preference expressed by respondents: make entry, preparation, access and ethical limits dependable, while leaving the tutoring conversation sufficiently open to remain responsive. Formalisation becomes problematic when it moves from supporting the encounter to prescribing it.

8.7. Voluntary Engagement, Recognition and Remuneration

Voluntary participation was widely valued because it preserves agency and distinguishes tutoring from compulsory remediation. It was also identified as a major implementation problem. Respondents anticipated difficulty recruiting enough tutors, sustaining motivation and making participation feasible alongside study, employment and other responsibilities. Suggestions included ECTS credits, certificates, micro-credentials, remuneration and formal acknowledgement of staff supervision (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 104–108, 125–136).

Voluntariness is ethically attractive but socially uneven. Students do not possess equal amounts of time, financial security or confidence. A programme dependent upon unpaid availability may recruit those who are already well positioned within the university and exclude students whose participation would require giving up paid work or caring time. The same applies to tutees: attending repeatedly is easier for some than for others.

Recognition can reduce this inequality, but it also changes the meaning of participation. ECTS embeds tutoring within study; a certificate adds symbolic value; a micro-credential makes competence portable; remuneration acknowledges labour materially. None is neutral. Credentials may intensify competition, while payment may encourage participation without necessarily producing commitment to the educational relation.

The relevance of Zepke's critique of engagement, discussed in Part I, is visible in these responses. Student activity can be celebrated while its labour and unequal conditions of participation disappear from view (Zepke

2017). Peer tutoring becomes vulnerable to this logic when contribution is praised but poorly supported, or when recognition is designed chiefly to generate measurable engagement.

A defensible model should combine voluntariness with realistic conditions of participation. Tutors should enter freely, but their preparation, time and responsibility should not be treated as costless. Recognition should acknowledge work without making accumulation of credentials the principal reason for undertaking it. Transparent compensation or credit may be especially important when institutions expect sustained and accountable participation rather than occasional mutual assistance.

Voluntary attendance also complicates evaluation. Participants may differ from non-participants in motivation, prior achievement, available time and willingness to seek help. Raw differences in grades or continuation cannot therefore be attributed directly to tutoring. Access, uptake and frequency of participation must be studied alongside outcomes rather than treated as background details.

8.8. Peer Tutoring as Support or as Delegation of Academic Responsibility

The most consequential tension is whether peer tutoring supplements academic education or becomes a means of delegating it. Report 1 explicitly identifies the danger that responsibility for the educational process may be transferred to student tutors, weakening contact between academic teachers and students and later provoking excessive control when staff attempt to recover authority (Jendza et al. 2026: 4–6).

The diagnostic survey shows that this concern was not theoretical. Students worried that tutors might be expected to perform lecturers' work, while staff questioned competence, misinformation and quality assurance. Their convergence adds empirical weight to a distinction already established in Part I: peer contribution is legitimate only when it adds a different educational relation rather than compensating silently for missing teaching or services.

The practical implication is feedback upwards. When tutors repeatedly encounter the same ambiguous task, inaccessible procedure or gap in support, the pattern should become a question for course design or institutional provision rather than an additional problem assigned to the tutor.

The same logic applies to emotional demand. Approachability may expose tutors to loneliness, anxiety or crisis, but the training emphasis on boundaries is credible only when academic mentors and professional services remain reachable.

The empirical test is therefore whether the institution remains available when difficulty appears. Without that availability, the language of student empowerment risks concealing a transfer of responsibility that respondents themselves anticipated.

8.9. What the Findings Reveal about the Contemporary University

The comparative findings make peer tutoring a diagnostic lens on the contemporary university. Respondents wanted relationships that are more approachable, reciprocal and attentive than those they routinely associate with formal structures. At the same time, they doubted whether institutions possessed the time, coordination and trust required to sustain such relationships. The desire for peer tutoring therefore points both to existing student capacities and to absences within ordinary academic life.

The findings also reveal a university divided between participation and assurance. Students are invited to become active, autonomous and collaborative, while institutions remain responsible for standards, fairness and continuation. These purposes are not inherently incompatible, but they are often organised through separate logics. Engagement is encouraged through projects and credentials; quality is protected through procedures; wellbeing is assigned to services; knowledge remains attached to courses and disciplines. Peer tutoring crosses these divisions and consequently exposes them.

Jendza's account of university cultures is useful here because it resists imagining the institution as one coherent order. Universities simultaneously

contain cultures of meeting, development, competition and work (Jendza 2020a). Peer tutoring may strengthen encounter and shared study, but it may also be absorbed into competition for distinction or become additional labour within an already intensified institution.

The survey's emphasis on belonging and inclusion should also be interpreted carefully. Peer tutoring may influence mechanisms connected with continuation: academic mastery, confidence, recognition, navigation and willingness to seek help. It cannot directly resolve financial insecurity, caring responsibilities, health problems, discriminatory structures or a mistaken choice of programme. The evidence supports treating reduced withdrawal as a hypothesis operating through specified pathways, not as a promised consequence of peer contact.

Accordingly, the survey supports hypotheses about mechanisms such as confidence, help-seeking, recognition and belonging rather than claims about progression or retention. The distinction between mechanisms, proximal changes and distal outcomes becomes an evaluation problem only later; at this stage it marks the limit of what these diagnostic data can sustain.

What Peer-EDU's findings ultimately disclose is a search for a university in which support is neither charity nor outsourced remediation. Students and staff envisage a practice that recognises students as contributors while preserving the accountability of teachers and institutions. Their caution is as significant as their enthusiasm. It shows awareness that relational language can be used either to deepen academic community or to transfer work downwards.

Rather than restating the conceptual tensions of Part I, the comparative evidence shows where they surface institutionally: in decisions about visibility, disciplinary legitimacy, technological access, recognition, supervision and the continuing presence of academic staff. The same principles therefore require different organisational answers at the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta.

The study portrays the contemporary university as an institution in which relationships are present but unevenly distributed and often disconnected from formal responsibility. Peer tutoring cannot remedy this condition on its own, although it can make some of its consequences visible.

PART

BECOMING A PEER TUTOR

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III

CHAPTER 9. THE PEER TUTOR ROLE: COMPETENCE, IDENTITY
AND RESPONSIBILITY

CHAPTER 10. DESIGNING THE PEER-EDU TRAINING PROGRAMME

CHAPTER 11. EXPERIENCING THE PROGRAMME: VALUE, READINESS
AND UNRESOLVED NEEDS

CHAPTER 12. SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SUPPORT OTHERS

CHAPTER 9

THE PEER TUTOR ROLE: COMPETENCE, IDENTITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

Part I considered peer tutoring as a pedagogical relation: a form of shared study organised through questions of knowledge, authority, care, inclusion and responsibility. Those questions return in Part III, but in a different register. Peer-EDU had to translate them into a role that students could recognise, prepare for and eventually inhabit.

This chapter reconstructs that role from the project rather than proposing an abstract profile of the ideal peer tutor. The evidence comes from Report 1, the three-university diagnostic study, the student training handbook, the post-training evaluation, participant reflections and the report from the preparation of academic mentors. These materials have different status. The diagnostic study records expectations and perceived risks; the handbook documents an intended curriculum; the evaluation captures the responses of 19 participants after training; the mentor report adds an institutional perspective; and reflective accounts illuminate how individual students interpreted the role. Together, they show what Peer-EDU asked a peer tutor to become, but not how that role operated over time in sustained tutoring practice.

One feature is immediately clear. The project did not define competence as possession of a set of conversational techniques. Knowing how to paraphrase, formulate a question or use a model such as GROW was insufficient without judgement about when such an intervention was appropriate, what lay beyond the tutor's responsibility and when another person needed to become involved. The competence structure implicit in Peer-EDU is reconstructed in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1. Reconstructed domains of peer tutor competence

Domain	Central practical question	Characteristic limit
Epistemic competence	Do I understand the matter well enough to support another student responsibly?	I do not replace the academic teacher or certify knowledge
Facilitative competence	Am I strengthening the tutee's capacity to think and act, rather than taking over?	Facilitation does not prohibit explanation or correction
Communicative competence	Am I listening, questioning and responding to what this student is actually saying?	Active listening is not counselling or unconditional agreement
Reflective judgement	Can I interpret an uncertain situation rather than apply a tool mechanically?	Reflection does not remove the need for timely action
Ethical competence	Am I acting honestly, fairly and within agreed expectations?	Confidentiality cannot be promised without exceptions
Boundary competence	Can I remain engaged without becoming a rescuer, therapist or substitute friend?	Distance should not become indifference
Inclusive and intercultural competence	Are my expectations and communication enabling this person to participate?	Adaptation does not mean stereotyping or lowering academic expectations
Referral competence	Do I recognise that another person or service should now assume responsibility?	Referral is not abandonment and should not be vague
Self-management	Can I recognise my own limitations, reactions, workload and need for supervision?	Commitment does not require unlimited availability

Source: Authors' reconstruction based on Jendza et al. (2026), Attard Tonna et al. (2026), Peer-EDU (2025a), Jendza and Jendza (2026), Godlewska-Werner and Jendza (2026), and Stosik (2026).

The table should not be mistaken for a validated competence scale. It is an analytical reconstruction of the role that emerged through Peer-EDU. Its significance lies in the combination of domains. Subject knowledge without communicative judgement was considered unsafe; empathy without boundaries could become over-involvement; independence without

referral competence could leave tutors carrying responsibilities beyond their position.

The role was therefore defined as much by what tutors needed to refrain from doing as by what they were expected to do.

9.1. From Answer-Giver to Facilitator

The movement from giving answers towards facilitation became one of the clearest themes in the project materials.

This issue has already appeared in Part I as a pedagogical question concerning authority and student agency. It returns here because Peer-EDU translated it into a practical expectation of the tutor role. The handbook's self-evaluation asked participants to notice whether they had guided the tutee or supplied the answer, who spoke more during the conversation and whether the other student left with a possible next step. In the post-training evaluation, participants themselves identified helping another person arrive at a solution rather than immediately providing one as one of the important lessons of the programme (Peer-EDU 2025a: 6–7; Jendza and Jendza 2026: 10–13).

This was a significant shift because many plausible recruitment routes into peer tutoring favour academically successful students. Success can easily produce an initial role image in which expertise is demonstrated by explaining quickly and correctly. The project instead asked participants to notice what their intervention enabled the other student to do.

The term facilitator requires qualification. Biesta's criticism of the reduction of teaching to facilitation remains relevant: universities cannot withdraw academic teachers from responsibility for knowledge, curriculum and judgement while celebrating student-led learning (Biesta 2012: 35–49). Peer-EDU used facilitation in a narrower sense. A peer tutor was not being trained to replace the teacher, but to help another student engage more productively with a bounded academic difficulty.

This could include asking a question, inviting the student to reconstruct their reasoning, offering an example, demonstrating a procedure or correcting an error. Facilitation was therefore never intended as a prohibition

on explanation. The distinction concerned what happened after an intervention: whether support returned the problem to the tutee in a form with which they could continue working, or made the tutor increasingly indispensable.

Cognitive apprenticeship provides one useful language for this pattern through modelling, coaching, scaffolding, articulation, reflection and the gradual fading of support (Collins, Brown and Newman 1989: 453–494). Research on university tutor development similarly suggests movement between transmitter, facilitator and reflexive-practitioner orientations rather than a simple replacement of one teaching style by another (Cotronei-Baird et al. 2023: 1338–1361).

Peer-EDU's practical formulation was simpler: the tutor should be able to help without taking possession of the other student's problem.

9.2. Subject Expertise and Pedagogical Judgement

If facilitation was one side of the role, credible knowledge was the other. The diagnostic study showed that inadequate subject knowledge and weak pedagogical competence were among the most serious perceived risks of peer tutoring. Students and academic staff across the three universities worried about confident but inaccurate explanations, incomplete information and tutors operating beyond what they actually understood (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 104–108, 120–129).

Peer-EDU therefore did not construct interpersonal competence as an alternative to subject knowledge.

At the same time, the diagnostic findings and literature review made it difficult to equate expertise simply with high grades. Successful performance does not necessarily mean that a student can reconstruct their reasoning, recognise the source of somebody else's misunderstanding or explain a concept without distorting it. Shulman's distinction between subject knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge was developed for professional teachers and cannot simply be transferred to peer tutors, but it helps

clarify the problem: knowing something and making it intelligible to somebody else are different achievements (Shulman 1986: 4–14).

Within Peer-EDU, the tutor's knowledge was understood as bounded and situated. A tutor might be able to identify a common misconception, model an approach to a problem, compare possible structures for an essay or help interpret feedback. None of this required pretending to possess the disciplinary authority of an academic teacher.

The practical issue was judgement at the limits of knowledge.

One decision concerned whether the tutor understood the matter sufficiently to intervene. The capacity to say I am not certain and then check an approved source, consult a mentor or direct the student towards the relevant academic teacher was part of competence rather than evidence of its failure.

A second concerned the type of difficulty. Repeating subject content is of little value if the actual problem lies in interpreting an assignment, understanding an academic convention or recognising where reasoning changed direction.

A third concerned authority. Contested marking, formal assessment decisions, accommodations and questions requiring specialist disciplinary judgement could not be resolved through the peer role.

Report 1 similarly cautioned against uncontrolled introduction of new material and emphasised preparation, role clarity and access to more authoritative expertise (Jendza et al. 2026). Peer-EDU thus located epistemic competence not in knowing everything, but in knowing what one knows, how securely one knows it and what to do when one does not.

9.3. Active Listening and Relational Attentiveness

Active listening occupied a particularly visible position in Peer-EDU. It was the highest-rated content area in the post-training evaluation, and participants repeatedly identified it among the most useful elements of the programme. The handbook's observation materials included paraphrasing,

clarification, summarising, non-verbal attentiveness, emotional acknowledgement and the balance between engagement and over-involvement (Peer-EDU 2025a: 5–9; Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–13).

Listening has already been discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to dialogue and care. It returns here because Peer-EDU made it an observable dimension of tutor performance.

The project's use of active listening was not primarily therapeutic. Its immediate function was epistemic: before responding, the tutor needed to establish what problem the tutee was actually presenting. Rogers and Farson's classical account is relevant insofar as it stresses entering another person's frame of reference rather than preparing a response while the other is speaking (Rogers and Farson 1957).

The programme also introduced Schulz von Thun's four-sides model as a heuristic. Participants were invited to notice that an utterance may contain factual information, self-revelation, a relational message and an appeal (Schulz von Thun 1981). The purpose was not to diagnose hidden meanings but to generate interpretations that could then be checked.

Thus a statement such as I cannot do statistics could be approached in several ways. It might concern a particular procedure, previous failure, anxiety, notation or uncertainty about how to begin. Listening allowed the tutor to postpone deciding which interpretation was correct.

Paraphrasing served the same purpose only when provisional: Have I understood correctly that...? Mechanical repetition would merely turn an intended relational skill into performance.

Participants also practised remaining with silence rather than immediately filling it. Yet the handbook did not present silence, paraphrase or emotional acknowledgement as universally appropriate techniques. Accessibility, language and individual preference could alter what attentive communication required.

Stosik's later reflection is especially useful because it shows how one participant interpreted this element beyond the immediate exercise. She describes becoming more conscious of interruption, distraction, clarification and allowing another person to finish speaking. Listening ceased to be merely something one does in tutoring and became, in her account, a more general form of attention (Stosik 2026).

This is one situated reflection rather than evidence of programme-wide transformation. It nevertheless helps show why Peer-EDU treated communication as part of role formation rather than as a preliminary soft skill.

9.4. Asking Questions Rather than Providing Solutions

Questioning was another central component of the role constructed through Peer-EDU. The handbook distinguished different purposes of questions, introduced a four-level Question Ladder: clarifying, exploring, reflecting and planning, and devoted substantial attention to the Question Funnel. Participants practised beginning with a relatively open account of the situation, identifying what required closer attention and eventually moving towards possible action (Peer-EDU 2025a: 11–16).

The theoretical significance of dialogue and questioning has already been established earlier in the book. Here the issue is narrower: what kind of questioning repertoire did the project give novice tutors, and what limits accompanied it?

The Question Funnel used in the programme belongs to a wider family of educational questioning sequences rather than to one canonical model. Research on educational questioning emphasises formulation, sequencing, wait time and what the teacher or tutor does with the response (Tofade, Elsner and Haines 2013).

An important complication concerns terminology. In research on classroom discourse, funnelling can describe a pattern in which increasingly narrow questions lead a learner towards a conclusion already held by the teacher, whereas focusing questions preserve the learner's reasoning as something to be explored (Wood 1998: 167–178; Alic et al. 2022: 224–233).

This distinction is particularly relevant to what Peer-EDU was attempting to achieve. A question may look participatory while functioning as a disguised answer. The Question Funnel was therefore most consistent with the project's role conception when narrowing helped reveal the problem rather than manoeuvring the tutee towards the tutor's predetermined conclusion.

The handbook did not forbid closed questions or direct explanation. Both could be appropriate. The tutor might ask the student to reconstruct reasoning, observe an attempted solution, offer a short explanation and then return the next step to them. The programme's preference for questions was thus a default orientation towards preserving intellectual activity, not an injunction to answer every request with another question.

This distinction later became visible in participant feedback. The Question Funnel was among the practical tools respondents valued particularly highly, but the wider evaluation also warned against allowing the number of models to become burdensome (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–16). The competence at stake was therefore not correct reproduction of a sequence, but the ability to decide when questioning helped and when it did not.

9.5. Feedback, Feedforward, Motivation and Goal-Setting

The Peer-EDU handbook offered participants a relatively rich conversational repertoire. Alongside questioning and active listening, it included feedback and feedforward, FUKO, GROW, GOLD and goal-setting. Chapter 10 will return to where these elements appeared in the programme architecture. The concern here is what their inclusion tells us about the tutor role the project was constructing.

Feedback and Feedforward

Peer-EDU treated feedback less as a verdict delivered by a knowledgeable tutor than as information that should support subsequent action. The handbook distinguished attention to what had already happened from feedforward: consideration of what might be attempted next (Peer-EDU 2025a: 8–10, 38–40).

This orientation is consistent with research that conceptualises feedback as a process in which students interpret information, develop judgement and act upon what they receive rather than merely collect comments

(Hattie and Timperley 2007: 86–90; Boud and Molloy 2013: 698–712; Carless and Boud 2018: 1315–1325).

The distinction did not require abandoning retrospective feedback. Without understanding why an earlier attempt succeeded or failed, a future-oriented suggestion can remain superficial. The intended movement was from event, through interpretation, towards a possible next step.

FUKO

The training also used the FUKO mnemonic: Facts, Feelings, Consequences and Expectations, with U deriving from the Polish *uczucia*. FUKO should not be presented as an independently validated scientific model with a clearly identifiable canonical origin. In Peer-EDU it functioned as a practitioner structure for separating observable conduct from personal judgement and making future expectations explicit.

Its relevance to the tutor role was therefore practical. Feedback was expected to concern work or conduct rather than pronounce upon personality.

GROW

GROW, standing for Goal, Reality, Options and Will or Way Forward, provided a structure for moving from a defined concern towards action. The model became widely known through Whitmore's Coaching for Performance and remains prominent in coaching literature (Whitmore 1992; Passmore and Sinclair 2020: 113–118).

Peer-EDU did not, however, transform peer tutoring into coaching. GROW was useful where the student possessed meaningful choices: planning work, considering study strategies, deciding how to respond to feedback or preparing to approach an academic teacher.

Its limits were equally important. A lack of disciplinary knowledge, a formal assessment decision, the need for accommodation or psychological crisis cannot be resolved through better goal clarification.

GOLD

GOLD served a different temporal function: Goal, Outcome, Learning and Differently. Used in Polish coaching literature and associated, among others, with Rzycka (2010), it supported retrospective consideration of a completed action or difficult event.

Within Peer-EDU, the contrast between GROW and GOLD helped participants distinguish prospective planning from retrospective reflection. Neither was intended as a mandatory script.

Goal-Setting and Motivation

The programme also used goal-setting to help turn a diffuse difficulty into an action that could reasonably be attempted. Research on goal-setting supports the value of specificity and feedback, provided goals remain meaningful and realistically controllable (Locke and Latham 2002: 705–717).

For the peer tutor, this meant distinguishing outcomes that a student could not directly command, such as receiving a particular grade, from actions more immediately open to them, such as practising a defined task or seeking clarification about assessment criteria.

The project did not define motivation as something a sufficiently enthusiastic tutor could insert into an unwilling student. The usefulness of goals depended upon whether the task was intelligible, alternatives existed and the problem lay within the range of what the student could influence.

Participants valued the practical models, particularly GROW and the Question Funnel. Some nevertheless experienced the density of tools as excessive (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–16). This feedback is important for reconstructing competence. Peer-EDU did not need tutors who could display the largest toolkit. It needed students increasingly able to select, modify or abandon a structure in response to the situation before them.

9.6. Building Trust while Acknowledging Asymmetry

The relationship between equality and asymmetry was developed conceptually in Chapter 3. It returns here because the Peer-EDU data show that it was also a concrete problem of role credibility.

Respondents expected peer tutoring to be more approachable than some encounters with academic authority, yet they also expressed concerns about competence, dominance, competition and misinformation (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–129). Being a peer did not automatically produce trust.

The role designed through Peer-EDU therefore required tutors to make themselves reliable through conduct: preparation, punctuality, discreet handling of information, willingness to admit uncertainty and restraint in using the role to display superiority.

Selection and certification inevitably introduce some asymmetry. A tutor is institutionally designated as somebody expected to possess useful knowledge or experience. Concealing this difference under the language of peer equality would make the authority attached to the role less visible rather than less real.

A simple initial agreement was one way of making the relation intelligible. Purpose, timing, preparation, confidentiality, role limits and the possibility of ending or renegotiating the arrangement could be made explicit.

Colvin's work is helpful in understanding why such clarity matters. Peer tutors may move between displaying authority in order to appear credible and minimising it in order to preserve acceptance among classmates (Colvin 2007: 165–181). Peer-EDU did not resolve this by pretending that tutor and tutee occupied identical positions. It asked tutors to exercise a bounded asymmetry: relevant knowledge and responsibility within a particular encounter without transforming that difference into a general hierarchy.

Trust in this sense depended partly upon predictable limits. The tutee should know both that information will not become informal gossip and that absolute secrecy cannot be promised in circumstances where safety or formal obligations require another response.

9.7. Ethics, Confidentiality and Academic Integrity

Ethics entered the Peer-EDU programme as practice rather than as a declaration appended to it. Participants were asked to formulate principles concerning confidentiality, fairness, patience and academic boundaries, and then encounter scenarios in which those principles became difficult to apply. The cases included secrecy, personal disclosure, interpersonal attraction, aggression, intoxication and requests exceeding legitimate academic support (Peer-EDU 2025a: 3–5, 28–36).

Several ethical questions have already appeared earlier in the book. They return here because the handbook made them part of the competence expected from the tutor.

Confidentiality was one such requirement. Information disclosed in tutoring should not circulate informally among friends or become conversational material outside the programme. Consultation with a mentor should use only what is necessary to understand the case.

At the same time, confidentiality could not be absolute. Immediate safety concerns, safeguarding duties, serious harassment and other institutionally defined circumstances may require disclosure. A credible programme therefore needs tutors to understand the limits of confidentiality before a difficult case occurs.

Academic integrity creates a second boundary. Collaboration can become collusion when the tutor writes assessed work, supplies restricted answers, substantially alters a submission or otherwise performs intellectual labour for which the tutee will receive credit. Explanation, discussion of criteria, questions about an argument and permitted feedback on drafts belong to a different category.

The International Center for Academic Integrity's values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage offer a useful orientation (International Center for Academic Integrity 2021). In the Peer-EDU context, honesty includes admitting uncertainty; fairness includes not providing privileged prohibited assistance; respect protects the tutee's authorship;

and courage may require refusing a request that would be easier to satisfy than to decline.

Potential conflicts also arise from existing peer relations. Friends, competitors, partners or students connected through other forms of influence may not be neutral matches. Such relationships do not automatically make tutoring impossible, but they need to be recognised rather than treated as irrelevant.

The project did not assume that a code could resolve every case. This is precisely why ethical competence was connected with consultation and supervision.

9.8. Boundaries, Emotional Involvement and Tutor Self-Management

Boundaries appeared repeatedly in the handbook, participant evaluation and mentor preparation. They therefore deserve attention here even though care and role limits have already been considered conceptually in Chapter 3.

The reason for returning to them is empirical: participants themselves identified boundaries as an area in which training had not yet produced complete readiness.

The handbook deliberately placed students before situations in which ordinary academic assistance became entangled with distress, aggression, attraction, disability disclosure, demands for secrecy or intoxication (Peer-EDU 2025a: 5–8, 28–36). The pedagogical purpose was not to make students capable of resolving such cases independently. It was to help them recognise the point at which the nature of the situation changed.

Emotional involvement was not treated as something that could simply be removed from tutoring. Tutors may experience concern, frustration, anxiety, pride or the wish to be needed. Their own history may be activated by a tutee's account. Such reactions can inform attention, but they may also distort decisions.

Peer-EDU therefore linked boundary competence with self-management. Tutors needed to notice not only what was happening to the tutee

but also what the situation was producing in themselves: an impulse to rescue, reluctance to correct, fear of disappointing somebody or willingness to remain available beyond sustainable limits.

Practical boundaries also concerned time, place and communication. A tutoring programme needs intelligible expectations concerning scheduling, communication channels, responses outside agreed hours, repeated cancellations and the duration or termination of the relationship.

Huyton's analysis of emotional labour in personalised university support is relevant here because it shows that emotionally demanding encounters cannot be treated simply as consequences of individual temperament (Huyton 2009). If institutions create roles likely to encounter disclosure and distress, they also acquire responsibility for structures of support.

This concern was clearly reflected in the Peer-EDU evaluation. Participants asked for more practice involving difficult tutees, emotional distress and boundary violations. Remarks that tutors should not 'get too emotional' and that they 'don't know everything' indicate a developing but unfinished understanding of the role (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 10–16).

The mentor training provides the institutional counterpart. Academic mentors participating in the University of Gdańsk workshop described the need for continuing supervision and rapid consultation, described as a 'safety net' when student tutors encountered situations they could not responsibly carry alone (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

Within Peer-EDU, boundaries therefore became evidence not of reduced commitment but of a more credible form of it.

9.9. Diversity, Accessibility and Intercultural Sensitivity

Inclusion was treated in Chapter 3 as part of the pedagogy of peer tutoring. In Part III the question becomes more concrete: what did Peer-EDU ask prospective tutors to notice and modify in their own conduct?

The international character of the programme made this particularly visible. Participants from the three partner universities could use shared terms

such as tutor, feedback, boundary or informality while attaching somewhat different expectations to them. Respondents valued mixed-university practice partly because it exposed their own assumptions to other interpretations (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 10–15).

Deardorff's model of intercultural competence is useful here in linking respect, openness and curiosity with interpretive capacity and adaptation rather than treating intercultural competence as possession of information about national groups (Deardorff 2006: 241–266).

For Peer-EDU, this translated into a relatively modest requirement: tutors should not assume that their own way of speaking, studying or displaying confidence constituted the natural baseline for another student.

Possible adjustments included slowing the conversation, writing key terminology, varying explanation, allowing additional processing time or changing modality. Yet tutors were not authorised to determine formal accommodations or create private alternatives to institutional entitlements.

The handbook's dyslexia scenario made this boundary particularly concrete. A student was reluctant to disclose dyslexia because of fear of being perceived as unintelligent. The tutor could neither diagnose nor compel disclosure, and could not promise to compensate personally for inaccessible arrangements. The task was to respond without judgement, preserve the student's agency and keep appropriate institutional routes visible (Peer-EDU 2025a: 28–36).

The scenario also illustrates why inclusion cannot depend entirely upon disclosure. Clear communication, reasonable pacing and more than one way of engaging with material can benefit students without requiring them to reveal private information.

Inclusive competence in Peer-EDU was therefore not an expectation that tutors personally overcome every barrier. It combined adaptation of one's own conduct with recognition of the point at which access becomes an institutional question.

9.10. Knowing When and Where to Refer a Student

Referral brings together several strands of the role: knowledge, ethics, boundaries, inclusion and self-management. For this reason, although the need for referral has appeared repeatedly in earlier chapters, it requires a separate place here. Peer-EDU treated knowing when to stop being the person who helps as a competence in its own right.

Referral could become necessary for different reasons. An academic question might exceed the tutor's disciplinary authority. A student might need counselling, accessibility provision, welfare or financial support. A situation could involve harassment, safety or academic misconduct. A recurring difficulty might originate in curriculum or assessment rather than in the student's study strategy.

The handbook therefore asked prospective tutors whether they understood the limits of their role and knew when another service or person should become involved. Its scenarios required participants to distinguish emotional acknowledgement from counselling and academic assistance from a situation requiring formal intervention (Peer-EDU 2025a: 28–39).

Peer-EDU also implied a distinction between referral as judgement and referral as dismissal. Saying you should talk to someone without identifying whom or how transfers uncertainty back to the student. A more responsible process includes acknowledging the issue, explaining the limit of the tutor's role, identifying a concrete route and, where appropriate and consent permits, helping the student make the transition.

Except where immediate safety or legal obligations override consent, the tutee should remain involved in what happens next. Referral should not transform assistance into ownership of somebody else's case.

The international structure of Peer-EDU made another point unavoidable: referral competence cannot be taught entirely through a common handbook. Operational knowledge is local. Tutors need current routes to academic teachers or coordinators, mentors, academic-writing or library support, language provision, accessibility services, counselling, student welfare,

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academic-integrity or ombuds structures and emergency contacts. Those arrangements differ among the three partner universities.

The post-training evaluation indicates that this infrastructure had not yet become fully clear to participants. They asked how tutees would be allocated, whom they should contact when problems arose, how to respond to mental-health crises and whether an academic would be available for consultation. Requests for shadowing, mentor contact and clearer procedures show that the ability to refer depends partly upon what the institution makes possible (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–16).

The mentor report extends this chain of responsibility. Academic mentors envisaged themselves as sources of consultation and case reflection, yet also requested supervision and support for their own role (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026). Responsibility did not end simply because a problem had been passed one level upwards.

This may be one of the most significant features of the role constructed through Peer-EDU. The competent tutor was not imagined as the student capable of managing the greatest number of problems independently. Competence included recognising when continuing to help personally would be less responsible than involving somebody else.

The project therefore produced a role with deliberate limits. The peer tutor was to be knowledgeable but not omniscient; facilitative but not passive; attentive without becoming a counsellor; capable of adaptation without assuming institutional authority; and sufficiently self-aware to seek supervision.

Training could make such a role imaginable and provide an initial repertoire for inhabiting it. The Peer-EDU evidence does not show how these competences developed through sustained tutoring practice, because that stage was not implemented. What it does show is how the project translated broad pedagogical commitments into a more concrete expectation of student responsibility.

The next chapter turns from the role itself to the programme designed to begin that preparation: how the Peer-EDU team converted diagnostic findings, literature and project principles into the curriculum delivered to prospective peer tutors.

DESIGNING THE PEER-EDU TRAINING PROGRAMME

The preceding chapter reconstructed the expectations attached to the Peer-EDU tutor. The present chapter follows the next step: how those expectations were turned into a curriculum for students preparing to take on the role. The programme was devised within the consortium rather than adopted from a commercial package. Colleagues from all three partner universities contributed to its development, while the University of Gdańsk team led the pedagogical design and coordination.

Three kinds of material allow that design to be reconstructed. The handbook sets out the curriculum as intended; project records document the online preparation and the intensive course that were organised; and the questionnaire completed after the training records how 19 respondents evaluated what they had taken part in. These sources do not permit a minute-by-minute reconstruction of every delivered activity. The analysis therefore stays with elements that can be securely documented across the available materials (Peer-EDU 2025a; Jendza and Jendza 2026).

The task of this chapter is consequently documentary and developmental. It asks how findings generated earlier in the project became choices about sequence, exercises, practice and reflection, before Chapter 11 turns to participants' evaluation of the programme.

10.1. From Diagnostic Findings to Curriculum Decisions

Design work began after the literature review and the three-university diagnosis had identified recurring uncertainties surrounding a prospective tutor role. Respondents raised concerns about limited familiarity with peer

tutoring, inadequate preparation, unreliable explanations, communication difficulties, unclear limits, motivation and the availability of institutional backing (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–129).

The curriculum did not convert each concern into a separate teaching unit. Instead, the project team used them as design pressures affecting the arrangement as a whole. Questions of role clarity appeared before skills practice; communication was taught through demonstration and enactment; uncertainty about expertise was linked with consultation; and difficult interpersonal situations were placed inside scenarios rather than left as abstract warnings. The relationship between diagnostic concerns and curriculum choices is summarised in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1. How diagnostic concerns informed curriculum choices

Issue emerging from the diagnostic study	Design response within the student programme
Different levels of prior familiarity with peer tutoring	Pre-course preparation and an early collective examination of the role
Uncertainty about the boundary between peer support and academic teaching	Explicit work on responsibilities, limits and how tutor, tutee and mentor responsibilities connect
Tendency towards advice-giving and communication difficulties	Demonstration, listening practice, structured questioning and work in triads
Risk of inaccurate or overconfident explanation	Exercises requiring recognition of uncertainty, role limits and routes for consultation
Low confidence and difficulties sustaining action	Questions oriented towards possibilities and small, feasible next moves
Emotionally demanding situations and uncertainty about referral	Complex scenarios, self-review and discussion of local sources of further support

Source: Authors’ reconstruction from Attard Tonna et al. (2026: 97–129) and Peer-EDU (2025a).

10.2. What the Programme Was Intended to Prepare Students For

Chapter 9 reconstructed nine interrelated domains of competence. The training did not present these as a checklist to be mastered one by one. For programme purposes, they were condensed into four immediate objectives: making the new role intelligible; helping students support another person without appropriating the task; developing a repertoire for attentive conversation; and enabling participants to recognise situations requiring further thought, consultation or transfer to another form of support.

The intended endpoint was therefore preliminary preparedness, not professional mastery. Participants were expected to leave with a workable understanding of the role, experience of conducting and observing tutoring conversations, familiarity with selected conversational resources, and a basis for reviewing their own conduct. The handbook's self-review sheets made those expectations concrete, although they were not constructed as a validated assessment instrument (Peer-EDU 2025a: 6–10, 38–40).

The evaluation offers a useful check on the modesty of this ambition. Of the 19 respondents, seven chose the option indicating full preparedness to start tutoring, nine placed themselves in the intermediate category, and three indicated that they were not ready yet (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7). The course could therefore initiate the role without closing the process of preparation.

10.3. Preparation before the Meeting in Gdańsk

Work began before participants travelled to the international course. The opening online module was designed to reduce differences in prior familiarity and to give the trainers some insight into the expectations students were bringing with them.

Participants completed a short exploratory questionnaire, viewed project videos, read material distinguishing tutoring from mentoring, and considered possible benefits, risks, forms of recognition and the place of subject knowledge in the proposed role (Peer-EDU 2025a: 1–2).

They were also given considerable freedom in how they represented their initial reflections. The handbook allowed a written journal, audio or video recording, poster, artwork, poem, script, role play or presentation, and invited students to respond to material produced by others. The online stage therefore performed two functions at once: it introduced the project vocabulary and began interaction among members of a cohort who had not yet met in person.

The exploratory questionnaire was used formatively. It helped trainers identify recurrent interests in feedback, motivation, trust, difficult cases and the practical organisation of future tutoring. Because the dataset was not analysed as a matched baseline, it should not be retrospectively presented as a pre-test.

10.4. The Four-Day International Face-to-Face Course

In December 2025, the University of Gdańsk hosted the intensive component. Forty-six students participated: 30 from the University of Gdańsk, eight from the University of Split and eight from the University of Malta. Teaching was carried out by an international team, with pedagogical coordination remaining with the University of Gdańsk group (University of Gdańsk 2025).

Over four days, students moved from defining the new role and discussing ethical limits to communication practice, conversational structures, work with discouragement and increasingly demanding situations. Short inputs were followed by demonstration, enactment in small groups, observation, peer response and reconsideration. Theory was used chiefly to give participants language for actions they could then try, observe and revise.

The distinction between appreciation of the course and appraisal of its organisation is visible in the questionnaire. Overall usefulness received

a mean score of 4.63 out of 5, whereas programme structure received 4.46. Written comments help explain the gap: respondents valued what was offered but repeatedly described the timetable as compressed and asked for more protected time in which to practise (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5, 10–15).

10.5. Making Communication Observable

The largest practical strand concerned conversation itself. Trainers demonstrated selected behaviours before students worked in triads, alternating among tutoring, receiving support and observing. The cases included overload, defensive responses, declining confidence and disclosures that moved beyond the immediate academic issue (Peer-EDU 2025a: 5–10).

Rather than reopening the theoretical discussion of listening developed in Chapter 9, the course treated communication as something that could be seen, tried and commented upon. Paraphrase, clarification, attention to non-verbal cues and a short activity drawing on Schulz von Thun gave observers a vocabulary for describing what occurred during an exchange.

This was the content area rated most highly, with a mean of 4.74. Open comments indicate that demonstration followed by experimentation was especially useful: students could watch one possible response, attempt another, and then compare how the interaction changed (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5, 11–12).

10.6. Conversational Structures as Temporary Supports

The programme also supplied novice tutors with a repertoire of structures for situations in which spontaneous helping might otherwise turn into premature advice or lose direction. The materials included the Question Ladder, Question Funnel, GROW, GOLD, FUKO, Stop–Start–Continue, feedback and feedforward. Chapter 9 examined the conceptual provenance and limits of these devices; the present concern is how they were used in training.

Participants first encountered the structures through explanation or demonstration and then tried them in brief exchanges. The handbook did not require literal adherence to a fixed sequence. The Question Funnel could widen again when narrowing proved unhelpful, while GROW and GOLD were positioned around different moments in a conversation: one more prospective, the other retrospective (Peer-EDU 2025a: 11–24, 38–40).

Structured devices and rehearsal activities were rated together at 4.68. Respondents referred particularly often to GROW and the Question Funnel, but some also felt that too many frameworks had been introduced (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5, 10–11).

This is an important design finding. A subsequent edition would gain less from enlarging the toolkit than from allowing a smaller number of structures to become familiar through use in changing circumstances. The issue emerging from the evaluation was not shortage of techniques but insufficient time to make them one's own.

10.7. Working with Discouragement without Psychologising the Problem

A further module focused on situations in which students described difficulty in fixed or discouraging terms. Cases concerned unsuccessful assessment, anxiety about public speaking, conflict within a group, language study and overload. Prospective tutors practised helping the student separate the immediate situation from a global judgement about ability and identify an attainable next move (Peer-EDU 2025a: 24–28).

The programme drew here on growth-mindset language, but did not treat effort as a universal remedy. Dweck and Yeager's later account is relevant here for its emphasis on context and its caution against turning mindset into generic encouragement (Dweck and Yeager 2019).

Within the curriculum, the practical boundary was comparatively clear. Reframing a difficulty might be useful where the student retained meaningful room for action. It could not remove inaccessible teaching, disability-related barriers, financial difficulty or emotional crisis.

This part of the course thus enlarged the tutor's conversational repertoire without inviting students to recode structural or personal circumstances as problems of insufficient motivation.

10.8. Learning through Role Rotation and Observation

Role play provided the principal mode of rehearsal. Students did not remain in one position. They repeatedly alternated between offering support, receiving it and watching another pair work. Each standpoint exposed a different dimension of the event: the pressure of having to respond, the experience of being addressed as a tutee, and the analytical distance available to an observer.

Observation sheets directed attention towards speaking time, forms of questioning, listening, emotional presence, rapport, limits and the direction established at the end of the conversation (Peer-EDU 2025a: 5–10, 15–24). Broad expectations could thus be discussed through concrete moments rather than through general declarations about good tutoring.

Role play, mini-scenarios and trainer demonstrations were among the elements most often praised in the evaluation. The same respondents also requested harder cases and additional rehearsal time (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 10–16).

The implication is more precise than simply 'more role play'. Repetition becomes educational when the problem changes. A revised sequence could begin with relatively legible situations and gradually introduce ambiguity, competing demands and cases in which no single technique supplies an obvious response.

10.9. Reflection Built into the Course

Reflection was not reserved for the final questionnaire. Entry activities, paired discussion, observer notes, self-review, peer comment and closing written work created several occasions on which participants could revisit

an earlier attempt and decide what to alter in the next one. Feedback was tied to observable conduct and was commonly directed towards one feasible adjustment rather than a general judgement of performance (Peer-EDU 2025a: 5–10, 38–40).

This arrangement gave students repeated opportunities to compare their initial image of tutoring with what became visible during enactment. The post-course questionnaire added another layer by asking about confidence, preparedness, useful experiences and areas in which further support was still needed.

Those responses pointed consistently towards matters that the course could only begin to address: difficult boundary situations, locally specific referral routes and the move from simulation to work with an actual tutee. In the programme logic, reflection therefore required continuation through later consultation, observation and discussion of cases rather than closure on the final training day.

This is also an important limit of the curriculum as documented. The programme created repeated occasions for reflection within preparation. It cannot tell us how such reflection would have changed once students encountered sustained tutoring practice, because that subsequent project stage did not take place.

10.10. Using an International Cohort as Part of the Design

The multinational composition of the cohort was not incidental to delivery. Students were deliberately placed with colleagues from another university and asked to compare understandings of tutoring, authority, feedback, professionalism and support. Institutional difference thus entered the training as material for examination.

International collaboration received a mean rating of 4.67. Respondents valued mixed groups and the possibility of testing their assumptions against students educated in other university settings. On the item concerning the climate of the course, 18 respondents selected the most positive option and one selected the adjacent category (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 6–7, 14–15).

These figures describe the short training event, not a continuing international community. Participants' requests for later meetings, opportunities to observe others and access to consultation show that the relationships created during four days would require other structures if they were to persist.

What distinguished the Peer-EDU programme was therefore not any single model or exercise. It was the way project evidence, international co-design and repeated rehearsal were brought into one curriculum. Forty-six students from three universities were given a common entry into a newly specified role, but the evaluation simultaneously exposed the provisional character of that preparation.

Several directions for revision were already visible: relieve the compressed timetable; devote more space to ambiguous cases; reduce the accumulation of conversational frameworks; and connect the course more explicitly with local arrangements for mentoring, consultation and referral.

Chapter 11 changes the evidential perspective. Rather than asking how the curriculum was constructed, it examines more closely how the students who completed the evaluation described the course, what they valued, where they remained uncertain and how far they believed themselves prepared for what was supposed to follow.

CHAPTER 11

EXPERIENCING THE PROGRAMME: VALUE, READINESS AND UNRESOLVED NEEDS

Chapter 10 reconstructed the curriculum that participants encountered in Peer-EDU. The perspective now changes. Rather than describing what the programme contained, this chapter examines what became visible when participants were asked to evaluate it immediately afterwards.

The evidence is deliberately narrow. It tells us how 19 respondents assessed the course, which experiences they considered particularly useful, how they described their confidence and readiness, and what they believed was still missing before they could begin tutoring. It cannot tell us whether the training subsequently changed tutoring practice or produced benefits for tutees. Indeed, the planned pilot did not take place, so the evaluation remains evidence about preparation as experienced at the end of the course, not about enactment of the tutor role.

Read in this way, the evaluation is more interesting than a satisfaction exercise. Its strongest finding is not simply that participants liked the programme. It is the coexistence of high appreciation with considerable caution about beginning the role independently. The respondents left more confident, but many also left with a sharper awareness of what they did not yet know.

11.1. What Kind of Evidence Does the Evaluation Provide?

The anonymous evaluation was completed by nineteen of the forty-six trainees: eight participants from the University of Gdańsk, seven from the University of Malta and four from the University of Split. The response set therefore represents fewer than half of the training cohort and should not be treated as a complete account of participants' experience.

The instrument combined four forms of evidence. Participants rated twelve dimensions of the programme on five-point scales; categorical questions addressed confidence, preparedness, the theory–practice balance and the perceived climate of the course; open questions asked what had been especially valuable or less useful, what participants believed they had learned, what further preparation they needed and how the programme might be changed; and institutional affiliation permitted limited descriptive comparison.

Quantitative items were summarised using arithmetic means and categorical counts, while open responses were organised thematically. Because participation was anonymous, individual responses could not be linked with the preparatory questionnaire or with later behaviour. There was no observed performance assessment and no follow-up after participants returned to their universities (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 4–5). The scope and evidential limits of the evaluation are summarised in Table 11.1.

Table 11.1. Scope of the post-training evaluation

Element	Description
Respondents	19 students: University of Gdańsk n = 8; University of Malta n = 7; University of Split n = 4
Training cohort	46 students
Instrument	Anonymous post-training questionnaire combining 1–5 ratings, categorical questions and open responses
Quantitative analysis	Arithmetic means for 12 five-point dimensions; counts for categorical indicators

Element	Description
Qualitative analysis	Thematic grouping of comments concerning value, limitations, learning and further support
Principal evidential limit	Immediate self-report without a matched baseline, behavioural assessment or follow-up into tutoring practice

Source: Authors’ synthesis based on Jendza and Jendza (2026: 4–5).

This evidential status is important for everything that follows. A score of 4.7 tells us that respondents evaluated an aspect of training very positively. It does not establish that the corresponding competence had been acquired.

11.2. A Strongly Positive Evaluation with a Pattern inside It

The numerical results were consistently favourable. The programme as a whole received a mean of 4.66 out of 5, and its usefulness in preparing participants for the tutor role was rated at 4.63. The structure and flow of the course received 4.46.

The highest score, 4.84, concerned trainer preparation and facilitation. Communication received 4.74, while both conversational tools and practical exercises were rated at 4.68. International collaboration reached 4.67, and understanding of the peer tutor role and responsibilities 4.65.

The lowest means were still positive: ethical boundaries and professionalism received 4.42, as did logistics and organisation. Understanding boundaries and limits was rated at 4.47. The full set of mean ratings is presented in Table 11.2.

Table 11.2. Participants’ quantitative assessment of the programme

Dimension	Mean (1–5)
Overall rating	4.66
Useful for preparing for the tutor role	4.63

Dimension	Mean (1–5)
Well structured: modules, sessions and flow	4.46
Role and responsibilities of a peer tutor	4.65
Communication skills	4.74
Ethical boundaries and professionalism	4.42
Conversational tools	4.68
Understanding boundaries and limits	4.47
Practical exercises	4.68
Trainers' preparation and facilitation	4.84
International group collaboration	4.67
Logistics and organisation	4.42

Source: Jendza and Jendza (2026: 5–7).

The differences are small and should not be exaggerated. Yet the configuration is suggestive when read alongside the open responses. Participants rated most highly what they could experience directly during the course: the trainers, communication, practical work and usable conversational resources. More uncertainty appeared around matters that extend beyond a training room: difficult boundaries, institutional arrangements and the practical conditions under which tutoring would begin.

Institutional subgroup means add little certainty. With only four respondents from the University of Split and similarly small groups from the University of Gdańsk and the University of Malta, differences between universities cannot support claims about comparative satisfaction or preparedness. At most, they indicate questions worth investigating later (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 5–9).

11.3. What Participants Valued in Practice

Chapter 10 described role rotation, demonstrations and scenario work as central elements of the curriculum. The evaluation allows a different

question to be asked: which of these experiences remained salient when participants looked back on the course?

Communication was the highest-rated substantive area, at 4.74, while practical exercises reached 4.68. Open responses repeatedly returned to listening, questioning, interaction with the tutee and the opportunity to practise rather than only hear how tutoring ought to be conducted.

Role play was particularly prominent. Participants valued changing positions between tutor, tutee and observer because the same conversation appeared differently depending on where one stood within it. Several comments suggested that simulation was the moment when an initially abstract role became concrete when participants could see “how it really looks” (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 10–14).

The social climate of the course was evaluated almost unanimously positively. Eighteen respondents answered that the environment had been inclusive and supportive; one chose “Mostly”. Comments referred to feeling accepted, understood and able to participate without being judged, including within an international group working in English.

These responses tell us something specific about the training environment. They do not demonstrate that prospective tutors would reproduce the same quality of interaction later. They show that participants experienced the course itself as a place in which experimentation and imperfect performance were possible without excessive interpersonal risk.

11.4. What Participants Wanted Less of and More of

The open responses are particularly useful because they complicate the uniformly high numerical ratings.

Three groups of activities were mentioned repeatedly as especially valuable: role plays and mini-scenarios; practical conversational structures, above all the Question Funnel and GROW; and cases that gave a more concrete sense of what another student might bring into tutoring, including the dyslexia scenario and situations involving emotional difficulty.

Criticism was directed less towards the relevance of topics than towards repetition and allocation of time. Some early poster activities were considered too general. Repeated production of ethical rules could feel redundant when different groups arrived at similar formulations. One respondent considered the amount of role play excessive, whereas several others wanted substantially more time for practice.

These comments need not be reconciled into a single preference. They indicate that repetition was valued when it produced another encounter with complexity, and disliked when it merely reproduced an introductory task.

The design implication is therefore not simply to increase or decrease the quantity of practice. A stronger sequence would reduce repeated definitional exercises and allow rehearsal to become progressively less predictable. Participants did not appear to be asking for more of the same; they wanted situations in which earlier learning had to be used under different conditions (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 10–11).

11.5. A Changed Vocabulary for Helping

Chapter 9 reconstructed the facilitative orientation embedded in the Peer-EDU role. Its significance here is different. The evaluation shows that participants themselves began using this orientation when describing what they believed they had learned.

Several responses contrasted solving somebody else's problem with helping that person work towards their own response. One participant described the tutor's task as bringing tutees "to a solution that they get to themselves" (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 11–12).

The importance of this statement should not be overstated. It does not demonstrate competent facilitation in practice. It does show that the criterion by which some respondents judged helpfulness had shifted. A rapid answer was no longer necessarily the clearest sign of successful tutoring.

A second group of comments concerned expertise. The observation that "tutors don't know everything" may sound elementary, but in the context of role formation it marks an important limit. Another response envisaged

tutor and tutee sometimes finding out something together rather than requiring the tutor to perform certainty.

What changed, on the available evidence, was therefore primarily the language through which participants interpreted the role. Whether that interpretation would have remained intact when confronted with pressure for direct answers, repeated dependence or subject-matter uncertainty cannot be established from this survey.

11.6. More Confident, but Not Necessarily Ready

The relationship between confidence and readiness is the most revealing quantitative result in the evaluation.

Seven respondents reported feeling much more confident after the course, nine more confident, and three selected a neutral response. Nobody reported becoming less confident.

Asked whether they were ready to tutor, however, only seven selected Yes. Nine answered Mostly, and three Not yet. Confidence, readiness and participants' experience of the training environment are summarised in Table 11.3.

Table 11.3. Confidence, readiness and experience of the training environment

Indicator	Distribution
Change in confidence	Much more confident: 7; More confident: 9; Neutral: 3
Readiness to tutor	Yes: 7; Mostly: 9; Not yet: 3
Theory–practice balance	Balanced: 17; Too much practice: 1; Too much theory: 1
Inclusive and supportive environment	Yes: 18; Mostly: 1

Source: Jendza and Jendza (2026: 7).

These two distributions should not be collapsed. Confidence refers to how participants perceived themselves after the course relative to before

it. Readiness asks whether they believed they could now assume a concrete responsibility. The programme appears to have strengthened the former more consistently than it secured the latter.

That divergence may itself be educationally significant. Greater familiarity with tutoring may have made its difficulties more visible. A participant can leave training feeling considerably more capable while also understanding more clearly why independent practice requires information, experience and access to others.

There are obvious limits to this interpretation. Both measures are immediate self-reports. A supportive training atmosphere may increase confidence, while anticipation of a real tutoring encounter may reduce willingness to claim readiness. Without observation or follow-up, neither interpretation can be tested.

The safest conclusion is therefore precise: sixteen of nineteen respondents reported increased confidence, while twelve did not describe themselves as fully ready to begin tutoring (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7).

That gap is more informative than either score viewed separately.

11.7. Where Readiness Became Uncertain

When participants were asked what further preparation they required, they rarely requested additional introductory theory. Their concerns clustered around situations in which several demands might arise simultaneously.

They asked about resistant or difficult tutees, repeated boundary crossing, severe emotional distress and possible mental-health crisis. The comparatively lower ratings for ethical boundaries and professionalism (4.42) and understanding limits (4.47) are consistent with these qualitative responses.

One participant asked what should happen when a trusted tutee wanted to talk about a “mental breakdown”. The difficulty expressed here is practical rather than definitional. Participants had already encountered the principle that a peer tutor is not a therapist. What remained uncertain was what to say and do in the moment between recognising distress and connecting a person with appropriate assistance.

The category of the 'difficult tutee' also requires unpacking. The phrase may refer to disagreement, anxiety, hostility, non-preparation, dependency, unrealistic expectations or requests that conflict with academic integrity. These situations place different demands on the tutor and cannot sensibly be addressed through one generic response.

Participants' uncertainty is therefore not simply a deficit in training. It signals an awareness that general principles become difficult when they have to be enacted in an ambiguous situation. What respondents requested was practice in judgement, alongside confidence that responsibility would not end with them (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–13).

11.8. Wanting to See Practice before Entering It

Another recurrent request concerned examples that felt closer to actual tutoring. Participants proposed observing experienced tutors, watching demonstrations, seeing recordings or working with more demanding cases.

Their requests add something important to the high rating given to trainer facilitation. Demonstrations had already helped make conduct visible. What participants now wanted was exposure to situations in which competent action was less smooth: a conversation that changed direction, a response that did not work, uncertainty about what to say next or a case that eventually required consultation.

Authenticity should nevertheless be handled cautiously. Video recordings of actual tutoring encounters raise substantial questions of confidentiality and consent, particularly where students disclose difficulty or personal circumstances. Reconstructed cases, composite scenarios and explicitly consented demonstrations may provide a safer and pedagogically richer alternative because critical moments can be stopped, reconsidered and re-played.

The request for modelling should therefore not be answered by presenting an exemplary tutor whose performance appears effortless. Novices may learn more from seeing an experienced person hesitate, revise an interpretation or acknowledge that a problem exceeds the limits of the encounter.

11.9. The Missing Bridge between Training and Practice

The evaluation becomes particularly revealing when participants describe what they wanted to happen next. Their requests included speaking with a mentor before beginning, shadowing somebody with experience, having an academic available for consultation and receiving further opportunities to practise. One respondent captured the unresolved difficulty simply as the “anxiety of starting” (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–16).

These requests change the question. The issue is no longer what another module should contain, but how a trained student enters a role carrying real responsibility.

A possible sequence can be inferred from the responses: training followed by observation or shadowing; an early encounter undertaken with additional support where feasible; prompt discussion afterwards; and continuing access to a mentor as independent activity increases.

This sequence was not implemented across Peer-EDU and should not be described as a project outcome. It is a design implication generated by the evaluation.

It also clarifies what participants meant when they hesitated to call themselves ready. Their requests were not simply demands for additional information. They concerned proximity to people who could help them interpret their first experiences.

Chapter 12 takes up precisely this unfinished part of the project by examining the preparation of academic mentors.

11.10. What the International Course Could Not Supply

A separate group of comments concerned the organisation of tutoring at participants’ home universities. Students asked how tutees would be recruited and matched, where meetings would occur, who should be contacted when problems emerged and what procedures would govern the

programme. One respondent referred to these questions as the “technical stuff”.

Their apparently administrative character is misleading. A tutor cannot act upon a boundary, refer appropriately or even begin an agreed relationship when the institutional arrangements behind those actions are unknown.

The international course could establish a shared conception of the role and provide common preparation. It could not determine every local answer for three different universities. Before tutoring begins, participants need institution-specific information concerning recruitment and matching, communication and scheduling, expected patterns of contact, confidentiality and records, academic-integrity procedures, referral and emergency routes, named programme contacts, complaints or rematching, withdrawal and accessible meeting arrangements.

This exposes a boundary of curriculum design. Some forms of preparedness cannot be produced inside a course because they depend upon arrangements that have to exist around it.

The respondents therefore identified not only gaps in their own readiness but incompleteness in the infrastructure into which they were expected to move (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–16).

11.11. What Should Change in a Future Edition?

Taken together, the evaluation points towards refinement rather than wholesale redesign. Participants did not reject the architecture documented in Chapter 10. Their responses indicate where time and emphasis should move.

Introductory and repetitive activities could be compressed so that a greater proportion of the programme is devoted to rehearsal. Practice should then become progressively more demanding: from relatively straightforward academic conversations towards ambiguity, resistance, boundary problems, academic-integrity dilemmas and situations requiring referral.

The number of conversational frameworks also deserves restraint. GROW and the Question Funnel were particularly well received, yet some respondents experienced the overall repertoire as dense. Future programmes would probably benefit from returning to a smaller number of structures across several different cases rather than continually introducing additional models.

Demonstration should remain important, but expert modelling can be made less polished and more analytically useful. Participants need to see not only what competent intervention looks like when it succeeds, but how a tutor notices that an initial response was inadequate, changes direction or seeks assistance.

Local orientation needs to precede any move into actual tutoring. A participant should not finish preparation without knowing who coordinates the programme, how a match begins, whom to contact, where the relevant referral routes lead and what happens when either participant wants the relationship to change or end.

Finally, the evaluation itself requires development. An immediate anonymous questionnaire is valuable for understanding participant experience, but a future programme could combine it with matched pre- and post-training measures, observation of simulated performance, follow-up after early tutoring encounters, mentor perspectives and, where ethically appropriate, accounts from tutees. None of these measures alone would establish causal effectiveness, but together they would make it possible to examine whether the role understanding and confidence reported after training travelled into practice.

The evaluation therefore leaves Peer-EDU with a more interesting conclusion than a claim of successful training. Respondents rated the programme very highly, particularly its trainers, communication work, practical exercises and conversational resources. Sixteen of nineteen felt more confident than before. Yet twelve stopped short of declaring themselves fully ready to tutor, and their open responses repeatedly pointed towards authentic practice, local procedures, mentoring and access to consultation.

The programme seems to have done something educationally valuable precisely because it did not leave every participant feeling that four days of intensive face-to-face training had made them fully prepared. Increased

CHAPTER 11

Experiencing the Programme: Value, Readiness and Unresolved Needs

confidence was accompanied by a more differentiated perception of responsibility.

That is where the evidence from the student training ends. The next question is institutional: who supports a tutor once a simulated problem becomes a real one? Chapter 12 turns to the academic mentors prepared within Peer-EDU and to the support architecture the project began to construct around the student role.

CHAPTER 12

SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SUPPORT OTHERS

Chapter 11 ended with a problem generated by the student training itself. Participants had completed an intensive programme, generally felt more confident, yet repeatedly asked what would happen when simulation gave way to responsibility: whom they could consult, whether they could observe an experienced tutor, and who would be available when a situation exceeded what they had practised.

Peer-EDU addressed one part of this problem through a second preparation pathway, this time for academic staff. Separate eight-hour workshops were delivered at the three partner universities in February and March 2026, involving fifty-one academic teachers in total. The workshops used a common set of materials developed within Peer-EDU. At the University of Gdańsk, the workshop was held on 13 February 2026 and involved sixteen active, certified academic tutors from different faculties. It was delivered by Dorota Godlewska-Werner and Dorota Jendza and focused on the role of those expected to accompany future peer tutors: ethical and organisational responsibilities, developmental communication, case consultation and routes towards other forms of institutional support. Cases, simulations, changing participant positions and moderated discussion formed its principal working methods (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026; University of Gdańsk Peer-EDU Team 2026).

This chapter draws primarily on the detailed evidence available from the University of Gdańsk workshop, while also considering findings from the University of Split teacher training programme reported by Mihaljević and Marić (2026). The distinction in evidential status is crucial. The mentor preparation pathway was designed and delivered across the three partner universities, but the supervision system for peer tutors was not subsequently tested in authentic tutoring practice because the planned pilot did not

take place. Accordingly, the chapter can report how academic staff were prepared, what participants considered important and what organisational arrangements emerged from the available training evidence. Where it moves from these materials towards a future supervision model, that movement is explicitly prospective.

12.1. Preparing Academic Mentors: A Second Peer-EDU Pathway

The project documentation uses the expression peer tutor trainers. Yet the February workshop at the University of Gdańsk assigned these academics a wider prospective function than the term trainer suggests. Initial instruction was only one part of the envisaged role. Participants were also expected to become people to whom a tutor could return with uncertainty, difficult experience or a question that could not be resolved within the peer relationship.

The University of Gdańsk workshop began by making this role itself an object of inquiry. Participants discussed what mentoring meant to them, what responsibilities belonged on either side of such a relationship, how success might be recognised and where ethical difficulties could arise. They then developed a code of ethics and compared mentoring with tutoring, coaching and teaching (University of Gdańsk Peer-EDU Team 2026).

This starting point matters because the programme did not assume that experienced academic tutors would automatically understand the new position. Their existing tutoring competence was a resource, but supporting a student who in turn supports another student creates a different arrangement.

The University of Gdańsk training report identifies four functions that participants associated with their prospective role. They envisaged themselves as:

- available sources of consultation and, where appropriate, disciplinary expertise;
- partners in the interpretation of difficult experience;
- advocates capable of making peer tutoring intelligible within faculties;

- contributors to institutional arrangements, including standards, referral routes and evaluation.

Importantly, they explicitly distanced themselves from the position of controller (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

The February workshop therefore produced not merely another group of trainers but an emerging description of what might sit institutionally between a trained student tutor and the wider university.

12.2. What Kind of Support Did the Mentor Role Require?

Several earlier chapters have already established that student responsibility in Peer-EDU was intended to remain bounded. There is no need to repeat that argument here. The mentor programme adds something more specific: it shows how academic participants understood the support they would be expected to provide.

Their descriptions concentrated on consultation rather than continuous oversight. The mentor should be available when interpretation was needed, help the tutor distinguish among possible responses and connect an issue with appropriate academic or institutional expertise. In ordinary cases, the object of discussion would be the tutor's handling of the situation rather than an attempt to manage the tutee indirectly.

One item in the workshop self-assessment captured this orientation particularly well by asking whether the mentor had taken responsibility for the process rather than supplying the solution (University of Gdańsk Peer-EDU Team 2026). This mirrors an element already present in the student programme, but at another level: the prospective tutor was asked not to solve everything for the tutee; the mentor, in turn, was not expected to solve every difficulty for the tutor.

The workshop participants nevertheless did not envisage supervision as purely non-directive. Some situations require more decisive academic or institutional action. A doubtful disciplinary explanation may need checking against an authoritative source. Assessment questions may have to return to

the course teacher. Safety, serious misconduct or formal entitlements may require established procedures rather than further reflective conversation.

What emerged was therefore a variable rather than uniform relationship: greater space for tutor judgement in ordinary cases, and greater institutional direction where authority, safety or formal responsibility becomes decisive.

12.3. From a Difficult Case to an Institutional Route

One of the most concrete outputs of the mentor preparation was a decision pathway for situations in which a peer tutor brings a problem to an academic mentor.

Participants constructed a decision pathway beginning with the tutor’s account of a difficulty. The cases were grouped into four broad areas: educational and assessment matters; formal or administrative questions; relational and boundary problems; and wellbeing or safety concerns. A separate “STOP—safety” point required participants to consider whether health or life could be endangered. Possible responses were differentiated as information, support or intervention (University of Gdańsk Peer-EDU Team 2026). The three levels of consultation are summarised in Table 12.1.

Table 12.1. Levels of consultation developed from the mentor workshop

Level	Typical situation	Primary response
Routine consultation	Uncertainty about a conversation, explanation, dependence or an ordinary difficulty within the tutoring role	Discuss the case with the mentor and identify an appropriate next move
Specialist referral	The matter belongs to an authorised academic, administrative, accessibility, welfare or counselling service	Identify a specific route and facilitate transition where appropriate

Level	Typical situation	Primary response
Urgent escalation	Immediate danger, serious harassment or violence, intoxication, or possible risk of self-harm	Activate local emergency or safeguarding procedures and ensure that the tutor is not left to manage the situation alone

Source: Authors' synthesis based on the University of Gdańsk Peer-EDU mentor programme (2026).

The distinction prevented two opposite errors. Not every uncomfortable encounter had to become a formal case, but neither could every problem remain inside a reflective tutor–mentor conversation.

The local dimension was equally important. Participants were asked to identify actual institutional routes rather than learn an international list of generic services. A useful answer to Whom do I contact now? has to contain names, functions and procedures that exist in the university where the situation occurs.

The workshop could test the intelligibility of this logic through cases. It could not test how quickly, reliably or consistently those routes would operate in practice.

12.4. Three Functions of Supervision

To interpret the mentor role more systematically, Proctor's distinction between formative, normative and restorative functions provides a useful vocabulary (Proctor 1987). The model originates outside peer tutoring and should not be imported as though academic mentoring were a form of clinical supervision. Nevertheless, the three functions correspond closely to concerns articulated during the workshop in Gdańsk. Their application to peer tutor supervision in Peer-EDU is summarised in Table 12.2.

Table 12.2. Three functions of peer tutor supervision

Function	Meaning within Peer-EDU	What the function should not become
Formative	Helping tutors develop judgement, communication and the capacity to learn from experience	Repeating the initial training course indefinitely
Normative	Keeping ethical, academic and institutional requirements visible	Continuous surveillance of routine tutoring decisions
Restorative	Giving tutors somewhere to process uncertainty and demanding encounters	Informal therapy or unlimited emotional availability

Source: Authors' adaptation of Proctor (1987) in relation to the University of Gdańsk Peer-EDU mentor programme.

The value of this distinction is analytical. The same consultation can perform more than one function. A tutor describing a troubling interaction may need help reconsidering what happened, clarification of a procedural obligation and recognition that the encounter was emotionally difficult.

This is also where the mentor programme extends the student curriculum rather than merely repeating it. The student course prepared participants to notice limits; the mentor course explored what the university might place on the other side of those limits.

12.5. Case Work as the Core Method of Mentor Preparation

The February programme relied heavily on cases. They concerned a tutor uncertain about an academic answer, illness affecting performance, depression and possible danger, concealed dyslexia, harmful gossip, interpersonal attraction, aggressive behaviour and intoxication. Participants changed roles during the exercises and used an observation tool oriented towards the process rather than towards rating the person involved (University of Gdańsk Peer-EDU Team 2026).

Several of these situations had already appeared in the student handbook. Reappearance here was deliberate rather than redundant. The position from which the case was examined had changed.

A student tutor encountering the dyslexia scenario had to consider how to respond within the limits of the peer role. An academic mentor faced a different question: how to help the tutor interpret that response, what institutional knowledge was required and whether somebody else now needed to become involved.

Case discussion thus moved the same difficulty one level outward.

Schön's distinction between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action remains useful, but need not be redeveloped here (Schön 1983). In the mentor programme, case work created time for the second movement: reconstructing what had happened, noticing what may have been overlooked and considering alternatives before another encounter occurred.

Huyton's analysis of significant student disclosure similarly helps explain why this matters institutionally (Huyton 2009). Emotionally demanding contact does not cease to have organisational consequences because it happens privately. Peer-EDU's mentor pathway recognised that student tutors should have somewhere to bring such experiences rather than privately absorb them.

12.6. Where the Student and Mentor Pathways Meet

The requests recorded after the student course and the priorities emerging from the mentor workshop form two sides of the same unfinished transition.

Students asked for opportunities to observe others, speak with a mentor before beginning, obtain advice after difficult situations and know whom to contact locally (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–16). The academic participants, working separately, envisaged consultation, case discussion and readily available collegial assistance as central parts of their future contribution (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

This convergence is more informative than repeating the general proposition that supervision is necessary. It indicates that both groups anticipated a gap between course completion and independent tutoring.

One possible bridge would include observation or shadowing, discussion before an initial encounter, rapid debriefing afterwards and continuing access to consultation as the tutor acquires experience. Cognitive apprenticeship offers a useful rationale for such gradual participation through modelling, coaching and the progressive reduction of support (Collins, Brown and Newman 1989).

Peer-EDU did not implement this sequence. Shadowing and supported first encounters therefore belong to the project's derived design implications, not to its documented practice.

The ethical constraints are also substantial. Observation of an authentic tutoring relationship requires informed consent, must not disadvantage the tutee and may be inappropriate where sensitive material is likely to arise. Reconstructed or composite cases can sometimes provide a more defensible intermediate step.

12.7. Beyond the Individual Mentor

The original version of this chapter described a future community of practice for tutors at some length. The concept has already been developed earlier in the book and does not need another theoretical exposition here. What the mentor data add is simpler and more concrete.

Participants wanted access not only to tutors whom they would supervise but also to other academics performing a similar role. They anticipated situations in which the mentor would also be uncertain and requested opportunities for consultation, including rapid collegial advice in unusual or conflictual cases (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

This matters because a supervision system organised as a chain

tutee → tutor → mentor

would merely relocate the endpoint of responsibility. Difficulties do not become straightforward simply because they reach an academic member of staff.

A more sustainable arrangement would therefore need horizontal as well as vertical relations: tutors able to compare cases with peers, mentors able to consult one another, and coordinators able to recognise difficulties recurring across several relationships.

Wenger's work remains relevant to such continuity (Wenger 1998), but the important point for Peer-EDU is empirical and organisational. Repeated case discussion could allow isolated encounters to become collective knowledge about the programme. If several tutors encounter the same incomprehensible assessment instruction or inaccessible procedure, the pattern should become visible beyond the individual dyad.

The support structure would then do more than protect tutors. It could become one route through which tutoring experience informs the university.

12.8. The Work of Mentoring Has Material Conditions

The diagnostic study had already shown that academic staff associated prospective peer tutoring provision with questions of workload, time, funding and recognition (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 104–129). The mentor pathway makes those concerns more concrete.

Being available to tutors involves more than attending the initial workshop. It may require responding to queries, discussing cases, maintaining knowledge of referral routes, coordinating with services and contributing to programme review. A supervision system that recognises these duties only symbolically risks functioning irregularly precisely when tutors need dependable access to it.

The need to recognise the work of academic supervisors has already appeared earlier in the manuscript and does not require another general defence here. The practical implication of the mentor programme is narrower:

a named mentor is useful only if the institution also creates the conditions under which that person can actually be available.

Those conditions could include workload allocation, a formally specified mentoring function, professional-development recognition and resources for coordination. The precise arrangement may differ among institutions.

What cannot reasonably differ is the assumption that recurring supervision can be sustained indefinitely through private goodwill.

12.9. Shared Principles and Institutional Adaptation

The academic mentor / peer tutor trainer programme was delivered separately at all three partner universities, using common project materials within different institutional contexts. This cross-university delivery makes it possible to distinguish between elements that could be shared and those that required local interpretation.

The available evidence is institution-specific: Godlewska-Werner and Jendza (2026) provide detailed post-training feedback from the University of Gdańsk group, while Mihaljević and Marić (2026) report findings from the teacher training programme at the University of Split.

Some elements appear relatively transferable, while others require local reconstruction.

Potentially shared elements include:

- differentiation among tutor, mentor and academic teacher roles;
- consultation through cases rather than constant prescription;
- the formative, normative and restorative dimensions of support;
- attention to boundaries and proportional escalation;
- routes through which uncertainty can move beyond the individual tutor.

Local elements include:

- institutional terminology;
- named services and contacts;
- safeguarding and emergency procedures;
- legal and data-protection requirements;

- workload and recognition arrangements;
- relations between central structures and faculties.

This distinction is consistent with the institutional comparison developed in Chapter 5. Adaptation is not a weaker version of faithful implementation. It is necessary when organisational responsibility is located differently.

Research on cascaded professional development also warns that successive transfer can simplify complex material when new facilitators receive content without sufficient participation, feedback or continuing connection (Iftikhar et al. 2022). Any future expansion of the programme through a wider training cascade would require more than access to slides or a handbook.

Participation in the programme, co-facilitation and subsequent collegial exchange would provide a stronger route towards local ownership.

12.10. What the Mentor Programme Added to Peer-EDU

The mentor pathway changed the architecture of Peer-EDU in an important way. After the student programme, the emerging peer tutor role could still be imagined primarily as a set of capacities located within individual students. Preparing academic mentors made another layer visible: the capacity of the university to receive uncertainty back from those students.

The project produced concrete elements of such an arrangement. Across the three partner universities, academic teachers completed dedicated eight-hour workshops based on common Peer-EDU materials. The workshops addressed the prospective mentor role, ethical and organisational responsibilities, difficult situations and routes for consultation and referral.

The detailed evidence from the University of Gdańsk workshop shows how these issues were worked through by the sixteen participating academic tutors. They developed a decision logic for different kinds of problems and articulated a future role centred on consultation rather than control. They also identified their own need for collegial assistance (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026). The University of Split training similarly brought

questions of role definition, terminology and the institutional distribution of responsibility into view (Mihaljević and Marić 2026).

What Peer-EDU did not establish is equally clear. The project did not observe mentors supporting peer tutors across sustained tutoring relationships; it did not test response times, supervisor workload, shadowing, case-meeting routines or the durability of the proposed escalation system. Those questions remain open because the pilot stage was not implemented.

The appropriate conclusion is therefore neither that Peer-EDU established a functioning supervision model nor that it merely formulated an aspiration. It did something intermediate and more specific: it designed and rehearsed the academic side of a support relationship that future implementation would need to activate and test.

That distinction also prepares the transition into Part IV. Up to this point, Part III has followed preparation from the student role, through the curriculum and its evaluation, to the academics expected to accompany future practice. The remaining question is no longer principally how individuals should be trained. It is what kind of institutional arrangement would be required for these separate elements to function together over time.

PART

FROM TRAINING TO INSTITUTIONAL PRACTICE

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IV

CHAPTER 13. BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE PEER TUTORING ECOLOGY

CHAPTER 14. THE PEER-EDU FRAMEWORK: A ROADMAP FOR UNIVERSITIES

CHAPTER 13

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE PEER TUTORING ECOLOGY

Part III followed Peer-EDU from the construction of the student tutor role through the training programme and its evaluation to the preparation of academic mentors. By that point, one limitation of a training-centred account had become difficult to ignore. Even well-prepared participants cannot make a programme dependable if matching is improvised, supervisors have no recognised time, referral routes are uncertain, suitable spaces are unavailable or the role has little institutional legitimacy. The focus now moves from the preparation of people to the arrangement in which their work would have to take place.

The term *ecology* names this interdependence. It does not imply a harmonious institutional organism. Barnett's ecological university is useful precisely because it directs attention to relations among educational, organisational and social environments rather than to an initiative treated as a self-contained service (Barnett 2018). In universities, however, these environments are marked by unequal authority, competition for resources, disciplinary difference and conflicting purposes. A peer tutoring ecology is therefore a configuration of roles, time, labour, spaces, recognition, technologies and routes of responsibility whose elements can support one another or work at cross-purposes.

The chapter maps those conditions rather than supplying the staged roadmap that follows in Chapter 14. It draws on the three-university diagnostic study, Report 1, the student and mentor programmes, the post-training evaluation and the institutional questions generated during Peer-EDU. Earlier chapters have already developed the pedagogical arguments concerning authority, care, inclusion, responsibility and the tutor role; they are not rehearsed here. They return only where an institution has to translate them into an organisational decision (Jendza et al. 2026; Attard Tonna et al. 2026).

One evidential boundary remains in force throughout. The planned peer tutoring pilot was not implemented. Peer-EDU can therefore support propositions about programme design, preparation and prospective institutional arrangements, but not claims about how matching, supervision or sustained tutoring functioned in practice, nor about effects on studying, progression, retention or wellbeing. The task of this chapter is to make the proposed ecology explicit enough to be tested.

13.1. Starting with a Clear Educational Purpose

Earlier chapters argued that peer tutoring should be judged educationally rather than by the mere presence of peer interaction or the promise of an institutional outcome. At the implementation stage, that argument becomes a boundary-setting device. Before recruitment, training or platform design begins, the university has to specify what kind of studying the programme is intended to make possible and where its remit ends.

The literature provides no reason to expect a common effect from the label *peer tutoring*. Programmes differ in role distance, group size, directionality, curricular location, voluntariness and the degree of institutional organisation (Topping 1996, 2005; Boud, Cohen and Sampson 2001). Positive findings similarly belong to particular arrangements: defined populations, trained tutors, specified relationships to curriculum, sufficient contact and continuing coordination (Arco-Tirado, Fernández-Martín and Fernández-Balboa 2011; Arco-Tirado, Fernández-Martín and Hervás-Torres 2020; Dawson et al. 2014). Reviews also show substantial variation in design, outcome definition and research quality (Burgess, McGregor and Mellis 2014; Stigmar 2016).

Peer-EDU respondents associated the prospective programme with accessible explanation, disciplinary understanding, greater confidence in approaching difficult work, integration and navigation of university life. They also anticipated misinformation, uncertainty about the place of academic teachers and the possibility that students might carry responsibilities for

which they were neither prepared nor authorised (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 108–129). These findings support a bounded purpose: peer tutoring should add an approachable form of academically oriented support to teaching and existing services, not become a general solution to whatever difficulty a student brings.

Biesta's question of educational purpose remains relevant here because operational decisions are never neutral (Biesta 2010). A programme organised around first-year disciplinary study will recruit, prepare and match differently from one aimed at transition, academic writing or reciprocal language practice. A concise purpose statement might therefore identify four elements: the matter to be studied, the group for whom access is being organised, the contribution expected from tutors and the responsibilities that remain elsewhere. Such precision also prevents distal ambitions from colonising the encounter. Retention, for example, may become a later research question, but it should not determine what counts as a worthwhile tutoring conversation.

The public dimension developed earlier in the book has an institutional consequence at this point. If the programme is to make knowledge and academic practices more available for common study, it cannot be organised principally as a remedial service for students already classified as deficient (Masschelein and Simons 2018). Purpose shapes not only what tutors do, but also who can enter without being marked by entry itself.

13.2. Readiness as a Configuration, Not a Score

Chapter 6 distinguished several dimensions of readiness. Their significance for implementation lies in the fact that they do not mature together. A university may have enthusiastic students but no coordinator, experienced academic tutors but no shared peer tutor role, accessible digital systems but uncertain referral procedures, or strong central endorsement with little disciplinary ownership. Treating these conditions as a single score would conceal precisely the asymmetries that matter in practice (Ross and Cameron 2007; Widoro, Situmorang and Chaeruman 2024).

The University of Split case illustrates this particularly well. Mihaljević and Marić describe teacher preparation as a setting in which terminology, existing roles and the distribution of responsibility become visible. Their conference contribution identifies the need to distinguish mentored students, student mentors and teacher mentors; allocate responsibility across cohort, programme and institutional levels; and develop common arrangements without erasing disciplinary autonomy or roles such as student demonstrators (Mihaljević and Marić 2026: 14). The source is a conference-based case formulation rather than a full empirical study, but it shows why preparing a programme can itself diagnose the institution.

The comparative findings point to different starting questions rather than three levels of readiness. Respondents at the University of Gdańsk drew attention to visibility and technological provision; respondents at the University of Split made legitimacy, terminology and the location of responsibility particularly salient; respondents at the University of Malta foregrounded hierarchy, competition and workload (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–129). Chapter 5 examined these differences as institutional ecologies. Here their practical implication is that the same design decision can solve one problem and create another. Formal recognition may strengthen legitimacy while intensifying hierarchy; decentralisation may protect disciplinary fit while weakening continuity.

Document review, stakeholder discussion and case-based mapping are therefore more useful than a declaration that the institution is 'ready'. Workshops can test whether apparently clear arrangements survive contact with a concrete situation. A severe disclosure may reveal that an emergency route is out of date. A course-linked proposal may expose conflicting assumptions between the central coordinator and programme leader. Discussion of existing demonstrator or mentoring roles may show duplication that an organisational chart had not made visible.

Readiness is developmental, but not every gap can safely be left for later. Institutions need to distinguish between conditions that can be improved during a bounded pilot and absences that make the first match premature. They also need to know who has authority to correct the latter. Jendza's account of coexisting university cultures is useful here: formal policy, everyday practice and disciplinary meaning may pull an initiative in different

directions within the same university (Jendza 2020a). The resulting domains of institutional readiness are set out in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1. Domains of institutional readiness for peer tutoring

Readiness domain	Questions to answer before implementation
Purpose and terminology	What educational problem is addressed? Are tutoring, mentoring, teaching and advising distinguished?
Pedagogical capacity	Who prepares tutors? What disciplinary and relational capacities are required for the particular role?
Organisational ownership	Who coordinates recruitment, matching, spaces, communication, data, complaints and continuity?
Academic responsibility	Which duties remain with teachers, supervisors, programme authorities and specialist services?
Ethics and safeguarding	What are the limits of confidentiality? Where do referral and urgent escalation lead?
Material and digital capacity	Are accessible rooms, scheduling tools, secure communication and hybrid options reliably available?
Resources and legitimacy	Are funding, workload, recognition and decision-making authority secured beyond one project cycle?
Institutional learning	How will recurrent cases inform teaching, services and programme redesign without breaching confidentiality?

Source: Authors’ synthesis based on Attard Tonna et al. (2026: 97–136), Mihaljević and Marić (2026: 14), Ross and Cameron (2007), and the Peer-EDU project materials.

13.3. Recruitment: Authorising a Role without Producing an Elite

Recruitment has to hold together two demands that are easy to separate rhetorically. Entry should be open enough for the role not to become a distinction reserved for an already advantaged academic elite, yet selective enough to protect tutees and the subject matter from unreliable support.

Academic credibility matters, but grades alone answer too little. Reviews of peer-mentor characteristics and tutors’ own accounts repeatedly place

communication, commitment, trustworthiness, self-awareness, empathy and role clarity alongside knowledge of the field (Terrion and Leonard 2007; Abbot, Graf and Chatfield 2018). Research on tutor behaviour adds a useful warning: confident presentation can coexist with directive knowledge-telling and limited responsiveness to another student's reasoning (Berghmans et al. 2013).

The competence framework developed in Chapter 9 need not be reproduced as a second taxonomy. Institutionally, it can be translated into a transparent role description, published criteria, a short application, evidence of adequate engagement with the relevant subject or academic practice, and an opportunity to respond to a case or brief simulated conversation. Equivalent routes should be available so that one culturally narrow performance of confidence is not mistaken for suitability. Accessibility adjustments and linguistic diversity belong in the recruitment design from the outset.

Grade-dominant selection carries a particular symbolic cost. It can convert prior academic advantage into institutional authority, imply that useful knowledge belongs principally to the highest achievers and exclude near-peers whose own experience of difficulty has produced valuable explanatory or navigational knowledge. Selection should therefore authorise entry into preparation and supported practice; it should not certify a superior student identity.

Conditions surrounding the role affect the applicant pool just as strongly as formal criteria. An unpaid scheme available only at narrow daytime hours will favour students with financial security, flexible timetables and fewer caring obligations. Questions of remuneration and recognition, examined in Section 13.11, therefore begin before selection rather than after it.

A credible entry process also requires a credible exit process. Repeated unreliability, serious boundary violations or persistently inaccurate guidance may justify pausing or ending participation. Criteria and review routes should be known in advance and include an opportunity for the tutor to respond. Informal reputation or the unilateral decision of one coordinator is an insufficient basis for withdrawing an institutionally authorised role.

13.4. Matching: Organising Access without Manufacturing Trust

Matching is an access mechanism, not a technology for producing interpersonal compatibility. Its first reference point should be the educational purpose: the course, topic, threshold concept, form of academic work or transition problem around which participants are expected to meet. Level of study, disciplinary proximity, timetable, language, modality, accessibility requirements and conflicts of interest may all be relevant, depending on that purpose (Topping 1996).

The earlier discussion of social and cognitive congruence explains why near-peer distance can sometimes help. Recency of experience may preserve memories of confusion that have become less visible to experts and may support language closer to a tutee's present position (Lockspeiser et al. 2008; Loda et al. 2019). Matching translates that possibility into an organisational choice without turning proximity into a guarantee. Excessive closeness may create collusion or blurred boundaries, while greater experience may be appropriate where the academic task is more advanced. The relevant distance follows the object of study rather than a fixed rule.

How students enter the matching system is equally consequential. Public designation as weak, failing or at risk can turn an offer of support into a statement about academic identity. Course-linked provision, open study groups and self-referral can make tutoring part of ordinary participation, while targeted outreach remains possible where access is demonstrably uneven. Communication should name demanding moments in study or transitions rather than deficiencies in persons (Byl et al. 2015; Arqus European University Alliance 2023).

Tutees should be able to express relevant preferences without disclosing sensitive information simply to justify them. They should also be able to refuse a proposed match or request another one without penalty. A first meeting can clarify purpose, availability, communication and limits before a longer arrangement is assumed. The programme needs an explicit response to inactive, uncomfortable or academically unsuitable pairings and to conflicts of interest that emerge only after contact begins.

No algorithm can remove this uncertainty. Digital systems may reduce scheduling friction and search across a larger tutor pool, but sensitive preferences, disability, safety and conflicts require human oversight. A robust matching system therefore depends less on collecting ever more personal data than on a clear beginning, the possibility of adjustment and enough capacity for rematching to be a real option.

13.5. From Training Completion to Authorised Practice

Chapters 9–12 have already examined the tutor role, the curriculum, participants' evaluation and the preparation of academic mentors. The institutional question is now narrower: what has to happen between finishing a course and being authorised to assume responsibility for a tutee?

The Peer-EDU evaluation showed that increased confidence did not translate into universal claims of readiness. Participants asked for shadowing, consultation, harder cases and clearer local procedures (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7, 12–16). These are self-reported judgements, but they make it difficult to defend a model in which a certificate issued at the end of training functions simultaneously as evidence of attendance, competence and readiness for every context.

A staged pathway can distinguish several thresholds: completion of core preparation; observed or otherwise reviewed simulation; local and disciplinary orientation; authorisation for a defined form of tutoring; supported early participation; and continuing review once the role is underway. Planning frameworks and reviews similarly emphasise modelling, rehearsal, feedback and continuing support rather than one-off instruction (Ross and Cameron 2007; Burgess, McGregor and Mellis 2014; Stigmar 2016).

The sequence should be proportionate. Facilitating a short revision group within one module may require different local knowledge and oversight from providing individual transition support over a semester. Herinek, Woodward-Kron and Ewers describe tutor preparation as situated 'between formulas and freestyle': structure is useful when it orients judgement

without becoming a script (Herinek, Woodward-Kron and Ewers 2024). Authorisation should follow the same principle.

Certification language must therefore remain exact. A document may confirm participation in a programme or successful completion of specified tasks. It does not confer a professional teaching qualification or guarantee future conduct. Where simulation or practice is assessed, criteria should address observable actions, use of knowledge and judgement at boundaries rather than personality. Completion, authorisation and ongoing participation are distinct statuses and need not be collapsed into one credential.

Periodic renewal can remain light. Updating referral information, reviewing significant procedural changes and participating in reflective review may be sufficient where the role has not changed. Staging is intended to make responsibility supportable, not to construct a miniature licensing bureaucracy around peer relations.

13.6. Coordination, Ownership and Institutional Memory

Many of the conditions discussed so far converge on one organisational question: who owns the programme when routine work begins? Report 2 records concerns that voluntary coordination would be fragile and that responsibility for the many interfaces of peer tutoring could easily remain ambiguous (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 104–108, 125–133).

Coordination includes recruitment, preparation, matching, communication, scheduling, data protection, access to rooms or digital systems, current referral information, complaints, supervisor contact and evaluation. None of these tasks is individually dramatic; together they constitute substantial institutional labour. A scheme that depends upon someone absorbing them informally after other duties is not yet embedded.

Complete centralisation is not the obvious alternative. A central unit can maintain common definitions, minimum ethical standards, data arrangements, accessibility requirements and programme-level evaluation. Faculties and programmes are better placed to identify relevant academic

practices, subject-specific expectations and suitable supervisors. Research on programme durability consistently emphasises fit with local structures, stable resources and continuing administrative responsibility (Ross and Cameron 2007; Dawson et al. 2014; Widoro, Situmorang and Chaeruman 2024).

The task is therefore to distribute work without dissolving answerability. Kezar's account of change in higher education helps explain why a formal decision at the centre rarely settles how a new practice will be understood locally (Kezar 2014). Jendza's analysis of university cultures similarly suggests that the same programme may be read as educational development, student service, managerial initiative or marginal experiment depending on the setting in which it appears (Jendza 2020a). Sustainable ownership has to connect these interpretations rather than assume one institutional logic.

Students should participate in governance because tutors and tutees encounter barriers that administrative design can miss. Their participation, however, should not turn student voice into unpaid programme management. A steering arrangement might bring together the coordinator, tutor and tutee representatives, academic supervisors, student-support and accessibility staff, quality-assurance personnel and, where needed, data-protection expertise. Wenger's work remains helpful in recognising how programme knowledge develops through participation, but a community cannot substitute for formal authority or allocated work (Wenger 1998).

Ownership becomes clearest when the programme is under strain. Who acts when tutor supply is insufficient, a match fails, a complaint is made, a supervisor cannot respond, or repeated confusion points towards a curricular problem? Institutional memory matters for the same reason. Decisions, rationales and contact routes have to survive staff turnover and the end of project funding rather than remain embedded in the knowledge of one unusually committed person.

13.7. Quality Assurance without Surveillance

Chapter 12 established the proposed role of academic mentors and the distinction among different functions of supervision. The question here is

not what supervision means, but how it can contribute to quality without converting tutoring into a closely monitored extension of formal teaching.

Three levels need to remain connected. At entry, the institution verifies that the agreed preparation and role-specific orientation have been completed. During participation, tutors require accessible consultation, case discussion and a route for checking academic uncertainty. At programme level, recurrent difficulties need to be examined for what they reveal about recruitment, matching, training, supervision, curriculum or support services. Studies of tutors' own accounts and behaviour reinforce the need for this continuing layer: difficulties are relational, organisational and didactical, while confident performance can conceal directive or unreliable practice (Abbot, Graf and Chatfield 2018; Berghmans et al. 2013).

Evidence collection should remain proportionate to those purposes. Minimal activity records might include date, duration, broad academic focus, modality and whether consultation or referral occurred. Tutees need a confidential route for raising concerns; tutors need a reflective space in which uncertainty is not automatically converted into performance evidence. Recording the content of every conversation would produce data at the cost of the very conditions under which students may be willing to expose difficulty.

An adverse-experience route should distinguish dissatisfaction, mismatch, inaccurate guidance, academic-integrity concerns, boundary problems, discrimination and serious misconduct. Responses can then range from clarification and rematching through additional supervision or retraining to a temporary pause or formal procedure. Proportionality is important: ordinary uncertainty belongs in educational review, whereas harm or repeated disregard of agreed limits requires stronger institutional action.

Quality assurance must also look beyond the tutor. If the same misunderstanding, assignment problem or procedural confusion recurs, the programme should not simply become more efficient at repairing it. Aggregated patterns can inform teaching, assessment communication and student services without identifying individual tutees. Peer tutors are not inspectors of students or lecturers; their encounters can nevertheless generate knowledge about conditions that those with curricular and organisational authority are able to change.

This system depends on supervisor capacity. Expected availability, case-load, consultation routes and workload recognition need to be specified rather than assumed. Accountability becomes distorted when student tutors are carefully monitored while the labour required to support them remains invisible.

13.8. Safeguarding as Operational Infrastructure

Ethical questions concerning confidentiality, academic integrity, boundaries and referral have already been examined from the tutor and mentor perspectives. At institutional level, the issue is whether those distinctions have been converted into procedures that can actually be used.

A concise code of practice should cover confidentiality and its limits, academic integrity, respectful communication, harassment and discrimination, gifts and dual relationships, contact outside agreed times, data handling, cancellation, withdrawal and complaints. Brzezińska and Appelt's distinction between ethical and effect-oriented organisation remains relevant: a programme cannot count as successful if apparently positive results depend on objectifying participants or allocating burdens unfairly (Brzezińska and Appelt 2013).

Each university also needs a current resource map. Academic and administrative problems, disability and accessibility, mental-health support, harassment, financial difficulty, international-student matters and emergencies require identifiable routes rather than a generic instruction to 'refer'. A supervisor or coordinator should remain available when the correct route is unclear. The operational question is not merely whether a service exists, but whether the pathway to it is known and usable.

Confidentiality has to be explained with the same practical precision. Immediate danger and formal reporting obligations may limit what can remain private. Data procedures should specify the minimum information recorded, access rights, purpose and retention period. Private messaging

accounts and improvised storage should not become default infrastructure simply because they are convenient.

The student and mentor programmes used scenarios to rehearse difficult decisions, but simulation cannot establish that a future referral system will function under pressure. Before implementation, contacts, response expectations, arrangements outside normal hours and communication back to the referring tutor should be checked with the services themselves. A flowchart whose endpoint does not respond creates the appearance rather than the reality of safeguarding.

Voluntary participation also includes the right to leave. Tutors and tutees should be able to pause, end or change a relationship without having to prove failure or endure pressure created by credentials, loyalty to the project or fear of disappointing staff. A non-punitive exit route is part of the programme's ethical infrastructure.

13.9. Spaces and Digital Infrastructure

The institutional ecology has a material form. Peer tutoring requires places and systems through which students can find one another, meet, access resources and contact the people who support the programme.

Physical space affects the meaning of participation. A room hidden inside a specialist support office may make attendance visible as a remedial act; an exposed public area may make it difficult to admit uncertainty. Bookable, accessible and reasonably quiet spaces should therefore be available at times that correspond to student timetables. Earlier chapters used public study as a conceptual category; here its spatial consequence is simple: the environment should allow two or more people to turn attention towards a text, problem or academic practice without reproducing either a counselling room or a transaction desk (Masschelein and Simons 2018). Whiteboards, shared screens and movable furniture matter only insofar as they support that work.

Digital infrastructure should solve ordinary organisational problems reliably: locating the programme, applying, matching, scheduling, communicating, accessing materials, contacting a supervisor and providing feedback.

Report 2 identified low awareness of available technological support and concerns about infrastructure, particularly at the University of Gdańsk and the University of Malta, while participants generally positioned technology as support for the relationship rather than its pedagogical centre (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–107, 120–133).

The Report 1 corpus includes technology-enabled arrangements and experimental work on online tutoring. Digital provision can extend access across distance and time, but online and face-to-face formats have different affordances and should not be treated as interchangeable (Chung and Tan 2019; Hardt, Nagler and Rincke 2023; Topping 2023). Modality should therefore follow purpose, access needs and participant circumstances rather than a presumption that the most scalable option is educationally preferable.

Integration with systems students already use may be more durable than the creation of a complex project-specific platform, provided those systems meet accessibility, privacy and security requirements. Automation can help with routine scheduling and search, but not every decision should be delegated to it. Human review remains necessary where matching involves disability, conflict, safety or sensitive preferences. Data minimisation is part of good infrastructure: digital sophistication should not require participants to surrender information irrelevant to the educational relation.

13.10. Accessibility and the Distribution of Opportunity

Chapter 3 treated inclusion as a pedagogical question of who can disclose uncertainty without losing academic standing. At implementation level, the question becomes distributive: who can become a tutor, who can seek support, and whose timetable, mobility, language and material circumstances have been silently assumed by the programme?

Universal design offers a practical starting point. Application forms, training materials, rooms, booking systems and digital platforms should be usable by a diverse group without waiting for exclusion to become visible (Burgstahler 2015). Tutors need ways of adapting communication and

materials while remaining clear that formal accommodations and disability-related decisions belong to authorised institutional processes.

Hybrid participation can widen access for commuters, disabled students, carers, students in employment and those temporarily away from campus. It should be treated as a legitimate modality rather than an inferior substitute for face-to-face work. Yet a video link alone does not constitute inclusion. Reviews of inclusive pedagogy warn against reducing access to technical accommodation when recognition, curriculum and the distribution of opportunity remain unchanged (Stentiford and Koutsouris 2021). Work reviewed in Report 1 likewise points towards cultural adaptation, shared decision-making and continuing support rather than simply inserting diverse participants into a fixed model (Marins and Lourenço 2021).

Outreach requires similar care. A formally open programme can still be used predominantly by students who already possess the confidence and social capital needed to seek it. Communication through courses, accessibility services, student organisations and international offices may broaden entry. Monitoring applications, matches and continuation can reveal under-representation, provided small groups are protected from identification and categories are not treated as explanations in themselves.

Distribution also has a disciplinary dimension. A well-resourced scheme concentrated in already advantaged faculties may widen inequality across the university even when individual encounters are beneficial. Governance should therefore examine where tutors are recruited, where demand remains unmet and how resources are allocated across programmes.

Most importantly, recurring barriers must be allowed to travel back towards those able to change them. Peer tutoring cannot repair inaccessible curricula, discrimination, financial precarity or absent teaching. Its institutional value partly lies in making such patterns harder to ignore.

13.11. Recognising Contribution: Credit, Credentials and Remuneration

Peer-EDU respondents proposed ECTS credits, certificates, micro-credentials, digital badges and financial remuneration. These mechanisms recognise different things and should not be treated as stylistic alternatives to one another. ECTS concerns assessed educational outcomes and student workload within a programme; a micro-credential concerns a smaller quality-assured educational experience; remuneration acknowledges labour; a certificate or badge may simply document participation or completion.

ECTS is defensible when the tutor pathway contains explicit educational outcomes, structured preparation, assessed reflection and workload proportionate to the credit awarded (European Commission 2015). Contact hours alone are not an adequate educational object of assessment. The European approach to micro-credentials similarly requires transparent information about learning outcomes, workload, assessment, participation, issuer and quality assurance (Council of the European Union 2022). An attendance certificate should not acquire the language of a micro-credential merely because the latter is institutionally fashionable.

Remuneration addresses a different question. Where tutors undertake regular, accountable work, or where unpaid participation would systematically exclude students who need paid employment, payment may be the more equitable form of recognition. Reciprocity does not depend on work being free. Hidden reliance on unpaid student labour can be more damaging, particularly when tutoring begins to perform teaching-related or student-support functions. Research on peer mentors suggests that recruitment and sustained participation are affected by how institutions recognise both the developmental and labour dimensions of the role (Terrior and Leonard 2007; Yomtov et al. 2017).

The same principle applies to staff. Coordination and supervision consume time and require expertise. Recognising student contribution while leaving academic support work outside workload models would reproduce the imbalance the programme is meant to avoid.

Earlier parts of the book examined the danger of capture in greater detail. At this point, the implementation question is concrete. Credentials can make work visible while also turning participation into another competitive distinction; payment can widen access while moving the role closer to employment; pure voluntarism can preserve an ethos of contribution while privileging those able to give time freely (Szkudlarek 2001; Zepke 2017). No single arrangement is inherently pure.

A mixed model may therefore be appropriate: credit or a micro-credential for an assessed developmental pathway, payment for regular delivery carrying recurring responsibility, workload allocation for staff, and simpler non-competitive acknowledgement for occasional contribution. The chosen arrangement should be transparent and periodically examined for its effects on motivation, hierarchy and access. Recognition succeeds when it makes contribution feasible without turning the tutor role into a scarce badge of academic worth.

13.12. Visibility without Promotion

A programme that students cannot locate is not accessible, but visibility is not the same as marketing. Communication performs institutional work: it gives the role a name, explains who may participate, establishes how the programme relates to teaching and support services, and signals what happens when difficulties arise.

This is particularly important where *tutoring*, *mentoring*, *advising* and informal peer support already circulate with overlapping meanings. The Peer-EDU diagnostic study identified visibility and internal communication as recurrent issues, while the University of Split case highlighted the need for a common vocabulary before local implementation (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 97–107; Mihaljević and Marić 2026: 14).

Communication should therefore make the scope of the tutor role, voluntary character of participation, forms of recognition and routes for concerns intelligible without reproducing deficit labels. Course announcements, virtual learning environments, orientation activity, student organisations and direct information from academic teachers can all contribute.

No single channel should be assumed to reach every group, and targeted outreach may be necessary where structural barriers make general messaging ineffective.

Student ambassadors can make the programme legible through experience, but their contribution should be recognised rather than treated as free institutional communication. More importantly, visibility should not depend on narratives of transformation that the evidence cannot sustain. Peer-EDU can describe its rationale, research, training, participant-reported experience and proposed architecture. It cannot advertise proven effects on grades, retention, wellbeing or institutional culture.

Evidential restraint is therefore part of legitimacy. A programme becomes credible not because its promotional language is confident, but because contacts are stable, response times are predictable, procedures work and academic staff understand how peer tutoring fits beside their own responsibilities.

13.13. Evaluation as Institutional Learning

Evaluation in this part of the book has a different function from the post-training questionnaire analysed in Chapter 11. It concerns a future programme operating over time and therefore has to distinguish the conditions of implementation from participant experience, candidate mechanisms and educational outcomes. Chapter 14 will use these distinctions as decision points in the roadmap; the purpose here is to establish the analytic architecture.

Report 2 proposed indicators concerning awareness, participation, tutor supply and demand, attendance, satisfaction, equity reach, pass rates and withdrawal (Attard Tonna et al. 2026: 130–136). Such categories are useful only when the claims attached to them remain proportionate. Evidence of capacity does not establish use; use does not establish quality; positive experience does not establish academic effect; and a distal outcome such as retention cannot be attributed to tutoring without a design capable of addressing competing explanations. The literature itself contains positive findings alongside substantial variation by model, population, dosage and outcome definition (Arco-Tirado, Fernández-Martín and Hervás-Torres 2020;

Dawson et al. 2014; Bengesai, Amusa and Dhunpath 2023). Table 13.2 summarises these analytically distinct levels of programme evaluation.

Table 13.2. Analytically distinct levels of programme evaluation

Level	Illustrative indicators	What the evidence can and cannot support
Capacity	Coordinator time; funding; tutor and supervisor supply; rooms; referral routes	Shows whether implementation conditions exist; does not show use or educational value
Reach	Awareness; applications; waiting time; representation; unmet demand	Shows who is reached or excluded; does not show participation or benefit
Participation	Matches; attendance; dosage; continuity; rematching; withdrawal from tutoring	Shows exposure to the programme; does not establish quality or effect
Experience	Satisfaction; perceived usefulness; safety; reported burden	Describes participants' accounts; does not demonstrate effectiveness
Process	Preparation completed; supervision used; referrals functioning; adaptation	Shows how the programme operated; does not by itself demonstrate outcomes
Candidate mechanisms	Understanding; help-seeking; confidence; belonging; navigation; tutor judgement	Identifies plausible changes through participation; requires appropriate measures and interpretation
Proximal outcomes	Completion of a task, assessment or course; relevant academic performance	May indicate near-term change; causal attribution requires a credible comparison and attention to selection and dosage
Distal outcomes	Re-enrolment; retention; graduation; time to degree	Addresses long-term institutional outcomes; cannot be attributed automatically to tutoring and is affected by many other conditions

Source: Authors' prospective evaluation framework, informed by Attard Tonna et al. (2026: 130–136), Pawson and Tilley (1997), Stigmar (2016), and the evidence-control principles developed in this book.

Voluntary participation creates a particularly important interpretive problem. Students who seek tutoring may differ from those who do not in motivation, prior achievement, available time, help-seeking and connection to the institution. Administrative comparisons should therefore report baseline differences, dosage and attrition rather than present raw attendee/non-attendee contrasts as programme effects. Depending on scale and feasibility, phased introduction, matched comparison, wait-list or randomised-encouragement designs may strengthen causal inference.

Realist evaluation is well suited to the comparative ambition of Peer-EDU because it asks what works, for whom, in which contexts and through which mechanisms rather than assuming a context-free intervention effect (Pawson and Tilley 1997). Quantitative indicators should therefore be read alongside tutor, tutee and supervisor accounts, difficult cases and unintended effects such as stigma, overwork, unequal access or curricular displacement.

Institutional learning requires decision rules as well as data. A steering group should know when evidence will be reviewed, what kinds of finding can trigger redesign and how changes will themselves be examined. Data collection must remain proportionate: small subgroup results should not permit identification, and material produced for reflective supervision should not be repurposed as performance data without explicit justification and consent.

Because the pilot did not take place, this framework remains prospective. In a first implementation cycle, its priority would be more modest than testing long-term impact: establish whether the proposed capacities, routes and processes actually exist and whether participants can use them as intended.

13.14. Sustainability without Institutional Capture

The tension between informality and institutionalisation was examined pedagogically in Chapter 3. It returns here only because sustainability changes the location of the problem. The question is no longer whether peer relations should be formal or informal in the abstract, but which parts

of the programme require dependable structure and which should remain open to situated judgement.

Structure belongs most clearly around the encounter: purpose, access, preparation, authorisation, matching, supervision, safeguarding, recognition, complaints and evaluation. Inside the encounter, tutor and tutee need room to respond to the matter they are studying rather than enact a compulsory conversational script. Falchikov's analysis of organised peer learning and the review by Wido, Situmorang and Chaeruman both underline that organisation supports educational practice when it clarifies purpose and responsibility, but can diminish it when peer relations become standardised delivery (Falchikov 2001; Wido, Situmorang and Chaeruman 2024).

For Peer-EDU, a useful institutional shorthand is **light regulation of the encounter with dependable support around it**. Light regulation of the tutoring encounter still requires strong coordination, safeguarding and recognition of the work involved. At the same time, dependable institutional support does not require detailed monitoring of every interaction. The distinction responds differently to concerns already encountered across the partnership: preserving disciplinary and interpersonal authenticity at the University of Split, avoiding status and competitive effects at the University of Malta, and strengthening visibility and infrastructure at the University of Gdańsk.

These choices also expose competing institutional logics. The same programme can be treated as an efficient retention device, a credential-producing opportunity or a way of widening participation in common academic work. Zamojski's account of publicness is useful because it asks what becomes available for shared concern rather than assuming that a public institution automatically acts publicly (Zamojski 2015). The practical question is which logic is strengthened by everyday decisions about funding, access, workload, data and recognition.

Sustainability therefore cannot be reduced to survival after grant funding. A programme may continue while its purpose is gradually displaced, its supervision becomes unpaid, its most accessible routes disappear or its credential begins to matter more than the relation it was meant to recognise. Coburn's account of scale is useful here because it directs attention beyond

numerical expansion towards depth, ownership and the capacity to adapt over time (Coburn 2003).

A sustainable peer tutoring ecology would consequently be one in which purpose remains intelligible, responsibility has identifiable locations, material conditions are resourced, local experience can alter the design, and continuation is open to review rather than guaranteed by institutional inertia. It would also be capable of noticing when tutoring reveals a problem that tutoring itself should not solve.

Chapter 13 has mapped the conditions and tensions of that ecology. Chapter 14 takes a different step: it converts them into a staged roadmap with decision gates, failure signals and points at which an institution should proceed, revise, pause or stop. The shift is deliberate. An ecology cannot be implemented as a checklist, but institutions still need a disciplined way of deciding what to do next.

CHAPTER 14

THE PEER-EDU FRAMEWORK: A ROADMAP FOR UNIVERSITIES

The final task of the Peer-EDU inquiry is to translate its theoretical arguments, diagnostic findings and educational designs into a form that universities can use. Translation is not the same as conversion into a checklist. A checklist presumes that the object to be implemented is stable, that contexts differ only in minor details and that compliance with a sequence of actions can substitute for educational judgement. The evidence assembled in this book supports a different conclusion. Peer tutoring takes form within particular disciplinary cultures, institutional histories, arrangements of responsibility and material conditions. A usable framework must therefore provide orientation without pretending to eliminate interpretation.

The framework proposed in this chapter is a staged roadmap. Rather than recapitulating the preceding project history, it draws on the evidence and designs assembled across Parts II and III together with the institutional architecture developed in Chapter 13. Its purpose is to identify questions that require answers, decisions that must be made and signals that should cause an institution to pause, revise or stop. The roadmap therefore offers disciplined orientation without prescribing one organisational model for every university (Jendza et al. 2026; Attard Tonna et al. 2026; Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026; Jendza and Jendza 2026).

Its source status requires particular clarity. Peer-EDU completed a literature review, diagnostic research, student preparation, mentor preparation and evaluation of the training experience. The planned pilot of tutoring relationships was not implemented. The project consequently offers no evidence about actual matching, sustained tutoring sessions, supervision in operation or effects on course performance, progression, retention, graduation or wellbeing. Sections 14.4 and 14.5 therefore describe a proposed pilot

and a prospective process of evaluation and redesign. They are not accounts of activities completed within Peer-EDU.

This limitation is not a reason to omit implementation from the roadmap. On the contrary, it identifies the point at which future institutions must move from well-founded design to inquiry under real conditions. A framework that stopped at training would reproduce precisely the problem reported by participants, who felt more confident but still asked how local procedures would work, how tutees would be found, whom they could contact and whether shadowing or consultation would be available (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 12–16). Training readiness and system readiness must be considered together.

The roadmap is also normative. It makes explicit the values that should guide decisions when efficiency, participation, recognition, safety and authenticity pull in different directions. These values are not decorative statements placed before operational guidance. They determine who is invited to shape the programme, what remains the responsibility of teachers and institutions, how uncertainty is treated, which forms of evidence count and what must not be sacrificed in the pursuit of scale.

The result is best understood as a provisional design hypothesis. It states what the Peer-EDU evidence and the wider literature make reasonable to try, what future inquiry should examine and what forms of institutional capture must be resisted. Its validity will depend upon use, criticism and revision in settings that differ from those in which it was developed.

14.1. Principles and Values of the Peer-EDU Framework

The first principle is enacted change. Within the project team, the widely circulated maxim ‘be the change you want to see’ expressed a demand for congruence between the university that participants wished to create and the way the programme itself was organised. The organisation of the programme should reflect the educational principles it promotes. Student agency requires meaningful participation in design, mutuality requires

some distribution of decision-making, and trust is difficult to sustain where monitoring becomes pervasive. The desired educational relation must become visible, however imperfectly, in the practices through which it is prepared. This is also a question of educational purpose: operational success cannot decide by itself what a programme should become (Biesta 2010).

A related inspiration was Ashoka's formulation 'Everyone a Changemaker'. In Drayton's account, changemaking is not confined to exceptional social entrepreneurs; it concerns the capacity to recognise patterns, initiate action with others and alter the conditions that reproduce a problem (Drayton 2006). Applied to Peer-EDU, the formulation supports recognition of students and academic staff as contributors to institutional change rather than recipients of a completed intervention. It must, however, be protected from a heroic interpretation. Not every difficulty is solved by individual initiative, and calling everyone a changemaker must not enable the university to withdraw resources while celebrating resilience and voluntarism. Agency becomes educationally and institutionally meaningful when people possess real opportunities, support and authority to act together.

The second principle is trust joined to mutuality. Peer status does not produce trust automatically. Tutors may possess greater disciplinary confidence, institutional knowledge or formal recognition, while tutees may experience the act of seeking help as a disclosure of inadequacy. Trust is built through reliable conduct: keeping agreements, listening without humiliation, acknowledging uncertainty, protecting confidentiality within stated limits and refusing to use the role as a source of superiority (Colvin 2007; Gravett 2023). Mutuality does not require identical roles. It means that both persons can contribute to the inquiry, question an interpretation and be changed by the encounter, while the tutor remains responsible for the way the role is enacted.

The third principle concerns peaceful relations. The project valued communication that reduces humiliation, blame and escalation, and it drew on practices associated with nonviolent communication. Rosenberg's distinction among observation, feeling, need and request can help participants separate description from accusation and formulate a request without converting it into a demand (Rosenberg 2015). In a university, however, peaceful communication cannot mean conflict avoidance or the suspension of

academic judgement. Evidence must still be challenged, boundaries named and misconduct refused. Brookfield and Preskill's work on democratic discussion is also useful here because it treats dialogue as a practice that must confront unequal voice and disagreement rather than merely produce a pleasant atmosphere (Brookfield and Preskill 2005). Peaceful relations are relations in which conflict can be addressed without withdrawing recognition from the other person.

The fourth principle is university friendship. Rutkowiak's reflection on the longing for university friendship names an educational relation threatened by competition, instrumentalisation and institutional distance (Rutkowiak 2010). Friendship in this framework does not mean compulsory intimacy, personal loyalty or favouritism. It refers to a disposition of shared concern: taking another person's attempt to study seriously, remaining present without possessing them and allowing a common matter to be more important than the performance of status. The international training participants' references to friendship, bonding and feeling accepted provide limited evidence that such relations mattered within the training environment; they do not show that later tutoring relationships achieved the same quality (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14–15).

The fifth principle concerns shared responsibility directed towards a common good. Here distribution must sharpen rather than blur answerability. Tutors are answerable for preparation, honesty, boundaries and referral; tutees remain responsible for their studying and choices; academic teachers retain responsibility for curriculum, teaching and assessment; coordinators for organisation and supervision; and the institution for accessible services and conditions of participation. Ingarden's distinctions among bearing, assuming and being held responsible help prevent the language of collective responsibility from becoming a way of making no one answerable (Ingarden 1987: 71–169). Brzezińska and Appelt's warning is equally important: peer tutoring becomes ethically problematic when responsibility for educational outcomes is delegated to student tutors and later recovered through excessive control (Brzezińska and Appelt 2013).

The common good at stake is not simply aggregate student success. Barnett's ecological university directs attention to interdependence across human, knowledge and social worlds (Barnett 2018), while Masschelein and

Simons and Zamojski place publicness in practices that open matters to common study rather than keeping them as private possessions of those already initiated (Masschelein and Simons 2018: 47–61; Zamojski 2015). Peer tutoring serves such a good only when widened participation remains joined to the responsibilities that make academic study trustworthy.

The sixth principle is productive uncertainty. The PUNC framework, developed in an Erasmus+ partnership that included the University of Gdańsk and promoted within that context by Adam Jagiełło-Rusiłowski and the PUNC team, defines Professional UNcertainty Competence as the ability to acknowledge, explore and handle uncertainty productively (Bollinger and van Rooijen 2022: 6–8). The formulation is highly relevant to peer tutoring. Tutors need to acknowledge what they do not know, explore a problem rather than conceal uncertainty behind confident performance, and decide whether to continue, verify, consult or refer. Tutees need room to formulate incomplete questions and revise unsuccessful approaches. Coordinators and leaders must also tolerate evidence that a planned model does not yet work.

Uncertainty competence should not become another individualised demand to remain adaptable under structurally produced insecurity. A student cannot ‘handle productively’ the absence of a supervisor, inaccessible teaching or a referral service that does not respond. Zepke’s critique of engagement in neoliberal times and Szkudlarek’s analysis of the capture of educational language warn that agency, resilience and competence can be appropriated by managerial agendas (Szkudlarek 2001; Zepke 2017). In Peer-EDU, uncertainty competence must therefore remain paired with institutional responsibility: the capacity to act without complete knowledge, and the right to expect that the university will remain present.

These principles form a normative core rather than a branding statement. Each has an implementation implication and a corresponding risk of capture. Table 14.1 makes this relationship explicit.

Table 14.1. Normative commitments of the Peer-EDU framework

Commitment	Implementation implication	Risk of capture
Enacted change and changemaking	Students, tutors, staff and services participate in defining the problem and shaping the response	Heroic individualism; institutional withdrawal disguised as empowerment
Trust and mutuality	Roles and limits are transparent; reliability, voice and the possibility of disagreement are protected	Assuming trust from peer status; concealing asymmetry or informal power
Peaceful relations	Communication reduces humiliation and escalation while preserving challenge, judgement and boundaries	Conflict avoidance; depoliticising inequality; compulsory positivity
University friendship and community	Shared concern for persons and matters of study is supported without demanding intimacy	Favouritism, forced belonging or substituting warmth for educational substance
Shared responsibility and common good	Answerability is allocated across tutors, tutees, teachers, coordinators, services and leaders	Responsibility diffused until nobody is accountable; unpaid delegation to students
Productive uncertainty	Participants can acknowledge not-knowing, investigate and consult or refer without performing certainty	Credentialised resilience; requiring individuals to adapt to structural neglect

Source: Authors' synthesis drawing on Drayton (2006), Ingarden (1987), Rutkowiak (2010), Rosenberg (2015), Bollinger and van Rooijen (2022), Barnett (2018), Masschelein and Simons (2018) and the Peer-EDU evidence.

14.2. Institutional Diagnosis: Purpose, Context and Readiness

Chapter 13 described the institutional conditions required for a sustainable peer tutoring ecology. The roadmap converts those conditions into a first decision gate. Before a programme is designed, the university should establish whether there is a sufficiently clear educational purpose, a legitimate

problem to address, a population for whom the arrangement is meaningful and an institutional capacity to remain responsible. Interest in peer tutoring is not itself a diagnosis.

Chapter 13 has already shown why readiness cannot be compressed into one score. The roadmap carries that conclusion forward by asking institutions to identify the particular configuration of visibility, legitimacy, disciplinary ownership, workload, hierarchy, trust and technological provision that requires attention in their setting (Attard Tonna et al. 2026). Diagnosis is therefore comparative in spirit but local in decision: differences among the University of Gdańsk, the University of Split and the University of Malta orient questions rather than prescribe three fixed models.

Diagnosis should begin with the educational situation, not with the available project template. What do students find difficult to enter or understand? Which difficulties arise from demanding disciplinary study, and which are symptoms of unclear teaching, inaccessible assessment, weak communication or unavailable professional support? Where is peer proximity educationally useful, and where would a peer role merely conceal a responsibility that belongs elsewhere? These questions prevent peer tutoring from becoming a universal remedy for unrelated institutional problems.

A second diagnostic question concerns existing practices. Informal study groups, student demonstrators, mentoring schemes, academic tutoring, student societies, writing support and transition activities may already perform adjacent functions. The task is not to replace them with a new label, but to identify overlaps, gaps, possible partnerships and role conflicts. At Split, the project discussion of student demonstrators showed that implementation may require clarification and connection of existing roles rather than the invention of an entirely new structure.

The third question concerns power and participation. Students who might tutor or seek tutoring, academic teachers, professional services, disability and international offices, student representatives and programme administrators should be involved before the core model is fixed. Co-creation literature shows that partnership can challenge institutional norms but can also reproduce exclusion when the students most able to participate are already confident, available and recognised (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten 2014; Bovill et al. 2016). Diagnosis must therefore ask whose interpretation

of the problem is absent and what conditions would enable their participation.

The gate at the end of diagnosis has three possible decisions: proceed, revise or stop. Proceed means that a bounded purpose, host unit, prospective owner, basic resource commitment and credible relation to teaching and support services have been identified. Revise means that the problem is relevant but responsibilities, access or capacity remain unclear. Stop is appropriate when the proposal is primarily reputational, when peer tutors would be expected to substitute for unavailable staff or services, or when no unit is willing to own the consequences of implementation. Deciding not to implement may be more responsible than launching an attractive but unsupported programme.

14.3. Programme Design and Preparation

Once the diagnosis supports proceeding, the institution can translate purpose into a local programme design. This stage should produce an explicit theory of change, a responsibility map and an operational minimum. The theory of change should identify the proposed educational activity, the contexts in which it is expected to matter, the mechanisms through which it may work and the outcomes that could reasonably follow. It should also identify rival explanations and circumstances in which the arrangement is unlikely to help (Pawson and Tilley 1997).

The distinction between mechanism and outcome is essential. A tutor's approachable position may make help-seeking less risky; discussion may make tacit academic conventions visible; explaining may require the tutor to reorganise subject knowledge; and repeated reliable encounters may support trust. These are candidate mechanisms. They are not guaranteed effects of assigning students to pairs. Nor are they identical to proximal outcomes such as improved navigation of an assignment, more purposeful study strategies or completion of a particular course requirement. Distal outcomes such as progression, retention, graduation or wellbeing are influenced by many other conditions and require different research designs.

The responsibility map should state who is answerable for recruitment, selection, matching, training, supervision, disciplinary accuracy, referral, accessibility, data protection, complaints and evaluation. It should also state what tutors and tutees are not responsible for. A recurring weakness in institutional initiatives is that responsibility appears distributed only after a difficulty occurs, when actors discover that each assumed another unit would respond. Design should make these interfaces visible before recruitment begins.

The operational minimum is the smallest credible infrastructure within which the programme can be tested. It includes a named owner and coordinator; a bounded educational scope; transparent recruitment and selection; preparation that goes beyond information delivery; a supervisor or mentor with recognised time; a referral map tested with the relevant services; accessible meeting and digital arrangements; a proportionate data plan; and a way for participants to raise concerns or leave the programme. The detailed options developed in Chapter 13 should be adapted to the local diagnosis rather than repeated as universal rules.

Preparation should be staged. Completion of a training programme indicates exposure to concepts and practice, not readiness for unsupported work. Peer-EDU participants' distinction between increased confidence and full readiness confirms the need for a bridge into practice (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 7, 12–13). Simulation, observation, co-tutoring, shadowing, supervised first encounters and review of early cases can form such a bridge. The institution should decide which elements are necessary before independent tutoring and which can develop through supervision.

Design should also include a clear account of recognition. ECTS, micro-credentials, payment, voluntary acknowledgement and diploma supplements may each be appropriate in particular contexts. The choice should reflect workload, access and educational purpose rather than a general preference for credentialisation. Recognition that is too weak can make participation dependent upon students with surplus time; recognition that is too competitive can turn a relational contribution into a distinction scarce enough to reproduce hierarchy. The same principle applies to academic supervisors: a programme is not sustainable when student labour is recognised while staff coordination and supervision remain invisible.

14.4. A Bounded and Supported Pilot: A Proposed Next Stage

The next stage in the roadmap is prospective. Peer-EDU did not implement its planned pilot, and nothing in this section should be read as a report of completed tutoring practice. The proposal is to begin with a bounded and supported pilot that enables the institution to investigate feasibility, relations and mechanisms before making claims about effectiveness or deciding to expand.

Boundedness concerns purpose, population, duration and responsibility. A pilot should be located where there is a recognisable educational need, willing academic partners and sufficient supervisory capacity. It should be small enough for coordinators to know what is happening and varied enough to expose relevant differences in students, subjects or modalities. Its duration should allow more than a ceremonial first encounter while remaining short enough for redesign before the next cycle. The boundaries must be communicated as limits of the inquiry, not presented as the first phase of inevitable university-wide rollout.

Support should be visible at the moment when uncertainty appears. Tutors need a contact who can respond within an agreed time, not only a handbook instructing them to ask for help. Supervisors need a method for case discussion that protects tutee confidentiality. Tutees need to know the purpose of tutoring, the limits of confidentiality, how to request a different match and how to use formal academic or professional services. Academic teachers need a route through which recurring curricular difficulties can be reported without converting tutors into informants on individual students.

The first encounters should be treated as supported practice. The institution may use co-tutoring, observation with consent, debriefing or an early review meeting. Observation should not become routine surveillance of a relationship whose educational value partly depends upon relative informality. It is justified only where the purpose, consent, data use and developmental value are clear. Supervisory attention should focus on judgement, boundaries and the relation to study rather than scoring tutors against a script.

A pilot also needs predefined stop and escalation conditions. Immediate action is required where safety, harassment, discrimination, academic misconduct, persistent boundary violation or serious misinformation is involved. A programme-level pause may be needed when supervisors cannot respond, referral services do not accept cases, demand greatly exceeds safe capacity, tutor workload becomes unreasonable, or participation is systematically inaccessible to particular groups. Such signals are evidence about the institution, not simply about individual tutors.

The pilot should not be evaluated through a celebratory narrative of first success. Initial enthusiasm, attendance and positive testimony are important forms of evidence about acceptability and experience, but they cannot establish educational effectiveness. The question is whether the proposed arrangement can be enacted responsibly, for whom, under what conditions and with what unintended consequences. Table 14.2 presents the full staged roadmap and its principal decision points.

Table 14.2. The staged Peer-EDU roadmap: decisions and failure signals

Stage	Core decision	Minimum evidence or conditions	Failure signals
Purpose and values	Is peer tutoring an educationally appropriate response?	Bounded purpose; explicit relation to teaching and support; normative commitments	Vague promise of student success; primarily reputational rationale; substitution for staff or services
Institutional diagnosis	Proceed, revise or stop?	Local need; existing-practice map; student and staff participation; prospective owner and resources	No ownership; absent student voice; unresolved role conflict; inaccessible participation
Design and preparation	Is there a credible operational minimum?	Theory of change; responsibility map; recruitment, preparation, supervision, referral, accessibility and data plan	Training treated as whole system; grade-only selection; no supervisor time; untested referral pathway

Stage	Core decision	Minimum evidence or conditions	Failure signals
Bounded pilot	Can the model be enacted responsibly under real conditions?	Supported first practice; defined scope and duration; consent; stop and escalation conditions	Demand exceeds safe capacity; misinformation; boundary harms; services fail to respond; hidden workload
Evaluation and redesign	Continue, change, pause or end?	Multiple perspectives; implementation evidence; mechanism inquiry; proportionate proximal measures	Satisfaction treated as effectiveness; only positive reporting; distal claims without appropriate design
Adaptive spread and embedding	What should remain common and what should vary?	Local ownership; sustainable resources; common ethical core; capacity for supervision and review	Expansion measured only numerically; over-standardisation; credential inflation; widening inequity

Source: Authors' synthesis based on the Peer-EDU project, Pawson and Tilley (1997), Coburn (2003), Kezar (2014) and Chapter 13.

14.5. Evidence, Feedback and Programme Redesign

Feedback is not an event at the end of the pilot. It is a set of channels through which tutors, tutees, supervisors, teachers, coordinators and support services can make the programme's operation visible while it is still possible to respond. Different actors see different parts of the ecology. A tutee can describe whether the encounter made study more possible; a tutor can identify recurring misunderstandings and boundary pressures; a supervisor can recognise patterns in judgement and referral; a support unit can report whether pathways are workable; and a coordinator can see where demand, capacity and access diverge.

These perspectives should not be merged into one satisfaction score. Satisfaction concerns whether participants valued or accepted an experience.

Participation concerns reach, attendance, continuation and the distribution of access. Implementation outcomes concern whether the programme was feasible, appropriate, usable and enacted with sufficient support. Mechanisms concern what changed within the relation or participants' interpretation of study. Proximal outcomes concern changes close to the activity. Distal outcomes concern later educational or institutional trajectories. Implementation research similarly warns against treating implementation outcomes as though they were identical to service or participant outcomes (Proctor et al. 2011).

The sequence proposed here is analytical rather than strictly chronological. A mechanism may become visible during the first meeting, while some implementation problems emerge only after several cycles. Nevertheless, the sequence prevents a common inferential leap: a participant liked the programme; therefore the programme improved studying; therefore it reduced withdrawal. Each step requires its own evidence and a plausible connection to the next.

Mechanisms should be investigated rather than merely named. If trust is proposed as a mechanism, researchers should ask which practices and conditions made interpersonal risk-taking possible, whether trust was symmetrical, and whether it enabled the tutee to expose uncertainty. If cognitive or social proximity is proposed, the inquiry should examine when proximity aided explanation and when it reproduced misconception or conformity. If belonging is proposed, evidence must distinguish a valued encounter from a broader and more durable sense of membership in the university.

Proximal outcomes should remain educationally specific. Possible indicators include increased clarity about an assignment, more purposeful help-seeking, improved capacity to explain disciplinary reasoning, stronger use of feedback, or more active participation in a course. Each requires suitable measures and a baseline or comparative logic if change is claimed. Course marks may be relevant in some designs, but they are affected by assessment, prior attainment, teaching and selection into tutoring. They should not displace qualitative evidence about how studying changed.

Distal outcomes require the greatest caution. Retention, progression, graduation and wellbeing may be legitimate long-term research questions, particularly where the theory of change specifies mechanisms through

which peer tutoring could contribute. They cannot be attributed to a short pilot without longitudinal evidence, adequate comparison and attention to confounding conditions. A programme may be educationally valuable without changing a distal institutional indicator; an apparent change in retention may occur without the tutoring relationship being its cause.

Redesign should follow the evidence rather than protect the original model. Possible decisions include continuing with minor adjustments, redesigning training or matching, changing the programme's scope, increasing supervisory capacity, correcting teaching or assessment problems revealed through tutoring, or suspending the programme. Negative and mixed findings are not project failure. They are the means through which the framework becomes less abstract and more answerable to context. Table 14.3 specifies the evaluation sequence and the claims each level can support.

Table 14.3. Evaluation sequence and permissible claims

Analytical level	Illustrative questions or indicators	What the evidence may support	What it cannot establish alone
Implementation conditions	Ownership, resources, supervisor availability, referral response, accessibility, feasibility	Whether a credible programme was made available and operated as intended or adapted	Educational benefit or participant change
Reach and participation	Who was invited, selected, matched, attended, continued or withdrew; equity of access	Who the programme reached and where participation barriers occurred	Quality of tutoring or effectiveness
Experience and acceptability	Satisfaction, psychological safety, perceived usefulness, burden, legitimacy	How participants experienced and accepted the programme	Improved studying, course performance or retention

Analytical level	Illustrative questions or indicators	What the evidence may support	What it cannot establish alone
Candidate mechanisms	Trust, help-seeking, cognitive/social proximity, academic navigation, reflective explanation, recognition	How and under what conditions the relation may have generated change	That the mechanism necessarily produced an outcome
Proximal educational outcomes	Clarity about tasks, study strategies, disciplinary explanation, feedback use, course participation	Changes close to the tutoring activity when measured with a suitable design	Long-term progression, graduation or wellbeing
Distal outcomes	Progression, re-enrolment, withdrawal, graduation, longer-term wellbeing	Long-term association or contribution only with longitudinal, comparative and context-sensitive evidence	Simple causal attribution to peer tutoring

Source: Authors' proposed sequence, informed by Pawson and Tilley (1997), Proctor et al. (2011) and the evidential distinctions developed throughout this book.

14.6. Scaling through Adaptation, Not Replication

Scaling should begin only after the institution can describe what has been implemented, what appears to matter and which problems remain unresolved. More tutors, sessions or faculties do not by themselves constitute educational scale. Building on the dimensions introduced in Chapter 13, expansion should be judged by whether educational depth, local ownership, supervisory capacity and continuing adaptation survive growth (Coburn 2003).

The framework therefore distinguishes a common core from a local design space. The common core includes a stated educational purpose; bounded roles; continuing responsibility of teachers and institutions; preparation,

supervision and referral; accessibility; proportionate data practices; and evaluation that separates experience, mechanisms and outcomes. These are not identical procedures, but questions to which every local model must provide a credible answer.

The local design space includes disciplinary focus, individual or group formats, near-peer distance, matching criteria, face-to-face or hybrid provision, timing, examples used in training, forms of recognition and the organisational home of the programme. Adaptation is not a deviation from fidelity when the object of fidelity is an educational purpose and ethical architecture rather than a fixed script. Kezar's analysis of institutional change similarly shows that change becomes durable through sense-making, networks, local leadership and alignment with institutional culture, not through a technical act of dissemination alone (Kezar 2014).

Scaling may be horizontal rather than vertical. A community of practice can connect several small programmes, enabling coordinators, tutors and supervisors to share cases, resources and questions while preserving local responsibility (Wenger 1998). A central unit can provide standards, training support and evaluation capacity without controlling every match or conversation. The appropriate structure may therefore be a network with a light centre rather than a single university-wide service.

Failure signals during scaling include falling supervision ratios, increasing waiting times, recruitment dominated by one social group, routine use of tutors to compensate for inaccessible teaching, pressure to report only positive indicators, and a growing gap between the official model and local practice. Another signal is credential inflation: participation becomes attractive principally because it confers competitive distinction. Szkudlarek and Zepke help name the broader danger of capture, in which the language of agency, engagement and community is reorganised around performance, retention and institutional reputation (Szkudlarek 2001; Zepke 2017). Scaling is defensible only when growth does not destroy the educational relation it is meant to extend.

14.7. Recommendations for University Leadership

University leaders should begin by authorising a purpose, not merely endorsing an initiative. Their first responsibility is to decide what educational good the institution is prepared to protect and what obligations it will not transfer to students. A public statement of support is insufficient when no unit owns coordination, no workload is recognised and no budget exists after the project period. Institutional change also has a relational dimension, requiring communication, cooperation and relationship-building across organisational boundaries (Ostrowska et al. 2025).

Leadership should establish a multi-year but reviewable resource commitment for coordination, preparation, supervision, accessibility and evaluation. Reviewability matters because sustainability is not an entitlement to permanent continuation. The programme should be capable of being changed, paused or ended when evidence shows that it lacks educational value or cannot be supported responsibly. Leaders must therefore protect the right to report difficulty rather than make programme survival dependent upon constant success narratives.

A second task is to align responsibility across organisational boundaries. Peer tutoring commonly crosses teaching, student affairs, quality assurance, disability support, counselling, digital services and student representation. Senior sponsorship can make cooperation possible, but ownership should remain close enough to the educational setting for local knowledge to influence decisions. The preferred arrangement is distributed leadership with named answerability, not a committee in which everyone supports the programme and nobody can decide.

A third task is to recognise labour without converting every contribution into a performance metric. Tutors may need payment, credit or formal acknowledgement; supervisors and coordinators need workload recognition and career legitimacy. Leadership should examine which students are excluded by unpaid participation and whether recognition mechanisms intensify competition. Investment in peer tutoring is justified only as part of

investment in teaching and academic community, not as a less expensive substitute for either.

Finally, leaders should ask what the programme reveals about the university itself. Repeated requests for help with one assignment may indicate a curricular or communication problem. Persistent emotional crises may indicate insufficient professional services. Low uptake may reflect stigma, scheduling or mistrust rather than student apathy. Treating peer tutoring as an institutional sensor requires leaders to respond to what becomes visible, including evidence that points beyond the programme.

14.8. Recommendations for Academic Teachers and Supervisors

Academic teachers should remain responsible for the educational architecture within which peer tutoring occurs. This includes the curriculum, the accuracy and accessibility of teaching, assessment requirements and the interpretation of disciplinary standards. A peer tutor can help another student enter these practices, but should not become the person expected to repair unclear teaching or mediate every difficulty between a course and its students.

Teachers involved in programme design should identify where peer explanation and shared inquiry are educationally appropriate. They can clarify threshold concepts, common misconceptions, relevant resources and the limits of permissible assistance. They should also make explicit that seeking peer support is a legitimate academic practice rather than evidence of deficiency. This is different from directing only low-performing students to tutoring, which can stigmatise tutees and turn matching into deficit classification.

Supervisors should support judgement rather than provide scripts for every situation. Their task is to help tutors interpret cases, check uncertain disciplinary explanations, maintain boundaries, learn from experience and recognise when a matter belongs elsewhere. They should be reachable through ordinary consultation and more structured case discussion, with clear escalation for safety, academic integrity and serious misconduct.

Supervision must have recognised time; otherwise the programme depends upon hidden goodwill and becomes fragile precisely when demand increases.

Academic staff should also listen to patterns emerging from tutoring. Confidentiality prevents the circulation of identifiable stories, but aggregated themes can inform course review. If several tutors report that students cannot interpret the same criterion, the response should include examination of the criterion and teaching, not only additional tutor training. Peer tutoring contributes to educational improvement when information travels back towards those who can change institutional conditions.

14.9. Recommendations for Peer Tutors and Tutees

Peer tutors should enter the role voluntarily and with a realistic account of its scope. Their responsibility is to prepare, listen, ask, explain when appropriate, acknowledge uncertainty, protect agreed confidentiality and use consultation or referral. They are not responsible for producing another student's success, resolving a mental-health crisis, adjudicating assessment, or compensating for unavailable teaching and services. The freedom to say 'I do not know' or 'this is beyond my role' is part of responsible practice, not a failure of competence.

Tutors should treat conversational methods as resources for judgement rather than techniques applied to a passive recipient. The Question Funnel, GROW, active listening and feedforward were central to the Peer-EDU training and valued in its evaluation, but participants also warned about density, repetition and uncertainty in difficult cases (Peer-EDU 2025a; Jendza and Jendza 2026). A good session is not one in which the tutor displays the greatest number of tools. It is one in which the tutee can work more intelligently and independently with the matter under study.

Tutees should be recognised as participants, not as programme objects. They should know why the programme exists, what the tutor can and cannot offer, how information is handled and how to change or end an arrangement. They retain responsibility for preparation, decisions and academic

integrity. At the same time, responsibility should not be confused with deserving whatever barriers the institution creates. Tutees must be able to report an inaccessible arrangement, unsafe interaction or unsuitable match without being blamed for insufficient engagement.

Both parties should be able to negotiate a simple working agreement concerning purpose, timing, communication, preparation, confidentiality and ending the relationship. Mutuality becomes visible when the tutor can be questioned and the tutee can refuse advice, while both remain answerable to the subject matter and agreed boundaries. Neither friendship nor trust should be required in advance; they may emerge through reliable shared practice.

14.10. Recommendations for Quality Assurance and Student-Support Units

Quality assurance should protect educational integrity without turning every tutoring encounter into auditable data. The first task is to define the minimum information needed for coordination, safeguarding, equity and evaluation. Attendance, modality and broad purpose may be necessary; detailed personal narratives usually are not. Data should be retained for a stated period, accessed by named roles and separated from assessment records unless a clear legal and educational justification exists.

Quality processes should examine implementation before judging effects. Was the programme accessible? Were tutors prepared and supported? Did supervisors respond? Were referrals accepted? Did matching procedures operate fairly? Did participants understand the role? Proctor et al.'s distinction between implementation and participant outcomes is useful here, provided that concepts developed in another service field are adapted cautiously to higher education (Proctor et al. 2011). A programme should not be condemned for failing to change retention when the immediate question was whether a responsible model could be enacted.

Equity monitoring should consider both tutors and tutees. Who applies, who is selected, who attends training, who completes the role, who seeks help, who withdraws and who remains absent? Interpretation must attend

to timetables, paid work, disability, language, caring responsibilities, digital access and the symbolic meaning of asking for help. Universal-design and inclusive-pedagogy perspectives support anticipatory flexibility but also warn that accommodation alone does not resolve unequal recognition or participation (Stentiford and Koutsouris 2021; Arqus European University Alliance 2023).

Student-support units should participate in designing referral pathways and test whether those pathways are credible. A flowchart is not a service. Units need agreed contact points, response expectations and feedback routes that preserve confidentiality while allowing coordinators to know whether the system works. Where capacity is insufficient, this should be treated as an institutional condition requiring action, not as evidence that tutors need more training in emotional support.

Quality assurance should finally create space for dissent. Tutors, tutees and staff must be able to say that a metric distorts practice, a procedure excludes participants or a credential changes motivation. The framework's values become meaningful only when they can be used to criticise the framework's own operation. The resulting distribution of non-delegable responsibilities is summarised in Table 14.4.

Table 14.4. Distributed but non-substitutable responsibilities

Actor	Non-delegable responsibility	Contribution to the shared framework
University leadership	Purpose, ownership, stable resources, workload recognition and response to institutional problems	Authorises, funds and periodically re-authorises the programme
Programme owner and coordinator	Operational coherence, recruitment, matching, communication, data and complaints	Connects local actors and ensures that procedures remain usable
Academic teachers and supervisors	Teaching, curriculum, assessment, disciplinary standards and supported judgement	Identify appropriate scope, supervise tutors and respond to recurring educational issues

Actor	Non-delegable responsibility	Contribution to the shared framework
Quality assurance and support units	Proportionate evaluation, accessibility and professional response within their remit	Test referral routes, monitor equity and keep implementation distinct from impact claims
Peer tutors	Integrity of their conduct, preparation, boundaries, honest use of knowledge and consultation	Facilitate shared study without replacing teachers, advisers or therapists
Tutees	Their own studying, choices, preparation and academic integrity	Shape goals, question interpretations and report barriers or unsafe practice
Student representatives and communities	Representation without claiming to speak for every student	Co-design communication, access, recognition and review
SEA-EU (or other alliance) partners	Respect for local ownership and data governance	Share resources, comparative inquiry and communities of practice without imposing uniformity

Source: Authors' synthesis of the Peer-EDU responsibility architecture.

14.11. Cross-University Cooperation and the SEA-EU Context

Peer-EDU originated through cooperation among three SEA-EU universities. Cross-university work made differences in terminology, authority, support structures and academic culture visible. Its value lies less in producing a single transnational model than in creating a comparative space in which local assumptions can be questioned. The three institutions can therefore continue to cooperate without requiring identical programmes.

A SEA-EU layer can support a shared ethical, legal and educational minimum: common distinctions among tutoring, teaching, advising and therapy; principles for confidentiality and referral; recognition of accessibility; and agreement that training completion is not equivalent to independent readiness. It can also support shared resources, translated materials, trainer development and reciprocal peer review of local designs. These common

elements should reduce unnecessary duplication while leaving programme ownership within each institution.

A cross-university community of practice could connect coordinators, supervisors and student tutors. Case-based seminars, annual design reviews and short exchanges can make tacit knowledge available across sites (Wenger 1998). The international Peer-EDU training suggests that participants valued perspective-taking, friendship and collaboration across cultural settings, but the evidence concerns nineteen survey respondents after one short programme and should not be generalised to later practice (Jendza and Jendza 2026: 14–15). Future cooperation should examine when internationality deepens inquiry and when language, mobility or status differences restrict participation.

Shared evaluation can be valuable when it preserves contextual interpretation. A common core of questions may allow comparison of reach, implementation and candidate mechanisms. Local teams should retain the ability to add questions relevant to disciplinary and institutional conditions. Comparative dashboards are useful only when they do not rank universities on incomparable indicators or encourage strategic reporting. The purpose of comparison is learning across difference, not competition for the most successful peer tutoring brand.

SEA-EU cooperation may also enable research designs beyond the capacity of one small programme: longitudinal follow-up, comparative case studies, realist evaluation and analysis of how different recognition or supervision arrangements operate. Such research should begin only after local provision is ethically and organisationally credible. The alliance is not a justification for scaling before readiness; it is an infrastructure for shared inquiry into adaptation.

14.12. Sustainability beyond Project Funding

Project funding can create time for inquiry, international meetings, training design and experimentation. It can also conceal the ordinary cost of continuation. Sustainability begins when the university decides which functions must enter regular structures: coordination, tutor preparation, supervision,

referral, accessible infrastructure, evaluation and renewal of materials. A programme that survives only through the unpaid overwork of a small founding group has not become sustainable; it has deferred recognition of its costs.

Embedding should be selective. Peer tutoring may be connected to programme review, transition provision, teaching-development centres, student-support strategies and workload systems. It need not be absorbed into every policy or transformed into a permanent central bureaucracy. Jendza's analysis of university cultures cautions against imagining the institution as one coherent order: cultures of meeting, development, competition and work coexist and can pull the programme towards different purposes (Jendza 2020a). Sustainability requires an organisational home capable of negotiating these logics without losing the educational purpose.

Succession is as important as funding. Coordinators and supervisors leave; trained tutors graduate; project knowledge becomes dispersed. Documentation should therefore include decisions and rationales, not only forms. A community of practice, induction for new staff, student representation in governance and periodic review can prevent the programme from depending upon personal memory. At the same time, documentation must remain light enough to be used and revised.

Sustainability also requires periodic re-authorisation. Each cycle should ask whether the original educational need remains, whether participants still experience the programme as legitimate, whether access has widened, whether responsibilities remain workable and whether the institution has acted on problems revealed through tutoring. Continuation should not be automatic merely because a programme has acquired a name, logo or credential.

The financial question should be answered openly. Stable provision requires a budget proportionate to the programme's scope and risk. Leaders should compare the costs not only with anticipated outcomes but also with the ethical cost of unsupported student labour and with alternative investments in teaching, advising or professional services. Peer tutoring should be funded because the institution values students' contribution to shared study, not because students are cheaper than qualified staff.

The most important form of sustainability is cultural. A programme becomes durable when asking for help is not stigmatised, tutors can acknowledge uncertainty, teachers remain receptive to what students make visible, and the university recognises relationships as part of its educational infrastructure. Barnett's ecological university, Masschelein and Simons' public study and the idea of university friendship all point beyond programme survival towards a university capable of sustaining common attention and answerability (Barnett 2018; Masschelein and Simons 2018; Rutkowiak 2010).

The Peer-EDU framework is therefore a roadmap rather than a blueprint. Its value lies in making visible how knowledge, relationships and responsibility are organised when students take on educational roles. Peer tutoring does not offer a simple resolution to the contemporary university's problems, but it reveals the conditions under which shared study becomes possible. Ultimately, the future of the framework depends upon institutions willing not only to adopt its structure, but to be changed by what its application reveals.

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This book began with a practical concern: how might universities support students entering unfamiliar academic worlds without interpreting every difficulty as an individual deficit? Peer tutoring offered one possible response. Yet the project quickly displaced the question that had produced it. Once students are invited to support one another's study, other questions become unavoidable: who may exercise educational authority, how knowledge is made available, what kinds of relation sustain study, and what the university must continue to do when students assume responsibilities within it.

Peer-EDU leaves these questions deliberately open. The project completed a literature review, a comparative diagnostic study across the University of Gdańsk, the University of Malta and the University of Split, an international preparation programme for students, a separate programme for academic mentors, post-training evaluation and a prospective implementation framework. The planned pilot of sustained tutor–tutee relationships did not take place. Accordingly, the project cannot demonstrate effects on attainment, progression, retention, graduation or wellbeing, nor can it show how matching, supervision and referral would have worked over time. That limit has been stated where it matters throughout the book; here it serves a different purpose. It marks the boundary between what Peer-EDU has learned and what a future programme would still have to discover in practice (Jendza et al. 2026; Attard Tonna et al. 2026; Jendza and Jendza 2026).

A conclusion to such an inquiry should not reproduce the argument chapter by chapter. The preceding parts have already examined transition, belonging, student authorship, knowledge, authority, care, the tutor role, programme design, training experience, mentoring and institutional

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architecture. The task now is narrower: to ask what becomes visible when these strands are read together. Peer tutoring is useful for this purpose precisely because it is a small practice. It places students, knowledge and institutional responsibility close enough to one another for tensions that are often dispersed across the university to become difficult to ignore.

The orientation remains neither celebratory nor denunciatory. The language of agency can conceal delegated labour; support can become a substitute for adequate teaching; participation can be recruited into retention and performance agendas. These possibilities require critique. But critique alone does not tell us what should be sustained. Post-critical pedagogy is helpful because it combines vigilance towards capture with an affirmative question about educational practices worth caring for (Hodgson, Vlieghe and Zamojski 2017; 2018). Studying with peers is approached here in that spirit: not as a proven solution, but as a practice whose promise and danger disclose something about the university that hosts it.

1. What Became Visible through Peer-EDU

The project first made visible how much university study depends upon knowledge that is not contained in the curriculum. Students encounter disciplinary vocabularies, forms of argument, assessment conventions, expectations of independence and institutional procedures that experienced members often no longer notice as requiring explanation. Admission grants formal membership; it does not distribute equal access to the interpretative resources through which academic life becomes readable. The diagnostic material from all three universities repeatedly brought academic and relational concerns together: participants spoke about understanding, confidence, communication, integration and knowing where to turn when something was unclear (Attard Tonna et al. 2026).

This does not mean that transition should be transferred to peer tutors. Earlier chapters have already shown why such a move would be both pedagogically and institutionally inadequate. What Peer-EDU adds is evidence that the boundary between 'academic' and 'social' support is less stable in practice than organisational structures sometimes imply. A question about

an assignment can contain uncertainty about whether one belongs in the programme; a difficulty in approaching an academic teacher can affect whether disciplinary confusion is ever voiced; a conversation about study may reveal that the real obstacle lies in an inaccessible procedure. The categories remain useful, but students encounter them in entangled form.

The comparative dimension sharpened this finding. The three partner universities did not provide three versions of the same institutional background. Existing tutoring traditions, degrees of centralisation, faculty autonomy, support structures, language, workload concerns and assumptions about academic authority altered what peer tutoring could plausibly mean in each setting. The same label could be heard as an extension of tutoring already familiar to the institution, as a new student-support mechanism, as a possible intrusion into teacher responsibility or as a form of student participation. Context does more than facilitate or obstruct implementation after a programme has been designed. It participates in defining the programme itself (Attard Tonna et al. 2026; Jendza 2020a).

Peer-EDU also exposed the distance between preparation and enactment. Forty-six students completed the international training, and the nineteen respondents to the post-training survey evaluated it very positively. Most reported increased confidence. Yet only seven described themselves as fully ready to begin tutoring, while the remainder selected 'mostly' or 'not yet'. Their requests concerned shadowing, local procedures, access to mentors, more difficult cases and somebody to contact when the situation exceeded what had been rehearsed (Jendza and Jendza 2026). Academic teachers were prepared for prospective mentoring roles through separate workshops at all three partner universities. Academic mentors participating in the University of Gdańsk workshop likewise anticipated the need for consultation and collegial support (Godlewska-Werner and Jendza 2026).

In this sense, the unrealised pilot is more than a methodological absence. It prevents the project from closing the distance between an educational idea and its institutional life through optimistic inference. A persuasive curriculum, motivated participants and carefully formulated roles do not yet constitute a practice. Between them lies organisation: matching, timing, rooms, communication, supervision, response capacity, recognition, trust and the mundane reliability of people and services. Educational innovation

often becomes most revealing at precisely this point, when the language of intention encounters the ordinary conditions of university work.

2. From Supporting Students to Making Study Possible

Peer tutoring can and should be useful. A student who receives a clearer explanation, understands an assessment convention or discovers how to approach a difficult text has not received an inferior form of education merely because the assistance was practical. The problem begins when usefulness is organised through a repair model in which the student is the only object expected to change. If the same confusion recurs because an assessment task is opaque, if help is needed because teaching is inaccessible, or if students cannot locate an existing service, a tutoring programme that becomes increasingly efficient at compensating for these conditions may actually make the institutional problem harder to see.

The earlier chapters used the language of *studying* deliberately. There is no need to restate the critique of learnification developed there. Its consequence for the argument is simple: an educational account of peer tutoring must retain the matter being studied. A tutoring encounter is not made educational by warmth, participation or conversational technique alone. Tutor and tutee meet around something that can resist both of them: a text, concept, problem, method, case or practice whose demands cannot be reduced to either participant's preference (Biesta 2010; 2012).

This changes the meaning of proximity. The value of a near-peer is not that a student replaces academic expertise with a more comfortable source of answers. It lies in the possibility that recent experience can make difficult practices more speakable and interpretable. A tutor may remember the point at which a concept first became intelligible, the confusion produced by an unfamiliar convention or the informal strategy that helped them begin. That memory can create a route into study. It can also be wrong, partial or overly confident. Peer proximity therefore becomes educationally

interesting only when it remains connected to disciplinary sources, academic teachers and the possibility of correction.

Publicness gives this account a wider horizon. The argument developed earlier can now be used without repeating its theoretical exposition: a university becomes more public when access to serious engagement with knowledge widens beyond those who already possess the habits and networks of insiders (Masschelein and Simons 2018; Zamojski 2015). Peer tutoring can enact a modest version of this gesture by making a difficult concept, convention or problem discussable between students. It neither democratises knowledge by declaring all interpretations equal nor protects it by reserving legitimate speech for staff. It widens the routes through which a matter can be approached.

This is why the distinction between academic support and educational participation matters. Support addresses a difficulty. Shared study can also alter who is recognised as capable of contributing to the intellectual life of the university. The difference need not be announced in every tutoring session. It becomes visible in the cumulative organisation of the practice: whether students are treated as cases to be processed, or as persons who may ask, explain, challenge, revise and bring another person into closer contact with a matter worth studying.

3. Students as Contributors without Becoming Substitutes

One of the book's recurring claims has been that students can become co-authors of parts of their educational environment. By the conclusion, that proposition needs less definition and more qualification. Peer-EDU shows several forms of contribution: students participated in diagnostic research, interpreted the tutor role during training, criticised the programme in its evaluation, and later brought their own accounts into the public space of the *Viva Dydaktyka* conference. In these moments, they were not merely recipients of an intervention. They became sources of interpretation about what the project was becoming.

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Such contribution does not erase the distinction between student and academic teacher. The point is not to celebrate horizontalism or to distribute every educational task to whoever is willing to perform it. The distinction remains productive because different actors possess different knowledge, authority and obligations. A student tutor can make an explanation accessible without becoming responsible for the curriculum. A tutee can question the tutor without determining what counts as adequate disciplinary evidence. Academic teachers retain responsibility for teaching and assessment; professional services retain responsibilities that require specialist competence; the institution retains responsibility for the conditions in which participation is invited.

The danger is delegation disguised as partnership. Student activity can become attractive to institutions precisely because it appears developmental, voluntary and relatively inexpensive. Under such conditions, the language of co-authorship may legitimise the transfer of work without a corresponding transfer of resources, authority or recognition. The critical literature on student partnership warns that participation can privilege those who already possess confidence, time and cultural legitimacy (Cook-Sather, Bovill and Felten 2014; Bovill et al. 2016; Mercer-Mapstone et al. 2017). Peer tutoring adds another dimension: access to the tutor role itself can become stratified through grade-based selection, unpaid labour or credential competition.

For this reason, the tutee's authorship matters as much as the tutor's. A tutoring programme becomes paternalistic when only the helping student is imagined as active. The tutee's questions can unsettle an explanation, expose an ambiguity and alter the direction of the encounter. Their refusal to accept an interpretation or to continue a particular match is not noise around the programme; it is part of the educational situation. The tutor's task is not to produce compliance with assistance but to create conditions in which another person's intellectual activity can continue.

The project materials offer only preliminary evidence of such a shift in role identity, since they come from preparation rather than sustained practice. Even so, remarks such as 'tutors don't know everything' and the description of helping another person reach a solution rather than receiving it ready-made are significant (Jendza and Jendza 2026). They suggest that

some participants began to detach helpfulness from omniscience. That is a modest change, but an important one: educational contribution becomes compatible with not knowing, and authority becomes compatible with leaving room for another person's judgement.

Co-authorship acquires institutional significance only when contributions can travel. If tutors repeatedly encounter the same ambiguous assessment instruction, inaccessible procedure or gap in support, the resulting pattern should not remain inside a series of private conversations. At the same time, neither tutors nor tutees should become informal auditors of one another or data sources for a system hungry for continuous monitoring. The educational challenge is to allow experience to inform teaching and organisation without appropriating confidential encounters. Students become consequential contributors when the university can learn from what they make visible while still carrying the responsibility to act.

4. The University around the Encounter

Part IV turned from persons to architecture. Its main implication can be expressed without repeating the detailed framework: the institution's most legitimate object of intervention is the ecology around the tutoring encounter, not every movement within it. Purpose, access, selection, preparation, matching, safeguarding, supervision, recognition, spaces, data practices and evaluation require deliberate organisation. The conversation itself requires something different: room for judgement, hesitation, humour, disagreement, reformulation and the possibility that the planned route will cease to be useful.

This is not a romantic defence of informality. Unstructured arrangements often privilege those who already possess social networks, discretionary time, confidence and familiarity with institutional life. Visible entry routes, accessible spaces, recognised roles and reliable referral can enlarge rather than diminish freedom. Formalisation becomes educationally problematic when it begins to own the interaction it was introduced to protect: when conversational scripts replace judgement, monitoring replaces trust, or certification becomes the principal reason to participate.

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The distinction among formal, informal and deliberately non-formalised dimensions of university life developed earlier in the book is helpful precisely because it avoids a binary choice (Jendza 2020a). Some elements should be formal because rights and responsibilities depend upon them. Some can remain flexible because disciplines, students and circumstances differ. Others should be protected from exhaustive formalisation because their meaning depends upon responsiveness between persons. The point is not to locate a universally correct quantity of regulation but to ask what each rule is protecting, whose risk it addresses and what educational possibility it may inadvertently close.

Supervision illustrates the same logic. The mentor pathway designed within Peer-EDU did not seek to place an academic observer inside every tutoring encounter. It created a place to which uncertainty could return. That difference is crucial. A university that invites students to take responsibility needs channels through which responsibility can move when the limits of the student role are reached. Consultation, referral and case discussion are not signs that autonomy has failed. They are part of an architecture that makes limited autonomy credible.

Recognition and resources belong to this architecture as well. The book has considered ECTS, micro-credentials, certificates, payment and workload allocation not because recognition is an administrative afterthought, but because different arrangements shape who can participate and what the role comes to mean. Unpaid contribution may exclude students who cannot afford to volunteer. Competitive credentials may turn mutual assistance into distinction. Invisible supervisory labour may leave nominal support unavailable in practice. These questions cannot be settled by a universal reward model. They require institutions to acknowledge that relational educational work has material conditions.

The same principle should govern evaluation. The prospective framework developed in Chapters 13 and 14 distinguishes implementation, reach, experience, possible mechanisms and educational outcomes because these answer different questions. The conclusion need not repeat the full sequence. What matters is the discipline it imposes on institutional storytelling. Positive testimony is valuable evidence of experience; it is not a shortcut to claims of effectiveness. Participation numbers show reach,

not quality. Retention may eventually be a legitimate research question, but it cannot retrospectively define the meaning of every tutoring relationship. Evidence is strongest when it allows the programme to become more answerable, not merely more defensible.

5. The Relational University as a Question of Answerability

The expression *relational university* has appeared throughout this book, but its meaning should not be sentimentalised at the end. It does not describe a university in which everyone feels close, hierarchy disappears or conflict is resolved through goodwill. Relations can exclude, dominate, exhaust and misrecognise. What makes relationality educationally significant is that the university acknowledges dependence without turning it into either weakness or licence to withdraw responsibility.

Peer tutoring makes this especially visible because knowledge, authority and responsibility cannot be kept in separate institutional boxes once two students begin to study together. Knowledge arrives through persons, texts, curricula and disciplinary practices. Authority moves: the tutor may temporarily know more about one problem, the tutee may expose the inadequacy of an explanation, the teacher may need to re-enter when disciplinary judgement is required. Responsibility also moves, but it should remain traceable. The educational quality of the encounter depends not on eliminating these movements but on preventing them from becoming invisible.

This is where the idea of modes of meeting becomes consequential. Earlier work on academic cultures argued that meetings do not merely express a university that already exists; through ways of confronting, avoiding, recognising or attempting to understand one another, participants reproduce particular spectres of the institution (Jendza 2020b). A peer tutoring encounter is similarly generative on a small scale. It can become a display of competence, an exchange of shortcuts, an avoidance of difficult knowledge, or a meeting in which another person's attempt to understand is taken seriously. The name of the programme cannot decide which mode appears.

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The relational university is therefore less an institutional identity than a test of arrangement. Does the organisation of study allow uncertainty to be voiced without humiliation? Can authority be exercised without monopolising thought? Can students contribute without their contribution becoming a substitute for teaching or professional support? Can the university learn from difficulties that emerge in local encounters? Can it provide enough structure for participation to be equitable while leaving enough openness for a meeting to remain responsive to what actually happens? These questions are more demanding than declaring relationality as a value because they can be asked of budgets, timetables, assessment practices, rooms, workload models and data systems as well as of interpersonal conduct.

This public dimension also changes the standard by which institutional answerability should be judged. The question is not only whether students can reach a programme, but whether the university remains open to what their participation discloses: opaque conventions, inaccessible teaching, uneven recognition or forms of knowledge that have become unnecessarily private. Peer tutoring is consequential when such signals can travel back towards those with authority to alter conditions, rather than ending as information held inside the dyad.

Barnett's ecological university helps extend this conclusion beyond the dyad (Barnett 2018). A tutoring relationship belongs simultaneously to an ecology of persons, knowledge, institutional practices and wider social conditions. Its value cannot be assessed by isolating one participant's gain. A programme that improves confidence while exhausting tutors, widens access in one faculty while concentrating resources away from another, or raises retention by masking an avoidable curricular problem would demand a more complicated judgement. Educational goods can conflict. A relational university is one that remains answerable to those conflicts rather than resolving them rhetorically through the language of community.

The post-critical register matters here once again. To affirm peer tutoring is not to believe that peer relations are pure. It is to judge that there is something worth protecting in the possibility that students might place knowledge between themselves, take one another's questions seriously and help keep study open. Critique protects that possibility from appropriation;

institutional responsibility gives it conditions in which it can exist; educational judgement determines, each time imperfectly, what should happen next.

6. What Remains to Be Studied

The research agenda now begins where the project could not continue: inside sustained tutoring practice. The first requirement is descriptive before it is evaluative. Researchers need to observe how relationships begin, what tutors and tutees actually do across repeated meetings, how aims change, when direct explanation replaces questioning, how disagreement is handled and what happens when one participant wishes to stop. Interviews, observation, case reconstruction and reflective records could illuminate successful encounters, but also failed matches, refusals, interruptions and situations that participants themselves consider unhelpful. Without these cases, the field risks learning only from relationships that survive long enough to be counted as successes.

A second task concerns the institutional routes surrounding practice. Supervision should be studied as something that happens, not assumed from the presence of a named mentor. How quickly can tutors obtain consultation? What do supervisors do with uncertainty? Which cases are referred and which remain within tutoring? Do professional services receive referrals in the way the programme anticipates? Do recurring issues travel back to academic teachers or programme leaders? Following such trajectories would show whether the institution can convert dispersed experience into institutional learning without violating confidentiality.

Third, equity and labour require longitudinal attention. Who becomes a tutor, who seeks assistance and who remains absent are questions that precede any outcome analysis. Payment, ECTS, micro-credentials, scheduling, language, disability access, caring responsibilities and commuting may change participation in different ways. Research should therefore examine recognition not only as motivation but as distribution: whose contribution becomes possible, whose labour is valued, and whether formal recognition gradually converts peer tutoring into a competitive asset. Capture is

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a temporal process. It can only be understood by watching what happens as a programme becomes visible, resourced and scalable.

Fourth, disciplinary difference should become an object of inquiry rather than a nuisance to standardisation. The authority appropriate to helping with a mathematical proof, clinical reasoning, laboratory practice, academic writing or an interpretative text cannot be assumed to be identical. Comparative case studies could examine what near-peer expertise means in different fields, how tutors negotiate uncertainty and when the presence of an academic teacher becomes necessary. Cross-university cooperation within SEA-EU could make such comparison especially fruitful if common questions are combined with respect for local meanings rather than converted into ranking.

Finally, outcome research should follow a clear inferential order. Implementation, reach, experience, mechanisms, proximal educational changes and distal institutional outcomes are analytically distinct. Satisfaction may justify redesigning or retaining a training element; it does not demonstrate improved study. A change in confidence may be meaningful; it is not equivalent to disciplinary mastery. Retention, progression and graduation require longitudinal and comparative designs capable of addressing selection and alternative explanations. Realist evaluation is particularly appropriate because the most useful question is unlikely to be whether peer tutoring works in the abstract, but what particular arrangements become educationally valuable for whom, under what conditions and through which mechanisms (Pawson and Tilley 1997).

These empirical questions should always remain connected to philosophical ones. Research that becomes increasingly precise about effects can still lose sight of what the activity is for. Future studies should ask how tutoring alters participants' relation to knowledge, how dependence and independence are interpreted, how educational authority is recognised and contested, and what kinds of membership become possible through asking for or offering help. Such questions are not alternatives to rigorous evaluation. They are what allow an indicator to be interpreted as evidence about education rather than merely about programme performance.

Peer-EDU began from a relatively modest conviction: students might be able to support one another's study more intentionally than the university

usually recognises. The project did not demonstrate that this possibility had been realised in sustained practice. What it produced instead was a body of evidence, educational designs and institutional questions that make future implementation more difficult to romanticise and more possible to examine responsibly.

The findings challenge two equally reductive accounts of peer tutoring: that peer relations naturally generate equality and community, and that institutionalisation inevitably converts them into instruments of efficiency and control. The Peer-EDU experience supports neither conclusion. Peer relations can reproduce hierarchy, just as institutions can exploit participation. However, deliberate organisation can create conditions where knowledge is approached differently, uncertainty is openly addressed, and students enrich the educational environment without substituting for institutional responsibility.

The decisive question is therefore not whether the university should intervene or withdraw, but what it must hold, what it can share and what it should leave open. It must teach, resource, recognise and respond when peer relations reach their limits. It should also permit students to question, interpret, assist, decline and revise what is being designed. The result will not be a frictionless community. A university worthy of the name contains disagreement, asymmetry, unfinished knowledge and competing responsibilities.

Studying with peers finally reveals that the university is made not only through curricula, regulations and strategies, but through *modes of meeting around matters* judged worthy of attention. The university becomes relational not when it transfers education to students, but when it creates conditions in which students, teachers and knowledge can meet – and accepts responsibility for what those meetings make possible, what they reproduce and what they leave unresolved.

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