

Staff Guide to Personal Tutoring

**Teaching and Learning Support,
University of Plymouth**

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What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide is to be read alongside [The University of Plymouth's Policy on Personal Tutoring](#)¹, and any Faculty or School-specific policies or guidance. The aim is to articulate good practice regarding the various strands of the personal tutoring role. Schools or Faculties may wish to adapt this guide, or use portions of it, when defining local policies or guidance.

What is a personal tutor?

“Personal tutors are...a sustained and first point of reference for individual students on pastoral or academic matters. The role is a pro-active, developmental one.”

University of Plymouth's Policy on Personal Tutoring, 2016

Personal tutors are typically academic members of staff who, alongside other roles (e.g. teaching, research), provide general academic guidance and personal support to a number of identified students (tutees). Normally, tutees are drawn from programme(s) on which personal tutors teach. The University's policy details the precise roles and responsibilities of both personal tutors and tutees. Of note, personal tutors are not expected to provide feedback or guidance on individual pieces of work set by other colleagues, or to act as trained counsellors in resolving complex pastoral matters. There is, however, an expectation that personal tutors provide a structured programme of support. This means that colleagues should take a proactive approach to tutoring, as opposed to a passive approach in which they merely wait for tutees to present with problems.

Local practice

Whilst Schools and individual colleagues are expected to meet the University's Policy on Personal Tutoring, there is devolved choice as to the specific approaches through which the policy is delivered. Heads of school and senior personal tutors should consider available resources and staff workloads when agreeing the precise model of local delivery. There is, for example, variation between Schools in whether tutees have the same personal tutor throughout their registration or whether different colleagues fill the role at certain points (e.g. dissertation supervisors in the final year of undergraduate study). Similarly, Schools have autonomy to decide if personal tutoring activities are positioned outside the formal curriculum or integrated with it (e.g. through contributing towards a credit bearing module); and whether tutorials follow a group format or are conducted exclusively on a one-to-one basis².

An online [Senior Personal Tutors' Forum](#) has been provided to share information about approaches to personal tutoring in different disciplinary contexts, and associated resources. The material can be viewed by personal tutors and other interested university colleagues via the digital learning environment (DLE).

¹ The policy, along with other resources, is available on the [Personal Tutoring Webpages](#) maintained by Teaching and Learning Support.

² Group tutorials may be effective in supporting tutees' social integration and learning. Where they are operated, tutees must also be able to access their personal tutor on an individual basis, as need arises (see 3.3 in [University of Plymouth's Policy on Personal Tutoring](#)).

First steps for personal tutors

All colleagues with personal tutoring responsibilities should revisit periodically The University of Plymouth's Policy on Personal Tutoring, which undergoes cyclical review. They should also remain acquainted with any local policies or guidance. Furthermore, they should familiarise themselves with the range of additional services offered by the University and its partners, to which they may signpost students as appropriate (see [Referral to additional services](#)).

Should a personal tutor feel that they are struggling to maintain a cordial and constructive relationship with a tutee, guidance should be sought from the relevant senior personal tutor at the earliest opportunity.

At the onset of the personal tutoring role it can be valuable for colleagues to reflect on any attitudes or allegiances that they hold, which could inadvertently influence the parity of support they offer across tutees, and how to manage this. Of relevance here is available [online training](#) in 'unconscious bias'.

Academic regulations

In relation to some student matters, the personal tutor's role may principally involve signposting relevant additional services. Nonetheless, tutees can legitimately expect their tutor to offer direct advice where there are associated academic implications. During their service personal tutors may, for example, encounter queries on the following topics:

- | | |
|--|--|
| a) Withdrawing from a module/programme | h) Repeating a module or stage |
| b) Changing programme | i) Accessing optional modules |
| c) Progressing between academic stages | j) Implications of module failure |
| d) Late submission | k) Absence from compulsory sessions |
| e) Academic offences | l) Extenuating circumstances |
| f) Exiting with a lower award | m) Calculating final award classifications |
| g) Fitness to practice | n) Appeals |

Immediate mastery of all associated regulations is likely to be unrealistic for many busy personal tutors. Nonetheless, as they encounter different student cases personal tutors should be prepared to identify relevant regulations and processes at local and institutional levels. Institutional regulations are available [here](#). Over time, personal tutors can develop a working knowledge of academic regulations.

First steps for senior personal tutors

Senior personal tutors should ensure that there are written records of any local policies or guidance, which individual personal tutors have access to and understanding of. In addition, senior personal tutors should periodically consult the [Role Description for Senior Tutors](#) and exploit opportunities to share good practice or resolve queries with counterparts in other Schools (e.g. by using the online [Senior Personal Tutors' Forum](#)). Should the role of senior personal tutor pass between colleagues in a department, Teaching and Learning Support should be notified to help maintain records, mailing lists etc. (email: teachandlearn@plymouth.ac.uk).

Communication and personal tutoring

From building an initial rapport with tutees, to understanding a situation well enough to provide helpful guidance, good quality communication is likely to be a pre-requisite for effective personal tutoring.

Active listening

During direct exchanges with tutees, 'active' listening can ensure that the personal tutor gains optimal understanding of an individual's situation and concerns. Posted below are links to brief video presentations covering the rationale and techniques surrounding active listening:

- [Brief introduction](#)
- [Deeper exploration \(go to 10:51 to view a demonstration\)](#)

The list below can serve as a helpful *aide memoire* to check that active listening techniques are employed during interactions between tutors and tutees.

Active Listening Checklist <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
L ook; to signal interest in the speaker make good use of eye contact and other forms of non-verbal communication (i.e. adopt an open posture, move out from behind the desk). Sources of distraction should be minimised (i.e. monitors turned off).		<input type="checkbox"/>
I nquire; employ open-ended questions that encourage the speaker to talk expansively (i.e. <i>how? what? why?</i>). Follow-up questions can be used subsequently to probe topics in more depth (i.e. <i>"tell me more about..."</i>).		<input type="checkbox"/>
S ummarise; at opportune moments, paraphrase what the speaker has said thus far, so as to show attentiveness and check correct understanding (e.g. <i>"so, what I am hearing is...is that correct?"</i>).		<input type="checkbox"/>
T ake notes; brief note taking can again signal attentiveness towards the speaker, as well as helping in later stages of discussion, where key points may be revisited and action plans identified.		<input type="checkbox"/>
E ncourage; smile, nod, use expressions (e.g. <i>"ah ha", "go on"</i>) and allow silence, all as a means of encouraging the speaker to further express him/herself. The cardinal rule is not to interrupt or talk over the speaker.		<input type="checkbox"/>
N eutralise feelings; the speaker should be encouraged to articulate their views/feelings in a respectful, non-judgemental atmosphere.		<input type="checkbox"/>

Non-verbal signs of distress

There are certain signs that a tutee may be experiencing difficulties, even if he/she has not expressed this explicitly. For example:

- a) Recent changes in behaviour.
- b) Significant changes in appearance or mood (e.g. weight, hygiene, hyperactivity, withdrawn demeanour).
- c) Evidence of regular consumption of alcohol, cannabis, or other substances (e.g. odour).
- d) Dramatic change in academic performance and/or attendance.
- e) Other parties expressing concern.

In the scenarios above it is important that the personal tutor does not evade potential issues. Having raised sensitively any specific concerns with the tutee, [active listening skills](#) can be used to establish a fuller picture of the individual's situation. There may be an innocent explanation for the signs, or

the tutor's offer of a listening ear may be sufficient in helping the tutee to overcome a short-term obstacle/challenge. Where the impression emerges of a more serious or longer-term issue, the tutor should approach the possibility of [referral to additional services](#) or further action (see [Student wellbeing: Identifying the appropriate course of action](#)).

Managing access and communication

In some cases, meetings with tutees may be formally scheduled (e.g. where group tutorials are being used or where tutorial activities are integrated with the taught curriculum). There are, however, likely to be instances where tutees seek unscheduled support from their tutor. It is helpful to clarify appropriate arrangements for making such contact, preferably at the earliest opportunity (e.g. the first tutorial meeting). Doing so may help establish appropriate boundaries and expectations. The following queries should be considered and clearly conveyed to tutees:

- a) How often will you aim to meet?³
- b) Will you operate an 'open door' policy, whilst you are on campus?
- c) Will you have regular designated office hours during which tutees can drop in flexibly; when will these be scheduled to enable equitable access across tutees?
- d) Will tutorials be held on a face-to-face basis, or will you allow/encourage other forms of communication (e.g. telephone, video conferencing)?
- e) What constitutes reasonable notice, as regards requests for an unscheduled tutorial?
- f) Will you ask the student to draft a rough agenda to help inform your efforts at support; should this be brought to the meeting or sent in advance?⁴
- g) What are your working days? This is especially important to discuss if you have a part time role with the University.
- h) How quickly will you aim to reply to emails?⁵
- i) How will you follow up students who fail to attend?⁶

In considering the points above, a 'style' of personal tutoring may be established. Here, it is incumbent upon personal tutors to successfully balance support for tutees against the importance of respecting and nurturing their independence, as summarised eloquently by the Centre for Learning and Teaching (2009, p24): *"It is important that students feel cared for as individuals but this should not undermine their autonomy and sense of personal responsibility (or indeed your own entitlement to a manageable workload)."*⁷

When establishing an approach to access and communication, it is important to reflect on any broader effects on tutees' expectations. For example, where personal tutors commit to responding

³ It is appropriate for colleagues to identify a sensible amount of time that they are able to allocate to the personal tutoring role, and to convey this to tutees. Doing so can help in ensuring equitable access across tutees and managing tutors' workloads. Indeed, personal tutors may wish to keep a loose record of the time they commit to this aspect of their job to avoid unreasonable pressures and to feed into planning discussions with their supervisors. In most Schools personal tutoring sits outside the formal curriculum, such that students have considerable autonomy in terms of their level of engagement. Consequently, personal tutors can expect to encounter variance across tutees, with some seeking regular contact and others remaining more self-reliant.

⁴ Here, the local system for Personal Development Planning (PDP) might help in setting the agenda (see [Supporting tutees' overall development](#)).

⁵ It is considered good practice to reply within 48 hours. This is enshrined in local policies in some Schools.

⁶ There may be a consistent local approach to handling non-attendance. For example, some Schools operate a 'traffic light' system to alert colleagues to persistent absence from personal tutorials, as well as other contact hours (e.g. lectures, seminars, practicals). Personal tutors should become familiar with any local practices.

⁷ Centre for Learning & Teaching (2009). Personal Tutoring: A Guide for Tutors, University of Brighton.

out of hours (e.g. on weekends or other non-working days) this may lead tutees to expect similar responsiveness from all staff.

It is also valuable to emphasise that under The University of Plymouth's Policy on Personal Tutoring, tutees themselves have responsibilities ([Section 4.0](#)). It should be acknowledged that students experiencing pronounced mental health difficulties or other challenges may be unable to fulfil these responsibilities, either on a temporary or longer term basis. Personal tutors should, therefore, use an appropriate level of tact when asserting tutees' responsibilities.

Contingencies when personal tutors are unavailable

The University of Plymouth's Policy on Personal Tutoring stipulates that an alternative point of contact must be identified where tutors are unavailable for more than two working days (e.g. through an 'out of office' message). The box below contains a template out of office message, featuring contact details for a host of relevant services. Colleagues may wish to 'cut and paste' it and make adaptations, to create a suitable message for use with their tutees.

Example out of office email message
<p>Dear colleague / student,</p> <p>I am now on leave and return to work on Xday Xmonth Xyear.</p> <p>The following webpages provide information on many issues affecting students: https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/current-students https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/teaching-and-learning/guidance-and-resources/student-support-services</p> <p>The following telephone numbers might also be of use:</p> <p>Security 01752 583333 (Emergency) 01752 588400 (non-emergency) International Student Advisory Service 01752 587740 Student Funding 01752 587680 Careers & Employability 01752 587456 Medical Centre 01752 222341 Wellbeing Centre 01752 587808 Duty Counsellor 01752 587676 (Monday-Thursday 9.00-5.00pm; Friday 9.00-4.30pm) Anytime Advice Line 0800 042 0134 (24 hours) Multi Faith Chaplaincy 01752 587760 Disability/Dyslexia Support 01752 587676 Learning Development 01752 587676 Sum Up for Numerical Support 01752 587676 Students' Union Support and Advice Centre 01752 588373 or 0800 9530155</p> <p>Kind Regards, Tutor's name</p>

Schools might also consider if, during a period of tutor absence, it is appropriate to route pressing queries to another member of academic staff (e.g. the senior personal tutor).

Value of recording interactions

Under The University of Plymouth's Policy on Personal Tutoring, tutors must ensure that participation in, and outcomes of, tutorial meetings are recorded. Such records may be generated easily where tutoring sessions are timetabled and/or integrated with the curriculum. For example, a register of attendance might be taken, as in a conventional class, and a piece of student work might represent the outcome. There is also an expectation of appropriate recording with regard to less structured personal tutor meetings. Whilst there is no prescribed format, in planning an approach it may be helpful to consider the following points:

- a) How will the responsibility and labour involved in recording meeting outcomes be distributed between the tutor and tutee?⁸
- b) What combination of electronic and paper-based methods will be used for recording?
- c) How will records be stored, so as to remain safe and compliant with [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#)?
- d) In settings where different colleagues fulfil the personal tutoring role during the student's registration, will the recording method allow material to be passed on?⁹

With regard to all these queries, advice should be sought from the Faculty registrar, who can outline the Faculty norms that have been established. Example forms, used to capture tutorial outcomes in one discipline, are available [here](#). For recording personal tutoring interactions many departments utilise the university's [Student Support System \(S3\)](#). Faculty administrators can advise about gaining access to the system. There are fundamental benefits from using S3 to record digitally the basic details of tutoring exchanges (e.g. date, time, attendance). For example, personal tutoring meetings count as a form of contact for monitoring the engagement of international students with [Tier 4 visas](#). Where a tutoring exchange has been recorded in S3 the University's UKVI (UK Visas and Immigration) compliance team can view this information. This helps avoid unnecessary pursuit of students on grounds of non-engagement. It can also benefit staff as, where cases of non-engagement occur, they may be contacted to give retrospective confirmation of engagement with tutees which could be time-consuming (e.g. manual scrutiny of diaries/Outlook records). Even where there is anecdotal evidence of engagement, a lack of documentary proof could result in Tier 4 students being reported to UKVI and their visa being cancelled, with implications for their future ability to apply for study in the UK. Clear evidence of engagement recorded for all Tier 4 students is also essential for the University's overall Tier 4 licence, which allows it to recruit international students.

Where S3 is used for recording tutoring exchanges care should be taken. The present version of the system allows staff from across the institution to view information pertaining to individual students. In order to meet obligations around [confidentiality](#) information of a sensitive nature should, therefore, be recorded separately using an alternative, secure method (e.g. locked paper-based archive). An institutional policy on records management is scheduled to appear at the following [link](#).

⁸ Wherever possible, it may be valuable to share responsibility for recording meetings with the tutee him/herself. Doing so can encourage tutees to engage in self-reflection. The provision of appropriately structured forms, which include prompting questions, can be helpful here. Forms might also ensure that material/points from the last meeting are discussed briefly during the next tutor-tutee exchange, so that an ongoing dialogic approach is established.

⁹ Where material is to be shared in this way, tutees should be made aware and asked if any specific information should not be given to the new tutor. This does not affect the right and responsibility of personal tutors to share information regarding tutees in certain circumstances (see [Confidentiality and Disclosure](#)).

Referral to additional services

As noted in the University of Plymouth's Policy on Personal Tutoring, personal tutors are not expected to provide expert guidance to tutees around all queries. A significant part of the role will involve signposting tutees to the wealth of support mechanisms offered by the University and its partners. Early in the tutoring relationship it can be helpful for the tutor to publicise a useful [self-help tool](#) hosted on the DLE (digital learning environment). Students can access this independently to learn more about available support options and which might be appropriate for them.

Referral should be handled sensitively. When initially discussing an issue, [active listening techniques](#) might be employed to make the tutee feel at ease and to gather as much relevant information as possible. Where referral appears valuable, care should be taken in explaining the rationale i.e. that the student might benefit from access to specialist help, which lies outside the tutor's skill base. This approach can avoid any misperception that the tutor merely seeks to offload the student to another party, for his/her own convenience. Given processes governing confidentiality, it is unlikely that tutors will hear further from the support service(s) to which a tutee is referred. Nonetheless, a tutor can propose that a tutee may like to keep in touch, regarding progress with the matter(s) in hand. This offer may make the tutee feel valued, so motivating him/her to go through with the referral advice. Moreover, once receiving support from additional services, a tutee may require assistance in an area where the tutor might be expected to have expertise (i.e. [Academic regulations](#)).

Helpful alphabetised lists of available student services are available [here](#) and [here](#). It may be helpful for tutors to bookmark these web addresses so that they can be quickly shared with tutees. A dedicated resource to help staff support students with wellbeing issues is available in a printable leaflet format [here](#). For illustrative purposes, a selection of services is listed below:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| a) Anytime Advice and Mental Health Helpline | h) Disability Services |
| b) Student funding unit | i) Care Leavers Service |
| c) Counselling | j) SUM:UP Maths/Stats drop-in clinic |
| d) Student Wellbeing Services | k) Medical Centre |
| e) Learning Development (study skills) | l) English Language Centre |
| f) Peer Assisted Learning (PALS) | m) Library |
| g) Accommodation | n) Careers and Employability Service |
| | o) Childcare |

Of note, [SHINE](#) (Self Help Inspiring E-resources) offers a repository of online resources that students can access quickly and independently to help self-manage issues such as anxiety.

Student wellbeing: Identifying the appropriate course of action

Where students disclose non-emergency well-being issues to personal tutors it is hoped that they will volunteer to access the self-help and referral services detailed above. Many of the options for support are incorporated within the [Learning Gateway](#), which has a physical base on the ground floor of the Student Wellbeing Centre on Endsleigh Place. Tutees can visit the Gateway, where staff will promptly begin the process of arranging access to appropriate support. Indeed, some of the services, such as the [Listening Post](#) and [Mental Health Drop In](#), can be accessed immediately,

without appointment¹⁰. Where a tutor and tutee have identified referral as a sensible course but the tutee is experiencing low self-efficacy, the tutor may wish to support the tutee by accompanying him/her to the Learning Gateway.

In contrast, a University [resource](#) gives unequivocal advice that staff should contact security services ((5)88400) or the emergency services (999) in the following emergency scenarios:

- Violent or aggressive behaviour.
- Student has acted on suicidal thoughts (e.g. taken an overdose).
- Student has disclosed current plans to harm self and is unwilling or unable to wait for support.
- Student experiencing a psychotic episode (e.g. irrational/delusional beliefs) which puts themselves or others at risk.

It is possible that a student case falls somewhere between these descriptions. For example, a student may make a significant disclosure during a tutorial. Afterwards, the tutor may be left feeling unsure whether the scenario is indicative of the student posing an imminent risk to themselves or others. In such cases tutors are reminded that they can themselves contact the University's [Mental Health Support Team](#) (01752 587676) for an initial discussion, during which the tutee's anonymity can be preserved. The trained members of the team can advise if the matter should be escalated, including the possibility that the tutee's identify and other information should be shared with/without consent (see section on [Confidentiality and Disclosure](#)).

Issues relating to safeguarding and terrorism/radicalisation (PREVENT)

All concerns relating to the above matters should be directed to the appropriate University personnel. Matters relating to terrorism and/or radicalisation¹¹, which are not an emergency, should be directed to Claire Oldfield 01752 (5)82052.

Concerns regarding the safeguarding of children or vulnerable adults should be relayed to one of the University's Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSOs). Where the issue relates to a student (and/or their relatives/associates), colleagues should contact Alice Ludgate 01752 (5)88229 or Claire Oldfield 01752 (5)82052. Where the issue relates to an employee (and/or their relatives/associates), colleagues should contact Julia Davy 01752 (5)88203.

Confidentiality and disclosure

Tutors should ensure that tutees' confidentiality is respected. Helpfully, the University's Student Wellbeing Services have identified [circumstances in which information about a student may be shared with others](#). In summary, these are:

¹⁰ Opening hours apply, as detailed in the embedded hyperlinks.

¹¹ Under the government's [PREVENT](#) strategy, the University has a statutory obligation to identify and carry out effective procedures for minimising the risk of radicalisation and terrorist activity.

- a) Where the individual has expressly granted his/her consent (e.g. they would like information about a personal matter to be passed on and considered as part of a mitigating circumstances claim in relation to assessment).
- b) Where there has been or is likely to be a serious breach of the law, such as activities relating to terrorism or the safeguarding of children/vulnerable adults (as opposed to a misdemeanour).
- c) Where the tutee, or another party, is at serious and imminent risk of harm.

In cases b) and c) information about a tutee might be shared legally without consent. Nonetheless, wherever possible, the tutor should seek to obtain the individual's consent and fully inform him/her of the rationale for the proposed disclosure. Where consent is gained from a tutee to share information, it is preferable to record this in writing. In cases a) – c) the tutor also has a responsibility to ensure that information is only shared with those people or agencies that genuinely need to know. There always remains the potential for acute incidents, where time does not permit liaison with relevant colleagues or gaining of tutees' consent to share information before taking action (e.g. see [Student wellbeing: Identifying the appropriate course of action](#)).

It is important to note that under the terms of the [General Data Protection regulation \(GDPR\)](#), students have the right to request access to most information held about them. This could include records of personal tutoring interactions. Hence, it is best to keep records concise, factual and non-judgemental. Where it is necessary to record opinions, it should be made clear that these are subjective views not fact.

Content for tutorials

The first meeting between a tutor and tutee is an important one. It provides an opportunity to establish a friendly, constructive and respectful rapport. Consequently, the meeting might involve general discussion of the tutee's path to Plymouth and expectations about the forthcoming University experience. Listed below are some possible questions for the initial tutor-tutee exchange, which might help nurture mutual understanding.

- a) Why have you chosen to study subject X?
- b) Why did you choose to study at The University of Plymouth?
- c) Tell me something about yourself.
- d) How are you feeling about being here?
- e) How do you think university is going to differ to previous educational contexts?
- f) What do you expect from your time here?
- g) What do you think we expect from you?
- h) What extra-curricular activities do you hope to become involved with?
- i) Is there anything that you are anxious about with respect to being a student?

As discussed, the first meeting can also offer a good opportunity to clarify tutees' understanding of the scope of the personal tutoring relationship and appropriate conduct.

Setting aside spontaneous meetings that tutees may request, scheduled meetings are likely to benefit from some degree of structure. Where a clear purpose and value to the meeting is apparent, tutees may be more likely to engage. Carefully devised structure and content might be especially important where the personal tutoring provision is integrated with the curriculum and/or makes a

contribution to students' formal academic credit. A planned programme of content can be set out in advance, in a tutees' handbook document for example.¹² Careful consideration should be given to sessions which suit a group format, versus those that are better conducted one-to-one. Short, focussed, more frequent tutorials are likely to be more beneficial than longer, less defined sessions. Where physical meetings are difficult (e.g. for tutees on placement), communication technologies might be used to ensure synchronous contact (e.g. telephone, video conferencing).

To stimulate thinking, a schedule of possible tutorial content is included below. This is based on the minimum provision of three tutorials/annum as stated in the University of Plymouth's Policy on Personal Tutoring. Naturally, a greater volume of meetings may be preferred. The content relates principally to undergraduate programmes but additional content, of potential value to postgraduate tutees, is highlighted.

¹² Many Schools will provide tutees with a handbook in relation to personal tutoring, which contains key information about central services, as well as the local context. It is important that personal tutors enquire about any such document and become familiar with the content.

Possible Structure for Personal Tutoring Sessions (legend of acronyms overleaf)			
	Meeting A (Induction Week)	Meeting B (Semester One)	Meeting C (Semester Two)
Stage 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a rapport through general discussion of tutees' background and expectations Publicise the student Self-help Tool Consider a group format to aid bonding between tutees Clarify the scope and schedule for personal tutoring, as well as appropriate conduct Sensitively discuss specific challenges one-to-one (e.g. disability, weaker academic or transferable skills), signposting accordingly Encourage tutees to engage with extra-curricular opportunities (Plymouth Extra), such as the Languages Café Postgraduate: Flag research/professional opportunities (e.g. guest speakers, research seminars, journal clubs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Check satisfaction with course choice Monitor academic progress to date Discuss general academic guidance available through Learning Development (e.g. essay writing; critical thinking; reflection; revision) or SUM:UP Discuss personal development planning (e.g. review tutees' CVs; discuss the HEAR; use Plymouth Compass) Discuss accessing appropriate opportunities provided by the Careers and Employability Service. Discuss any relevant academic regulations Postgraduate: Promote engagement with research/professional fora (e.g. institutional/ (inter)national conferences), to foster network building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss module options for next year Discuss potential placements Promote SPQ completion Support tutees' overall development; specifically, emphasise how summer plans (e.g. travel, employment) may contribute to portfolio evidence Discuss progressive increase in intellectual rigour between stages of UK HE programmes Postgraduate: Discuss future research or collaboration; promote completion of postgrad evaluation
Stage 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome tutees back For 'direct entry' students, cover points from stage 1 meeting A Reflect on weighting of stage 2 in relation to final outcome Discuss potential targets and route to realising these (e.g. target degree classification). Debrief on any recent placement activity Debrief on any extra-curricular summer activities in support of tutees' overall development, which can be documented using the Plymouth Compass Discuss accessing appropriate opportunities provided by the Careers and Employability Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor academic progress to date Discuss general academic guidance available through Learning Development (e.g. essay writing; critical thinking; reflection; revision) or SUM:UP Discuss current placement experiences, if appropriate Discuss personal development planning (e.g. review tutees' CVs; discuss the HEAR; use Plymouth Compass) Discuss accessing appropriate opportunities provided by the Careers and Employability Service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss sandwich year if appropriate Discuss module options for next year Promote SPQ completion If applicable, discuss final year dissertation topics and expectations Support tutees' overall development; specifically, emphasise how summer plans (e.g. travel, employment) may contribute to portfolio evidence
Stage 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome tutees back For 'direct entry' students, cover points from stage 1 meeting A Reflect on weighting of stage 3 in relation to final outcome Discuss potential targets and route to realising these (e.g. target degree classification). Debrief on any recent placement activity Debrief on any extra-curricular summer activities in support of tutees' overall development, which can be documented using the Plymouth Compass Discuss accessing appropriate opportunities provided by the Careers and Employability Service Start drafting individual reference 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor academic progress to date Discuss general academic guidance available through Learning Development (e.g. essay writing; critical thinking; reflection; revision) or SUM:UP Promote completion of NSS, clarifying meaning of items (e.g. remind tutees of feedback received) Discuss, in detail, future plans for work/study Discuss accessing appropriate opportunities provided by the Careers and Employability Service Enquire about progress with any final year dissertation/project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete individual reference Ask tutee to feedback on personal tutoring experience, to inform future development Enquire about progress with any final year dissertation/project Promote Plymouth Connect as a means of staying in touch with the university and wider alumni community

HEAR = [Higher Education Achievement Report](#)
NSS = [National Student Survey](#)

SPQ = [Student Perception Questionnaire](#)
PTES = [Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey](#)

Supporting tutees' overall development

According to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA; 2015, p14), which regulates Higher Education in the UK, universities have a responsibility to facilitate students' overall development:

*"Higher education providers [should] have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential."*¹³

This expectation is often delivered through a system of Personal Development Planning (PDP), defined by the QAA (2011, para 28) as:

*"A structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development."*¹⁴

The personal tutor role often becomes a focal point for delivering this support. At Plymouth, Schools operate a range of PDP systems. Consequently, personal tutors must seek information about local arrangements from, for example, the senior personal tutor. A typical format is for students to use an e-portfolio to capture activities that they have engaged in and the knowledge and skills which were developed. This could include academic experiences from their curriculum but might also include paid employment, appropriate extra-curricular activities (e.g. volunteering; leadership positions in sports, clubs or societies; service as course representative or student ambassador), and structured developmental activities offered by the University (e.g. careers training and competitions). The personal tutor might periodically review the portfolio evidence, helping the tutee to identify areas for further enhancement and how content might be best articulated for the pursuit of employment or further study.

The Plymouth Compass

For some time PDP at the University has been facilitated by an institutional subscription to the [PebblePad](#) e-portfolio platform. Whereas Schools previously had to use this software to devise bespoke e-portfolio structures, the University has now developed a set of 'graduate attributes' (the [Plymouth Compass](#)), with an accompanying 'off the shelf' e-portfolio. These resources map out key areas for students to seek self-enhancement. A dedicated [guide](#) explains how colleagues can integrate the Plymouth Compass with their personal tutoring work, lending structure to tutorials. All staff and students can view the Plymouth Compass e-portfolio by visiting <https://v3.pebblepad.co.uk/login/plymouth/Login> (or searching for "e-portfolio Plymouth" on Google), where it is accessible via the 'Resources' tab.

The e-portfolio offers a structured environment for students to reflect on the skills and knowledge that they have drawn from various experiences, which might support them on leaving the University (e.g. in preparing for job interviews where they must articulate their strengths and experiences). Once students graduate they retain indefinite rights to access and edit their e-portfolio.

Employability-focussed resources

As part of the University's accessible '7 steps series', a staff guide to [Enhancing Student Employability](#) has been compiled. The document provides introductory guidance to staff regarding how to best enhance employability through the curriculum and wider student experience.

¹³ Quality Assurance Agency (2015). The UK Quality Code for Higher Education Overview and the Expectations. https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/quality-code-overview-2015.pdf?sfvrsn=d309f781_6

¹⁴ Quality assurance Agency (2001). Guidelines for HE Progress Files. <http://dera.ioe.ac.uk/8480/>

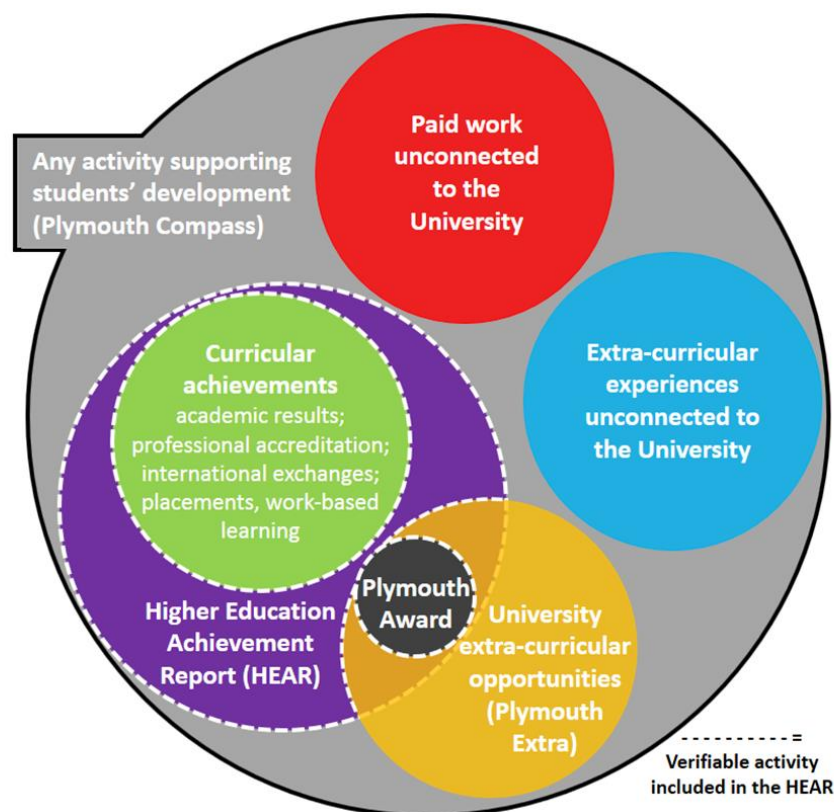
Meanwhile, the University maintains webpages with the theme [Employability in the Curriculum and Beyond](#), which includes a section pertaining to personal tutoring.

An anatomy of personal development opportunities for Plymouth students

To successfully support tutees it is advisable that personal tutors have a good general grasp of the available developmental opportunities. The diagram below seeks to facilitate this understanding by providing a simplified impression. It does not capture any locally instituted systems for PDP.

In brief, the Plymouth Compass graduate attributes act as a broad framework for capturing all forms of developmental activity, including those which are not verifiable by the University itself. This encompasses paid work unconnected to the University; extra-curricular experiences unconnected to the University; curricular achievements at the University; and University-endorsed extra-curricular experiences. The latter are brought together in a searchable online catalogue called [Plymouth Extra](#).

Also shown on the diagram is the [Higher Education Achievement Report \(HEAR\)](#). This differs from the Plymouth Compass in that it is a national scheme operated by around 90 Higher Education Institutions in the UK. A set of standardised headings and sections are used to capture students' academic achievements and those extra-curricular activities which the host university can formally verify (e.g. language courses, service as a peer mentor, service as a School representative). The Plymouth Extra catalogue explicitly highlights where extra-curricular activities can be verified and hence entered on the HEAR. One activity which would be added to a student's HEAR is successful completion of the established [Plymouth Award](#). This is a dedicated award to celebrate the achievements of students who are able to make a significant time commitment to their chosen extra-curricular activities (e.g. volunteering).



Personal development opportunities

The list below includes opportunities available to students in some key areas. Over time, personal tutors can familiarise themselves with these opportunities and promote them to students as appropriate.

Careers and employability

Note that many of the careers and employability services open to students are brought together within the mycareer portal: <https://mycareer.plymouth.ac.uk>

- a) Career navigator (digital resources spanning CV building; interview simulation; practice psychometric and aptitude tests; skills assessment tools)
- b) [Plymouth Connect](#) – the alumni network through which students can access mentoring or just connect with Plymouth alumni.
- c) [The Professional Mentoring Programme](#), which targets particular student groups as part of the widening participation agenda.
- d) Employability events (e.g. employer networking evenings; recruitment fairs; practice interviews/assessments; employer presentations)
- e) Employability competitions (Creative CV; FLUX)
- f) Accelerate workshops (covering a host of employability skills, such as careers planning, networking, LinkedIn).
- g) Part-time job opportunities
- h) Sprint programme (personal development course for undergraduate females in STEM subjects)

NB. The careers service also support students on a one-to-one basis, as detailed in their [Information for University Staff](#).

This [YouTube channel](#) provides an accessible taste of various opportunities co-ordinated by the Careers and Employability team, which could be promoted to students.

Entrepreneurship

- a) [Social enterprise](#)
- b) [Futures Entrepreneurship Centre](#)
- c) [Intellectual property matters](#)

Extra-curricular activities (Plymouth Extra)

Placements and work-based learning

[Languages Café](#) (for informal languages practice)

Exchange Opportunities

- a) International Student Exchange Programme (ISEP)
- b) Erasmus
- c) Various direct/bi-lateral schemes

University of Plymouth Students' Union (UPSU)

- a) Opportunities to serve as School/course representative
- b) Jobs
- c) Volunteering opportunities and other extra-curricular activities

Life after University and staying in touch

Personal tutors can promote the concept of staying in touch with the university both to current finalists and recent graduates who they are still in touch with. [Plymouth Connect](#) is the University's platform for maintaining alumni relationships. Graduates can, for example, staff in touch with contemporaries from their time at university and offer support to current students as a mentor.