Policy on Personal Tutoring at the University of Plymouth

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The University is committed to providing an excellent learning experience for all students. This includes high standards of academic and pastoral support. The University's policy for personal tutoring is intended to promote achievement, well-being and through-life learning and to help ensure that each individual student is known and valued and that their needs are recognised and supported.

1.2 This policy document covers all undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree programmes at the University of Plymouth except certain professional programmes run in the Plymouth University Peninsula Schools of Medicine and Dentistry and in Partner institutions (including PUIC) which have their own policies in respect of personal tutoring.

1.3 The policy was developed in collaboration with University of Plymouth students in the spirit of the Partnership Agreement (January 2012). It was updated in 2016, in line with internal and external developments including the UK government's 'Prevent' strategy.

1.4 Whilst programmes and Schools may vary the implementation of personal tutoring, this policy should always be regarded as the minimum set of standards across the University.

1.5 This policy should be considered alongside other University policies such as Equality and Diversity, Harassment and Bullying, Complaints, Information Security and Data Protection.

2.0 The role and responsibilities of the personal tutor

Personal tutors are designated as a sustained and first point of reference for individual students on pastoral or academic matters. The role is a pro-active, developmental one and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

a) Planning and scheduling a structured programme of meetings

b) Providing general feedback on overall academic performance and engagement and offering appropriate guidance.

c) Ensuring that students know how to contact them, and identifying an alternative point of contact if they are unavailable for more than 2 working days (e.g. through an out of office message)

d) Signposting services that students might access to support their further development or to obtain appropriate professional guidance on academic or pastoral matters and providing appropriate assistance where required to support students in accessing such services.

e) Fostering the development of students' reflective and independent learning strategies.

f) Encouraging students to engage in Personal Development Planning, especially those co-curricular and extra-curricular activities that can be recorded in section 6 of their Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR), and to give timely consideration to their future career progression and employability where appropriate.

g) Ensuring that tutorial meetings are arranged at appropriate intervals.

h) Respecting confidentiality and protection of information shared with them by students – but also raising concerns about students' well-being and engagement where appropriate.

i) Recording participation in, and outcomes of, tutorial meetings. (Personal tutors should be aware that the Data Protection Act provides students with the legal right, upon request, to access records of these meetings).

The role does <u>NOT</u> include:

a) Providing specialist academic guidance on all aspects of the programme of study.
b) Giving feedback on individual pieces of academic work or examinations not set by the personal tutor.
c) Acting as a trained counsellor, disability or careers advisor.
d) Solving all problems.

3.0 Entitlements of students.

3.1 Every student shall be allocated a named personal tutor who should normally be a member of academic staff within the subject discipline of the student. Students will be assigned to a new tutor if:

- a member of staff is unavailable for a period of more than 6 weeks (this will be on a temporary basis and they will normally revert to their original tutor on his/her return);
- their tutor leaves the university;
- the student moves discipline/programme area.

3.2 All first year students, direct entry students and top-up students will be allocated a personal tutor within two weeks of registration. All students will be informed of the name and contact details of their personal tutor on allocation.

3.3 Throughout their time at the University of Plymouth, personal tutors will establish and maintain regular contact with their students either on a face-to-face basis or, where appropriate, using communications technology (e.g. telephone, Skype). The minimum entitlement is a meeting three times per academic year. Students can normally expect to meet their personal tutor within the first two weeks of their first semester. At least two meetings will take place in the first semester of the students' arrival on the Plymouth campus. Students should have access to their personal tutor at other times, as the need for consultation arises, and provided that a meeting is requested at reasonable notice. Additional meetings may also take place at the instigation of the personal tutor and/or student.

3.4 Students must be informed how best to contact their tutor quickly and efficiently, and this should be established in the first meeting of the year. Staff and students should set clear boundaries and encourage communication through a mutually preferred method.

3.5 Information given to the personal tutor will usually be treated as confidential and generally will not be shared unless the student consents. However there are circumstances in which the University's commitment to confidentiality can be overridden. Students will receive a statement in the Programme Handbook about the confidentiality of discussions with their personal tutor, with the proviso that certain matters may need to be referred on and/or placed on record. (This might include any requirements for professional/ statutory bodies). In exceptional circumstances a personal tutor may be required to pass on information in the vital interests of a student (e.g. where there is a clear, significant and specific risk to the health and safety of a student or to that of others) or when a disclosure may be required by law. This will include any requirement for disclosure under the Prevent

Duty and concerns about safeguarding. All personal information held is subject to the Data Protection Act and the University policies on Data Protection and Information Security.

4.0 Responsibilities of students

4.1 Attending all arranged meetings or sending apologies and suggesting an alternative time.

4.2 Ensuring that they go to, or make contact with, the nominated personal tutor when they need help or guidance.

4.3 Being an active participant in seeking solutions to problems, and following the advice given by their tutor where possible.

4.4 Notifying their personal tutor if they are having academic, health or personal problems that are affecting any aspect of their work.

4.5 Students should seek further support from the Student Union Advice Centre if required

5.0 Staff entitlements

5.1 Personal tutoring will be included transparently in staff workload allocations.

5.2 Personal tutoring will be an integral part of the Performance Development Review for those staff engaged in the process.

5.3 All personal tutors will be supported and have access to training in key attributes of personal tutoring.

5.4 All personal tutors will have access to a lead person responsible for personal tutoring within each School for advice and guidance.

5.5 Personal tutors should seek support from Counselling Service or Occupational Health if required

6.0 University, Faculty and School responsibilities

The effective delivery of this policy depends on actions taken by the University (including central services), Faculties and Schools.

6.1 The University will:

- publish this policy in full in appropriate format and ensure its availability to students and staff,
- provide efficient and effective information sharing systems to underpin personal tutoring,
- create and maintain a supply of materials for guidance and links to additional support services available,
- ensure that personal tutoring training opportunities are available for all staff,
- establish and maintain a personal tutor support network,
- facilitate information exchange that encourages and supports best practice in personal tutoring,
- ensure that personal tutoring is recognised within the Personal Development Review and associated reward/promotion processes,
- ensure that personal tutoring is accorded appropriate allowance in staff workloads,
- ensure that all personal tutors are fully aware of their responsibilities, the limits to their role and the sources of further help for both themselves and the students they are responsible for.

6.2 Faculties and Schools will:

- designate individual staff with responsibility for leading personal tutoring in each School,
- ensure that all students have a named personal tutor,
- put in place a system for re-allocating students to a new personal tutor where appropriate,
- ensure that appropriate feedback mechanisms are in place to monitor, evaluate and recommend changes required for effective delivery of personal tutoring,
- develop, implement, disseminate and evaluate local best practice guidelines for effective personal tutoring within the parameters set out in this policy to ensure that a regular schedule of meetings are in place,
- publish information on personal tutoring in programme handbooks.

7.0 Monitoring and Review

7.1 This refreshed policy will be implemented with effect from 1st September 2016 for all students.

7.2 The effectiveness of the implementation will be monitored through staff-student liaison committees at programme, School and Faculty levels and issues resolved at the most appropriate level. School level monitoring will be the responsibility of the designated personal tutoring lead person.

7.3 The Personal Tutoring Policy will be reviewed by a group delegated by the DVC (Education) with that task, for implementation by September 2018.

Approved by: Teaching, Learning and Quality Committee

On behalf of: PVC T&L

Date: 12/09/16