



Personal Tutoring Policy at the University of Plymouth

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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 and life-long learning and to help ensure that each individual student is known and valued and that their needs are recognised and supported.
- 1.2 As part of an excellent learning experience, the University expects all Personal Tutors, Senior Tutors and the Central Support Services to be actively engaged in promoting and supporting student well-being.
- 1.3 This policy covers all undergraduate degree programmes, including Integrated Masters, at the University of Plymouth **except** for Partner institutions (including University of Plymouth International College), which have their own policies in respect of personal tutoring. Appropriate annexes to this policy to cover additional student groups may be added as necessary.
- 1.4. Whilst programmes and Schools may vary the implementation of personal tutoring due to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body Requirements (PSRBs), this policy should always be regarded as the minimum set of standards and expectations across the University.
- 1.5 This policy should be considered alongside other University policies, including the Student Well-being and Review Policy, Attendance and Engagement Monitoring, Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Dignity & Respect, Student Sexual Violence and Misconduct, Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedure, Appeals and Complaints, Fitness to Practice and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

2.0 Personal Tutoring

2.1. Key Principles for Personal Tutoring:

- a) All academic staff will normally be expected to carry out Personal Tutor activities as part of their teaching and learning role.

- b) The nature and content of personal tutorials is a local School decision, supported by University guides such as '7 steps to effective personal tutoring' and other resources.
- c) Every student shall be allocated a named Personal Tutor who should normally be a member of academic staff within the same subject discipline of the student. It is generally considered good practice for a Personal Tutor to retain the same students throughout their programme of study.
- d) Students might be assigned to a new Personal Tutor in specific circumstances, for example:
- Where 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)
 - If a tutor leaves the university
 - A student moves discipline/programme area
 - If a personal tutoring relationship breaks down
- e) In some subjects, the Final Year Project Advisor may additionally be the main point of support for students due to the increased level of contact.
- f) All undergraduates identified in Section 1.3 will be allocated a Personal Tutor within two weeks of registration and students will be informed of the name and contact details of their Personal Tutor on allocation. It is good practice for a first meeting to take place during Induction week.
- g) Throughout their time at the University of Plymouth, Personal Tutors will establish and maintain regular contact with their students typically via online meetings, mobile phone or on a face-to-face basis as appropriate. The minimum expectation is tutors will normally schedule five meetings in the first academic year, four meetings in the second academic year and three meetings in each subsequent year, which may be on a group or individual basis. Students can normally expect to meet their personal tutor within the first two weeks of their first semester, and at least three meetings should typically take place in the first semester of the students' arrival on campus. Students should have access to their personal tutor at other times on a pastoral basis, 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.
- h) 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 or in the tutor's first email to their tutees. Staff and students should set clear boundaries and encourage communication through a mutually preferred method.
- i) Information given to the Personal Tutor will usually be treated as confidential and will generally not be shared unless the student consents, or unless the information shared with a tutor suggests another person is at risk of harm: for more information, see the University Safeguarding Policy. 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 PSRBs). All personal information held is subject to GDPR and the University's Data Protection Policy.

2.2 *The Role and Core Responsibilities of the Personal Tutor*

Personal Tutors are designated as a first point of reference for individual students on academic (subject-related) or pastoral (typically social or well-being issues that may impact on a student's ability to study) matters. The role is a pro-active, developmental one and includes **as a minimum**, but is not limited to, the following core activities:

- a) Ensuring that students know how to contact tutors, 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.
- b) Ensuring that tutorial meetings are arranged at appropriate intervals.
- c) Respecting confidentiality and protection of information shared with them by students, but also raising concerns about students' well-being and engagement where appropriate.
- d) Recording participation in, and outcomes of, tutorial meetings and other engagements with students e.g. via the S4 system. (Personal Tutors should be aware that GDPR provides students with the legal right, upon request, to access records of these meetings).
- e) Signposting services and opportunities that students might engage with to support their further development or to obtain appropriate professional guidance on academic or pastoral matters, and providing appropriate encouragement and assistance where required to support students in accessing such services e.g. Wellbeing, Careers & employability planning, Learning Development.

2.3 The Personal Tutor role does **not** 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 tutor.
- c) Providing specialist advice such as that provided by a qualified counsellor, disability or careers advisor.
- d) Providing automatic advocacy and support for academic appeals and complaints.
- e) Solving all tutee problems that might arise.

2.4 *Additional Personal Tutor Responsibilities*

Heads of School (HoS) may require Personal Tutors to support additional activities, if other academic staff do not already undertake them. The following should be negotiated and agreed with each HoS on a local basis as appropriate:

- a) Providing general feedback on overall academic performance and engagement.
- b) Fostering the development of students' reflective and independent learning strategies.
- c) Encouraging students to engage in Personal Development Planning, and to give timely consideration to their future career progression and employability where appropriate.

2.5 *Responsibilities of students*

- a) Attending all arranged meetings, or sending apologies and suggesting an alternative time.
- b) Being an active participant in group tutorial activities.

- c) Contacting their Personal Tutor if they are having academic, health or well-being problems that are affecting any aspect of their work, and following the advice given by the tutor where possible.
- d) Alerting the Senior Tutor if a Personal Tutor re-assignment is needed
- e) Seeking further support from the Student Hub and/or the Student Union Advice Centre if required.

3.0 Senior Tutor Role and Responsibilities

The role of the Senior Tutor is to advise and support Personal Tutors in carrying out their role, responding to staff queries and concerns, and signposting further sources of support and advice as appropriate.

3.1 Support and development of Personal Tutors

Responsibilities will include the following as a minimum (but are not restricted to):

- a) In collaboration with School/Faculty professional services staff, Senior Tutors should take the lead in overseeing the personal tutorial system to ensure it is operating appropriately.
- b) Ensuring that all Personal Tutors are aware of their responsibilities and are notified of any updates and changes to the School personal tutorial system.
- c) Ensuring that all Personal Tutors are aware of the various student development opportunities available to students at Plymouth, e.g. volunteering, mentoring etc. as well as the importance which the University and employers attach to a broad HE experience.
- d) Fostering awareness of, and liaison with, Central Support Services such as Counselling, Learning Development, Disability Assist, Careers Service etc and ensuring that all tutors know which member of staff in the support services has dedicated responsibility for their School.
- e) Briefing first-time Personal Tutors
- f) Monitoring staff requests for training and tutorial support to inform wider University staff development initiatives.

3.2 Senior Tutors are also responsible for the following activities:

- a) Maintaining their own professional development and keeping up to date with initiatives within the University and sharing good practice.
- b) Ensuring that information from the wider University is cascaded back to Personal Tutors in their School.
- c) Taking forward general issues and concerns from Personal Tutors to the Senior Tutor Forum or other relevant University group.
- d) Producing and annually updating guidance for Personal Tutors in their School as a local supplement to the University Guidance for Personal Tutors, and ensuring that all material is appropriately disseminated to all Personal Tutors in their School.

3.3. Additional Senior Tutor Responsibilities

Heads of School may require Senior Tutors to support some additional activities, if they are not already undertaken by other colleagues e.g. programme leads or Stage Tutor leads. The following should be negotiated and agreed on a local basis as appropriate:

- a) Facilitating processes involving Personal Tutors such as when students are re- allocated to another Personal Tutor where there is period of staff absence or is otherwise unavailable, or where in the judgement of the Senior Tutor the relationship between the student and tutor has irretrievably broken down.
- b) Systematically gathering feedback from student course representatives and staff on the efficacy of the personal tutoring system and highlighting issues for programme committee to consider.
- c) Reporting on the personal tutorial system to local Student-Staff Liaison Committee(s).
- d) Contributing to the undergraduate student induction process e.g. a talk within Freshers' Week.
- e) Where appropriate, having oversight of the monitoring, registration and attendance of students, especially first years, and supporting Personal Tutors in following up persistent absentees.
- f) Ensuring that support is in place for students suspending, withdrawing or transferring.
- g) Ensuring that relevant support is in place for international students, where necessary.
- h) Where local practices do not currently cover these, Senior Tutors may also be invited to:
 - oversee the extenuating circumstances procedures, ensuring students are notified of the procedures & deadlines and liaising with relevant staff in line with University regulations & procedures governing the extenuating circumstances process.
 - attend Case Conferences for particular students

4.0 University, Faculty and School responsibilities

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

The University will:

- a) Publish this policy in full and ensure its availability to students and staff.
- b) Provide efficient and effective information sharing systems, such as S4 to underpin personal tutoring.
- c) Create and maintain a central supply of materials for guidance e.g. 7 steps to effective personal tutoring, and links to additional support services available.
- d) Ensure that personal tutoring training & staff development opportunities are available for all staff.
- e) Establish and maintain a Community of Practice to support personal tutoring, by facilitating information exchange to encourage and assist best practice.
- f) Ensure that personal tutoring is recognised within the Personal Development Review and associated reward/promotion processes.

- g) Ensure that personal tutoring is accorded appropriate allowance in staff workloads.
- h) Ensure that all Personal Tutors are fully aware of their responsibilities, the limits to their role and the sources of further help in the Central Support Services for both themselves and the students they are responsible for. This includes the process for handling urgent student welfare concerns and when to contact University Security and/or emergency services.

4.1 Faculties and Schools will:

- a) appoint one or more individual(s) as a Senior Tutor to support and lead Personal Tutors.
- b) ensure that all students have a named Personal Tutor.
- c) put in place a system for re-allocating students to a new Personal Tutor where appropriate.
- d) ensure that appropriate feedback mechanisms are in place to monitor, evaluate and recommend changes required for effective delivery of personal tutoring.
- e) 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.
- f) publish information on personal tutoring in programme handbooks.

4.2 Schools will ensure the following staff entitlements:

- a) Personal tutoring will be included transparently in staff workload allocations.
- b) Personal tutoring will be an integral part of the Performance Development Review for those staff engaged in the process.
- c) All Personal Tutors will be supported and have access to training in key attributes of personal tutoring e.g. S4 system and SWRP training.
- d) All Personal Tutors will have access to a lead person responsible for personal tutoring within each School for advice and guidance, typically the Senior Tutor.
- e) Personal Tutors should be aware of when and how to escalate concerns to support teams such as the Student Hub (gateway to Counselling, Mental Health, Funding, Disability and International Advice teams), including the process for any urgent out-of-hours concerns via University Security.

5.0 Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy will be implemented with effect from 1st September 2021 for all students identified in Section 1.3.

- 5.1 The effectiveness of the policy's implementation will be monitored through staff-student liaison committees at programme, School and Faculty levels with issues resolved at the most

appropriate level. School-level monitoring will be the responsibility of the Senior Tutor with the Head of School, or the HoS nominee e.g. Associate Head Teaching & Learning.

5.2 The Personal Tutoring Policy will be reviewed after 3 years with any amendments implemented by September 2025.

Agreed at: University Teaching, Learning and Quality Committee

25th January 2021