Code of practice for personal tutoring

Academic year 2020/21

Contents

Purpose and scope

1. This *Code of practice* sets out the principles of the University's personal tutoring system.

2. The core purpose of personal tutoring is to support taught[1] students' academic, personal and professional development through an on-going personalised point of contact with the University.

3. Additionally, personal tutoring has an important role in the continuing induction of students into the academic community, developing an understanding of learning and living in the University environment.

4. This *Code of practice* applies to all students on taught programmes of study leading to an award of the University of Surrey, including distance learning programmes. It does not apply to students on University validated programmes at the Associated and Accredited Institutions (AIs) who will be subject to their own institutional policies.

Principles

5. Each student should have an established personal contact within the Department or School to which their programme belongs.[2]

6. This provides an important point of contact in matters relating to students' academic progress, personal development and welfare, and underpins the process of induction and orientation into academic life and the University community.

Roles and responsibilities

7. **Heads of Schools/Departments**[3] are responsible for ensuring the establishment and implementation of the personal tutoring system in accordance with this *Code of practice*, ensuring that each taught student is assigned a Personal Tutor, and that staff are appropriately supported in their role as a Personal Tutor. This involves Heads of Schools/Departments ensuring that the time commitment of staff as Personal Tutors is reflected in their workload model, that Personal Tutors are aware of their responsibilities (see paragraph 28 below), and of the sources of specialist support to which they may refer students (see paragraph 26 below). Heads of Schools/Departments are also responsible for assigning the role of Senior Personal Tutor to a member of academic staff. The role can be assigned to any member of academic staff, including the Director of Learning & Teaching.

8. **Senior Personal Tutors** are responsible for ensuring the School/Department is aware of the support made available to students by central support services, for ensuring that the personal tutoring system is well communicated to students and staff, and for monitoring the personal tutoring system and sharing good practice where appropriate.

9. **Directors of Learning and Teaching** will be responsible for the delivery of student induction, for new and returning students, in their School/Department.

10. **Personal Tutors** are responsible for offering guidance and support to their tutees on how to function effectively in the University environment and for referring students to the appropriate sources of academic or welfare advice when necessary. They are expected to have a basic knowledge of the structure of the tutee's programme of study, and to be pro-active in seeking appointments with tutees.

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[1] For research students, this is the responsibility of the Principal Supervisor (see *Code of practice for research degrees*).
[2] In the case of joint programmes, the Department/School in which the student's file is normally held.
[3] Or their nominees.

11. **Students** are responsible for attending meetings with Personal Tutors, for being adequately prepared for tutorial discussions, and for communicating with their Tutor if for any reason they are unable to attend these meetings. They are responsible for taking the initiative in seeking timely advice from their Personal Tutor when faced with academic, personal or other issues that are impacting on their academic progress.

12. Whilst information will be provided from a variety of sources, Senior Personal Tutors will be responsible for ensuring that Personal Tutors receive appropriate training and information to support their role Academic Registry will be responsible for providing up-to-date guidance to help in the delivery of pastoral support, and Disability and Neurodiversity will be responsible for providing up-to-date guidance on supporting dyslexic and disabled students.

Procedure

13. Before the start of the student's programme of study, students will be assigned a Personal Tutor who is a member of academic staff (as defined in the University *Introduction to the regulations*), or an Associate Tutor.

14. Students on distance learning programmes will also be provided with a Personal Tutor in order that the standards of personalised academic and pastoral support and underpinning of induction are ensured.

15. Personal Tutors will offer support and advice to students in the areas of:

- academic progress;
- pastoral/welfare issues;
- personal/professional development and employability.

16. Personal Tutors should meet with their tutees at least once per semester, although the expectation is that, for first year students this may be more frequent. Meetings should normally take place within the first two weeks of Semester 1 and the first four weeks of Semester 2. The frequency of meetings and the Personal Tutor system operated in the School/Department should be communicated clearly to students, at the beginning of each session.[4] Students can request additional meetings with their Personal Tutor if needed.

17. All meetings should be structured with a clear and agreed agenda[5], as determined by the School/Department. Meetings may be held in small group format, but Personal Tutors will also ensure that all tutees are offered the opportunity to meet individually if requested.

18. Personal Tutors will keep concise records of each meeting, including a brief summary of the discussion and any agreed actions or referrals using the agreed recording system accessed via *Surrey Self-Service*. These will normally be placed on the student's file (marked confidential as necessary). It may be appropriate for some records to form part of the student's personal development planning (PDP) portfolio.

19. Schools/Departments will ensure that each of the areas of induction listed in Appendix 2 is addressed. These may be underpinned and reinforced through the

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[4] It is good practice for individual meetings to be scheduled at appropriate times of the year for tutors and tutees to reflect in particular on academic progress. For example, a meeting held shortly after Semester 1 assessment results are available would provide the opportunity to discuss any resulting issues and to identify additional areas of support that may be required.

[5] Clarifying the purpose of the tutorial in advance may make it easier for both students and staff to engage in the meeting.

personal tutoring system or delivered through other means (for example, specific study skills units in modules).

20.   Schools/Departments will provide an appropriate mechanism for students to request and receive a change of Personal Tutor, and all reasonable requests will be accommodated if practicable.

21.   Schools/Departments will pay particular attention to the personal tutoring arrangements for students under the age of 18 (see *Child Protection Policy (Safeguarding)*. Advice should be sought from Academic Registry staff to ensure the appropriate measures are in place.

22.   Schools/Departments will also pay attention to the specific needs of international students in both the academic and pastoral support provided through their Personal Tutoring system. Further guidance can be obtained from International Student Support and the booklet *Supporting Students: A Handbook for Staff.*

23.   Whilst Personal Tutors are not required to visit students on placement, they (or another nominated member of staff) will continue to provide support to students during this time. Rather than physical meetings, this support may be provided through alternative means of communication (email, telephone, Skype, etc.).

24.   Personal Tutors should provide accurate information for tutees on their availability[6] and should make contingency arrangements which may be used for urgent problems when they are unavailable. It is expected that the Personal Tutor will remain the same for the duration of the student's registration (but see paragraph 20 above), although the Senior Personal Tutor will arrange cover for research leave, sickness absence and other forms of absence.

25.   Personal Tutors will record non-attendance at personal tutorials and are responsible for calling a meeting with a tutee where there are reports of unsatisfactory attendance and/or engagement with their programme of study, or in the event of any other cause for concern. Emerging patterns of non-attendance / non-engagement will be drawn to the attention of the Year Tutor, Programme Leader and/or Director of Learning and Teaching as appropriate.

26.   Personal Tutors should be familiar with the support that is available to staff and students across the diverse student body from central support services (as shown on the student support website, the booklet *Supporting Students: A Handbook for Staff*, and the requirements of the School's/Department's personal tutoring system (see paragraph 28 below). Where a Personal Tutor feels unable to give advice, guidance should be sought from the Senior Personal Tutor, and/or the student should be referred to alternative sources of specialist support (eg Centre for Wellbeing, Students' Union).

27.   Any personal problem discussed with the Personal Tutor will normally be confidential unless the student gives permission for the matter to be taken further. However, there are occasions (eg when a student is at risk of harm to themselves or others) when it would be inappropriate to maintain confidentiality in order to exercise an appropriate duty of care towards the student and to protect their vital interests and those of third parties. Guidance on confidentiality protocols is available in *Supporting Students: A Handbook for Staff* and will be provided as part of training.

28.   The Senior Personal Tutor will ensure that the personal tutoring system is well communicated to students and staff, and that expectations are agreed with and supported by the Head of School/Department. A statement setting out the intentions of the School/Departmental system, and how it is operated, will be made available to

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[6] The publishing of 'office hours' during which a tutor is available, whilst good practice, should not replace the need for arranging one-to-one meetings.

all staff and students to whom it applies. This guidance will normally be used in student handbooks and during induction. It will be regularly reviewed and updated and should include:

- what is expected of staff (for example, levels of engagement with students)

- what is expected of students (for example, attendance at personal tutor meetings)

- the mechanism for requesting a change of Personal Tutor

29. Where a School/Department is under legal or regulatory requirement to monitor attendance at inductions (eg for health and safety or visa control reasons), the School/Department may wish this to be accommodated as part of personal tutorial arrangements.

30. The Senior Personal Tutors' Forum will facilitate communication between Senior Personal Tutors and central support services. The Forum will also provide the opportunity for Senior Personal Tutors to share good practice and to facilitate the on-going development of the personal tutoring system and associated resources. The Forum will be chaired by an elected Senior Personal Tutor and will provide reports on its activities to the University Learning and Teaching Committee.

31. It is mandatory that all Personal Tutors attend training before taking on the role. The following areas should be covered:

- the support that is available to students from central support services;

- the guidance available in *Supporting Students: A Handbook for Staff*;

- the University's policies on data protection, disability, safeguarding children, misuse of drugs by students, student death, etc.

(See Appendix 1 - Sources of advice and further guidance below for web links to the above policies)

32. Schools/Departments will ensure that the time commitment of staff in personal tutoring is reflected in their workload allocation model. In doing this, Schools/Departments will seek to balance the loading on individual members of staff in order that they can have meaningful contact with each of their personal tutees.

Monitoring and review

33. The Senior Personal Tutor will monitor the personal tutoring system within the School/Department in order to enhance its effectiveness as a student support mechanism. This will include ensuring that the personal tutoring system is considered periodically by its Staff-Student Liaison Committee(s) and Boards of Studies. The Senior Personal Tutor will ensure that feedback from this monitoring is included in the School's/Department's annual programme reviews.

34. Through the University's annual programme review process[7], the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees will ensure that any Faculty, School or Department-level issues in relation to the personal tutoring system are addressed and will draw any issues requiring consideration at an institutional level to the attention of the Personal Tutors' Forum. Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees will also ensure that good practice identified is shared across the Faculty, or across the institution where appropriate, through the Senior Personal Tutors' Forum minutes and webpages.

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[7] See *Code of practice for annual programme review: taught programmes*

35.   The performance of academic staff with respect to personal tutoring will be monitored and reviewed through the University's annual appraisal process, with excellence given due recognition and reward.

Appendix 1 - Sources of advice and further guidance

Supporting Students: A Handbook for Staff:

Student support website

Relevant University policies

- *Data Protection Policy*
- *Disability Policy – Staff, Students and Visitors*
- *Disclosure, Confidentiality and Sharing of Personal Data Concerning Disability*
- *Dignity at Work and Study Policy*
- *Misuse of Drugs by Students Policy and procedures*
- *Policy Statement on Religious Observance*
- Student Policies and *Regulations*

University academic and student regulations

Relevant University Codes of practice:

Code of practice for assessment and feedback

NUS Charter on Personal Tutors

Appendix 2 - Student induction

Schools/Departments should ensure that each of the areas of student induction listed below is addressed. This will normally be through a combination of Welcome Week (for new students), Returning Student Induction (for continuing students), and the personal tutoring system, although delivery may be offered through other mechanisms (eg specific study skills units within modules, resources offered by Academic Skills and Development, etc).

Studying in general:
- independent learning, including taking responsibility for own learning
- time management and getting organised
- writing skills for the discipline (essays, reports, assignments)
- academic integrity and plagiarism
- mathematical skills (where appropriate)
- using online learning resources
- information and digital literacy
- laboratory skills (where appropriate)
- health and safety (lab related and other)
- choosing modules/programme specialisation choices
- importance of the 'student voice' at the University
- personal development planning (PDP)
- Library and Learning Support resources
- Disability and Neurodiversity

Regulatory matters:
- *Regulations for taught programmes*
- *Regulations for extenuating circumstances* (incl. reasonable adjustments)
- *Regulations for academic integrity*
- *Student disciplinary regulations*
- *Regulations for academic appeals*
- *Procedures for support to study* (and, where appropriate, *Regulations for fitness to practise*)
- *Procedure for complaints*

Assessment and feedback:
- preparing for assessment
- understanding assessment modes
- understanding grading (University's grade descriptors) and classification
- the feedback policy of the University
- understanding feedback processes (including recognising feedback that is available)

- alternative routes of receiving feedback (peers, personal tutors, support services)
- identifying students who may need reasonable adjustments and referral to Disability and Neurodiversity

Working and studying with others:
- team work principles and roles
- resolving conflict and seeking advice
- group and team work
- diversity and internationalisation
- communication skills
- cultural exchange and learning

Professional development:
- recording achievement
- ethical awareness
- self-awareness
- goal-setting
- appropriate behaviour for professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)

Student support:
- MySurrey Hive
- Student Services Centre
- Guildowns Health Centre
- Centre for Wellbeing
- Employability and Careers Service
- Student Life Mentoring
- University of Surrey Students' Union