

# **CETL Briefing Papers – Personal Tutoring**

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### **Aims of the Initiative**

Successful personal tutoring comes from developing a mutually beneficial relationship between tutor and tutee. To build that relationship there should be clear roles and responsibilities on both sides.

Personal tutoring should be defined as group or individual guidance given to students by academic staff, with a focus on personal and academic development and progression on their overall programme of study. The key principles of personal tutoring are:

1. All students have a named personal tutor
2. All personal tutors are members of academic staff
3. The personal tutor will concentrate on a student's personal and academic development and progression on their overall programme of study
4. All personal tutors will be able to direct students to support facilities available within their own School and the University
5. The personal tutor is not expected to be an academic specialist in all areas in which the tutee is studying
6. The personal tutor will have an understanding of, and commitment to, improving student learning

### **Description of the Initiative**

In order to carry out their responsibilities tutors will be expected to undertake the following:

1. Maintain regular communication (virtual and/or face-to-face) with each of their designated tutees at least 3 times a year (e.g. once per term for full time undergraduate study) and at each significant phase for all other modes of study (including part time, postgraduate and work based learning). The first communication must be at the start of any study.
2. Keep a record of that communication
3. Inform students, their academic school and the University (SITS) of their availability (virtual and/or face-to-face) for personal tutoring
4. Follow up students who are not making satisfactory progress or who are at risk of withdrawal
5. Assist students in their personal and academic development, planning and progression. In a three year full time undergraduate study this might be by:
  - at level one helping students with their orientation to HE and their chosen subjects, and developing their learning by such activities as reviewing and acting on assessment feedback
  - at level two developing professional and employability skills including activities such as placement learning

- at level three helping students successfully complete their studies, this might include the writing of references
- 6. Offer students advice and guidance to help students liaise with other staff and support facilities in their school and the University
- 7. Maintain awareness of other sources of support within their school and University
- 8. Undertake annual mandatory staff development on personal tutoring

#### Expectations of students

In order for personal tutoring to be beneficial and meaningful students will be expected to undertake the following:

1. Maintain regular communication with their personal tutor
2. Prepare for and engage in any personal tutoring related activities
3. Contact personal tutors if there are any issues that may impact on their academic performance or pose any risk to their progression or withdrawal
4. Act on any recommendations and advice offered by personal tutors

#### Boundaries

Staff should make students aware of their respective roles and expectations at the start of their relationship. This includes, for example, availability both virtual and/or face-to-face, issues such as confidentiality and record keeping. These boundaries may have individual, school and programme specific requirements but all should reflect the University Personal Tutor Policy as a minimum requirement.

#### Advice and guidance for personal tutoring

To make sure that all those involved in personal tutoring are clear about what is expected and what are the benefits of personal tutoring. Therefore the following must be produced and updated:

#### University

- A web based policy statement including roles and responsibilities for both staff and students that set out the University minimum standard
- A directory of generic support facilities that link to other web based resources
- A template and guidance for school specific personal tutoring handbooks and web information

#### School

- School specific personal tutoring handbooks available to all staff

- Statements of specific personal tutoring arrangements on school web sites for both staff and students
- Guidance on school specific support facilities that are linked to the university web site

### Best Practice

While undertaking research for this revised policy it is clear that there are local areas of best practice that should be shared across the university, for example, the use of a student portal WOLF topic in SAS to facilitate personal tutoring and the use of SITS to tell students who their personal tutors are.

It is also important to be able to hear student views on personal tutoring and to be able to respond to any changing needs of the University's diverse student body. Therefore a question on personal tutoring must be included in the internal student satisfaction survey.

### Anticipated next steps

Approval is requested for implementation from September 2008 with the minimum requirement that every student has an identified Personal Tutor.

Following approval from Academic Board, May 2008 a working group will be established to ensure successful implementation across the University and to further consider the following areas of practice that have been identified by UQEC.

Establish a process for the monitoring and evaluation of personal tutoring

- Workload allocation model
- Communication of student entitlements
- Staff development opportunities
- Record keeping and how SITS could assist schools with storing information

### Evaluation and impact of the Initiative

A policy for personal tutoring was received by UQEC (April 2008) and approved by Academic Board (May 2008). This policy was crafted by the CIEL team with contributions from all academic schools. In July 2008 new web pages were created by the CETL and LIS to support this policy. These pages were primarily seen as helping members of staff and are prominent on the first page of the staff information web page. The personal tutoring web pages also have a short cut web address [www.wlv.ac.uk/personaltutoring](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/personaltutoring). The implementation and evaluation of the personal tutoring scheme is being undertaken by ILE. Interim finds were reported to the Executive in June 2009 as part of a Retention and Progression Update

Every School already had a Personal Tutor system. The aim of the 2008-9 strategy was to:

- improve each student's knowledge of the identity of their Personal Tutor
- improve the consistency of the student/tutor experience across the University

The target was that each student should have an identified tutor whose name was entered onto SITS so that the student was able to identify the relevant member of staff. Particular priority was given to the new Level 1 full time students. In addition to this central initiative each School attempted to ensure that students met their Personal Tutor at the earliest opportunity and that tutorial times were clearly identified. ILE provided website support.

Evaluation of this initiative showed that entry of tutor names onto SITS for Level 1 students varied across the University from 54% - 98%. Further investigation showed that this variation was often due to the identification of an appropriate individual to enter names on to SITS and the requisite resources being identified. There is no evidence that students used this information or that this action improved the quality of tutorials. It did appear to provide a system which reinforced the allocation of a Personal Tutor to each student. Some Schools provide this information to students via a generic 'student support' WOLF module

% of First Year f/t students with Personal Tutors entered on SITS 7<sup>th</sup> May 2009

SAD	HLSS	UWBS	SLS	SAS	SCIT	SEBE	SEd	SSPAL	SoH
90%	53.3	82.2	85.1	94.9	54.4	67.5	56.5	77.9	57.1

An early sample evaluation at the end of Welcome Week (Dean of Students: October 2008) showed that on a sample of 497 students, 87% knew who their personal tutor was.

Mid year evaluation from Schools (ILE: February 2009) regarding their student booking systems showed clearly that each School had a system by which students were able to book tutorials and that students were aware of this system. The systems themselves varied. Each School also had a system for identifying 'students at risk', but this did not always involve the Personal Tutors.

The Internal Student Satisfaction Survey (Dean of Students: May 2009) showed:

'My tutor has been helpful' % student agreement:

SAD	HLSS	UWBS	SLS	SAS	SCIT	SEBE	SEd	SSPAL	SoH
64.8	60.7	40.8	67.3	61.0	66.0	62.0	68.9	56.3	80.1

## Policy Implications

- Stakeholders

A policy was created and was presented to academic board and university quality committee. Web pages were created to provide information for both staff and students. These included roles and responsibilities for both, suggested activities and a directory of sources of information. [www.wlv.ac.uk/personaltutoring](http://www.wlv.ac.uk/personaltutoring)

- HE Sector

Policy and web pages were presented to a symposium the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Personal Tutoring and Academic Advising Conference (April, 2009) with the Universities of Liverpool and York. Feedback from the sector was the policy was clear to understand and allowed local interpretation, pages for which are as follows: <http://www.wlv.ac.uk/Default.aspx?page=18378>.

## Business Case (This could be hurdles)

- Opportunity

Personal Tutoring have contractual obligation to conduct personal tutoring and have a 50 designation for this activity. The personal tutoring system is also embedded in to Long Thin Modules that continue over an academic year

- Risk analysis of not continuing the programme

There will always be a need for personal tutoring in an academic environment. By not providing this the University will not be provided a fundamental role of academic support that is valued by students and is a key role within the academic contract.

- Resource implications of the programme.

This is a key part of the academic contract and 50 hours are designated in the workload allocation for all academic staff. . It is recommended that Deans are given the responsibility to ensure that details of personal tutors and the allocation of tutees are entered on SITS at the start of each significant phase of study and that these details are kept up-to-date.

### **Expert Contacts and Links**

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