

School of Computing, Engineering and Mathematics

Personal Academic Tutoring Staff Guidelines

Supporting our students

As a Personal Tutor you have a crucial role in supporting your tutees, not just those who are facing problems. This support extends from identifying students experiencing difficulty and signposting them to the range of additional support available to signposting tutees to opportunities designed to develop and extend them such as volunteering. A personal tutor needs to be supportive and encouraging. Occasionally, you may also have to identify and discuss poor behaviour or poor attendance.

At Brighton, our undergraduate students arrive with a variety of entry qualifications, the majority with low or non-tariff, coming from a range of participation neighbourhoods, with almost a quarter (24%) from the most disadvantaged areas (POLAR Q1 & 2).

Students from Widening Participation backgrounds often lack the cultural capital which aids transition to Higher Education and are likely to also have the additional pressures of part time work or other responsibilities which compete for their time (Thomas and Hixenbaugh, 2005). Additionally, this group of students are less likely to actively seek support when experiencing problems (Dogson and Bolam, 2002, Thomas 2005), lower confidence in this group of students may be contributing factors to leaving their course (Quinn et al. 2005). Therefore, the need for a robust and consistent personal academic tutoring system to support all students is a priority for Brighton.

Research into retention has shown that an early informal discussion/meeting about how students are settling in will help them make the transition to university more effectively and also identify any issues or concerns before these reach crisis point.

This guidance is designed to support you in your role as Personal Academic Tutor and ensure that you are well prepared. It includes advice on the role of the Personal Tutor and details of other sources of student support. Most courses will have key times in the year when many students are facing common issues, such as examination nerves, assessment deadlines or assessment stress and it may be worth arranging an (extra) group tutorial rather than dealing with queries on an individual basis.

The course/programme administrator will provide you with a list of students entering the University with a WP 'flag' this will alert you to the potential difficulties they might face in making the transition into Higher Education, you will also receive information about students who have learning support plans from the disability team. You will also be provided access to the students' *My Grades* through instructor access to the students' modules on StudentCentral.

The role of a personal academic tutor can be both challenging and rewarding with the chance to make a real difference to the outcomes of the individual students but you must remember that you are an academic tutor and not a counsellor and ensure that you are able to refer students in need or crisis to the relevant professional help as needed, usually by referring to the Student Support and Guidance Tutor or Student Services.

The role of the Personal Academic Tutor

A personal academic tutor:

- provides a central point of consistent contact within the academic team for the student and to foster a sense of 'belonging' to the University, through creating a sense of academic community with the School;
- provides information and guidance on Institutional processes, procedures and expectations;
- supports students to alleviate anxiety about what is expected academically (e.g. independent study) and to aid transition to Higher Education;
- refers students to other support services as required (SSGT, Student Services);
- provides a holistic support for retention, progression and success for all students;
- supports students in regularly reviewing their academic progress and performance in line with the Personal Academic Tutoring policy;
- supports students' awareness and use of academic feedback;
- encourages students to reflect on their formal and informal learning more broadly (rather than focusing on individual modules) and how it contributes to their future development and career.

Responsibilities of the Personal Academic Tutor

- Maintaining regular contact with each tutee, the minimum of 3 times per year as per the Personal Academic Tutoring Policy.
- Welcoming tutees to Brighton, where possible this should be during the "post online enrolment" period.
- Following up students who are not attending regularly (including to scheduled Personal Academic Tutorials).
- Having a good awareness of tutee progression and engagement through *MyGrades* and other learning analytics.
- Ensuring each individual student is known and valued and that their needs are recognised and supported.
- Encouraging and assisting with reflection on progress to date (including reflection on academic grades and feedback) and following up students who are not making satisfactory progress.
- Liaising with other members of academic staff as appropriate (e.g. module leaders, module tutors, course leader).

- Referring to SSGT or Student Services as needed.
- Advising and supporting tutees, for example, with the procedures for Mitigating Circumstances.
- Ensuring students know how to contact their personal tutor and how to request an individual meeting.
- Responding promptly (maximum of 5 working days) to a request for contact or support from a tutee and to provide an alternative point of contact when unavailable through out of office messaging.
- Discussing future employability and skills development planning and signpost students to Careers service where students can receive support for career planning, skills development and employability.
- Signposting students to correct complaints or appeal procedures if required and the help available through the SU Support Service.
- Helping students think beyond the course and encourage your tutees to actively participate in university life. Praising success; encouraging students to take on challenging activities.
- Maintaining confidentiality of the tutorial meetings unless the students is deemed to be a danger to themselves or others (UoB Cause for Concern policy, flowchart and framework) or discloses a disability which needs a referral to the SSGT and the disability team.
- Recording attendance at Personal Academic Tutorial meetings/tutorials (group and individual)
- Writing references.

Support for Personal Academic Tutors

- As a personal academic tutor, you can receive support and training for this role from the Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT). Please contact your Deputy Head of School (L&T) to arrange this on an individual or group basis.
- A set of resources will be available for all staff on the CLT website and on the Student Services Website.
- A new member of staff will have a workshop on the role of the Personal Academic Tutor as part of their induction process with the CLT, to be arranged by the DHoS (L&T) or the staff member's Line Manager.
- Your Deputy Head of School (L&T) is the designated lead in the School for Personal Academic Tutoring and will provide advice on any issues where guidance is required
- You can decline to act as the Personal Academic Tutor for individual students in exceptional circumstances and this will be managed by the DHoS (L&T)
- The role of the academic personal tutor will be recognised in your workload

Personal Academic Tutoring Structure in the School of School of Computing, Engineering and Mathematics

Each student is allocated a personal tutor during induction and there are at least 3 meetings in the first year of study. In the School of Computing, engineering and Mathematics, we implement this as follows.

Level 0 and 4

Computing

Personal tutors meet weekly with their Level 4 personal tutee groups as part of the module CI453. Personal tutees may also request individual meetings with their personal tutor.

Engineering

Personal tutors meet regularly with their Level 4 personal tutee groups as part of the module XE421. Personal tutees may also request individual meetings with their personal tutor.

Foundation year: personal tutors meet with their personal tutees as follows: (1) Welcome Week, (2) week 6; (3) post semester 1 results.

Mathematics

Level 4 and Foundation year: personal tutors meet with their personal tutees as follows: (1) Welcome Week, (2) week 6; (3) post semester 1 results. These meetings may be group meetings, individual meetings or a combination of both.

Level 5

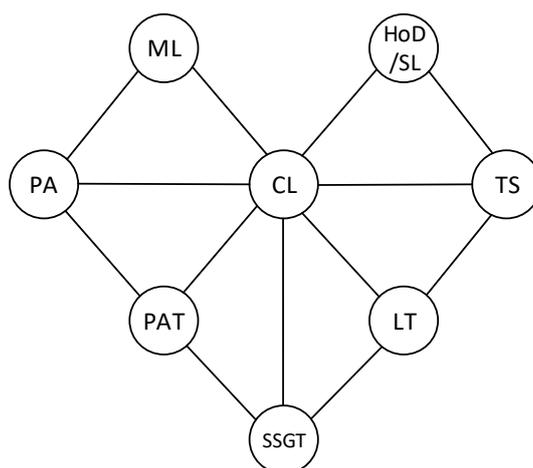
The schedule of meetings between personal academic tutors and students follows a similar pattern in Level 5: (1) Welcome Week, (2) week 6; (3) post semester 1 results. These meetings may be group meetings, individual meetings or a combination of both.

Level 6 and 7

The timing of meetings with Level 6 and Level 7 students is more flexible. Personal academic tutors should meet with students at a mutually convenient time. Again, these may be group meetings, individual meetings or a combination of both.

Support Network in the School of Computing, Engineering and Mathematics

The role of the Personal Academic Tutor is part of a wider team to offer support to the students as there are responsibilities which lie with other colleagues to offer support. This is illustrated by the following diagram.



PA – Programme Assistant
 SSGT – Student Support and Guidance Tutor
 PAT – Personal Academic Tutor
 LT – Level Tutor
 CL – Course Leader
 ML – Module Leader
 HoD/SL – Head of Division / Subject Lead
 TS – Technical Support Staff

Student Support Staff

How the role of the Personal Academic Tutor works in relation to other course staff:

Module Leader and Module Tutors

- The Academic Tutor should not be answering questions about individual modules and module content and the student should be referred to the module leader or tutor
- Module Leaders provide a point of contact regarding academic content of modules for students, therefore are in a position to recognise students experiencing specific challenges. Attendance at lectures and tutorials, particularly at the start of semester 1, will be recorded in order to monitor student engagement. This will also serve as early identification of any students who may be at risk and in need of additional support, the module leader will discuss this with the Personal Academic Tutor.
- Module Leaders will make the Personal Academic Tutor aware of any concerns over their personal tutees

Course Leader

- Providing the Personal Academic Tutors and Course administration team with a list of personal academic tutor allocations
- Dealing with requests for extensions to deadlines for students on the course, using the appropriate University form (ARGEAR 1);
- Liaise with personal tutors as necessary.

Student Support and Guidance Tutor

- All schools within the University have an assigned Student Support and Guidance Tutor (SSGT). SSGT's offer an invaluable source of information and advice to students and can be contacted by email, phone or in person. Contact details are advertised on posters throughout the school, online on StudentCentral and in-person introductions are made during induction week. SSGT's are available to discuss a range of issues such as; homesickness and loneliness, problems with accommodation, problems adapting to study, difficulties with the course or decisions about potentially changing direction, stress-related issues and mitigating circumstances.

Level Tutor

- Ensuring that the induction week programme is organised and appropriately co-ordinated.
- Dealing with requests for extensions to deadlines for students on the course, using the appropriate University form (ARGEAR 1); (IF NOT COURSE LEADER)
- Liaise with personal tutors and student support tutors as necessary.

Deputy Head of School (Learning & Teaching)

- Monitor the implementation of the Academic Personal Tutoring Policy through school meetings/programme boards.
- Ensure that a process of attendance monitoring of Personal Academic Tutorials is in place
- Agreeing School practice on recording outcomes of personal tutorials to maintain confidentiality (e.g. tutors emailing tutees the agreed actions or agreed outcomes of a meeting)
- Ensuring Personal Academic Tutors dealing with students under the age of 18 and vulnerable adults are aware of the safeguarding procedures, students services can provide support for this.

Other Academic Staff/Course Administrator/Technical Staff

- Technical Support staff and School Office staff have key roles within the student experience. They often have first line contact with students and are often in a position to identify student who are experiencing difficulties.
- Referring students to Personal Academic Tutors as necessary.
- Administrator will provide personal academic tutors with information on students with a WP 'flag' on entry.
- Administrators will hold a list of personal academic tutor allocations.

STUDENT SERVICES

Student Services is a central department that provide a range of services to support students through university and to help them you get the most from their student experience.

Our experienced and supportive staff offer advice on a range of issues, including:

- Advice about money worries and how to live on a budget.
- Support in finding jobs and volunteering opportunities.
- Help accessing academic support if students have a disability, learning difficulty or long-term medical condition.
- One to one support for students with worries or concerns in a safe, confidential space.

Below is an outline of some of the ways in which they assist students.

Careers Service

A range of services to support students to build employability skills and boost graduate potential - careers guidance, enterprise skills, and employment and volunteering opportunities. In addition, the course Career Planning Agreement can help students identify the employability skills they are developing from their academic study.

Chaplaincy

For all faiths or none, social events, retreats, worship, discussion, support and listening.

Childcare

With two Ofsted rated nurseries open to children of staff, students and the local community, the University of Brighton is an excellent choice for high quality, affordable and flexible childcare.

Counselling

Students can access Counselling for any reason – if academic life is a cause for concern, or for personal reasons. Counselling offers a safe and confidential space for student to discuss their issues. In the first instance students are offered an assessment appointment, followed by further guidance and support or referral to appropriate agencies.

Disability and dyslexia support

Support for students with a disability, specific learning difficulty or long term-health condition. We encourage students to disclose as soon as they can, so they can take advantage of the wide range of academic and personal support available.

Health and wellbeing

We have local links with GP surgeries (Eastbourne and Moulsecoomb) and health and wellbeing information and workshops to help students keep their minds and bodies in balance and get the most out of university.

Student Advice Service

When it comes to student finances at university it pays to be money wise; so for expert advice on financial issues, including fees, grants, bursaries, loans, and money management, contact the Student Advice Service. They can also help international students needing immigration advice, and help settling into the UK academic life.

Getting in touch

Further information about our services is available at <http://www.brighton.ac.uk/current-students/index.aspx>, or students can also access us via the 'help and advice' tab on student central for access to FAQs, ask a question or book appointments.

Email at studentservices@brighton.ac.uk access at each campus by visiting our student centres, or call us to find out more or book an appointment.

Eastbourne - Trevin Towers, Gaudick Road T: 01273 643845

Falmer – Student Centre, E Wing Checkland Building T: 01273 643584

Grand Parade – Student Centre, Ground Floor, main building T: 01273 643187

Moulsecoomb - Manor House, Moulsecoomb Place T: 01273 642895

Hastings – The Student Centre, Level 1, Priory Square T: 01273 644643

STUDENTS' UNION SUPPORT

Union Support offer free, confidential & impartial advice to students.

Our team of advisers are very experienced in assisting students with any queries about their courses and can help if things go wrong.

We actively support hundreds of students every year by helping them make appeals, raise and resolve complaints, guide them through academic misconduct, disciplinary and fitness to practice matters, as well as gain extensions and support claims for mitigating circumstances.

In addition, we help those who are in debt to the university and those having problems on their course. We always try to offer the information, advice or representation they need to make their situation better. If we can't help we'll find someone who can.

bsusupportservice@brighton.ac.uk

www.brightonsu.com/support

References

Cause for Concern Flowchart

<https://staff.brighton.ac.uk/ss/Source/Cause%20for%20concern%20flowchart.pptx>

Cause for Concern Framework

<https://staff.brighton.ac.uk/ss/Source/Cause%20for%20Concern%20Framework.pub>

Cause for Concern Procedure

<https://staff.brighton.ac.uk/ss/Documents/Cause%20for%20concern.docx>

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Hixenbaugh, P., Pearson, C. & Williams, D. (2005) Student perspectives on personal tutoring: What do students want? In: L. Thomas & Paula Hixenbaugh (eds) *Personal Tutoring in Higher Education*. Stoke-on-Trent. Trentham Books Ltd, 45-58.

Quinn, J., Thomas, L., Slack, K., Casey, L., Thexton, W., & Noble, J. (2005) *From life crisis to lifelong learning. Rethinking working class 'drop out' from higher education*. York. Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Thomas, L. (2005) Widening participation and the increased need for personal tutoring. In: L. Thomas & Paula Hixenbaugh (eds) *Personal Tutoring in Higher Education*. Stoke-on-Trent. Trentham Books Ltd, 21-32.