



University of Essex



PERSONAL TUTOR POLICY

AIM

At the University of Essex, we want our students to be fully supported with their academic and pastoral needs as they engage with their academic journey. A key role in this support is a student's Personal Tutor who can provide them with timely support, signpost to specialist services, and help to foster a sense of belonging.

The aim of this Personal Tutor Policy is to outline, and explain our minimum requirements and to be clear about the responsibilities of everyone involved in this process: Personal Tutors, Senior Personal Tutors, Directors of Education, Heads of Department and Faculty Deputy Deans Education.

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SUMMARY

Personal Tutor systems can increase engagement and retention, encourage attendance, promote academic success and enhance the overall student experience (Thomas 2012, *What works? Student retention and success programme*). There is considerable research which indicates that effective personal tutoring is beneficial to student outcomes and satisfaction, particularly in the context of expansion of student numbers and

student diversity. Personal contact and feeling connection to the University is important to all students, however, those students who are most at risk of failure, withdrawal or underachievement are the same ones who may need encouragement to ask for help. A named contact within the department is especially important for these students to build connections and signpost support.

SCOPE

The Policy affects all members of academic staff engaged in teaching and supporting students as well as those who have an education leadership role: Deputy Deans (Education); Heads of

Department; and Directors of Education. The roles and responsibilities of these parties are detailed in the next section.

Our minimum requirement is that:

- All undergraduate and taught postgraduate students have a named Personal Tutor in their department that they can approach for information, advice and guidance throughout the duration of their course.
- Personal Tutors meet with tutees at the start of their course and arrange meetings (individually and/ or in small groups) each term (and a minimum three times per year).
- Personal Tutors use Learner Engagement Activity Portal (LEAP) data to discuss engagement and progress with tutees. A record of meetings and any other contacts with tutees are recorded in LEAP.
- A named Senior Personal Tutor allocates, coordinates and supports personal tutors in their department acting as a point of referral for any concerns by tutor and tutee.
- Senior Personal Tutors complete Mental Health First Aid training.
- Personal tutor arrangements are evaluated in the annual review of courses and should be considered in Student Voice Groups annually.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

PERSONAL TUTOR

- 1 All Personal Tutors meet with their tutees at the start of their course and arrange regular meetings each term. These can be arranged individually or in small groups. There should be a minimum of three meetings per year. Students may request additional meetings at any time during the year.

Personal Tutor meetings can take place face to face or remotely via Zoom. Personal Tutors are encouraged to explore the following [Moodle resource](#) for further guidance on how to facilitate Personal Tutor sessions via Zoom. This resource includes information from the Innovation and Technology Solutions team on sustaining high levels of security and privacy.

- 2 Personal Tutors are a first point of contact for their tutees and provide academic and general support. This does not replace individual support from specialist support services and Personal Tutors will always signpost to these services as needed.
- 3 At the meetings Personal Tutors will have access to our Learner Engagement Activity Portal (LEAP) and use this to discuss academic progress with their tutees. They explore any issues affecting progression and engagement (e.g. academic, personal, financial, accommodation or similar issues). The meetings can also be used to discuss the transition between years and into 'graduate life'.
- 4 If a Personal Tutor has any concerns about their tutee's wellbeing they refer them to the relevant specialist support service. If they are unsure of the exact support the student may need they discuss their concerns with the Senior Personal Tutor.
- 5 A record of all meetings is included on the LEAP system. This includes details of any referrals. Content of the meetings is not necessarily included and not without student permission.
- 6 Personal Tutors complete any essential training requirements for the role as well as familiarise themselves and keep up to date with the support services available to students in order to facilitate signposting and referrals.

SENIOR PERSONAL TUTOR (SPT)

- 1 SPTs allocate, co-ordinate and monitor arrangements for Personal Tutoring in the department.
- 2 SPTs ensure that every Personal Tutor is aware of the requirements, support and guidance available to them.
- 3 SPTs provide guidance and support to Personal Tutors if they have any concerns about a student or are unsure of the exact support needed.

This includes signposting Personal Tutors to the supporting [Moodle site](#) for further guidance on facilitating effective sessions in both a face to face and online capacity.
- 4 SPTs are the link with Student Support for the department.
- 5 SPTs are the under-18s co-ordinator for the department and are responsible for monitoring and meeting with those students personally.
- 6 SPTs respond to requests from students to change their Personal Tutor. Students can request a change at any time and do not need to give a specific reason.
- 7 All SPTs are trained in Mental Health First Aid so that they can signpost students to the specialist support when needed and help Personal Tutors to do the same.
- 8 A record of all meetings is included on the LEAP system. This includes details of any referrals. Content of the meetings is not necessarily included and not without student permission.
- 9 SPTs complete any essential training requirements for the role as well as familiarise themselves and keep up to date with the support services available to students in order to facilitate signposting and referrals.

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION (DoE)

- 1 In partnership with the Senior Personal Tutor, the DoE ensures that Personal Tutoring in their department is in accordance with the Personal Tutor policy.
- 2 In partnership with the Faculty Deputy Dean Education the DoE encourages the sharing of good practices between colleagues across departments and Faculties.

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT (HoD)

- 1 HoDs are responsible for making sure that all academic staff engaged in personal tutoring in their department are aware of the minimum requirement for the role.

FACULTY DEAN EDUCATION (DDE)

- 1 Faculty DDEs will provide updates to Education Committee annually to confirm that Personal Tutoring is taking place and is effective.

ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 1 Organisational Development provides essential training for personal tutors including providing information, advice and guidance to support them in their role.

WORKFLOW



