Personal Tutoring

A guide to academic and personal support for students at the University of Bristol
What is personal tutoring for?

Having a personal tutor should help you with your academic and personal development whilst you are at university. It’s really crucial support, to get you through your studies. It’s about having someone who knows you, how you learn, and helps you to get the most out of your degree. It includes:

• Having someone to turn to and talk things through with when you’re feeling lost or behind
• Being able to discuss how to juggle your studies with health (or other) problems
• Support in accessing extra-curricular activities
• Signposting to other support services, and helping you access them if you decide to do so

Every student at Bristol is different. You might have different circumstances, different learning styles, different strengths and weaknesses to those around you. And whilst a degree programme can’t cater for every student’s individual taste, the support you receive from your personal tutor should be just that: personal, set up to help you.

Your department may ask you to complete pre-set development work during personal tutor sessions. This is intended for your benefit but it is up to you whether you complete it. The terms of your relationship should be an agreement between you and your tutor, and you should feel free to talk to your tutor about the kind of help that you need.

Ultimately, academic support and personal tutoring is about making sure you have someone you can rely on in the university to support you.

Please do take advantage of and engage with these support opportunities; don’t suffer in silence, or hope a problem will work itself out – most of the time it doesn’t!
How does it work?

There are three different elements to academic support across the university. These might be combined in slightly different ways in some schools, but each of these roles should be evident in some form.

If you’re on a professional programme, a medicine student for example, these roles may even have different titles – but the support described within this guide should still be in place.

**Academic Personal Tutor**

The Academic Personal Tutor (commonly called a personal tutor) is your main contact within the department throughout your studies, and someone you can turn to for help and advice on both academic and personal matters. This person should know you reasonably well, keep an eye on how you’re doing, meet you regularly, and be there if you need to arrange an individual appointment. They should also be your first source of advice for things like:

- Feedback received on work
- Study skills
- Option choices
- Information about your programme of study
- References
- Anything else you feel relevant.

Usually, you’ll have the same Personal Tutor throughout your time at Bristol, unless this is not possible, or you request otherwise.

Your Personal Tutor will arrange contact with you. Contact with your personal tutor might be by way of small groups or one-to-one meetings (or a mixture of the two), depending on your programme of study. As a minimum you should expect:

- At least six meetings during your first year.
- At least four meetings in every other year.
- At least one meeting a year on a purely one-to-one basis.

Remember you should also feel free to contact your personal tutor at any time outside of the scheduled contact times.
The Senior Tutor is an academic in your department or school who is there to provide additional support if you need it. Typically your personal tutor may ask you to see the Senior Tutor if you have issues that are likely to significantly affect progress with your studies without targeted support, help, and guidance.

The Senior Tutor takes the lead on personal tutoring in their school, supports Personal Tutors in their work, and will be highly knowledgeable about alternative sources of support should you require them.

Additionally, as the person overseeing personal tutoring in your school, you may wish to see the Senior Tutor if you have an issue with the provision of academic support, or feel that you need to change your personal tutor for any reason.

Not all students feel comfortable discussing things that might have an impact on their studies with academic staff who may be teaching them or assessing their work.

If you feel you can’t approach a member of the academic staff with something, a member of your school’s administrative team will be designated as an alternative, confidential source of advice.

It’s useful to remember that all types of members of staff at the university as well as academics are committed to supporting you and helping ensure your studies are successful.

In addition, if you feel you need to go beyond your department entirely, the Students’ Union offers free, independent, confidential advice from a team of professional, full-time advisers.
The Students’ Union runs a free, independent and confidential advice service called “Just Ask”. The Just Ask advisers specialise in advice on academic issues such as:

- Changing course
- University processes like submitting extenuating circumstances, appeals and complaints
- Helping students with university hearings, such as disciplinaries, fitness to practice panels and plagiarism interviews.

The Just Ask advisers can also help students with wider issues such as financial, personal or social problems, and run a number of student-led support groups. Whatever your problem or question, just ask! www.ubu.org.uk/justask

The University’s Student Services also provide help and support on all aspects of university life. These services are:

- Students’ Health Service (An NHS General Practice doctors’ surgery)
- Student Counselling
- Disability Services
- Careers Service
- Multi-faith Chaplaincy
- Vulnerable Students’ Service.

You can find out more about these services (including which service is the most appropriate for a particular issue) at www.bris.ac.uk/studentservices
Specialist Support:

The International Office gives advice and support for all international students, and students studying abroad: www.bris.ac.uk/international-office

The Student Funding Office gives advice about financial issues, and information on funding your studies: www.bris.ac.uk/studentfunding

The Accommodation Office helps students with any problems or questions about housing; either in university-owned or privately-owned accommodation: www.bristol.ac.uk/accommodation

Course Reps:

If you would like a particular problem or issue to be discussed in your wider school or department you can also get in touch with your Course Rep.

They are students who represent the interests and opinions of fellow course mates. Course Reps are elected at the beginning of each year, in each program, for each year group. Course Reps sit on the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) for your department or school.

Course Reps will be actively seeking your opinion, look out for them in lectures and seminars - they’ll be in bright green hoodies!

Alternatively email the UBU Representation Coordinators ubu-representation@bristol.ac.uk who will put you in touch with your Course Rep.