

Academic Personal Tutoring Policy



Summary			
<p>The policy provides a framework to ensure a consistent approach to the system of academic personal tutoring for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students across the University, whilst allowing the operation of different models to suit discipline needs.</p> <p>Whilst the policy covers the role of the Academic Personal Tutor, the Senior Tutor and the student, the policy's primary audience is Senior Tutors.</p> <p>The policy is a staff-facing document, and within it outlines that schools should communicate with their students regarding the operation of academic personal tutoring within the programme/school.</p>			
Scope - this document applies to:			
UG and PGT students			
For applicants entering in:	2023/24	Applies to academic year:	2023/24 onwards
Document Control			
Owner	University Education Committee - which has delegated operational responsibility to University Learning and Teaching Committee		
Division	Education and Student Success: Academic Quality and Policy Office (AQPO)		
Lead contact	University Education Director for Academic Support Academic Quality Manager in AQPO		
Type	Policy	Status	Approved
Asset number	n/a	Version	2
Approved by	University Education Committee (UEC) and Senate	Date current version approved	UEC 07.09.22
Date current version published	7 September 2022	Date first published	August 2018
Revision schedule	Annual	Next review date	May 2025
Superseded documents	N/A		
Related documents	Academic Personal Tutor Handbooks (UG and PGT) Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes		
Keywords	Academic Personal Tutor, Personal Tutor, Tutoring, Academic Support, Senior Tutor		

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Note: The Academic Personal Tutoring Policy is currently under review. Through the 2023-2024 session, we will be piloting and consulting on enhancements to the way that personal tutoring provision is organised in the University.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Academic personal tutoring is key to the academic and skills development of our taught students. The policy outlined here covers the principles to which schools' personal tutoring systems should adhere and the roles involved, Academic Personal Tutor (hereafter simply referred to as just Personal Tutor), Senior Tutor and student.
- 1.2 Personal tutoring complements the wider matrix of services in place to support student success e.g. Careers, Study Skills, Student Wellbeing.
- 1.3 The way in which personal tutoring operates in the context of wider student support may differ between schools, programmes and levels of study but should be communicated clearly to both students and staff. Despite these differences, this policy is designed to provide a framework to ensure a consistent approach to undergraduate (UG) and taught postgraduate (PGT) personal tutoring across the University of Bristol.
- 1.4 Limited exceptions to this Policy may be granted with the approval of the Academic Lead for Personal Tutoring if the system provides the same level of student experience. Currently the excepted programmes are: MBChB, and the undergraduate programmes in the Veterinary School.

2. The purpose of academic personal tutoring

Personal tutors will:

- facilitate students' reflection on their academic experience, skills, progress, and ambitions
- advise students about their programme and unit study choices
- listen to students, and where appropriate, signpost to support services

By:

- developing a purposeful relationship with tutees which is embedded in the discipline

To enable students to:

- self-reflect, build resilience and autonomy
- transition successfully into, through, and out of University
- develop a sense of belonging in the academic discipline and University.
- be aware of the support services available to them and how to access them

3. Principles for personal tutoring arrangements in schools

- 3.1. All undergraduate and taught postgraduate students should be allocated a Personal Tutor (or, for some PGT programmes, a team of Tutors) at the start of their programme.
- 3.2. The details of how the personal tutoring system operates in each programme should be clear and transparent and communicated to both students and staff. Personal Tutoring Statements, which may cover one or many programmes, should outline the system.
- 3.3. Each school will have at least one Senior Tutor.
- 3.4. The schedule and format of tutorials is determined by the Senior Tutor to ensure a regular programme of contact which conforms with the minimums outlined in this policy (section 7).
- 3.5. Excellence in personal tutoring and senior tutoring is recognised through the University's promotion and progression framework and through the Bristol Teaching Awards scheme.
- 3.6. Personal tutoring and the role of Senior Tutor (and Deputy roles) should be reflected in the school's workload allocation.
- 3.7. Personal Tutors and Senior Tutors will be provided with training, information and resources (see section 5) to support them in their roles.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Personal Tutors

- 4.1. The role of Personal Tutor is considered a core responsibility for academic members of University of Bristol staff on pathways 1 and 3. The role may also be undertaken by members of staff on pathway 2 or NHS staff with honorary University contracts.
- 4.2. In addition to the role as outlined in section 2, the Purpose of Personal Tutoring, the Personal Tutor will:
 - 4.2.1. Understand their duties and responsibilities as a Personal Tutor and familiarise themselves with their school's personal tutoring system.
 - 4.2.2. Have regular meetings/contact with their tutees in line with this policy and their school framework and record the attendance at these as outlined in the [View Tutee Details and Record Tutorial Attendance](#) User Guide in BEAM (Bristol Education Administration Manual).
 - 4.2.3. Write references for tutees as requested.
 - 4.2.4. Undertake any training associated with the role (see section 5).

Senior Tutors

- 4.3. The Senior Tutor oversees the overall provision of personal tutoring for taught students and the implementation of this policy within their school.

4.4. Appointment

- 4.4.1. The Senior Tutor will be a member of academic staff with appropriate experience. They will need detailed knowledge and understanding of the [Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes](#).
- 4.4.2. With the exception of staff appointed to Senior Tutor role on an open-ended contract, the Senior Tutor role should normally be appointed for a fixed term (three years is suggested), although the tenure can be extended with the agreement of the individual and the Head of School.
- 4.4.3. The Senior Tutor term of office should normally end in October to allow them to undertake work associated with the autumn assessment period.
- 4.4.4. Schools should put appropriate procedures in place to ensure succession planning

and handover of the role, where possible, schools should appoint new Senior Tutors in time to allow a shadowing period.

- 4.4.5. Schools with high student numbers may choose to divide this role for example by level of study or by department or appoint Deputy Senior Tutor/s as appropriate. Those schools with one Senior Tutor and who have not adopted a formal Deputy arrangement, should ensure that a staff member is identified who is able to deputise for the Senior Tutor in times of absence.

4.5. The Senior Tutor will:

- 4.5.1. Understand the Senior Tutor duties and responsibilities and familiarise themselves with their school's personal tutoring system.
- 4.5.2. Define, for each programme, the frequency and form of contact points between Personal Tutors and their tutees, within the scope of this policy (see section 7) and review and update, if necessary, the Personal Tutoring Statement/s.
- 4.5.3. Oversee the allocation of tutees to Personal Tutors and that this is recorded in the student record system, as outlined in the User Guide [Assign Personal Tutors](#) in BEAM. This may include actioning enquiries/complaints from students regarding personal tutoring and ensuring that an alternative Personal Tutor is arranged where appropriate.
- 4.5.4. Ensure the school enacts its process to ensure continuity of care for tutees, for example when students are assigned a new Personal Tutor, transfer to another school, or as staff leave or go on research leave.
- 4.5.5. Ensure there is a process for checking-in with exams-only students; check-ins should be at a minimum of once a month in term time (as per the [Student Engagement Policy](#)).
- 4.5.6. Carry out the tasks attributed to the Senior Tutor around student non-engagement as outlined in the [Non-Engagement Response Map](#) in BEAM.
- 4.5.7. Contribute to the school process for considering Exceptional Circumstances, as set out in the [Regulations and Code of Practice for taught programmes](#).
- 4.5.8. Provide induction for new Personal Tutors concerning the tutoring arrangements in the school. When requested, support and advise Personal Tutors on academic issues raised by students, and signpost Personal Tutors so they can advise students on contacting student support services.
- 4.5.9. Ensure that personal tutoring arrangements are communicated to all students in the school (this could be via sharing the relevant Personal Tutoring Statement) and welcome new students (ensuring they are aware of the purpose of personal tutoring and relevant roles and responsibilities).
- 4.5.10. Advise students as needed around:
 - matters of academic process, such as exceptional circumstances, transfers, withdrawals, suspension of studies and academic outcomes.
 - the required to withdraw process (as per the process notes, map and guidance for Senior Tutors in the '[Communicate with Required to Withdraw Students](#)' section in BEAM, please note that these can also be undertaken by alternative staff such as the School Education Director or Programme Director).

Students

- 4.6. Students are active partners in the personal tutoring system and as such they should familiarise themselves with the role of their Personal Tutor, Senior Tutor and their own responsibilities.
- 4.7. Students may request to change their Personal Tutor. No reason for wanting to change is required. They should contact the Senior Tutor who will arrange for them to transfer to another member of staff.
- 4.8. Students will:
 - 4.8.1. attend personal tutorials (notify their Personal Tutor if they are unable to attend) and respond promptly to any communication from their Personal Tutor.
 - 4.8.2. actively participate in personal tutorials and consider the advice and feedback from their Personal Tutor.
 - 4.8.3. reflect on their academic progress, to be aware of their skills development needs.
 - 4.8.4. be proactive in seeking support from their Personal Tutor if/when required.

5. Training and support for Personal and Senior Tutors

- 5.1. Schools should induct new Personal Tutors to ensure they are familiar with the local personal tutoring system.
- 5.2. A template School [Personal Tutor Handbook](#) is provided for Senior Tutors to amend and make school specific. It includes a wide range of generic information that Personal Tutors may find useful.
- 5.3. The Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT) offer an [online module](#) and also [workshops](#) for those new to personal tutoring and those wishing to refresh their knowledge and skills.
- 5.4. [Education and Student Success hosts a SharePoint](#) page with useful guidance and resources for personal tutoring.
- 5.5. '[Supporting Student Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)' is one of the essential training modules in Develop that all staff are required to undertake. The [Develop platform](#) also hosts courses by Bristol Mind around supporting students' wellbeing.
- 5.6. New Senior Tutors are offered a University induction and all Senior Tutors are made members of the Senior Tutor Network, a forum to share personal tutoring practice and any issues affecting student support provision.
- 5.7. The University's Staff Counselling Service offers Senior Tutors the opportunity to attend monthly peer support groups.

6. Confidentiality

- 6.1. Tutors will respect the confidentiality of discussions with their tutees unless there is a concern for their safety or the safety of others. Personal information about tutees is subject to the Data Protection Act and should be treated as confidential. More information of the Act can be found at www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/data-protection/ and [Guidance for attendance notes and documents](#) is available in BEAM.

7. Organisation of personal tutoring inschools

Type and frequency of meetings

- 7.1. Personal Tutors should contact their new tutees as early as possible, normally in Welcome Week or early in Week 1.
- 7.2. Personal tutorial meetings can take place as small group or one-to-one meetings, as appropriate.
- 7.3. Meetings/contact can take place, in person, via an online platform (Teams, Zoom etc), by email or telephone.
- 7.4. It is the responsibility of the school/Personal Tutor to arrange personal tutoring meetings with tutees.
- 7.5. When students move to the dissertation phase of their programme the Personal Tutor role may transition to the dissertation/project supervisor.
- 7.6. **Undergraduate students:** The expected frequency of contact for full-time (standard attendance) undergraduate students is given below. At least one of these contact points each year should be a one-to-one session.
 - 7.6.1. First year students: at least THREE contact points will be scheduled in each teaching block.
 - 7.6.2. Subsequent years of study: at least TWO contact points will be scheduled in each teaching block.
- 7.7. **Postgraduate taught students:** The expected frequency of contact for full-time (standard attendance) PGT students is at least THREE points of contact over the two teaching blocks, at main points of transition, by Personal Tutors or tutor teams.

Allocation of tutees to Personal Tutors

- 7.8. The total number of tutees allocated to any given tutor will be variable. However, the expectation is that full-time staff will normally have no more than 30 tutees at any one time. (It is recognised that in schools operating the team tutoring model this recommended maximum number of tutees does not apply).
- 7.9. In large PGT cohorts a team tutoring model may be adopted. Students should be made aware of the names and contact details for all team tutors.

Students on joint honours programmes

- 7.10. Students on joint honours programmes the 'lead' school is responsible for assigning a Personal Tutor. Within the joint school, a member of staff will be identified as a point of contact for matters relating to that school.
- 7.11. Depending on the size of the cohort it may be desirable for the role of Personal Tutor to be undertaken by the Programme Director in owning school and the named contact (joint Programme Director) in the other school.

Students on intercalated programmes at Bristol

- 7.12. University of Bristol students who intercalate within the University will retain the Personal Tutor allocated to them in their professional programme. Schools may choose to assign tutors to internal intercalating students if appropriate to the academic support required.
- 7.13. Students from outside the University of Bristol who intercalate into Bristol programmes should be assigned a Personal Tutor in the intercalation school.

Students studying away from Bristol

- 7.14. The Senior Tutor, in liaison with other relevant individuals (e.g. study abroad academic director, the Global Opportunities Team etc), is responsible for ensuring there are processes by which students are supported by the school whilst they are studying away from Bristol, including but not limited to those undertaking study abroad, placements or work in clinical academies, and communicating those to relevant students and Personal Tutors.

Supporting exams-only registered students

- 7.15. The Senior Tutor is responsible for agreeing how the school manages the process for checking-in with exams-only students. Check-in contacts should be at a minimum of once a month in term time.