

## **Arrangements for Academic Tutoring 2011/12**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The University is committed to providing an outstanding student experience and has set out the following aims and objectives in its Strategic Plan 2007-2012:
- to provide an academically rewarding, personally fulfilling experience for students
  - to further our reputation for excellent inclusive higher education, in order to meet the diverse needs of students, employers and society in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
  - to contribute to the creation of a skilled workforce by producing highly employable entrepreneurial and professional alumni
  - to maintain a high level of academic and personal support for all students which takes full account of the diverse and changing nature of the student body.
- 1.2 This is a proposal for an Academic Tutor system for all undergraduate students, full-time or part-time, that will play a significant role in enhancing the students' academic and personal experience of studying at the University of Worcester. It will replace the role of Personal Tutor for all undergraduates joining the University from September 2011. The shortcomings of the current system of Personal Tutoring have been a running theme of debate in the University, with adverse comments at, for example, the Student Learning Conference in November 2010 and in the Student Written Submission, prepared as part of the Institutional Audit. This paper has been prepared as part of the work of the Academic Tutoring workstream, set up to address this issue.
- 1.3 Implementation will be in two phases. Phase 1 will see initial changes being made for first year undergraduate students starting in September 2011 and then Phase 2 will enable the system to be fully embedded into courses from September 2012.
- 1.4 The introduction of Academic Tutoring is a refocusing of the current resource deployed through the existing system of Personal Tutoring, which will cease for first year students from September 2011. There may be a small net increase in workload in the initial year of operation in Institutes who do not already operate a system similar to the proposal but it is anticipated that, from 2012-13, more of the Academic Tutoring will be embedded in the curriculum. The proposed system of Academic Tutoring has been designed to be front-loaded, with greater emphasis and resource being allocated to the first year of study.
- 1.5 The following sets out the arrangements for 2011/12 in terms of the purpose of the system, and the responsibilities of Institutes, course teams, academic tutors and tutees, together with the support for implementation to be provided by the University. A generic statement regarding the Academic Tutoring system and the expectations of tutors and tutees will be prepared for the University Student Guide and the website. Institutes are asked to ensure that all course teams provide students with clear written statements of how the system will operate in specific courses/subjects in 2011/12.

### **2 Purpose of the Academic Tutor system**

- 2.1 The main focus of the Academic Tutor role is to support students in relation to their course and studies as follows:

- Support all students in becoming a member of the University and making the transition to studying in higher education
- Help students to understand the requirements of their course in terms of knowledge and understanding, skills development and assessment requirements
- Support students to take responsibility for their own learning through helping them to reflect on their progress, identify their learning needs and develop appropriate strategies to achieve them
- Help students to make the most of the learning resources and other forms of learning support available to them
- Support students in academic, professional and career related planning and development, and the appropriate recording of this
- Advise and guide students on issues or problems arising whilst they are at the University and, where appropriate, direct them to the broader range of services provided by the University
- Support students for whom there may be particular challenges when entering higher education (eg students with disabilities, students leaving care, black and ethnic minority students)

2.2 Academic Tutors will normally be subject specialists and link with a named student throughout their undergraduate studies. Academic Tutors will make students aware of when they are available and how they prefer to be contacted.

2.3 From September 2012, subject to some refinements of SOLE, joint honours students will normally have two named Academic Tutors. However, in September 2011 joint honours students will be allocated an Academic Tutor from one of their subjects and alternative arrangements will be made by Institutes for these students to access academic support for the other subject.

2.4 Students will be encouraged to see their Academic Tutors as their first point of contact to discuss any wider issues or problems that arise during their time at University. It will not be the role of the Academic Tutor themselves to try to resolve the issues or problems raised but to listen, offer initial advice and then to direct the student to other appropriate sources of help including the broad range of services available within the University.

2.5 The Academic Tutoring system for first year undergraduate students will operate as follows:

- A series of planned one-to-one or group sessions (group sizes may vary depending on course and curriculum needs) for first year Tutees;
- An initial meeting, normally during Welcome week, or at the latest within the first three weeks of the start of the academic year;
- A minimum of four meetings during the academic year;
- Meetings timed to coincide with key points such as assessment results or module selection.

2.6 Staff development and training resources to support the Academic Tutor role will be provided on an Institute basis, to ensure that Academic Tutors are well prepared for, and supported in implementing, the new role (see annexe).

### **3 Institute responsibilities**

3.1 In implementing the Academic Tutoring system, Institutes will:

- i. Be free to implement Academic Tutoring in a way best suited to the interests of their students providing their arrangements deliver the minimum expectations in terms of the aims and student entitlement
- ii. Identify a named Academic Tutor for each student, who is a subject specialist and will be their Academic Tutor, normally, for the duration of their studies
- iii. Ensure specific arrangements for joint honours students to access additional tutor support for non Academic Tutor subject area are clearly identified and communicated to students
- iv. Allocate undergraduate students to Academic Tutors using the University's electronic systems, wherever possible
- v. Nominate one or more members of staff to be responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring and reporting on the arrangements for the Institute
- vi. Ensure that each course communicates to students the way in which the Academic Tutor system for that course will operate in 2011/12
- vii. Monitor the effectiveness of the Academic Tutoring process, including student satisfaction and report on it at Institute Board and within the annual evaluation report
- viii. Provide access to appropriate training and information to staff to enable them to undertake the role of Academic Tutor, successfully including information about referral procedures in the case of a crisis.

#### **4 Course Team responsibilities**

4.1 Within University and Institute guidelines, the course leader and course team will be responsible for:

- i. Embedding core elements of Academic Tutoring within, *or aligned to*, mandatory modules, placing particular emphasis on Level 4
- ii. Clearly articulating the progression of core skills, advice and guidance over Levels 4, 5 and 6
- iii. Making evident what are considered core subject specific academic skills for development (ie as distinct from generic skills or individual advice and guidance)
- iv. Providing students with a clear written statement, preferably within the course handbook and via other means of communication (eg Blackboard) on the provision of Academic Tutoring and a structured programme of activities within the course
- v. Ensuring it is clear who a student should see if their Academic Tutor is absent and who to seek advice from if there is a problem with their Academic Tutor.

#### **5 Academic Tutor responsibilities**

5.1 The expectations of Academic Tutors are to:

- i. Meet with their first year Tutees normally within Welcome Week, or at the latest within the first three weeks of the start of the academic year
- ii. Arrange meetings with their first year Tutees at least four times during the academic year, on either a group or a one to one basis.<sup>1</sup>
- iii. Act as their Tutees' first point of contact for initial guidance and advice on all matters related to academic progress on the course, including making module and option choices
- iv. Support their Tutees in becoming a member of the University and making the transition to studying in higher education
- v. Help their Tutees to understand the requirements of the course in terms of knowledge and understanding, skills development and assessment requirements

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<sup>1</sup> The aspiration is that all courses will be able to schedule at least two of these meetings on a one-to one basis; however there is some flexibility in 2011/12 as a transition year.

- vi. Facilitate Tutees to take responsibility for their own learning, helping them to reflect on their progress, identify learning needs and develop appropriate strategies to achieve
- vii. Help their Tutees to make the most of the learning resources and other forms of learning support available to them
- viii. Support their Tutees in academic, professional and career related planning and development, and appropriate recording of this
- ix. Advise and guide Tutees on issues or problems arising whilst they are at the University and signpost them to the broader range of services provided by the University
- x. Annotate the Tutee records regarding their meetings through the staff record on the SOLE pages
- xi. Provide Tutees with a University of Worcester reference.

## 6 Academic Tutee responsibilities

6.1 Academic Tutoring is regarded as a core part of the first year academic experience to help students make the transition to higher education, become members of the University and engage successfully with their academic studies. In order for students to get the most out of this system, Tutees are expected to:

- i. Attend scheduled Academic Tutoring sessions and prepare for the sessions as guided by the Academic Tutor
- ii. Take responsibility for learning through reflecting on progress and responding to advice and guidance offered by their Academic Tutor(s)
- iii. Take the initiative in contacting their Academic Tutor(s) in relation to problems or if in need of advice outside of the scheduled sessions
- iv. Keep a record of the meetings with their Academic Tutor
- v. Ensure personal details on the SOLE page are current and correct.

## 7 Monitoring and evaluation

7.1 The Academic Tutoring system and its implementation will be evaluated and reviewed towards the end of 2011/12, in order that any amendments can be made in the light of experience and any restructuring of undergraduate programmes.

7.2 The Academic Tutoring system will also be evaluated through student feedback and representation systems, and the annual evaluation process, and may also be a focus for discussion in staff review meetings. The system will be reported on through the annual evaluation process at Institute Boards and LTSEC.

7.3 Work will be undertaken by the Academic Tutoring workstream to further develop this scheme and to roll it out to all years from 2012.

## 8 Actions the University will undertake to support implementation to include

Action	Lead by
Communication strategy to include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crib sheet for staff at Open/Visit days</li> <li>• Development of information for students and parents on academic tutoring and support</li> <li>• Development of web pages to support Academic Tutoring, including a single place for academic staff to source signposting information</li> </ul>	Jane Britton

Identification of Institute implementation strategy	Heads of Institute Institute L&T Leads Course Leaders
<b>Staff Training</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difference between Academic Tutor / Personal Tutor</li> <li>• Ideas for AT sessions</li> <li>• Use of staff notes in SOLE pages</li> <li>• Referral and signposting to, and accessing support from, specialist professional services</li> </ul>	Institute leads (nominated by Hol) Roger Prout Ian Scott/John Peters Kevin Pickess
Development of staff training resources and information	Roger Prout Ian Scott/John Peters
<b>Institute allocation of Tutees</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including cleansing of current data held</li> </ul>	Kevin Pickess Institute staff (nominated by Hol)

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