

## POLICY

### Personal Academic Tutoring Policy

#### Contact Officer

Director of Quality and Educational Development

#### Purpose

The University is committed to providing an outstanding educational experience as identified in its Strategic Plan.

The Personal Academic Tutor system, for all students, full-time or part-time, plays a significant role in enhancing the students' academic and personal experience of studying at the University of Worcester. It replaced the role of Personal Tutor for all students from September 2012.

#### Overview

Implementation has been in three phases. Phase 1 saw initial changes being made for first year undergraduate students starting in September 2011 and then Phase 2 saw the system more widely implemented, with the term Academic Tutor replacing Personal Tutor for all undergraduate and postgraduate students (and in July 2015, Academic Board agreed the system should in future be known as the Personal Academic Tutoring system). Phase 3 will see personal academic tutoring embedded wherever possible in courses.

The proposed system of Personal Academic Tutoring has been designed to be front-loaded, with greater emphasis and resource being allocated to the first year of study.

The following sets out the policy in terms of the purpose of the system, and the responsibilities of Institutes, course teams, personal academic tutors and tutees, together with the support for implementation to be provided by the University. A generic statement regarding the Personal Academic Tutoring system and the expectations of tutors and tutees is available in the University Student Guide and on the website. Institutes will ensure that all course teams provide students with clear written statements of how the system will operate in specific courses/subjects.

#### Scope

All academic staff and students.

#### The Policy

##### 1 Purpose of the Personal Academic Tutor system

- 1.1 The University's approach to personal academic tutoring is grounded in a philosophy of student educational development that places a high value on induction into the University community,

supporting students at key transition points, enabling students to reflect on progress and set future goals for achievement academically and for employability, and to become autonomous learners. The Personal Academic Tutor system is intended to provide a stable, holistic and developmental form of support for individual students that is course related. The main focus of the Personal 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, and between the different levels of, 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.

1.2 There are a range of sources of advice, guidance and support for students provided by the University Student Services through Firstpoint and through the Student's Union. Personal Academic Tutors are not expected to resolve all issues or problems presented by students, but to listen, offer initial advice and then, where appropriate to direct the student to other appropriate sources of help available within the University.

1.3 All students will be allocated a named Personal Academic Tutor from their course or subject on entry to the University. Undergraduate students will normally have the same Personal Academic Tutor for the duration of their studies, although subjects may decide that Personal Academic Tutoring in the final year of an Honours degree is best supported through the Independent Study or Major Project supervisor. Joint Honours students will be allocated a Personal Academic Tutor for one of their subjects and given a named contact to facilitate access to academic support for the other subject. Post-graduate students will be allocated a Personal Academic Tutor; this may in some cases be the course leader.

1.4 The Personal Academic Tutoring system operates as follows:

- An initial meeting, normally during Welcome Week for Undergraduate students, or within the first three weeks of the start of the academic year for all other students
- A series of planned one-to-one or group sessions (group sizes may vary depending on course and curriculum needs) for tutees
- A minimum of four meetings during the academic year for all first year undergraduate students, and three meetings in the second and third years of study; a minimum of two meetings for post-graduate students
- Meetings timed to coincide with key points such as induction/transition, assessment results or module selection
- Personal Academic Tutors will make tutees aware of when they are available and how to arrange a meeting.

1.5 Personal Academic Tutoring will be a planned and scheduled set of meetings with clear purpose, activity and outcomes, to reflect the focus of the system set out at 1.1 above, which should be communicated and explained to students at the start of the year.

1.6 Staff development and training resources to support the Personal Academic Tutor role will be provided on an Institute basis.

## **2 Institute responsibilities**

2.1 In implementing the Personal Academic Tutoring system, Institutes will:

- i. Identify a named Personal Academic Tutor for each student, who is a subject specialist and will be their Personal Academic Tutor, normally for the duration of their studies, and ensure effective arrangements are in place to take account of students who are late entrants and to re-assign Personal Academic Tutors where a member of staff leaves the University or is away from the University for an extended period
- ii. Ensure specific arrangements for Joint Honours students to access additional tutor support for the non-Personal Academic Tutor subject area are clearly identified and communicated to students
- iii. Allocate students to Personal Academic Tutors using the University's electronic systems, wherever possible
- iv. Nominate one or more members of staff to be responsible for co-ordinating, monitoring and reporting on the policy for the Institute
- v. Ensure that each course communicates to students the way in which the Personal Academic Tutor system for that course will operate
- vi. Monitor the effectiveness of the Personal Academic Tutoring process, including student satisfaction and report on it at Institute Board and within the annual evaluation report, and take active steps to support effective implementation of the policy
- vii. Provide access to appropriate training and information to staff to enable them to undertake the role of Personal Academic Tutor, including information about referral procedures in the case of a crisis.

## **3 Course Team responsibilities**

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

- i. Embedding core elements of Personal Academic Tutoring within, *or aligned to*, the curriculum, placing particular emphasis on new students during their first stages, e.g. level 4 for Undergraduate, first semester for Postgraduate
- ii. Clearly articulating the purpose, organisation, expectations and outcomes of the Personal Academic Tutoring process for each student group over each year of study
- iii. Making evident what are considered core subject specific academic skills for development as well as core transferable skills, employability related skills, and setting clear expectations in relation to review, reflection and planning personal academic progress
- 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 Personal Academic Tutoring and a structured programme of activities within the course
- v. Ensuring it is clear who a student should see if their Personal Academic Tutor is absent and who to seek advice from if there is a problem with their Personal Academic Tutor.

#### **4 Personal Academic Tutor responsibilities**

4.1 The expectations of Personal Academic Tutors are to:

- i. Meet with their Tutees within Welcome Week (for first year undergraduates) or within the first three weeks of the start of the academic year for students in other years
- ii. Arrange meetings with their Tutees at least four times during the academic year for first year Tutees, three times for other years, and at least twice for post-graduate students. This can be on either a group or a one-to-one basis<sup>1</sup>
- iii. Act as a first point of contact for advice on matters related to academic progress on the course, including general guidance on module and option choices, with appropriate signposting to Firstpoint for the process of module selection
- iv. Support their Tutees in becoming a member of the University and making the transition into higher education and between academic levels
- v. Help their Tutees to understand the requirements of the course in terms of knowledge and understanding, skills development and assessment requirements
- vi. Facilitate Tutees to take responsibility for their own learning, helping them to reflect on their overall 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. The Personal Academic Tutor will log the meetings on the SOLE pages
- xi. Provide Tutees with a University of Worcester reference if requested.

#### **5 Personal Academic Tutee responsibilities**

5.1 Personal Academic Tutoring is regarded as a core part of the student academic experience to help students make the transition into higher education, become members of the University and engage successfully with their academic studies on an on-going basis. In order for students to get the most out this system, Tutees are expected to:

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

#### **6 Monitoring and evaluation**

6.1 The Personal Academic Tutoring system will be evaluated through student feedback, representation systems and the annual evaluation process, and may also be a focus for discussion in staff review meetings.

6.2 Institute Boards and their Learning and Teaching Committees (or equivalent) and Learning,

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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.

Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) will be responsible for monitoring and review of the effective implementation of the Personal Academic Tutoring System. The Director of Quality and Educational Development will be responsible for oversight on behalf of LTSEC.

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| <b>Approval Authority</b>   | Academic Board  |
| <b>Date of Commencement</b>                                       | 01/09/2013  |
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| <b>Date for Next Review</b>                                       | 31/07/2016  |
| <b>Related Policies, Procedures, Guidance, Forms or Templates</b> | n/a   |
| <b>Policies/Rules Superseded by this Policy</b>                   | V2  |