

Personal Academic Tutoring Policy

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Purpose

The University is committed to creating and sustaining the conditions that enable all students to benefit from an educational experience which is intellectually, socially and personally transformative.

The Personal Academic Tutor system plays a significant role in supporting students' academic and personal experience of studying at the University of Worcester and in supporting them to fulfil their potential. As such it is an important element of University strategies for improving student outcomes and evidencing teaching excellence. It is also a key strand of the access and participation plan and its goals of eliminating outcome gaps between student groups.. The Policy sets out the key principles for implementation, including core responsibilities of Schools and staff who act as Personal Academic Tutors.

Overview

Personal Academic Tutoring is intended to be embedded in the course experience for all students, although there is some flexibility in how it is implemented at course level. The core purpose of Personal Academic Tutoring is to support students in engaging with the academic requirements and expectations of their learning, and their professional and personal development through their time at the University.

Personal Academic Tutors are expected to monitor the academic progress of their tutees, discuss and agree developmental objectives and goals with their tutees, support them in making decisions about module choice, if applicable, and

employability related plans, maintain a record of meetings, and provide them with an academic reference if required. Personal Academic Tutors are expected to ensure students who are experiencing personal difficulties that impact on their studies are signposted to the professional student support services available at the University. This includes for example:

- Student Services provides a comprehensive guide for staff on [Signposting Student Support](#).
- [Library Services](#)
- [Centre for Academic English and Skills](#)
- [Study Skills Portal](#)
- [Academic Writers in Residence](#)
- [Student Union](#)

The University supports and facilitates a model of Personal Academic Tutoring that is purposeful and based on the principles of working in partnership with students to achieve personal development objectives. Staff development is provided to support this model.

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

- 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 Students' Union ([Worcester SU Help and Advice](#)). 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. See also [Signposting Student Support](#).
- 1.3 All undergraduate 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. There may be slightly different arrangements for students on professional courses or for courses with PRSB requirements. However, the purpose and principles of this policy should be maintained. 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. Postgraduate students may be allocated a named point of contact rather than a Personal Academic Tutor which may in some cases be the course leader.
- 1.4 The Personal Academic Tutoring system operates as follows:
- An initial meeting, normally during Induction Week for undergraduate students, or within the first three weeks of the start of the academic year for all other students
 - A series of regular planned one-to-one or group tutorials (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
 - For postgraduate students (except PGCE students), meetings with the personal named contact or Personal Academic Tutor will be arranged as required
 - Meetings should be 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.
 - Course handbooks should make clear who students should contact if their Academic Tutor is not available for more than 2 weeks.
- 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 and included in staff handbooks.
- 1.6 It is recommended that Schools consider linking Personal Academic Tutorial meetings at level 4 to a mandatory course module and/or setting 4 small group meetings through the first semester to build a sense of purpose and belonging. Guidance on how this may be managed will be developed through the PAT Leads Forum.

1.7 Staff development and training resources to support the Personal Academic Tutor role are made available through the University webpages. A range of staff development opportunities are available to support the design of personal academic tutoring in courses and to support the skills development of individual staff.

2 School responsibilities

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

- i. Appoint a Personal Academic Tutor Lead to oversee and support the implementation of the Personal Academic Tutor system in accordance with University Policy
- ii. Identify a named Personal Academic Tutor for each student, who is usually from their course or subject area and will be their Personal Academic Tutor, normally for the duration of their studies
- iii. Ensure effective arrangements are in place to take account of students who are late entrants and students whose Personal Academic Tutor leaves the University or is otherwise not available to carry out the role.
- iv. Re-assign Personal Academic Tutors where a member of staff leaves the University or is away from the University for an extended period
- v. Allocate students to Personal Academic Tutors using the University's electronic systems, wherever possible, ensuring no individual Personal Academic Tutor has more than 35 undergraduate tutees in total, and where this is not possible, action is taken to rebalance workload eg through the allocation of additional time for Personal Academic Tutoring.
- vi. Ensure that each course communicates to students the way in which the Personal Academic Tutor system for that course will operate
- vii. In the case of joint honours students, ensure that liaison takes place across the departments to make certain students have access to appropriate support
- viii. Monitor the effectiveness of the Personal Academic Tutoring process, including student satisfaction and report on it within the annual evaluation report, and take active steps to support effective implementation of the policy
- ix. 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. Personal Academic Tutors are not expected to provide ongoing mental health support, but guidance on supporting a student who presents with significant anxieties or related issues will be made available to PAT.

3 Course Team responsibilities

3.1 Within University and School 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 the first stages of their course.

- ii. Clearly articulating the purpose, organisation, expectations and expected outcomes of the Personal Academic Tutoring process for each student group over each year of study in the Course Handbook and at induction.
- iii. Setting clear expectations in relation to review, reflection and planning the development of graduate attributes, core academic, transferable and employability skills on the part of personal tutees to support personal and academic success
- iv. 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.
- v. Including the operation of the Personal Academic Tutor system is a standing item on staff student liaison committees.

4 Personal Academic Tutor responsibilities

4.1 The expectations of Personal Academic Tutors are to:

- i. Meet with Tutees within Induction (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 Tutees at least four times during the academic year for first year Tutees, three times for other years, and as required for postgraduate students.
- iii. Arrange an appropriate balance of one-to-one and group meetings, with clear opportunities for students to request an individual meeting with their Personal Academic Tutor if required.
- iv. 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
- v. Support Tutees in becoming a member of the University and making the transition into higher education and between academic levels
- vi. Help Tutees to understand the requirements of the course in terms of knowledge and understanding, skills development and assessment requirements
- vii. Enable 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
- viii. Help Tutees to make the most of the learning resources and other forms of learning support available to them
- ix. Support Tutees in academic, professional and career related planning and development, and appropriate recording of this
- x. 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 (see Overview section above and para 1.2)
- xi. Maintain a record of meetings via the agreed record keeping system
- xii. Provide Tutees with a University of Worcester reference if requested (see section The Role of the Student).

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. Ensure personal contact details on the SOLE page are current and correct.

6 Monitoring and evaluation

6.1 Heads of School are responsible for the effective implementation and monitoring of Personal Academic Tutoring within their Schools. The Director of Quality and Educational Development will be responsible for oversight of the system on behalf of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC).

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

Related Policies, Documents or webpages

[Personal Academic Tutors](#): webpage resources to support staff undertaking the Personal Academic Tutoring role [accessed 05/02/2020]

Approval/Review Table

Item	Notes
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Date of Approval	07/2024
Approved by	Academic Board
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Policy Officer	Director of Quality and Educational Development
Department	Quality and Educational Development
Review date	Spring 2027
Last reviewed	Spring 2024: review and updating to reference the appointment of a School Personal Academic Tutor Lead, to clarify responsibilities of various parties, to provide more flexibility in support for postgraduate students, through reference to allocating a personal name point of contact or PAT, and to specify a maximum of 35 tutees for individual Personal Academic Tutors.
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