

## TUTORIAL POLICY

### Introduction

1. The University of Suffolk is committed to providing personal tutorials as an essential feature of its programmes of study. This policy specifies what personal tutorials are and outlines their purpose. It also identifies student entitlement, the responsibilities of/support for personal tutors and relevant quality assurance mechanisms.

### Key principles underpinning personal tutorial practice

2. Key principles which underpin personal tutorial practice:

- Learner-centredness – respect for each student as an active learner and as an individual with their own particular set of needs;
- Concern for all aspects of students' learning – educational, career, personal and social;
- Equality of opportunity and diversity – ensuring and promoting equality of opportunity and diversity including eliminating unlawful discrimination.

These principles significantly help to create the conditions for learning and to empower students to feel sufficiently secure and confident to make increasingly mature and responsible decisions.

### Personal tutorials

3. Personal tutorials are pastoral meetings between a student and her/his designated personal tutor where together they consider the student's academic progress and any issues relating to, or with the potential to affect, that progress. Academic, career and personal development opportunities should also be discussed, and actions planned to promote successful/desired outcomes.

4. Personal tutorials are considered critical in fostering student confidence and stability and in promoting the skills, attitudes and behaviours to enhance students' current learning and nurture lifelong and reflective learning. They are also vital in helping students achieve positive outcomes from their programmes of study.

5. Additionally the personal tutorial system is intended to complement and advance the Institution's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy by offering planned, structured, continuous and confidential support for students on programmes of study at the University of Suffolk.

6. The policy also recognises the central part personal development planning takes within each student's learning and the invaluable role personal tutors can take in promoting and facilitating associated activities. Personal development planning is '*a structured and supported process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development*' (QAA 2001). At undergraduate levels, students are normally expected to engage with the University's personal development planning opportunities.

### **Subject-specific/academic tutorials**

7. In addition to personal tutorials, students will usually have access to subject-specific academic tutorial support for their learning and assessment needs at module/unit/course level. Time for these subject-specific academic tutorials is met from within module/unit/course taught hours, determined by module tutors and approved as part of the initial validation and subsequent re-approval processes. These can be group and/or individual tutorials. Study skills sessions may be offered as an integral aspect of these subject-specific/academic tutorials though these are often provided as additional sessions or as part of the taught element of mandatory modules.

8. Often on, for example, small part-time courses, these two types of tutorial may be combined and the functions of both fulfilled in one meeting between tutor and student. Tutors should ensure students are fully aware of the dual role of these personal/subject-specific tutorials.

### **Purpose of the personal tutorial system**

9. The personal tutorial system provides a personal contact point for all students and is intended to help them to:

- Articulate, plan for and evaluate progress towards their personal, education and career goals;
- Become more effective and confident learners who take increasing responsibility for their learning as they progress through their programmes of study;
- Recognise their own learning needs, capabilities and style and apply their learning to other contexts;
- Recognise, reflect on and value their achievements and progress;
- Develop, monitor progress with and identify extra-curricular opportunities for achieving key skills;
- Be better prepared for post-course professional development and employment;
- Develop a positive attitude to lifelong learning.

### **Personal tutorials – student entitlement**

10. All students of the University of Suffolk will:
- a. Be allocated a personal tutor during the induction period for their course.
  - b. Early in their programme of study, be advised of:
    - the entitlement opportunities and rationale for personal tutorials;
    - the name, telephone and e-mail address of their personal tutor;
    - the procedure for booking tutorials, which is determined by the course team at the point of validation. This should also be clearly stated in student handbooks;
    - the recording procedures for tutorial meetings/use of progress files and transcripts;
    - procedure in the event of a problem arising in their relationship with their personal tutor;
    - the other support mechanisms within the institution and how to access them, e.g. Learning Services, Student Services, Students' Union, etc.
  - c. Be entitled to four 20 minute personal tutorials per year if in full time study or pro rata for part time. At least one of these tutorials would normally be face to face, though, the University recognises the value of other modes of contact such as group tutorials, email, blogs and other on-line facilities;
  - d. Regard their personal tutor as their first point of contact in the event of any query/emergency/problem impacting on their studies;
  - e. Be able to use their personal tutor as a referee for entry to further study or employment;
  - f. In the event of a problem arising in the student/tutor relationship, have the right to take the matter to their Course Leader or Dean of School (or equivalent manager).

### **The responsibilities of personal tutors**

11. Personal tutors will be appointed by the relevant Dean of School or equivalent manager in consultation with the Course Leader and in discussion with the tutors concerned. For the majority of courses, providing the arrangement is agreeable to both parties, the personal tutor will remain in this role for the complete duration of each student's period of study. However, recognising the benefits of having specialist tutors allocated to benefit students at different stages of their progression, courses may adopt a system whereby cohorts of students are allocated a Level Tutor to take the role of their personal tutor during their study at each level of the course. Deans of School or equivalent managers are responsible for ensuring that personal tutors have sufficient

contact time allocated to fulfil their personal tutor role effectively. Should a problem arise in the relationship between a student and his/her personal tutor, the Course Leader (usually in conjunction with the Dean of School or equivalent manager) will make alternative tutorial arrangements.

Personal tutors' responsibilities are:

- a. In relation to their studies, helping to ensure students' well-being, looking after their interests, and guiding them in their preparations for future study needs.
- b. Being available to meet with each personal tutee individually in accordance with the expectations set out within this policy and in accordance with any locally agreed processes and procedures.
- c. Ensuring that students' academic progress, personal development and attendance are monitored (this may be supported by module activities and Course Leaders), taking appropriate action as necessary.
- d. Enabling students to maximise their academic strengths and interests, address any difficulties they may be experiencing within their programme of study and cope with any problems affecting their progress.
- e. Liaising with Course Leader, Module Leaders, employers, professionals and other relevant external agencies as necessary.
- f. Advising on students' selection of modules and the making of other academic choices to ensure continuity and coherence within their chosen programme of study, relevance to their intended post-course destination and adherence to the relevant regulatory framework.
- g. Providing guidance on careers and postgraduate professional training opportunities in collaboration with the University's Careers Service.
- h. Advising students on the availability of relevant specialist services within and out with the Institution.
- i. Maintaining student tutorial records in accordance with relevant policies, procedures and formats.
- j. Writing references for personal tutees during and after their period of study.
- k. Attending and contributing to Course Committees, team meetings and Assessment Boards as required.

### **Support for personal tutors**

12. Support for personal tutors will be provided:
- through the Guide to being a Personal Tutor in the Quality Manual;
  - by Deans of School or equivalent managers and Course Leaders;
  - via staff development activities;
  - as part of the staff induction programme;
  - by Student Services and the Students' Union;
  - by providing a standard Tutorial Record Card.

### **Quality assurance in relation to personal tutorials**

13. The quality of the personal tutorial system will be assured and enhanced by the following mechanisms:

- Review of the Tutorial Policy at least every 5 years.
- Regular review of the Guide to being a Personal Tutor in the University's Quality Manual.
- Student surveys – by identifying satisfaction level and any common concerns and action planning to address identified issues.
- The Risk-based Monitoring and Enhancement (RiME) processes – strengths and aspects of the system in need of improvement can be identified from a variety of sources and reported through the RiME processes at course and School or partner institution level along with actions planned to address the specified issues. Monitoring of progress with the actions is undertaken at Course Committees.
- Student Complaints and Academic Appeals procedures.
- Access to relevant staff development activities (in-house and external).