

## Learning and Teaching Support Handbook

### Chapter 8 - Academic Tutoring: code of good practice

#### 1. Introduction

1. This Code outlines the minimum requirements for Academic Tutors (also known as Personal Tutors) and Senior Tutors. It should be read in conjunction with the relevant Tutor Guide produced annually by the Academic Development and Skills team. Please also see the Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study, Mitigation, and Academic Conduct and Practice procedures. Please also see the Academic Tutoring guide in the [Education Toolkit](#)

Please note, this section of the TQA Manual is under review during the 2023/24 and 2024/25 academic years to incorporate the term “Pastoral Mentor”, linked to the Student Academic Support (SAS) Project. Please see the [TQA Manual Introduction](#) for more information.

#### 2. Purpose of Academic-led Tutoring Provision

- 2.1 The intention of academic-led tutoring provision is to ensure that each student is assigned a named academic contact within the department who they can talk to about their academic and professional development. This should include conversations around the themes of transition, progress, and realising ambition.
- 2.2 Every student on a taught programme of study will have an Academic Tutor (terminology may vary depending on the discipline). Support for the academic development and welfare of postgraduate research students is covered by the Code of Practice – Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students.
- 2.3 Although the role of Academic Tutor should be distinguished from that of module tutors on the programme of study, it is likely that an Academic Tutor will also be one of the student’s programme tutors. The role of Academic Tutor involves providing academic advice and support to the student across the programme of study and reviewing wider academic progress. Their role extends to providing referral guidance to students to sources of specialist support (e.g. for academic matters; emotional health and wellbeing issues; academic and language skills support; careers and professional advice etc).
- 2.4 The Academic Tutor is a student’s first port of call in matters relating to students’ academic progress, employability and career plans. The Academic Tutor is not an expert in terms of support and interventions but will know about support services that

are available to students to help them engage with the Students' Guild and Students' Union, and to access more specialist help from other services on the relevant campus and in the wider community where relevant.

### **3. Responsibilities of Academic Tutors**

- 3.1 Academic Tutors must offer at least five scheduled meetings per year to undergraduate students and at least three scheduled meetings to PGT students. These meetings can be academic group tutorials, however students must also be provided with the opportunity to book individual one-to-one appointments, to discuss confidential matters. In addition, an Academic Tutor may request a one-to-one meeting where an intervention is required e.g. unsatisfactory progress or poor attendance or welfare concerns. Academic Tutors must provide a structured curriculum, in line with the requirements of the department (see 5.1), to the programme of tutorials, to support the academic success and graduate outcomes of the student.
- 3.2 Academic Tutors must endeavour to ensure that a one-to-one meeting with new undergraduate student tutees is offered in their first two weeks of study.
- 3.3 Tutorial meetings may take the form of structured group meetings or one-to-one meetings as appropriate to the department and depending on the purpose of the tutorial. These meetings can be held in person, over the telephone or online, to be as flexible as necessary to meet the needs of the students.
- 3.4 Academic Tutors should also set aside designated time each week during term-time to be available to see tutees. These arrangements should be clearly communicated to students at the start of the academic year. Individual tutorial hours are not necessarily intended to be in addition to office hours, but to more clearly indicate the times that tutors are available to tutees for individual tutor meetings where needed.
- 3.5 Academic Tutors are responsible for calling a tutorial meeting where there are reports of any cause for concern, such as unsatisfactory attendance, engagement and/or progress, or in the event of health and wellbeing concerns.
- 3.6 Academic Tutors should inform students of the structure and purpose of tutorials and of any preparations that the student should complete in advance of a tutorial. This may include providing, or signposting to, any learning resources which may usefully accompany the tutorials. Tutorials should be scheduled at appropriate times during the

year to review progress and to provide advice and guidance as necessary, and linked to the University's three themes: transition, progress and realising ambition.

- 3.7 A record should be kept by the Academic Tutor of each meeting and any follow-up actions agreed. As a minimum this should record the student's name, the date and time of the meeting, the location, what was discussed and agreed actions.
- 3.8 Academic Tutors will be familiar with the University's guidance on confidentiality and data protection. Where a student raises matters in confidence, this confidence must be respected, unless there is a risk of harm to the student or others. The student should be strongly advised to seek any further support as appropriate.
- 3.9 Academic Tutors should support tutees in considering their academic success and graduate employment outcomes, through the three themes: transition, progress and realising ambition, and help them to develop strategies to achieve these.
- 3.10 Where an Academic Tutor is concerned that a student is at risk of immediate harm or of harming others, they must explain to the student that they have a duty to report it. The Academic Tutor should then contact their Senior Tutor, line manager, and Welfare Consultants. Academic Tutors must be informed of the actions they need to take, should a student be at serious risk of harm, or of harming others. In an emergency:  
In Exeter, dial 01392 722222 (internal x2222) for Estate Patrol.  
In Cornwall, dial 01326 255875 (internal 5875) for Campus security.  
01326 254444 (internal 4444) for emergency first aid.  
And/or contact emergency services directly by dialling 999.  
If a student discloses harm in the past and are not at immediate threat, this can remain confidential.
- 3.11 To work with Pastoral Mentors as appropriate and to signpost students to Pastoral Mentors as appropriate.

#### **4. Responsibilities of students**

- 4.1 Students are regarded as active partners in their learning and development at the University, and a degree of professionalism is expected from them. It is therefore expected that students will attend all scheduled meetings requested by Academic Tutors, or agree an alternative time as convenient. Students should be prepared for tutorial discussions and respond to requests for information as required by the Department.

- 4.2 Students should be encouraged to take notes to record the details of each meeting and any follow-up actions agreed. These notes should be uploaded to an appropriate and secure shared space for viewing by both the student and the Academic Tutor for reference in future meetings.
- 4.3 Students are also encouraged to be proactive in identifying and accessing any relevant skills training offered by, the Department, the Faculty (or delegated school) or the University, as appropriate and to take note of, and respond to, feedback and guidance from tutors.
- 4.4 Where a student's personal or other circumstances are impacting on their academic progress, it is expected that they will inform their Academic Tutor who can discuss options for support, advice and guidance.
- 4.5 Students should inform Student Records of any changes in address or similar personal details by logging into the [student portal](#) and clicking the student record tab to amend contact details.
- 4.6 Students should check their University email at least once per day for messages from the Academic Tutor and other members of staff.

## **5. Responsibilities of the Department or Partner Institution**

- 5.1 The Department (or Partner Institution) should make available to students and staff clear information concerning the provision of Academic Tutoring and support for students' academic development within the Department. Departments must develop a structured tutorial curriculum for use by Academic Tutors in order to provide a consistent tutorial format across the department, underpinned by the three themes of transition, progression, and realizing ambition. The structure must be made available to students. Once a department has developed and agreed their tutorial structure, the structure should be reported to the Academic Development Team for curation. An example of a tutorial structure has been provided to colleges and Senior Tutors.
- 5.2 The Department should be mindful of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy when allocating academic staff, and considering any requests from students to change their Academic Tutor.
- 5.3 It is recognised administrators and technicians often provide a listening ear for students outside the tutorial framework. It is therefore important that Departments/Partner Institutions ensure that they, too, are aware of this Code.

- 5.4 The Department must ensure that an appropriate time allocation is made for Academic Tutor and Senior Tutor duties when considering workload models.

## **6. Senior Tutor**

- 6.1 Each Faculty (or delegated school) should have at least one Senior Tutor or equivalent key contact, who can provide induction guidance, support and resources to Academic Tutors -- including, where appropriate, schedules, suggested agendas and checklists to maximise consistency in the student experience of tutoring.
- 6.2 The Senior Tutor should be able to signpost Academic Tutors to additional sources of support and guidance in the management of more complex cases such as those involving disciplinary and Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study. The Senior Tutor will in many cases, take on more complex and difficult cases where expertise is required. The Senior Tutor is not a source of professional expertise such as that of a counsellor.
- 6.3 Senior Tutors are expected to liaise and share practice with colleagues in similar roles across the University through participation in the Senior Tutor Forum, facilitated by a central coordinator in Academic Development. Senior Tutors may attend SSLCs where appropriate to provide updates on Academic Tutoring. Senior Tutors are expected to provide such updates to Faculty (or delegated school) Education Strategy Meetings.

## **7. Allocation of Academic Tutors**

- 7.1 Faculties (or delegated schools), and associated Hubs, are responsible for allocating an Academic Tutor to all taught students and recording these in the student record system.
- 7.2 Faculties (or delegated schools) and associated Hubs should also provide clear, transparent information to students on how to change their Academic Tutor, without the need for students to give a reason for their request.
- 7.3 Unless there is a specific need to provide two tutors, Combined Honours students, and FCH students, should be allocated only one Academic Tutor. However, there should also be a named contact in the other Faculty (or delegated school) where this applies, to provide specialist guidance in relation to module choice and any other issues arising that are related to the other Faculty (or delegated school). In the case of such students, Academic Tutors may need to liaise with the named contact in the tutee's other Faculty (or delegated school) from time to time.

## 8. Support for Academic Tutors

- 8.1 Faculties (or delegated schools), and associated Hubs, must ensure that staff allocated to undertake academic tutoring are properly trained and aware of the relevant learning and development opportunities available to them, including the University's [Academic Tutoring](#) introductory course, additional workshops, [ELE resources](#), [Academic Tutor Resources](#), the [Educator Development Team webpage](#) and resources on the University [Education development pages](#).
- 8.2 Faculties (or delegated schools), and associated Hubs, must ensure that Academic Tutors and students are aware of the University's [Health Wellbeing and Support for Study](#) procedure and to the information on Mitigation in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual.
- 8.3 Faculties (or delegated schools), and associated Hubs, must also provide Academic Tutors with basic information about their tutees at the outset of the programme and ensure access to, or ability to receive information about their tutees' academic progress.
- 8.4 Academic Tutors should be prepared to write a reference for the tutee unless alternative provision is made by a Faculty (or delegated school) employability officer or other individual who knows the tutee.

## 9. Monitoring and enhancement

- 9.1 Faculties (or delegated schools) and associated Hubs, should monitor students' attendance at scheduled tutorials and have in place standard procedures for following up students who fail to attend such pre-arranged meetings.
- 9.2 Faculties (or delegated schools) should also monitor Academic Tutoring through reviewing the results of University surveys, as well as through other Faculty (or delegated school) monitoring and evaluation processes, as appropriate. Academic Tutoring should be a standing item on the agenda for SSLCs.
- 9.3 At University level, the effectiveness of academic personal tutoring provision in Faculties will be monitored through quality processes such as the Quality Review Framework and inclusion of questions relating to Academic Tutor support in University surveys.
- 9.4 The Senior Tutor Forum will produce a yearly commentary to Education Board, identifying progress and issues regarding academic-led tutoring. The commentary may

also refer to the appropriateness of structures; roles and responsibilities; allocation of tutors to tutees; workload; attendance monitoring, student feedback, observations regarding general trends, and examples of good practice.