Personal Tutoring policy

1. Introduction

The University of Greenwich has a long-standing commitment to personal tutoring as a facility for students, in recognition of its powerful role as an important tool of student engagement. Specifically, personal tutoring contributes to successful student retention, progression and achievement and promotes student participation and engagement with the full range of opportunities available as part of their student experience. Further, in this university which is diverse in terms of discipline and location, experience and aspiration personal tutoring has a key role to play in the building of community and shared identities.

It is the aim of this revised policy to ensure that the profile of personal tutoring is raised, to extend personal tutoring in reach and remit, and that personal tutoring is established as one of the ways in which the student and academic body work together as partners throughout the whole period of study. There is a need to establish University-wide consistency in delivery and to enhance the quality and standards of personal tutoring.

Revisions to this Policy and the approach to personal tutoring have been formulated on the basis of research reflecting the views and priorities of both students and staff, in furtherance of the University Strategy, and by learning from approaches to personal tutoring in other institutions.

1.1 This revised policy:
- specifies the Personal Tutor Remit
- commits to the further enhancement of the support facilities for, and the management of, personal tutoring and defines the role of students and staff members in this activity
- establishes a Personal Tutoring Forum for personal tutors, the students' Union, and members of the Directorates to meet and discuss personal tutoring, for example to share best practice and engage in problem solving
- commits to further developing the Personal Tutoring Hub
- specifies the requirement to embed the Personal Tutor Record System and to keep records of personal tutoring
- sets out the planning and reporting system to be established in order to ensure the effective operation of personal tutoring

1.2 Research both at Greenwich and across the HE sector demonstrates the importance of personal tutoring for supporting student progression and achievement; developing a rounded and deepened skill set, and fostering a sense of belonging that is essential for positive engagement. At this time, many institutions recognise the value of robust personal tutoring, there is a general underlying trend towards expanding the remit to focus more closely upon student outcomes with regards to employability as well as academic performance as well as supporting students to make the most of their time while at University, which may be reflected in student feedback including student satisfaction surveys (such as the NSS).

1.3 Personal tutoring will build a friendly and non-judgmental relationship of trust between personal tutor and tutee and foster peer relationships, facilitating students to become engaged members of the wider community. These characteristics support and enhance students' academic and personal development and are aligned with the principles of students as partners and co-producers of their own learning and development, alongside fostering community development. As such personal tutoring is of central importance to student experience and outcomes.

1.4 The aims of the policy are to:
- set out the entitlements, roles and responsibilities of personal tutors and of students as tutees
- set out the responsibilities of the university in supporting and resourcing personal tutoring
- achieve consistency in practice and quality of provision for students across the university through setting the threshold of delivery and a definition of the remit of personal tutoring, with appropriate recognition of curriculum and student journey diversity
- embed personal tutoring as essential to student engagement, progression and achievement
- establish personal tutoring as one of the key relationships of partnership, essential to students' co-production of their learning

1.5 This policy applies to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students both on campus and while on placement. This policy also applies to distance learners. Arrangements for personal tutoring for postgraduate research students and Associate or Exchange students do not fall within the scope of this policy.

2. Principles

2.1 The aims of personal tutoring are to:
- support students throughout the entire student journey
- enable students to take responsibility for, and become partners in, their learning, academic progression and achievement
- ensure that students develop the skills and capacity necessary to achieve their desired outcomes. These skills and capacities will include (but are not limited to) academic skills including study skills such as ethics and plagiarism, developing the skillset needed to successfully attempt assessment and take feedback, employability skills, and skills in managing personal needs and personal change
- support students to build relationships with other students and members of staff, fostering a sense of belonging to the university community and pride in the university
- facilitate students to participate in university activities, including (but not limited to) taking opportunities for extra-curricular activities for example engaging with clubs, societies and associations; volunteering; taking up various roles such as those pertaining to leadership, consultation and other forms of contribution; and engaging with the wider community

2.2 There will be a recognisable University-wide provision, transparently communicated to students and staff, consisting of:

- clarity of expectations, roles and responsibilities relating to personal tutoring, both defined by this Policy and further by Faculty plans (with contribution from Directorates and EDU), these being annually produced and taken through the Student Experience Committee system
- a Personal Tutoring Remit setting out what members of staff will do and what students should expect
- resourcing for staff including:
  - a specification of personal tutee to tutor allocation planned through workload allocation and appraisal discussions; one characteristic of this is that there will normally be a maximum of 30:1 tutee to tutor allocation (agreed with line manager)
  - a Personal Tutoring Hub (chaired by the Educational Development Unit)
  - a Personal Tutoring Forum (chaired by the PVC for Student Experience)
  - a personal tutor online system with record card and useful information (managed by the ILS with input from the Directors of Student Experience and developed in collaboration with the Personal Tutoring Forum members)
  - support for personal tutors delivered through other roles (for example Heads of Department; Directors of Student Experience; Directors of Learning and Teaching) and processes (for example appraisal discussion and workload planning, and developmental opportunities through the Personal Tutoring Forum and participation with the Personal Tutoring Hub)
  - feedback gathered from student representatives by programme committees and other mechanisms of student consultation including the student experience committee system
  - support for personal tutors to develop knowledge and skills, delivered through other policy and activity areas (for example through employability activity and activities pertaining to student-facing services such as mental health support, money advice and accommodation services)

2.3 Acting as a personal tutor is not the same as being a lecturer, programme leader, course-coordinator or administrator; it is a distinct and well-defined role that should not be subsumed into other academic roles.

- whereas lecturers may develop personal relationships with students and are sometimes referred to informally as 'tutors', their responsibility is defined in relation to delivery of the curriculum through a particular course/courses and responsibility for programmes
- the role of personal tutor goes beyond that of a lecturer and encompasses pastoral, academic and administrative elements; personal tutors have specific responsibility for their tutees as individuals beyond, as well as within, the programme team to which they belong
- the role of personal tutor is normally an intrinsic element of all teaching academics' workload. In addition research orientated staff may be asked to take on personal tutees if appropriate

2.4   Personal tutoring provision will be on-going throughout the student journey. It is recognised that the major transition points of the journey may require specific support. The major transition points include but are not limited to, the start and end of journey, as well as movement between levels of study, the start and end of placements, periods spent abroad, or time out from studies and so on.

2.5   It is the joint responsibility of personal tutors and tutees to actively work together to build a successful tutorial relationship. Directorates and the Students' Union are responsible for supporting this relationship. For example Directorates will provide facilitating systems and services. Both Faculties and Directorates will positively promote the personal tutoring facility. The Students' Union will be valued as an essential partner in supporting the take up and delivery of personal tutoring. It is the responsibility of the student body to positively engage with personal tutoring, both directly with their personal tutor, and through processes of co-creation and feedback on areas which include (but which are not limited to) the Personal Tutor Remit, for example through the student representation system by which feedback and suggestions for improvements will be sought.

2.6   University-wide personal tutoring provision will be implemented locally and flexibly by Faculties, with tailoring and enhancement to take account of the diversity of academic disciplines, student cohorts and the requirements of professional and regulatory bodies. Faculties will work with Directorates and the Students' Union to achieve outcomes.

2.7   The quality of personal tutoring, suggestions for improvement and activities will be an appropriate topic of discussion in feedback and consultation between all parties, for example in programme committee meetings, student experience committee structures, and through the consultation process of the Students' Union as well as locally between tutors and students.

3. Expectations: students' entitlement and responsibilities

3.1   All on-campus students on taught programmes and all distance learning students at the University of Greenwich will be allocated a named personal tutor at the first point of registration and enrolment with the University.

3.2   Students will be informed before arrival where practicable, and in any event no later than their first week, who their personal tutor is, and they will meet their personal tutor during their first week (or on arrival if late). At this meeting, students will be made aware of the purpose and scope of their personal tutoring, and will be invited to propose what they would like to get out of it, and to begin to engage with formulating their plans and objectives.

3.3   All taught students will have scheduled personal tutor meetings, this will normally be between 4-6 sessions per academic year. A minimum of 2 of these sessions must be 1:1. These sessions include a session held at the start and end of the year.

3.4   The style of meetings will be flexible, and could include larger group meetings, 1:1 meetings, small group discussions, and be conducted by skype, online or in person.

3.5   In addition to 3.3 personal tutees may visit their personal tutors within advertised staff office hours.

3.6   Students will be given by their Department:
- clear information about what they can expect from their personal tutor, including an explanation of the different academic roles and purposes of personal tutor meetings and academic seminars
- clear and accessible information about personal tutor availability, contact details and how to arrange a one-to-one meeting
- clear and accessible information about the Personal Tutor Remit
- information about the potential benefits of engaging with their personal tutor
- information about procedures by which personal tutoring arrangements can be changed where appropriate and any problems with existing arrangements reported
- Information about how to give feedback through student consultation processes among other means for example to Heads of Department
- information about how to request a change of personal tutor

3.7   Students are expected to engage fully with their personal tutor, recognising the University's commitment and their own responsibility, and should:
- participate actively in arranged sessions
- respond to communication from their personal tutor promptly
- keep their personal tutor informed of any major changes in their circumstances or of barriers which affect their academic work in a timely manner
- alert their personal tutor to any additional or specific learning needs they may have
- respect personal tutors' office hours
- engage with the personal tutor remit
- actively identify what they would like to get out of personal tutoring
- actively engage with support services as needed

4   Expectations: staff responsibilities and resourcing

4.1   Academic staff who act as personal tutors will be pro-active in:
- signposting to student-facing services such as those pertaining to mental health, money advice, as well as ancillary services such as those offered by the Chaplaincy, and those provided by the Students' Union, as appropriate

4.2   Personal tutors are expected to:
- be a first point of contact for students from entry and throughout a student's period of study
- establish and build a personal and non-judgmental relationship with their allocated tutees
- support and enhance the tutees' academic and personal development primarily (but not exclusively) by taking tutees through the Personal Tutor Remit
- recognise and respond to the diversity of their tutees' needs and situations in a sensitive manner throughout the student journey

- engage with their tutees at a minimum at the start and end of every year, and at the start of every term, as part of a normally defined 4-6 sessions over an academic year
- maintain regular contact with their allocated tutees through and outside of timetabled and other meetings
- be informed about university policy and regulations (e.g. extenuating circumstances, disability and dyslexia) and know how to refer students to other sources of support including student facing services
- respect confidentiality in an appropriate and professional manner
- be accessible and available to tutees
- provide tutees with their office hours and contact information
- keep and access records and tracking systems as available to monitor their tutees' progress as appropriate and in line with university guidelines and data protection
- be sufficiently informed to be able to write references for example for employment or further study where appropriate

4.3 Personal tutors are expected to be:
- responsible for no more than 30 tutees under normal circumstances

4.4 By arrangement in each Faculty under the direction of the Director of Student Experience, and as set out in the implementation plan, Personal Tutors will receive:
- clear and timely information about personal tutorial allocation
- tutees' details
- workload allocation to reflect the quantity and quality of personal tutoring undertaken
- professional development to support them in the role including access to the University Personal Tutoring Forum and access to the Personal Tutoring Hub
- administrative and other support as agreed by Students' Union, Faculty, Directorates and so on, as appropriate
- guidance as to how to use the Personal Tutor Record System
- support for personal tutors delivered through other roles (for example Heads of Department; Directors of Student Experience; Directors of Learning and Teaching)
- the Personal Tutor Remit as set out in this policy for implementation and delivery

5. Personal Tutor Remit

Over the course of the student journey, every tutee will address the key elements of the Remit. A record of this will be kept on the online Personal Tutor Record System by the personal tutor.

The Remit outlines the key elements which personal tutoring sessions should address over the whole period of study. It is not prescriptive in terms of the 'when' and 'how' of delivery, due to the character of the academic curriculum of the programmes of study running concurrently. Part of the Remit may be embedded into the programme of study and often in particular ways, for example, in fulfilment of Subject Benchmark and/or the requirements of professional bodies.

Thus, this Remit is intended to work with the programme of study. Personal Tutors must take tutees through the remit, aiming to reinforce learning and sign post as appropriate to other

sources of learning. Personal Tutors, in working with students on the Remit should actively connect work undertaken by students as part of the curriculum, including academic skills, employability skills, and other developmental work embedded into core learning.

This Remit will not negate or be mutually exclusive of personal responsiveness to individual needs, it is a requirement that Personal Tutors endeavour to identify personalised skills and training needs through the course of their tutoring.

Further this remit will interleave with other activities for example those found within extra-curricular activities, drawing out and reinforcing learning undertaken in a potentially wide range of ways (for example through sports and cultural activities work related activities and so on).

The Remit consists of the following elements:

- fostering ownership of the student experience of University, a sense of identity and belonging, and the will and capacity to succeed
- ensuring that tutees understand the expectations of their academic programme including the transition points for example between different parts of the curriculum and different levels of study
- ensuring that tutees understand the expectations of the assessment process and that they collect and work with feedback;
- referral to work undertaken in the curricular, with discussions about, and signposting to further opportunities to develop, skills including but not limited to study skills academic writing skills; mathematical skills; digital skills and language support as appropriate
- on-going conversations about employability including referring to and signposting curriculum related and extra-curricular related opportunities; working with students on career pathways including supporting the exploration of employment options and discussing academic aspiration into the future (for example future learning and postgraduate work options)
- on-going signposting of University employability services and opportunities known of, or offered by, Departments and Faculties as appropriate
- supporting and developing awareness of the importance of employability 'soft' skills: confidence, aspiration, ambition, resilience, empathy alongside employability 'hard' skills: CVs, application forms, numeracy, literacy
- supportive conversations exploring opportunities such as student club/society membership and participation, volunteering, extra-curricular activities related to field of study, and engagement with working and community life
- ensuring that every tutee develops in summary a personal plan which includes personal target setting and action planning to lead to a developing sense of profile and expertise
- understanding the resources available for pastoral and social support including those provided by student-facing services, the Students' Union, the Chaplaincy, and other bodies
- ensure that tutees are engaging in a range of support activities and structures as appropriate to their needs

Details of how the Remit will be operationalised within each subject area will be specified within each Faculty, through the annual review and planning system.

6.   Implementation and Operation

The Personal Tutoring (Student Engagement Framework) task and finish group will be widened to include all four Directors of Student Experience, and will be charged with drawing up and managing the implementation of this policy in the first instance, such that this amended policy is in operation in time for the new student intake of academic session 2016-17.

The Personal Tutoring task and finish group will abide by these principles:

6.1   Each Faculty working with the Students' Union, EDU and relevant Directorates will develop initial implementation plans.

6.2   A summary plan showing how this policy will be implemented across the range of portfolio areas will be reported to the University Student Experience Committee at the last session of the year. The summary plan should contain a short statement explaining the approach taken, alongside information as to how the policy will be implemented. The summary will be led and presented by the Director of Student Experience.

6.2   Detailed implementation plans which underpin this summary document may be produced at either Programme, Subject or Department level as determined by the Faculty, and should be sensitised to the curriculum and it mode(s) of delivery (for example taking into account PSBR requirements, placement opportunities and where these fall in the programme of study, and so on) and identify specific objectives for that part of the student body as appropriate. These detailed plans will be reported to the Faculty Student Experience Committee and form the basis of each Faculty's summary plan

6.3   After the first cycle of one year, the Faculties will each produce one summary document which contains:
- a review of progress
- and a plan for the forthcoming year

This summary will be led and presented by the Directors of Student Experience and reviewed by the University Student Experience Committee at the last session of each academic year.

6.4   Student-facing services and the EDU will support and enhance personal tutoring. This will be done both through the Student Experience Committee and the Personal Tutoring Forum as well as other channels including the University Executive.

6.2   The support of the Students' Union in promoting personal tutoring and in facilitating feedback upon its operation, and suggestions for activities, is recognised as integral to the success of personal tutoring and is therefore welcomed. The PVC for Student Experience will be responsible for ensuring that partnership with the Students' Union is sought.

6.3   A Personal Tutoring Forum will be established and run by the PVC for Student Experience. It will meet termly. It will rotate between campuses.

6.4   The Personal Tutoring Hub will be further developed to support personal tutoring, this will be managed by the Educational Development Unit.