

## St Mary's University

### Personal Tutoring Policy

#### Introduction

This Policy details the principles and minimum expectations of the University's Personal Tutoring activity. It is important to note that this is the second iteration of the Policy and has been developed as a response to feedback following the pilot of the scheme at Level 4 throughout the 2016/17 academic year. The purpose of the Policy is to support students' academic, personal and professional development through an on-going personalised point of contact with the University.

Personal Tutoring has an important role in enabling students to fully engage with their University experience and realise their full potential, both educationally and personally throughout their time at the University. Having a Personal Tutor will provide students with the opportunity to reflect on their learning and academic progress whilst also developing a pastoral, mentor-like relationship with a key member of academic staff. Personal Tutors will be able to advise students on a variety of services and issues; including academia, student services, extracurricular activity and professional development.

The Policy applies to all students studying taught programmes delivered at the University, and is flexible to accommodate all programmes and student circumstances. It does not apply to students on University validated programmes at Collaborative Partner Institutions who will be subject to their own institutional policies.

The Policy takes effect in full for all Level 3, Level 4 and Level 5 students at St Mary's University in 2017/18; Level 6 and Level 7 - postgraduate taught programmes (PGT) only - will formally apply in the 2018/19 academic year, however early adoption of the policy at these levels by programmes in the 2017/18 academic year is welcomed by the University.

The content of the Policy includes:

1. Principles
2. Roles and responsibilities: partnership
3. Minimum expectations
4. Data Recording
5. Referral Process
6. Tutor Dashboard

All queries concerning the Personal Tutoring Policy should be directed to the Student Engagement and Retention Officer ([catherine.redding@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:catherine.redding@stmarys.ac.uk)).

## **1. Principles**

Each student will have an established personal contact within the Faculty to which their programme belongs. This provides for a personalised system of academic and pastoral support for all students in which student progression is regularly monitored and supported.

The Associate Deans Student Experience for each Faculty should have an updated and complete list of all Personal Tutors and their Tutees.

Students will be advised of their Personal Tutor contact details at the beginning of the Welcome Fortnight when they are sent notification of their first tutorial, which will occur within the Welcome Fortnight period. Students should remain with them throughout their period of study, unless the Tutee requests a change of Personal Tutor, if the member of staff leaves or the student changes programme.

If a student wishes to change their Personal Tutor at any point throughout their studies, they should contact the Programme Lead for their Programme. Any requests of this nature should receive a response within five working days and the request should normally be granted. Once the change to the assigned Personal Tutor has been made, the Programme Lead must relay the updated information to the Associate Dean Student Experience. If the Tutee's Personal Tutor is also the Programme Lead for their Programme, they should submit their request to the Associate Dean Student Experience, whereby the same process should apply.

Students who are studying joint honours programmes will be assigned a designated programme-level Personal Tutor in both of their areas of study. This will ensure that the student receives regular communication from both of their programmes and mitigates the risk of them feeling that there is inconsistency in their experience of the Personal Tutor system.

All students at the University are entitled to an organised tutorial within the first two weeks of both Semester 1 and Semester 2. At Level 3 and Level 4 both of these tutorials must be individual tutorials, however at Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7 (PGT only) only the first of the pair is required to be an individual tutorial. Personal Tutors will be required to create a number of other contact points with the students throughout the year by offering their Tutees an individual tutorial. This however will only be compulsory when the students confirm that they would like one.

All members of the academic staff with teaching responsibilities are expected to contribute to the Personal Tutoring system. This Policy outlines the minimum provision required for all students. Programme Teams are expected to utilise the flexibility of the Policy, using it as a springboard for enhancement for both the needs of their students and methods of curriculum delivery. It is also expected that Programme Teams engage professional services and other areas of the University to develop their Personal Tutoring systems, utilising all available at St Mary's University to ensure an enhanced and holistic student experience.

## **2. Roles and Responsibilities: partnership**

The Policy is built on the concept of partnership between staff and students and the various roles that are necessary in ensuring that this is the case. Below is an overview of these roles and responsibilities.

- a. Personal Tutors:
  - Organise the compulsory tutorials outlined in this Policy
  - Manage the contact points prescribed in this Policy, in collaboration with the Programme Team to ensure consistency of student experience across the entire programme
  - Monitor their Tutees' academic progression, pastoral care and professional development in partnership with each Tutee, utilising technology systems as they are developed and introduced to support and enhance the Personal Tutoring system
  - Where requested, support the Tutees' knowledge and understanding of both formative assessment and summative feedback, or refer the Tutee in a timely fashion to a member of staff best placed to do so
  - Signpost Tutees to relevant support and advisory services
  - Attend training and professional development sessions for Personal Tutors including Personal Tutor Forums
  - If a student does not respond to more than two contact points, notify the Programme Lead so that the referral process can begin
  
- b. Programme Leads:
  - Implement and monitor the Personal Tutoring Policy within their programme, ensuring clarity and equity of experience for all Tutees. Furthermore, ensure that the programme has enhanced tutoring provision in line with the minimum outlined in this Policy
  - Ensure all new students at Level 3, Level 4 and Level 7 (PGT only) have an assigned Personal Tutor in readiness for Welcome Fortnight and assign a Personal Tutor to students who arrive after the Welcome Fortnight
  - Ensure that Tutees at Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7 (PGT only) returning students are reminded of their Personal Tutor and that Personal Tutors are reminded of their Tutees prior to the start of each academic year
  - Ensure that the Policy is adhered to in its entirety, and encourage all staff to attend training and development sessions, and engage with the Personal Tutoring Forums
  - Activate and manage the referral process for unresponsive students within five working days of receiving of notification from Personal Tutors
  
- c. Associate Deans Student Experience:
  - Work with the Programme Leads and Programme Teams to ensure that all programmes have developed an enhanced Personal Tutoring system, beyond the minimum requirements outlined in this Policy, and have strategic oversight of Personal Tutoring development within the School, in collaboration with the Student Engagement and Retention Officer
  - Work with the Programme Leads to ensure that there is equity of experience with regards to the Personal Tutoring provision throughout the entirety of the School

- Maintain a regular dialogue with the other Associate Dean Student Experience and the Student Engagement and Retention Officer regarding Personal Tutoring within the School and report any issues and/or good practice.
- d. Deans of Faculty:
- Ensure all aspects of the Personal Tutoring Policy are comprehensively implemented throughout the Faculty
  - This responsibility may be delegated to the Heads of Department if the Dean of Faculty sees fit
- e. Students:
- Attend the compulsory tutorials at the beginning of Semester 1 and Semester 2
  - Provide a response to Personal Tutor emails and other interactions inviting them to tutorials even if the student does not require or want a tutorial, and maintain regular dialogue with the Personal Tutor
  - Fully utilise the opportunity to discuss their progress with, and seek advice and guidance from their Personal Tutor to enhance their student experience
  - Engage with opportunities for further development arranged or recommended by the Personal Tutor
  - Understand the referral process for both staff and students

### **3. Minimum Expectations**

- a. Programme Teams are expected to inform students of the University's Personal Tutoring Policy in its entirety at the beginning of each academic year.
- b. Individual tutorials offer the chance for students to discuss their academic progress, personal and professional development and wellbeing. Personal Tutors will make use of the Tutor Dashboard data to reflect upon a Tutee's level of engagement and academic progress and use this to inform their interactions with their Tutees.
- c. The format of the tutorial at the beginning of Semester 2 for Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7 (PGT only) is to be determined by individual Programme Teams; however the chosen format must be consistent throughout the whole Programme cohort and not vary from Personal Tutor to Personal Tutor.

Furthermore, Personal Tutors are required to contact their Tutees in order to enquire as to how they are doing both personally and academically and also offer them the opportunity of an individual tutorial; these contact points would normally take the format of email communication. At Level 3 and Level 4, these formalised contact points are to be made three times per semester, totalling six times per year. At Level 5, Level 6 and Level 7 (PGT only), the formalised contact points are to be made twice per semester, totalling four times per year. In the tables below are the recommended schedules for these communications, including the initial tutorials:

<b>Levels 3 and 4</b>		
Tutorial 1 (individual tutorial)	Welcome fortnight	Semester 1
Contact Point 1	Weeks 5-7	Semester 1
Contact Point 2	Weeks 10-12	Semester 1
Contact Point 3	Weeks 14-17	Semester 1
Tutorial 2 (individual tutorial)	First fortnight of Semester 2	Semester 2
Contact Point 4	Weeks 24,25	Semester 2
Contact Point 5	Weeks 30-32	Semester 2
Contact Point 6	Weeks 35-39	Semester 2

<b>Levels 5, 6 and 7 (PGT)</b>		
Tutorial 1 (individual tutorial)	Welcome fortnight	Semester 1
Contact Point 1	Weeks 7 -11	Semester 1
Contact Point 2	Weeks 13-17	Semester 1
Tutorial 2 (individual or group tutorial – Programme decision)	First fortnight of Semester 2	Semester 2
Contact Point 3	Weeks 24,25	Semester 2
Contact Point 4	Weeks 32-39	Semester 2

- d. If a Tutee makes a request for an individual tutorial with their Personal Tutor, either as a result of these contact points or at any other point in the year, an email response to this from the Personal Tutor should normally be provided within two working days and the tutorial itself should take place within ten working days of the request. This expectation applies during term time and exam periods (including resits).
- e. At Level 3, Level 4, and Level 7 (PGT only) in advance of Tutorial 1 students will be required by their Programme Teams to submit a short reflective piece of work. This will normally take the format of a 300 word written piece however Programme Teams can use discretion as to the format that the submission takes, to ensure it is relevant to the programme. The format chosen must be consistent throughout the entire programme to ensure equity of student experience. The reflective piece should be utilised by the Personal Tutor to learn more about their Tutees prior to the first tutorial, and to provide a starting point for building the Personal Tutor/Tutee rapport. It is recommended that Personal Tutors also prepare a similar reflective piece about themselves in order to aid this introductory process and show partnership between students and staff. These staff reflective pieces should be uploaded to MyModules to ensure that they are accessible to students.
- f. In Tutorial 1 at Level 5 and Level 6 the reflective piece does not need to be completed again, however the content of the tutorial should evaluate the Tutee's previous year, taking into account both academic and extra-curricular activity. The Personal Tutor should help the Tutee to plan their year ahead, and ensure that they are aware of all of the opportunities that they can engage with at the University, for

example volunteering, student activities and other services provided at St Mary's University.

#### 4. Data Recording

- a. Students should be made aware that a record of all interactions with their Personal Tutor will be kept, and will be accessible to them upon request. Records of all interactions held with Tutees, any actions taken as a result of these and resulting outcomes must be stored electronically, and stored securely and confidentially in line with the St Mary's Data Protection Policy, which can be found here:  
<https://staffnet.smuc.ac.uk/services-departments/HumanResources/Documents/Data-Protection-Policy.pdf>
- b. Students should be made aware that information given to the Personal Tutor will be treated as **confidential**, apart from attendance records as these are needed in order to ensure that the referral process can be initiated. However, there are circumstances in which the University's commitment to confidentiality can be overridden. In exceptional circumstances, a Personal Tutor may be required to pass on information in the vital interests of a Tutee (e.g. where there is a clear, significant and specific risk to the health and safety of the Tutee or to that of others) or when a disclosure may be required by law.

#### 5. Referral Process

- a) When a Tutee has been unresponsive to two contact points with their Personal Tutor, the Personal Tutor should, in the first instance, liaise with the wider Programme Team to establish the Tutee's level of attendance with their studies. If this is satisfactory, the only action that needs to be taken is to notify the Programme Lead that the Tutee is not engaging with the Personal Tutoring system but that they are with their academic studies. If the Tutee's level of attendance with their studies is not satisfactory, the Personal Tutor should alert the Programme Lead, who should then initiate the next stage of the referral process. The Programme Lead should proceed to contact the established liaison staff member from the following departments to enquire as to whether the Tutee has been in contact with them:
  - Student Services
  - Learning Development Team
  - Students' Union
  - If living in University accommodation, the Life Coordinators
  - Careers
  - Chaplaincy
  - Registry

With regards to the above services, it should be noted that if a student has not granted permission for their data to be shared, student confidentiality has to be respected and this information may not be available to Programme Teams. However, by creating this communication system, professional services staff members who are aware of students using their service but bound by data protection may well be able to aid students by being

made aware that the student in question is not engaging with their Programme Team or Personal Tutor.

- b) If the student has been in contact with any of these departments, the Programme Lead and professional services staff member should work in collaboration and use discretion to establish who is best to make appropriate contact with the student next, in order to try and gain communication from them regarding their situation. It is important to be mindful that any communication made throughout this process must be positive and supportive rather than punitive in nature. The Programme Lead should keep an electronic record of all contact that is made with the student, so as to ensure that their Personal Tutoring record is kept up to date. If the student is still unresponsive from the contact made at this stage after ten working days, the case is then referred to the Associate Dean Student Engagement to engage the next stage in the referral process.
- c) When an unresponsive student's case is referred to the Associate Dean Student Experience, it is apparent that there has been a distinct lack of communication between the University and student for a substantial amount of time and therefore the student is at very high risk of leaving the University. Upon receiving notification of the student's case from the Programme Lead, the Associate Dean Student Experience should send an officiated letter to the student within five working days, in both hard and soft format. The letter should be supportive and positive in nature, in order to encourage conversation between the student and University rather than hinder it. If this letter is once again not met with response from the student after ten working days, the case should be referred to Registry Services in order to engage the withdrawal process, in collaboration with the Head of Department.

## **6. Tutor Dashboard**

The Tutor Dashboard provides Personal Tutors with key information about their Tutees and offers a platform for Personal Tutors to record their interactions with their Tutees. Personal Tutors will be able to monitor a Tutee's engagement and academic progress throughout their studies, and the data included will allow the Personal Tutor to gain an insight into both the Tutee's academic progress and more personal factors that may affect their study, for example whether they are a Home, EU or overseas student, and the distance they live from campus. This resource should be utilised by Personal Tutors regularly in order to keep a regular track of their Tutees and their progress.

The full list of data sets the Tutor Dashboard includes is:

- Qualifications on entry
- Exam results average and by module
- Single/joint honours status
- Stage code of tutee (current, withdrawn, complete, leave of absence, other)
- Exam resit timetable
- Status: Full or Part-Time
- Fee Status: Home, EU or Overseas
- Halls or home student

- Term Time distance from campus

Within the Tutor Dashboard, an area will be developed to provide Personal Tutors with up to date information regarding other areas of the University and opportunities that may be of interest to their Tutees. Personal tutors are expected to engage with this area of the Tutor Dashboard and relay information on to their Tutees in a timely fashion.

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