

UCO Procedure

HE Personal Tutor Procedure

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Purpose:

This document sets out guidance and requirements in relation to Personal Tutoring at UCO, including the responsibilities of the Personal Tutor, the Student and the Academic Department.

Overview:

The Personal Tutor is seen as central to the provision of effective guidance, personal and pastoral support, with Personal Tutors working with academic course teams and wider professional support services to ensure all students are supported and encouraged to succeed in their studies. Ensuring a personalised learning experience for all students is at the heart of UCO's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy, the Personal Tutor system is a key component of ensuring this aim is delivered. Effective advice and guidance from Personal Tutors can make an important contribution to the overall experience of students and improve retention and commitment to studies. The Personal Tutorial is one element of the HE Tutorial Scheme at UCO which also includes Academic Tutorials and Group Tutorials. UCO's Personal Tutoring Procedure recognises the NUS and their policies around student Mental Health and Wellbeing and personal tutoring (2020).

The Personal Tutor will support and encourage tutees to reflect upon and plan their personal, professional, academic and employability skills development. Personal tutors may also provide feedback following assessment and/or help students to reflect on feedback from other staff. They may guide students on matters relating to the students' overall progression on the programme and employability after. Personal Tutors may provide tutees with course relevant career advice, assistance and encouragement in preparation for placements (where appropriate) and suggestions for possible further study opportunities. In addition, Personal Tutors will reflect with students on the Applied Learning Model of employability experience. As such, the Personal Tutor works with the student throughout the student journey and it is important that the Tutor and Tutee meet on a regular basis to assist progression and success on the degree programme.

The Role of the Personal Tutor

- To provide a personal contact for the student within the institution, being responsive to student communications.
- To be understanding, supportive and personable, acting when necessary as a liaison between the student and course leaders.

- To offer knowledgeable guidance, assistance and support in helping to manage the student's experience.
- To work enthusiastically with students to support transition and progression in their academic studies and enabling them to reach their full potential.
- To act as a sounding board for any positive or negative issues related to the experience of their tutees and act as an advocate for their students as required.
- To act as a sensitive listener and point of contact for students who may require additional support or guidance, but recognising when the problems presented are beyond the tutor's competence and control and seeking support for the student through the appropriate institutional referral processes.
- Be responsible for having up to date knowledge of support offers and systems around the processes to identify potential issues of Mental Health and Disability for referral to the Mental Health and Wellbeing Office.
- To ensure employability is embedded into the student experience, to discuss and acknowledge where this is being developed and to sign post to the HE Career and Graduate Outcome Officer.
- To participate in training and development opportunities that support their ability to fulfil the role of Personal Tutor.
- To maintain accurate records of formal tutorial meetings on the appropriate electronic system, currently My Cap.
- To support students through mitigating circumstances processes where appropriate.

The Personal Tutor should initiate contact with tutees in Induction Week in order to introduce themselves, set mutual expectations and to establish a basis for a good relationship. At this stage it is important to clarify the boundaries of the relationship, including:

- **Supporting the student:** Students are legally adults and should be treated as such. They should be encouraged to take responsibility for communicating their needs and for seeking appropriate support.
- **Offering Support:** Personal tutors are often the first point of disclosure of related issues that require extra support. The Personal Tutor must follow the appropriate referral process and not take on the support responsibilities where it is not in their remit to do so, such as, Safeguarding, mental health and disability support. It is the right of the student to have the appropriate support offered.
- **Confidentiality:** The nature and limits of confidentiality need to be made clear to students who seek support. In some instances, it will be necessary and appropriate to refer issues to other agencies within and outside of UCO and whenever possible this should be done with the knowledge and agreement of the individual concerned. If there are any doubts about what is being disclosed, you are advised to stop the conversation and take advice. The Data Protection and Data Policy and the Admissions Policy deal specifically with confidentiality in relation to student matters and are a good starting point for delineating what type of information can be disclosed to whom.

The Responsibilities of the Personal Tutor

- Introduce themselves and meet their new tutees before the end of the first week of a new academic year.
- Hold regular tutorial sessions as a group and aim to see their tutees regularly and individually, at a minimum, twice during the winter and spring term and once in the summer term (either in-person or virtually)
- Students should be informed in the first meeting about the different ways and at what times they can contact their Personal Tutor, as well as what to do in instances when their named Personal Tutor is not available.
- At the first meeting opportunities for disclosure should be presented and detailed information of the Professional Services and how to contact them delivered. Especially the Disability and Wellbeing Service.
- Help the tutees allocated to them settle into HE life and make successful transitions throughout the levels of study.
- Respond to tutees' requests for advice on matters and refer, as necessary, to the correct department or service, ensuring that appropriate help is offered to the student.
- Encourage tutees to come and see them in the event of needing to seek information or advice or to talk things through with a friendly listener.
- Complete appropriate records of dates, times and outcomes of meetings with tutees on the electronic student record system, never disclosing any information on the system that should be kept confidential.

The Responsibilities of the Student:

- Respond promptly to meeting requests and contact from their personal tutor, meeting or having contact at a minimum twice during the winter and spring term and once in the summer term.
- Attend timetabled tutorials.
- Make themselves aware of all support services discussed by Personal Tutor and how to contact them.
- Aim to respect the specified times at which tutors make themselves available to see students and to only contact their tutor through appropriate communication channels (i.e. university email or on their direct office phone number).
- Ensure they know how to contact their tutor at short notice in the case of emergencies and, at all other times, try to see their tutor at the specified time.
- Keep tutors informed of any academic, health or personal problems which may have an impact upon their studies.
- Complete appropriate records of dates, times and outcomes of meetings with tutors, maintaining a PDP throughout their degree.

The Responsibilities of the Academic Course Team:

- Implement and monitor the system of face-to-face personal tutor support.
- Ensure each student is allocated a personal tutor and has appropriate support.
- Ensure details of the personal tutor system are explained in the student handbook.
- Agree on record-keeping systems and confidentiality.
- Gather feedback on the effectiveness of the system and identify improvements.

Version History

| Issue | Changes | Author | Approved at | Date of Issue |
|-------|--|--|---------------------|----------------|
| 1.0 | Procedure Implemented | Head of Student Journey | HE Management Group | September 2017 |
| 1.1 | Minor additions – Mental Health and Wellbeing | Head of Student Support & Wellbeing Services | QIC | November 2019 |
| 1.2 | Minor Amends - Update to NUS policy and increased awareness around disability and Wellbeing. | Head of Student Support & Wellbeing Services | n/a | May 2022 |

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