

Personal Tutoring Policy

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Policy Summary

This policy sets out the University's core principles of personal tutoring, including the minimum standard of expectations for all students and staff involved in the process:

- ✦ The role of the Personal Tutor, including tutoring responsibilities, frequency, and timing of Personal Tutor meetings for full and part-time undergraduate and postgraduate students, and the provision of information.
- ✦ Student responsibilities in the Personal Tutoring process, including attendance and preparation or meetings, and informing Personal Tutors of exceptional circumstances.
- ✦ Support resources available for Personal Tutors, and the monitoring and evaluation of the Personal Tutoring system.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

The [Guide to Exceptional Circumstances](#) provides further information to Personal Tutors and students on events that may constitute exceptional circumstances, and the process for informing the University of these issues.

If a Personal Tutor has any concerns regarding a tutee's continued Fitness to Study or Fitness to Practice (if relevant to the student's programme), further guidance can be found in the [General Regulations for Programmes](#).

Note also the [Safeguarding Concern Policy](#) and guidance for [supporting students in distress](#).

Version Control

Ref No	Version	Responsible Officer	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date
AU-RSC-18-1867	A	Adam Hewitt	ULTC	Jun 2019	Sep 2019
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Introduction

This policy is part of the University's commitment to enhancing the student experience and reflects Aston's determination to provide personalised academic support for our students in their studies.

Personal tutors play a vital role as part of a wider support structure as a consistent source of information, guidance, and support. They help students feel part of the Aston community and provide a personal touchstone for support in study.

This policy document sets out a framework of core principles for personal tutoring that will apply throughout the University for on campus taught programmes. It is acknowledged that Colleges of study have different structures which may lead to some variations in the detailed operation of personal tutoring and academic and student support arrangements in general. These core principles set out a minimum standard of expectations for all students and staff, however, to ensure consistency and a comparable experience.

General

From the commencement of their programme, all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students will be allocated a named personal tutor, who is familiar with and/or closely involved with the student's programme of studies.

New students will be introduced to and have opportunity to meet their personal tutor within the first two weeks at the start of their studies. This normally takes place during Welcome Week (or equivalent induction period).

Normally, students should retain the same personal tutor throughout the duration of their studies to enable professional relationships to develop fully. It is recognised that there are circumstances where this is not possible due to staff changes, study leave, or periods of extended illness. In such cases Colleges/programmes must ensure that a student is reallocated to another personal tutor as quickly as possible, that this is communicated clearly to the student, and that there is minimum disruption for the student.

Students can request a change of personal tutor and, whilst this will not be automatically granted, requests should be considered and not unreasonably declined.

The system for personal tutoring, the role of the personal tutor, and the student's responsibilities will be made clear in the relevant programme handbook or related programme information and during the first meeting with their personal tutor.

Distance/work-based and Degree Apprenticeship learning programmes will adapt approaches to provision of personal tutorial support as appropriate to the context of study. For these programmes, Students are informed at the outset of the key contact points for support and guidance in study.

Personal tutoring for part time campus-based students should adhere to the minimum standards for full time students but it is recognised that there may be a need to adjust the timing and frequency of meetings.

Role of the Personal Tutor

The personal tutor is a key point of contact for students for general academic guidance and support in study.

Personal tutors should be available to support students with any matters related to their studies. It is not expected that personal tutors are experts on all matters, however, they should listen to students' issues or concerns sensitively and responsively, provide advice and guidance, and signpost students to other sources of support within the College, University, or Student's Union where required.

Personal tutors should support students in understanding the purpose and role of personal tutors and related professional boundaries. Although designed to be personalised, it is nevertheless a professional relationship.

Personal tutors should help students settle into University life and in becoming active members of the academic community, particularly during induction, subsequent re-orientation at the start of each academic Stage, following a period of placement activity, study abroad, and/or leave of absence. This includes helping students to engage effectively with wider study activities and support services.

Personal tutors should arrange to meet and be available to meet with tutees on a regular basis to assist their continuing progression throughout the programme.

Personal tutors should provide support for students according to need such as in preparing for assessment, in reflecting on assessment outcomes and feedback, in considering module choices (where appropriate), and on wider matters relating to the students' overall progression on the programme.

Personal tutors should provide tutees with general career advice and assistance and encouragement in preparation for placements (where appropriate), suggestions for possible further study opportunities, and/or direct students to sources of specialist support where required.

Personal tutors must encourage tutees to attend meetings and make reasonable efforts to contact any who do not do so without prior notification. Personal tutors should inform tutees of their availability and ensure they are available at relevant times throughout the academic year.

Personal tutors should contact tutees where there is evidence that their engagement in study falls below thresholds that may indicate risk to progression and should record key details of actions taken.

Personal tutors must keep a minimum record of meetings with tutees. Records of meetings and/or actions taken should be recorded in [MAP](#).

Normally treating matters raised by students confidentially unless the student has authorised their disclosure, information recorded should be factual and avoid sensitive details. There are occasions when it would be inappropriate to maintain confidentiality and where information should be disclosed to other relevant colleagues. These include situations where information, including related to [exceptional circumstances](#), indicates risk to a student's continuation, progression, and/or completion, and specifically where a reason for concern regarding a student's welfare or the welfare of others is identified.

Personal tutors should be familiar with, and manage their responsibilities according to, Aston's [Safeguarding Concern Policy](#).

Personal tutors should use and encourage students to use Aston's [SafeZone](#) app for safe study on campus.

Personal tutors will be familiar with [Student Support Services](#) and take an active role in referring and supporting students to engage with these as required.

Personal tutors will take action and refer any information indicating a student may be at risk of harm as a matter of urgency. Key points of referral in serious situations include the [Campus Safety Team](#) (0121 359 2922) and West Midlands Police (999). Note key guidance about [supporting students in distress](#).

Student Responsibilities

Students should attend scheduled meetings and maintain regular contact with their personal tutor throughout their studies.

Students should inform their personal tutors in advance if they are unable to attend a scheduled meeting and help make alternative arrangements (for students on the placement Stage this contact should be undertaken virtually).

Students should arrange and attend further meetings with their personal tutors during the periods of the Stage when they are required to do so (for students on placement Stage this contact should be undertaken virtually).

Students must inform their personal tutor of any circumstances which might affect their studies or their ability to proceed or if they are considering withdrawing from their programme.

Students should prepare for meetings with their personal tutor and be willing to act upon their advice including contacting or meeting with any other support services or University colleagues to whom they are referred.

Students must ensure that they are familiar with and confident in accessing other sources of support whenever a personal tutor may be unavailable, or support needs require attention outside normal working hours.

Frequency and Timing

The arrangements set out below are minimum standards. Colleges may wish to provide additional opportunities for meetings with personal tutors. Furthermore, students should be encouraged and expected to make additional ad hoc arrangements to contact or meet with their personal tutors if they have urgent concerns or issues they wish to discuss.

Personal tutors must meet with new students – including direct entrant students from another institution – as soon as possible at the start of studies. For full time undergraduate students this should be during Welcome Week or as soon as possible if arriving late to campus. For postgraduate taught students, or part time undergraduate students, this should be within the first two weeks of the start of the programme.

Scaffolded approaches to structured weekly sessions for students new to Aston in the first teaching period of an academic year are encouraged where relevant to the context of study. Recognising the value of group-based tutorial activities, students should in all cases also be provided with clear opportunities for individual support.

For students in the second or subsequent Stage of study, a scheduled meeting with personal tutees must be arranged at or near to the beginning of each remaining Stage of the programme to assist with orientation and progression. The remaining two formal meetings should be aligned as relevant to the context of study. These may typically be scheduled to coincide with key assessment dates or in preparation for specific learning activities such as field trips. Further guidance is available in the Personal Tutor Handbook.

All full time undergraduate and postgraduate taught students must be given at least two further opportunities to meet with their personal tutors during each Stage of study. These meetings may be at any time, though early in the second term and shortly before or after the summer assessment period may be particularly appropriate.

Students on placement are normally supported by a placement tutor.

All part time undergraduate and postgraduate taught students must be given at least one further opportunity to meet with their personal tutor during each Stage of study.

Personal tutors may arrange to meet with tutees individually or in groups but there must be a minimum of one individual meeting each Stage of the programme and students should be encouraged to contact their personal tutor for individual discussions at other times if necessary.

Support for Personal Tutors

All personal tutors must complete training for the role and will have access to detailed information, guidance, and a range of additional related staff development opportunities.

All personal tutors should have a named point of contact for support in role including referral of more complex cases. This would typically be a more experienced colleague able to provide relevant advice.

Colleges/programmes must ensure personal tutors are fully aware of the roles and responsibilities of other colleagues who can provide relevant advice to assist them or the student including Stage tutors, programme directors, College office staff, placement tutors, Placements Team, and senior managers as appropriate.

Monitoring and Evaluation

In allocating personal tutor responsibilities, Colleges should consider workload issues and be mindful of the numbers of tutees allocated to any individual tutor.

Colleges/programmes must regularly review the effectiveness of the personal tutoring arrangements. This will include ensuring that it is considered as part of the continual monitoring process; and through the analysis of NSS data, staff/student liaison committees and other student surveys and feedback.

The University will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of personal tutoring arrangements across the University through the University Learning and Teaching Committee.