

Personal Tutors Policy

Introduction

1. Birkbeck is committed to ensuring that students are provided with effective and appropriate support during their studies, this includes providing support with a personal tutor.
2. Provision of effective personal and pastoral support can make an important contribution to the overall experience of individual students. The Student Engagement & Widening Participation committee has provided evidence that high quality support in addition to normal academic contact through lectures, seminars and other classroom-based activities can improve retention, particularly in the early stages of study.
3. This Policy outlines the College's approach to personal tutoring. It will identify the responsibilities of departments and schools in the provision of personal tutoring and of personal tutors towards their students. It will also outline the responsibilities of students in working with their personal tutors.

Principles

4. The following are the general principles of the College's provision of personal tutors:
 - a) In principle each enrolled student should have a named personal tutor to provide general guidance on academic and non-academic issues and problems, and to suggest other sources of help.
 - b) Personal tutors will be allocated and students notified of the details of their personal tutor normally before the commencement of the programme of study.
 - c) Personal tutors should be available to meet their students regularly. Personal tutors should normally initiate any contact with their students within the first month of the academic year.
 - d) Personal tutors should keep records of instances of tutorial contact.
 - e) The role of the personal tutor should be explained clearly in the appropriate College or Programme handbook.
 - f) Students may, with good reason, request to change their personal tutor; students wishing to change in personal tutor should contact their department.
 - g) Students have a right to confidentiality, and permission from the student shall be sought should it be necessary to discuss her/his difficulties with others, unless facing an urgent situation where there is a risk of harm to the student or to others.
 - h) Students have the right not to seek or accept support or guidance, even though this might be to their disadvantage, on the understanding that they recognise this possible disadvantage.

Responsibilities of the Personal Tutor

5. Core responsibilities of a personal tutor are defined as:

- initiating first contact with new tutees. providing a personal, regular contact for the student during the academic year;
- providing advice, support and general guidance on academic issues;
- recognising when the assistance required is beyond the competence or responsibility of the personal tutor and, in consultation with the student, referring the student to specialist academic or pastoral support services within the College or outside the College where necessary;
- to support students in their understanding of agreed College Regulations, Policies and Frameworks.
- where necessary facilitating liaison between the student and other student support services within the College;
- helping students to develop appropriate learning skills, including by signposting available study skills resources and training.
- actively participating in the induction process with students;
- providing students with the opportunity to review and reflect upon their progress ;
- offering guidance in making choices over modules, options, postgraduate/ further study and career opportunities;
- where appropriate, providing an academic reference for the student.

Responsibilities of the Student

6. Core responsibilities of the student are:

- maintaining contact with and responding to requests for information from their personal tutor;
- ensuring that they go to the nominated person/personal tutor whenever they need help or are asked to do so, including scheduled meetings with the personal tutor as required;
- being an active participant in student and personal tutor discussions;
- notifying their personal tutor promptly if they are having any problems, such as academic, health or personal, that are affecting their academic work.

Departmental / School Responsibilities

7. Core responsibilities of the department and/or school are:

- publishing to students the details of their allocated personal tutor;

- ensuring that support provision and the personal tutor role are made available and students clearly directed to The Personal Tutor Policy;
- organising opportunities for students to meet their personal tutor during induction;
- where appropriate, ensure that a reallocation process is in place for cases where student and tutor do not work well together, or where tutors are unavailable for an extended period due to illness, leave etc;
- Personal Tutor training will be given at staff induction.

Academic Board
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