Policy on Personal Tutoring

Introduction

1. The aims of the College, as defined in its Mission Statement, include the aims to:
   - Provide part-time higher education courses which meet the changing educational, cultural, personal and career needs of adults; in particular those who live or work in the London region.
   - Enable adult students from diverse social and educational backgrounds to participate in our courses.

2. The College’s supporting objectives include the objective to:
   - Ensure the College provides an inclusive working and learning environment for its students and staff so that all may develop to their full potential.

3. The College’s 2010-2014 Retention Strategy states that the College aims to be at the forefront of the development of student support systems and processes which underpin improved part-time student retention and completion. The College’s 2012-2016 Learning & Teaching Strategy states that the College aims to be responsive to the changing needs of our students, and refers specifically to the development and enhancement of the academic and personal tutoring system.

4. Provision of effective personal and pastoral support can make an important contribution to the overall experience of individual students. There is 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.

5. 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

6. Each 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. Personal tutors should be allocated within 3 weeks of the commencement of the programme of study and notified to the student.

7. The role of the personal tutor should be explained clearly in the appropriate course handbook.
8. Students should be given the opportunity to communicate with their personal tutor within the first month of the academic year.

9. Personal tutors should be available to meet their students regularly (at least once a term). Students should initiate any meeting with their personal tutor.

10. Students may with good reason, change their personal tutor; the procedure for requesting a change in the personal tutor should be outlined in programme handbooks.

11. Personal tutors should keep appropriate records of tutorial contact.

12. These principles will be adapted as necessary to meet the needs of distance learning students.

**Responsibilities of the Personal Tutor**

13. The basic responsibilities of a personal tutor are defined as:

   • being the first point of contact for their tutees for general advice on any academic-related issue;
   • providing a personal, regular contact for the student throughout 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;
   • making appropriate efforts to ensure that all students are aware of the opportunity to meet with them during the academic year.

14. In order to fulfil these responsibilities a personal tutor will need to:

   • be acquainted with the services that are available within the College;
   • be familiar with the processes and procedures relevant to student progression within the College;
   • respect the student's right to confidentiality, to make this general right clear to the student, and to get permission from the student 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;
   • respect each student's 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;
   • undertake appropriate professional development to equip her/himself for the different elements of the personal tutor role.

15. Other responsibilities of personal tutors may include:

   • liaising between the student and others within the College;
• helping students to develop appropriate study skills;
• actively participating in the induction process with students;
• providing students with the opportunity to review and reflect upon their progress;
• helping the student to reflect on feedback given by other staff members;
• offering guidance in making choices over modules, options, postgraduate/further study and career opportunities;
• contributing to any requests made to the College for a reference for the student;
• conforming with the College’s Data Protection Policy and Code of Practice.

Responsibilities of the Student

16. The responsibilities of the student are:
• initiating contact with 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 finding a solution to any problem;
• notifying their personal tutor promptly if they are having any academic, health or personal problems that are affecting their academic work.

Departmental / School Responsibilities

17. The responsibilities of the department and/or school are:
• publishing the allocation of personal tutors;
• ensuring that support provision and the personal tutor role are published and students clearly directed to this guidance;
• organising opportunities for students to meet their personal tutor during induction;
• developing processes for recording whether meetings have taken place and ensuring that all students are offered the opportunity to meet with personal tutors.
• 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.
• develop a system of feedback from staff and students on the operation of the personal tutor system

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