

# **PERSONAL TUTOR GUIDE TO STUDENT SUPPORT**

We seek to provide all our students with excellent support whilst they are at the University.

Research shows a strong correlation between student satisfaction and an effective personal tutoring programme. All students at the University are allocated a personal tutor who they can turn to for help and advice if they are having difficulties. If you are a personal tutor, you are in a unique position to be able to help students get the most out of their course and their time at the University and thereby to achieve their full potential.

### 1.1 The Role of the Personal Tutor (PT)

The role of the PT is to support each individual personal tutee by:

1. monitoring personal tutee's attendance and performance on the course and following up on poor performance and attendance,
2. advising personal tutees in relation to:
  - i) issues relating to the course and/or assessments
  - ii) personal issues affecting the tutee's studies,
3. providing basic careers advice,
4. encouraging personal tutees to take timely advantage of the opportunities which are available to them through careers/pro bono/extra-curricular programmes,
5. providing employment and study references,
6. promoting an on-going client relationship with the personal tutee with a view to promoting the University.

If a student asks you about something which you do not know or are unsure about, you should try and help by either finding out the answer yourself and getting back to the student or putting them in touch with the right person/department e.g. a career issues, the University Employability Service; fee issues, Student Services; a serious personal problem, their own GP/student counsellor. If you do put the student in touch with another person/department, check back with the student after a few days to ensure the matter is now resolved and the student has the information they need.

Personal information is processed and held in the University administration systems and is used for the administration of academic related support and other legitimate university purposes in accordance with the data protection principles embodied in the General Data Protection Regulations. The information that students provide should not be disclosed without consent, except where there is a legal obligation to do so or where exceptional issues of personal safety arise.

Here are three examples of possible situations when confidentiality will/might be breached:

- Where there appears to be a serious and imminent risk to the student's own or to others' safety.
- Where there are serious grounds for concern about the student's mental well-being.

- Where the law requires disclosure for the prevention and detection of terrorism.

In any situation where confidentiality needs to be breached, information may be passed to any of the following people:

- Centre Director
- Operational Services Director
- Head of Operational Services
- Head of Programme and Student Affairs (for the student's course)
- Member of the University Wellbeing Team (that is; counselling, welfare support, Mental Health Advisor, Head of Student Support Services, Wellbeing Service Manager)
- GP
- Police/immigration service (where the police or immigration service are investigating a criminal offence in which a student may be involved)

Where a student discloses a disability for the first time to a member of University staff, the staff member is then deemed to have received the information on behalf of the University and has a duty of care to report the student's declaration of a disability to the Disability Support Service.

## 1.2 Personal tutor files

All PTs should keep a record of their discussions with individual tutees so that any advice given is noted. Therefore, at the start of the course each PT must open a class file.

The primary object of maintaining a class file is to ensure that the University is always in a position to give students the best possible advice. The notes which you make of interviews are not only of value to you in subsequent dealings with the tutee, but are also essential in case you are ill or leave the University and someone else has to take over your duties as PT. The quality of your notes may well determine the value of the advice it is possible to give in your absence. Notes like "saw X, gave general advice re progress", are of some assistance but something fuller and more detailed is needed if a particular issue is raised by the tutee or subject tutor. However, you should not place on the official class file purely subjective adverse opinions of a type unsustainable by any factual evidence.

Although the class file is an official University record, the possibly sensitive nature of its content is such that it is to be regarded as confidential (see above). Please keep the file in a safe place, but also ensure that it is readily available in case it is needed e.g. if a request for a reference is received when you are absent. There may be additional Centre-specific practices in place in respect of where that information should be stored. You should retain the class file for one year from the date a student completes their course. After this time please check with Student Services at your Centre regarding its future storage.

Should you leave the University please hand your files to Student Services. If there is a change in role, or for any other reason, you cease to be a PT for an ongoing student, make sure that the class file is handed over as appropriate.

If you are to be absent for a prolonged period (e.g. maternity leave or long term sickness) please ensure that Student Services know where your class files are.

NB some University information received by tutors is to be regarded as confidential, and must not be revealed to the student body. This includes the University's marking schemes for skills and other in-course assessments and for written examinations. These must, on no account, be handed to students.

### **1.3 Getting to know your personal tutees**

#### **1.3.1 Referring to the Students by name**

Print the class photographs from UNIT-e and try and memorise the names of your personal tutees.

#### **1.3.2 Knowing at least a little about each tutee**

During induction and/or at your first meeting, find out something about your tutees, such as which sports they play/which teams they support/where they travel from each day/career plans. This will allow you to develop a rapport with individual tutees. Maintain this interest throughout your contact with the tutees.

#### **1.3.3 Be consistent**

Treat all students in the same manner to avoid allegations of favouritism or discrimination.

#### **1.3.4 Open door policy**

We have an open door policy at the University of Law. The first time you take a class you should ensure the students know how to contact you.

As tutors are not in University 24/ 7 there will be times when you are not available and it is therefore important that you manage student expectations. During your first session you should let your tutees know your hours/days of work. This is especially important for tutors who work part-time for the University or who have weekend contracts and are therefore not in University Monday - Friday. Experience has shown that students are usually happy to work round tutor times provided they know what they are in advance.

#### **1.3.5 Responding to emails from Students**

You should reply to student emails as soon as possible – ideally within 24 hours of receipt. If this is not feasible due to the nature of the query or your own commitments, you should send an email acknowledging receipt and indicating when you will reply. If there is a day when you will not be in University (e.g. due to holiday/ non-working day etc.) or a day when you will not be checking your emails (e.g. due to meetings etc.) you should set an out of office message on your email. This message should:

- State the dates of your absence
- Explain that you will reply to emails on your return
- Give an alternative contact in case of urgent matters

## 1.4 PT meetings

With the exception of the first PT meeting, which is compulsory, it is not compulsory for personal tutees to attend these meetings, but the expectation is that they do so.

Asking the tutee to complete the relevant pre-meeting questionnaire may help to facilitate discussion.

### 1.4.1 Introductory PT meeting - 15 minutes

This should, if possible, take place during the first 4 weeks of the course for attendance-mode students.

The main purpose of the meeting is to allow the personal tutor to start to get to know their tutees and to ascertain whether they have any initial concerns or issues relating to the course. If appropriate for the tutee's circumstances it is also an opportunity to encourage the tutee to engage with the University Employability Service and to take part in career development activities and take advantage of any other opportunities offered e.g. Student Association, social/sporting etc.

There is a brief pre-meeting questionnaire (see Appendix 1) which can either be e-mailed to the tutees in advance, or can be completed during the meeting.

Before the meeting you should check the following if available;

- a) the tutee's enrolment information on UNIT-e to obtain background information (e.g. home town, prior qualifications etc.) and to see whether it reveals any issues e.g. the need for a Disability Support Agreement,
- b) the Student's attendance record to date,
- c) whether the Student has signed a Data Protection/Learning Needs/Regulation 13 Acknowledgement Form,
- d) the tutee's completed pre-meeting questionnaire.

You should also explain the significance and purpose of future meetings – i.e. an opportunity for you to reassure and encourage the tutee and for any issues to be identified and addressed.

Remind tutees that workshop tutors will be monitoring the tutee's general progress, preparation and participation in class. Try to be fairly upbeat and positive about this. The idea is to give the tutees a sense of the support you can and will provide if they, for their part, apply themselves fully to their course and put in appropriate effort.

It is also important to check with the tutee that he/she has informed the University of any relevant disability support needs and completed and signed the Acknowledgement Form relating to such needs which they were given in their induction session. If having checked the disability support needs status of the tutee there is something to report which they have not already advised the University about, tell the tutee that they must alert the Disability Support Service.

If the tutee is sponsored, or using publicly funded loans for their study, PTs should also remind tutee that the terms of their sponsorship, or loan, may mean that they have consented to University releasing interim information to their sponsoring firm such as attendance, preparation for and participation in class.

#### 1.4.2 Future PT meetings

The main purpose of future PT meetings is to discuss the tutee's progress on the course and any issues or concerns the tutee may have in relation to their studies or the forthcoming real exams.

In addition, it is important to cover the tutee's attendance and consider any absences to date. You should also ensure they have engaged with the University Employability Service.

Prior to each meeting, you should check the tutee's;

- mock/assessment results,
- attendance record,
- APM reports for tutors' comments on progress so far.

#### 1.4.3 Final PT meeting

It is also vital to discover the tutee's plans for after they finish the course. This information should also be passed to the Employability Service to use in their compilation of destination statistics. Remind your personal tutees who are re-sitting exams that they continue to have full access to the Employability Service until they have passed their courses or exhausted their assessment attempts.

### **1.5 Monitoring Student attendance**

You should refer to the Student Services attendance protocol.

It is worth bearing in mind the following points in relation to student attendance:

- Students who are absent or tell you that they will be missing part of the course for a particular reason should be reminded that their funding might be withdrawn for unsatisfactory attendance on the course.
- Unsatisfactory attendance can mean that (under the Student Discipline and Attendance Regulations and / or the Assessment Regulations) Students are prevented from taking an assessment.

- Unexplained absences may affect references that you give for students (see Student Handbook for guidance).
- Under the terms of their sponsorship by a firm they may have agreed that unsatisfactory attendance is reported to their firm who might want to discuss it with them.
- Non-EEA nationals will be at risk of removal from the course due to unexplained absences.

## 1.6 Students from outside the European Economic Area

The vast majority of Students from non-EEA countries require what is known as “Tier 4 sponsorship” before they can obtain a visa to study in the UK. All queries including passport and visa, right to work, attendance, transfer to another mode, assessments and resits, intermission, withdrawal, contact details, should be referred to the University International Visa office [visaoffice@law.ac.uk](mailto:visaoffice@law.ac.uk) or the Tier-4 Officer at each centre.

If more than a relatively small percentage of Tier 4 Students withdraw, the University will have failed to comply with the criteria for retention of its licence to admit Tier 4 Students. It is therefore essential that Personal Tutors closely monitor the attendance of Tier 4 Students and take an active role in their pastoral care with a view to supporting them to remain on the course.

## 1.7 General information to PTs

Students should be advised to contact Student Services for the appropriate procedure to:

- Transfer to another workshop
- Transfer to another University centre
- Transfer to another mode of study (NB Tier-4 sponsorship is only valid on a Full Time course; therefore it is not possible for a Tier-4 sponsored Student to transfer onto a Part-Time course)
- Intermission
- Withdrawal
- Deal with queries about eligibility or exemptions
- Enquiries about the hardship fund (The University maintains this fund to help Students who are in a situation of severe financial difficulty. If you do have a Student who you feel is in genuine financial difficulty, always refer the Student to Student Services.

### 1.7.1 Council Tax Certificates

These are produced by Student Services early in the course and Students will be notified when they are ready to be collected. Only Students on full-time non accelerated courses are eligible for the certificates and they exempt Students from council tax for the period from September to June only.

### 1.7.2 Complaints about members of the teaching and administrative staff

From time to time you may receive suggestions or complaints from students about the organisation of the University in general, or about the alleged failings of a particular member of staff. If this occurs, please refer the Student or Student(s) to the Academic Manager or Centre Director/Head of Tutors as appropriate.

### **1.7.3 Students who are unsure when/whether to reveal poor results to prospective employers**

This can be a difficult area. You may find it helpful to bear the following points in mind when advising a student. It is important that the student is truthful at all times to a prospective employer. Therefore, if directly asked by an employer if they have passed all assessments to date, they must be truthful in their reply. Students should also check the terms of their offer before finally deciding what to do.

If provisional marks are published it will usually be in order for the student to wait for the confirmed results before notifying his/her employer of results.

In some cases students have the opportunity to retake skills before the end of the course and so may wish to wait to see if they pass these resits for these before disclosing results to their employers. However, this can be a risky strategy as the employer may take the view the student should not have delayed telling them.

If the student is sponsored, it may be that the University is obliged to send the student's results to the firm. In such a case the student would be best advised to speak to the firm themselves as soon as possible.

Although you can discuss the pros and cons of the situation with the student ultimately any decision must be the student's own decision.

### **1.7.4 Matters affecting a student's suitability to be a solicitor /barrister/ disciplinary problems**

You may become aware of facts which show that a student at the University is unsuitable to be admitted as a solicitor or barrister. Should you find yourself the unwilling recipient of such a confidence, you must advise the student that his or her best interests lie in full and frank disclosure to the SRA/ Bar Standards Board.

This is a matter where the University may take the view that despite the confidential nature of the information, it has a duty of disclosure to the SRA/ Bar Standards Board. Remember that as a solicitor/ barrister you have your own personal duty to the profession.

Problems have arisen in the past between students, e.g. clashes between students sharing accommodation. Disputes such as these can often be resolved through informal discussions. As always, it is important to keep a careful note of any discussions in case of further problems at a later date.

If such disputes cannot be resolved in this way, if the incident concerns threats of violence, or if complaints are received about a student (whether from other students or from persons unconnected with the University) it may be necessary to take the matter further. You should discuss this with the relevant Centre Programme and



Student Affairs Lead who will decide whether to invoke the formal disciplinary procedure.

### **1.7.5 Students who require disability support**

All students should have stated on their application forms and on-line registration whether they have any disability support needs and whether they require any special facilities on the course or in the examinations. The Disability Support Service will have contacted such students at an early stage to agree any special arrangements and these will be set out in a Disability Support Agreement which the student must sign. Students should be asked to sign the Student Acknowledgement Form to record their situation at the induction day session.

If at any time during the course it becomes apparent that a student may need special facilities or that he or she may need to change the facilities required, again please let the Disability Support Service know and refer the Student to them. Medical evidence will be required to substantiate any request for special facilities. Students can find out the details from the Disability Support Service. A link to the Policy can be found on the University website

No special examination facilities can be granted to students on the ground that English is not their first language.

### **1.7.6 English language and learning support**

If you have a student who would benefit from English language or learning support you should refer them to the relevant Centre Programme and Student Affairs Lead.

### **1.7.7 Illness/personal problems**

You should ensure that you have read the relevant course specific Regulations before talking to a student about any illness/personal problem affecting his/her study and/or assessments including concessions (copy in Student Handbook).

If a student wishes to discuss the possibility of not submitting/not sitting an examination please note that it has to be a student's decision whether or not he/she is fit to sit an exam/submit an assessment and that, whilst the Board of Examiners have some discretion, you can't predict the outcome of a concession application.

### **1.7.8 Counselling Service**

There may be times when a student may benefit from seeking professional therapeutic support. Personal Tutors should steer tutees towards the Counselling Service in the following cases:

- where the tutee is presenting with issues of a psychological and emotional nature that require professional intervention and support
- where the tutor is concerned about a tutee's mental health and wellbeing
- where a tutor is concerned about a tutee's safety due to possible risk to the tutee and / or others
- where the tutor feels unable to deal with the tutee's problems because they are of a sort which the tutor believes calls for professional counselling support

Appointments to see a counsellor are made via email at counselling- [Centre name]@law.ac.uk. Further information is available on Elite > Health and Wellbeing > Counselling Service

### **1.7.9 The Student Association**

All current students at the University are members of the Student Association. Throughout the year, the Student Association advertises various representative roles (some of which are paid positions) as well as the opportunity to organise social, sports, academic and professional events. PTs should encourage their tutees to apply for a representative role or to form part of the Student Association Events Committee in their centre, and generally become more engaged with the University as this is likely to enhance their student experience. Further information about the Student Association and the various opportunities can be found at [www.law.ac.uk/student-association](http://www.law.ac.uk/student-association) or via email at [student-association@law.ac.uk](mailto:student-association@law.ac.uk).

## **2. Writing references for students**

### **2.1 Checks prior to writing**

Any reference you give must comply with Q4.1.2 Staff Reporting on Student Performance Protocol, which is available on ELITE (Registry Matters, Policies and Procedures, Q4 Enabling Student Development and Achievement). You must use the appropriate template attached to the policy when providing your reference.

**Any reference must be copied to Student Services who will store it against the Student's UNIT-e record**

### **2.2 Points to bear in mind when writing references**

- Don't make factual statements which cannot be substantiated.
- Don't be malicious.
- Actual marks achieved by a student should not be revealed. However, when the final results are published, it is possible to reveal whether the student concerned has failed, passed, passed with commendation or passed with distinction (or grade relevant to their course, e.g. upper second, outstanding).
- Any confidential information should not be disclosed without the student's consent.
- If you feel that any reference you give the student is likely to be unfavourable you should contact the student to discuss it with him/her. This will give the student the opportunity of finding someone else to act as referee.
- No evidence about the student's personal or medical circumstances should be disclosed without his/her prior written consent.
- It is University policy not to provide "open" references.

## **3. Data protection**

Please familiarise yourself with Q4.9 Privacy Policy which is available on ELITE (Registry Matters, Policies and Procedures, Q4 Enabling Student Development and Achievement).

**Appendix 1**  
**Tutee pre-meeting questionnaire for first PT meeting**

Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire and email it to your personal tutor at least [ ] days prior to your Interview.

Name and workshop group number:	
1. Do you have any concerns about the course / how you are you settling in?	
2. Have you contacted the Employability Service yet?	
3. What do you want your future career to look like? For example, where do you want to work, what type of employer, what type of legal or other work?	
4. Do you have any work experience?	
5. Which career development activities do you intend to take part in e.g. pro bono / extra-curricular activities? (See the My Employability and My Centre tabs on Elite).	
6. Are you involved or would you like to be involved in the University's Student Association, or sporting and social activities?	

**When you have completed the questionnaire please send it to your personal tutor.**

Version	Amended by	Revision summary	Date
V1.1	QA Officer	Logo updated, minor formatting changes.	June 2019
V1.2	Registry Officer	Change to coding convention	24/03/20