CODE OF PRACTICE FOR PERSONAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS ON TAUGHT PROGRAMMES

Preface

This Code of Practice sets out the procedures for Personal Support for Students. It applies to all students on taught programmes at the University and replaces previous guidance on Personal Tutors. The Code is based on extensive research conducted by the Personal Tutor Working Group comprising students, staff and the Students' Union.

The Code is reviewed and re-issued annually with any significant amendments being approved by the Academic Policy Committee. Reports on the operation of the system are made through departments' annual developmental review reports and through an annual report to the Academic Policy Committee.

1. Principles

1.1 Each department must have in place systems for supporting all students which provide:

a) Regular personal support

b) Crisis support

c) Reflection on each student's progress and personal development skills

1.2 The responsibility for initiating contact in respect of regular personal support lies with the department.

1.3 The responsibility for initiating contact in respect of crisis support or additional requests for guidance lies with the student, but on the understanding that clear arrangements are in place to facilitate that contact.

1.4 Students and staff have equal responsibility for developing and maintaining the relationship.

1.5 Staff providing personal support for students must receive training. This should be through induction for new staff, and appropriate on-going staff development. Whilst staff development will usually be provided centrally there must also be briefings by the department in relation to the content of this Code of Practice. The staff development programme must include information regarding other University services, the processes for referral of students for further assistance and how to give effective personal support for students.

2. Operation of the Personal Support System

2.1 Each student must be allocated a personal support tutor at the start of their programme. The department must notify the student and the University Registry of this allocation, and of any subsequent alterations. The department must also publish in the departmental

handbook the procedures whereby students can apply to change their tutor.

2.2 Joint degree students must be allocated a personal support tutor from their lead department, but must also have access to academic support in both disciplines.

2.3 The allocation of staff to the role of personal support tutor can be undertaken in one of the following ways

   a) an approximately equal distribution of students across all the department's academic and teaching staff

   b) the distribution of students across some of the department's academic and teaching staff

   c) the identification of programme leaders as personal tutors where the programme is small

2.4 Tutors must have knowledge and understanding of the student's programme of study. Departments should ensure that the number of tutees allocated to tutors is at an appropriate level to ensure that they can have meaningful contact with each of their personal tutees.

2.5 Students should be allocated a personal support tutor within the first week of their programme.

2.6 **It is a tutor's responsibility to**:

   a) establish initial contact with tutees through group or individual meetings or other contact (this should be through a face to face meeting for campus-based students) at the beginning of their programme, ideally within two weeks; this should be regarded as the single most important element in establishing the basis of a sound tutor: tutee relationship

   b) arrange regular one-to-one meetings or formal points of contact with each tutee (for campus-based students this should be face-to-face meetings each term); for part-time and distance learning students the regularity and mode of contact should be appropriate to the context and approved during the Programme Approval process. The publishing of 'office hours' during which a tutor is available whilst good practice, should not replace the need for arranging one-to-one meetings

   c) issue invitations, for example, by e-mail or via Blackboard to attend such meetings or interactions, with a reminder that tutors are in a position to advise and guide at all times, not just when difficulties occur

   d) wherever circumstances allow, respond positively to requests from tutees for assistance in understanding departmental or University procedures, and engage in personal advocacy to support students

   e) refer students to the University's central support systems as necessary

   f) undertake such other duties relating to student support as may be determined by the Head of Department

   g) keep a record of each meeting or significant contact with tutees

2.7 **It is a student's responsibility to**:

    a)   Respond to contact from their tutor (contact here includes invitations to face-to face meetings, telephone conversations and e-mail)

    b)   take the initiative in instigating meetings or contact if the need arises, seeking timely advice from their tutor, when faced with academic, course assessment, personal or other issues that require support

2.8 **It is a Department's responsibility to**:

    a)   draw the attention of staff and students to this Code of Practice annually and circulate any additional departmental guidelines

    b)   ensure that relevant information concerning tutees is passed on to tutors in a timely manner

    c)   have an agreed and published arrangement for dealing with students requiring immediate advice or assistance; this means that when a tutor is not available, there should be a clear alternative contact. Such arrangements for crisis support should be clearly publicised to students, academic and administrative staff

    d)   ensure that if a personal support tutor becomes unavailable for any reason for a significant period of time, that a new tutor is allocated and that this is advised to the student and to Registry

    e)   in the case of joint degree students, ensure that liaison takes place across the departments to ensure students have access to appropriate support

3. **Monitoring**

3.1 The operation of the personal tutor system should be a regular agenda item for student/staff committees and departmental staff meetings. In order to monitor the functioning of the system, departments may develop additional methods of surveying student satisfaction with their personal support tutors.

3.2 Departments should report annually on the operation of the Personal Support system to their College Academic Committee as part of the Annual Development Review of their programmes. This should include:

    a)   the maximum number of personal tutees allocated to any one tutor

    b)   any training or induction activities offered to tutors

    c)   how the department has monitored personal support for students

3.3 College Academic Committees should include information on Personal Support for Students in their College reports on Annual Developmental Review to the Academic Policy Committee so that good practice and any issues can be disseminated across the University.

Approved by Senate in July 2012