

## **Revised Personal Tutoring Policy 2022**

### **Preamble: Context**

This review of the Personal Tutoring System at Edge Hill University is aimed at addressing its form and function in relation to recent student data trends at the University, risks, and expectations embodied within the regulatory functions of the OfS.

Fundamentally, we are committed to providing the highest quality student experience, support and success and will continue to do so. It is the right thing to do.

The current policy and regulatory environment and core messages in the recent consultation on the B Conditions, TEF and student outcomes measures each provide us with the opportunity to reflect on the efficacy of current policy and practices and how they may be enhanced.

Important, contemporary, considerations and challenges related to the above include:

- Current trends in retention and completion data, graduate outcomes data and resulting PROCEED measures (our current vulnerabilities lie in areas of retention after year 1, completion of programmes and progression to graduate level employment or further study)
- The next iteration of the NSS and the focus on the student experience as an 'Aspect' of the emerging reiteration of the TEF (with particular focus on student voice, personalisation, teaching and support, sense of belonging and communications)
- The aim is to retain TEF Gold status, which will be dependent on success on the above measures
- The importance of avoiding intervention by the OfS regulator and any potential reputational damage

These are arguably aligned towards ensuring the best possible student experience and success, which is what we value. Irrespective of the policy climate, we can use this review point as an opportunity for further enhancements.

The intention of this policy is to focus on principles related to 'what works' not to offer an absolute prescription. In this way, compliance will ensure that diversity of UG, PG, PT and CPD provision is recognised.

Whilst the suggestions for revision of the policy appear demanding, our current data sets on students' retention, satisfaction and progression indicate that we need to be very focused in our approaches if we are to make the improvements that are necessary. We need to maintain ourselves, deservedly, as a highly successful university with a positive, externally recognised brand.

It follows that excellence in teaching, learning, student support and success result in optimised

retention, progression, and subsequent reputational growth; recruitment is enhanced, and we progress in a virtuous cycle of development. The significance for the TESOF and OfS B conditions is thus quite obvious.

### **The Revised Personal Tutor System Policy at Edge Hill University, 2022**

Edge Hill University is committed to high quality guidance and support for all students. This consists of central support through Student and Learning Services, support from academic staff through teaching and assessment and through the role and functions of Personal Tutors.

Personal Tutoring is to sit within an architecture of wider support and occurring at appropriate frequency as to ensure that the policy is enacted.

The role of the Personal Tutor is of primary importance and represents a 'stable point of reference' and an 'anchor' for students during their university experience. The role is key to successful transition into Higher Education and throughout their programme of study to graduation, employment, or further study. The role is acknowledged to be influential in enhancing the student experience, supporting the process of induction, positively impacting on a sense of belonging, retention, achievement, and satisfaction.

Personal Tutoring should be inclusive, providing ongoing support and challenge with academic, social, and pastoral issues, acting as a principal point for referral and communication with the wider University community.

Personal Tutors are thus central to aspects of academic and pastoral support and guidance and are a key interface with central services for students. They should be the point of regular contact for students within an organised system in departments/areas within each Faculty.

As such, Edge Hill University will provide a well-planned, high quality, monitored, and evaluated Personal Tutor system which impacts upon:

- Students' sense of personal belonging
- Cohort identity, and personal development
- Academic success
- Health and wellbeing
- Career aspirations, personal/professional development, employability, and positive graduate outcomes

All students will be expected to participate in planned, scheduled, engagements with tutors as part of taking responsibility for their own learning, **to complement their attendance at timetabled teaching sessions**. This will be delivered to a schedule determined by the department to ensure that the principles and components below can be fully attended to and a high-quality experience ensured.

### **Principles**

The Personal Tutor system is a fundamental element of a network of support services and is underpinned by the following:

- Respect for **every student as an active learner** and an individual with personal learning needs
- Commitment to a sense of belonging, cohort identity, **individual and group development**
- **Focus on Monitoring** of students' academic, pastoral, and personal/professional development using appropriate **data**
- **Focus on general wellbeing**
- Provision of support from **highly trained tutors with triage to expert specialist services**
- Support for induction of students into the academic community and their transition through academic study, **towards positive graduate outcomes**
- Recognition of the **importance of equality of opportunity, diversity, and inclusion**
- A **shared responsibility** for each student's learning, development, and achievement

**Edge Hill University Undergraduate Personal Tutoring will comprise of the following components:**

- All students having a named, fully trained, Personal Tutor (assigned during the pre-arrival phase and/or induction week). Students will be given the name and contact details of their personal tutor, whenever possible in **advance of arrival**, at the beginning of a new academic year and be provided with an opportunity to meet their tutor in a group session during the first week, and to meet on an **individual (one-to-one) basis within two weeks of starting University**
- The expectation that students should attend all Personal Tutor sessions scheduled
- Retain the same person throughout the programme of study (although changes may be necessary/unavoidable and in this instance will be clearly communicated)
- Scheduled group sessions at regular intervals throughout the academic year
- Sessions will have a planned focus on aspects that might include academic, social, pastoral and group support and eliciting feedback from students ('Student Voice'). Individual support may be made available in the latter part of each session if needed
- Individual tutorials in addition to, and to compliment group sessions. These should occur a minimum of 1 per semester/teaching block (or as required/requested). **It is expected that, in most cases, this minimum frequency will be exceeded. The frequency and its fitness for purpose will be a key aspect of validation and review**
- Tutors having access to appropriate monitoring data for the student cohort and individuals (including attendance at teaching and Personal Tutor sessions; assessment data; online engagement analytics; referrals to central services with appropriate notes to inform individual, personalised sessions). This may be achieved in collaboration with departmental administrators
- Fully trained tutors, conversant with the services that are available within the University and the processes and procedures relevant to progression and specialised support – academic, professional, and pastoral
- Respect for the student's right to confidentiality, only disclosing information with the student's consent or if the student presents as 'at risk' of harm to self or others or raises professional concern, in line with University policies<sup>i</sup>
- Write references **if appropriate**

- Personal Tutor support for student engagement with an online portfolio, including evidencing employability, graduate outcomes, and career readiness. This will be in collaboration with a designated Careers Advisors in each department
- A Code of Practice for staff and students (see appendix)
- Consideration of Personal Tutoring as a legitimate part of Peer Observation, as a developmental approach and a way of surfacing best practices for dissemination
- Recognition of specific excellence in Personal Tutoring incorporated into the University Learning and Teaching Fellowship. This will include those from specialist support services demonstrating excellence
- Annual review within faculties, with formal reporting to the Student Experience Sub-committee, to promote enhancements and surface best practices for dissemination through the Centre for Learning and Teaching

### Postgraduate and CPD Students

Given the nature of these students and acknowledging that such study can be at whole programme or at module level, such as in accredited CPD, the following are the key expectations of personal tutoring:

All students will have a named Personal Tutor, which may be the module leader in certain CPD contexts. The functions of support, monitoring and triage to services will be similar to that of provision for undergraduates.

#### All Personal Tutors will:

- Contact tutees to share contact details (email, extension number, availability times)
- Disseminate information regarding scheduled meetings (this will be **dependent upon the course length and delivery mode** so will vary across programmes)
- Remain the same person throughout the postgraduate study (although changes may be necessary/unavoidable and in this instance will be clearly communicated)
- Act as a principal contact for pastoral, professional and/ or academic concerns or advice
- Meet regularly with their tutees
- Arrange/conduct individual tutorials to provide tailored academic advice, support, and guidance as appropriate
- Arrange group tutorials where applicable and/or necessary (**dependent upon the nature and duration of the course**)
- Assist students with professional development
- Be fully trained and conversant with the services that are available within the University and the processes and procedures relevant to progression and specialised support – academic, professional, and pastoral
- respect the student's right to confidentiality, only disclosing information with the student's consent or if the student presents as 'at risk' of harm to self or others or professional concern, in line with University policies
- write references **if appropriate**

### Quality Management and Enhancement

Validation will include an articulation of the specific approach to Personal Tutoring, related to the expectations above, so as to acknowledge the situated contexts and variety of

programmes.

Departments will produce staff/student guides for each programme, describing their local implementation of the Personal Tutor system. This will be **based upon consideration of the approach approved in validation and review processes**. These arrangements will be subject to annual review and considered in relation to student feedback, tutors' reflection, and local evaluation processes. All personal tutors will undertake **mandatory training** and will be expected to engage in continuing staff development relevant to the Personal Tutor role. Briefings and professional development support will be **coordinated through the Centre for Learning and Teaching**.

Faculties will engage in the enhancement and dissemination of good practice related to the personal tutor role internally. This information will be **reported to the Student Experience Sub-committee annually** and used to inform the further enhancement of the Personal Tutor system, in the form of a short annual review of lessons learned and emerging good practices.

## **Appendix:**

### **Code of Practice for the Personal Tutoring System at Edge Hill University**

The Code of Practice for Personal Tutoring provides clear expectations on behalf of both the student and the Personal Tutor. A successful Personal Tutoring system is based on a shared responsibility between the student and the tutor, supported by the department/area, Faculty, and the University's services.

#### **It is required that:**

- The system of Personal Tutoring and the role of the Personal Tutor will be clearly defined, for students, in a handbook/VLE
- It is a shared responsibility for both the student and their Personal Tutor to proactively engage with the personal tutor process and to communicate effectively
- Personal Tutors will provide general guidance on academic and support issues and will signpost or refer the student to other sources of advice and guidance
- Students will be given the name and contact details of their personal tutor, whenever possible in **advance of arrival**, at the beginning of a new academic year and be provided with an opportunity to meet their tutor in a group session during the first week, and to meet on an **individual (one-to-one) basis within two weeks of starting University**
- Continuing students will be given the name and contact details of their personal tutor and be provided with an opportunity to meet their tutor in a group session and to meet on an individual basis (one-to-one) within two weeks of enrolment
- If the Personal Tutor is absent, departments/ areas will provide an alternate/alternative point of contact and information as appropriate in a timely manner
- Personal Tutor sessions will be clearly scheduled, and this will be clearly communicated to students
- It is the student's responsibility to attend, to participate and engage with their personal portfolio development where appropriate to their study

During the working week, the personal tutor will respond to informal emails and telephone enquiries normally within two working days. Each department will have a system in place to address urgent issues.

#### **Roles and responsibilities:**

##### **Students will:**

- Ensure that the name and contact details of the Personal Tutor have been noted
- Keep in regular contact with their personal tutor and attend all scheduled meetings
- Notify their personal tutor (or departmental administrator or Programme Leader) in the event of illness or other reason for non-attendance at the University
- Notify their personal tutor where there are academic or personal/medical problems which are affecting attendance or impacting on academic progress
- Contact their personal tutor as soon as possible if performance in forthcoming

examinations or assessments is going to be affected by ill health or other personal circumstances

### **Personal Tutors will:**

- Personal Tutors will contact their personal tutees, whenever possible in **advance of arrival**, at the beginning of a new academic year and schedule an opportunity to meet their tutor in a group session during the first week, and to meet on an **individual (one-to-one) basis within two weeks of starting University**
- Provide regular, scheduled group sessions and individual sessions (with additional personal sessions on request, as appropriate)
- Provide academic advice, guidance and support and assist students with their academic development and achievement
- Support student transition
- Act as a key contact for pastoral, professional and/ or academic concerns or advice
- Point students towards other sources of more specialist support – academic, professional, and pastoral
- Facilitate personal/professional development and achievement as part of a structured process (including a portfolio in UG provision)
- Be trained and fully conversant with the services that are available within the University and the processes and procedures relevant to student progression and support
- Respect for the student's right to confidentiality, only disclosing information with the student's consent or if the student presents as 'at risk' of harm to self or others or raises professional concern, in line with University policies
- Provide contact details (e-mail address, extension number, availability)

### **Personal Tutoring: Faculty requirements**

Faculties will determine their own specific processes for the operation of personal tutoring. This will be agreed in preparation for validation of curricula. As a minimum Faculties must:

- Have an **agreed schedule** for personal tutoring that is consistent across programmes that includes when and how tutors are allocated
- **Retain a register** of staff in Personal Tutoring roles and a record of their training
- At departmental level **regularly review** distribution of personal tutors to maintain appropriate and manageable allocation
- Have a **clear process** for the reallocation of personal tutees in instances of staff illness or departure
- Signpost and **refer staff (via line managers) to mandatory personal tutor training sessions** to ensure that all staff have completed mandatory training
- Have systems for **capturing feedback** on personal tutoring and reporting these to HoDs, with a particular focus on good practice and dissemination
- **Have mechanisms for reporting generic and specific professional development needs** for action by the CLT that will feed into the personal training sessions provided
- **Ensure that the approach to Personal Tutoring is clearly articulated in validation and review.**

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<sup>i</sup> [safeguarding-policy.pdf \(edgehill.ac.uk\)](https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/safeguarding-policy.pdf)

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[serious-incident-reporting-policy.pdf](#)