

**Personal Tutor Scheme 2018-19:
Guidance on communicating and meeting with Tutees**

1. Introduction

Each University School has a Personal Tutor Scheme, co-ordinated by a Lead Personal Tutor with administrative support from the School Office. All undergraduate students are allocated a Personal Tutor upon commencing the degree programme and will meet with their Tutor on a number of occasions throughout the academic year.

This guidance document is intended to outline best practice for Personal Tutors interacting with Tutees as part of a School-based scheme. In consideration of the one-to-one context of Personal Tutor and Tutee meetings, communications between both parties, and administration and delivery of the scheme, advice is offered below to support professional behaviours and processes, as appropriate.

2. The role of Personal Tutor

Upon initial engagement with Tutees, the role of the Personal Tutor should be clarified and any expectations discussed. The responsibilities of a Personal Tutor are:

- to promote reflection upon and support for students' academic development while they are on their course;
- to promote other activities and experiences related to the personal, academic and professional development of their students;
- to guide students appropriately via effective signposting to relevant student support services.

Further detail on the role and responsibilities of the Personal Tutor can be found in the Personal Tutor Guide 2018-19, available at <http://go.qub.ac.uk/personaltutorscheme> .

3. The Personal Tutor and Tutee relationship

The relationship between Personal Tutor and Tutee exists within the context of a regulated learning environment and should be conducted in accordance with University policies and procedures (for example, the University's Code of Conduct and Health and Safety Policy). It is important that appropriate boundaries, for instance, regarding contact, availability, and meeting arrangements, are set with Tutees upon introduction to the scheme. An informal discussion highlighting the ethos of the scheme and role of Personal Tutor may be useful for clarification. Here, confirmation of what the Personal Tutor *can do* (for example, offer constructive feedback on academic performance) and *cannot do* (for example, deliver counselling support) should help make plain the parameters and value of the relationship.

The Personal Tutor and Tutee relationship is based upon the principles of mutual respect and fairness and is underpinned by the University's Equality and Diversity Policy: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/DiversityandInclusionUnit/PoliciesandProcedures/EqualityandDiversityPolicy/#d.en.759342> .

Personal Tutors should always act in a manner that supports the principles and integrity of the scheme. Social engagement with Tutees outside of the learning environment should be proportionate and occur only where reasonable grounds exist; for example, at School or University events. Private social activity, including via on-line platforms, is considered inappropriate.

4. Communications with Tutees

The Personal Tutor will communicate with the Tutee at specific points of the academic year, as outlined in the Personal Tutor Guide 2018-19 and/or as agreed at School level. Where communication via the School Office is not possible, the Personal Tutor should correspond directly with Tutees via his/her staff email account. Availability for correspondence (or, times at which contact can be made) should also be indicated. Communications with Tutees will always be focused upon the student's personal, academic and professional development. The Personal Tutor must be prepared to redirect Tutee queries where appropriate; for example, by signposting relevant student support services. Further details on signposting can be found in the Personal Tutor Guide 2018-19.

Good communication between Personal Tutor and Tutee offers students the best opportunity to engage fully with the scheme. Personal Tutors should ensure that all communications remain both professional and focused upon the Tutee's developmental needs.

Consequently, any sharing of personal telephone numbers and on-line contact details, including requests to access personal social media accounts and/or communicate privately via personal social media platforms must be avoided. The Personal Tutor should also not participate in communications with third parties claiming to act on behalf of the Tutee without the latter's explicit permission. In such circumstances, normal Data Protection and confidentiality policies apply (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/about/Leadership-and-structure/Registrars-Office/FileStore/Fileupload,766524,en.pdf>). Any communications deemed inappropriate should be documented and reported to the Lead Personal Tutor, before referral to School management.

5. Meeting Tutees

5.1 Purpose

In most cases, Personal Tutors will meet with Tutees on three or four occasions (as a minimum) during the academic year. There may be local issues at School level, such as professional requirements that dictate a specific schedule for Personal Tutor and Tutee engagement. Further information on academic year arrangements for Personal Tutoring, including recommended contact points can be found in the Personal Tutor Guide 2018-19.

Where possible, the purpose of each meeting should be communicated / agreed in advance with the Tutee. In circumstances where the Tutee requests a meeting, the Personal Tutor should seek some brief details on the area(s) or issue(s) to be covered. Items agreed can then be noted by the Personal Tutor in advance of discussion.

5.2 Location

The location(s) of Personal Tutor and Tutee meetings should be agreed at School level as part of local arrangements and reviewed annually. Selection of meeting venue(s) should consider the appropriateness of the physical setting for a one-to-one meeting. Relevant accessibility issues should always be considered. Locations which are physically isolated due to the nature / layout of the relevant building should also be avoided. Where possible, meetings with Tutees should take place in an open environment and/or in a room with visual access (for example, via a glass vantage point in a wall or door). Where the physical setting does not afford these features, an open door policy for the duration of the meeting may offer a remedy; however, this should be agreed upon with the Tutee and respectful of practical concerns, such as maintaining privacy and confidentiality throughout.

Should the Tutee or Personal Tutor have any reservations about the venue set for the meeting, it is necessary that alternatives are explored and a new location agreed upon. Any issues and/or concerns that arise relating to meeting location(s) should be documented and reported to the Lead Personal Tutor and School management for consideration.

5.3 Attendance

Meetings scheduled and agreed with Tutees should be recorded as an indicator of engagement with the scheme. Scheduling information, including date/time/place of meeting(s) should be available at School level. Records of student attendance (or non-attendance) should be held by Personal Tutors and shared afterwards with the School Office and Lead Personal Tutor. Tutees should also be encouraged to record their engagement with the scheme. This might include, for instance, the number of times they have met with their Personal Tutor, developmental goals set, and feedback received.

5.4 Record Keeping

It is recommended that Personal Tutors make appropriate record of any items covered in meetings with Tutees. Ideally, this will start with an informal agenda set in advance of the meeting and include notes on queries, discussion points, recommendations and agreed actions. Any recorded information should be available at School level. Up to date guidance on record keeping and management of personal data (including staff responsibilities) is available under the Data Protection section of the Personal Tutor Guide 2018-19.

In usual circumstances, all personal information shared by Tutees should be treated in confidence and consent will be required before sharing this information with another person(s). However, confidentiality may be breached where the Tutee is at risk of harm to themselves or others, or a legal issue is presented (i.e. a crime has been committed) As a rule, Tutors should not guarantee non-disclosure and make this stance clear to Tutees.

In the event that the Tutee makes a personal disclosure, or an area of concern becomes apparent, the Personal Tutor may wish to contact the Student Wellbeing Service webpages. Further information and guidance is offered for University staff on the '*What to do if...*' page: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/wellbeing/InformationforStaff/Whattodoif/>.

Please note: The University recognises that under SENDO, if a student discloses a disability or long term condition to any member of staff at any stage, the University is deemed to be aware of the student's disclosure. Therefore, all staff should be proactive and

encourage/provide opportunities for students to disclose. Staff should contact Disability Services for advice on effectively supporting students with disclosure. This should also include preparation for work placements or Erasmus programmes.

The Disability Support Code of Practice offers further information on Disclosure and Confidentiality relating to Disabilities and Long-term Conditions:

<https://home.gol.gub.ac.uk/University%20Documents/Staff%20Documents/Supporting%20Students/Disability%20Support%20Code%20Of%20Practice.pdf>