CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY
PERSONAL ACADEMIC TUTORING POLICY

1. Context
Personal tutoring has been identified by our students as a significant priority within the student experience provided by the University. Whilst NSS and USS feedback is considerably more positive than negative, in free text comments around academic support the main recurring themes are that: there is inequity among students in terms of the amount of support provided; variations in levels of support offered by different tutors; difficulty accessing staff when seeking support; and a need for more guidance on assignments. Where personal tutoring is mentioned, some student comments relate to students not knowing who their personal tutor is and/or never having met with their personal tutor.

Across the HE sector the contribution of a tutoring role has been closely linked to retention and success by a recent large-scale HEA project¹ which identified that active personal tutors are key to academic socialisation and a sense of belonging which were significant factors influencing students’ decisions to continue with their studies. The personal tutor² role has moved away from the ‘pastoral’ towards being an ‘academic advisor’ with a specific remit to provide “… regular contact with an academic about their academic support needs …. to give students appropriate support to help them identify the academic skills they should develop in order to improve their grades”.

It is also important that the Personal Academic Tutor initiates conversations with students around the development of CCCU’s Graduate Attributes and future plans regarding employment, career development or further study.

It is acknowledged that across the University there are some excellent examples of personal academic tutoring and where this occurs those staff will recognise much of what in contained within this policy document. This policy is not intended to change arrangements that are clearly working well but rather seeks to reinforce such good practice as well as requiring others to emulate it such that there is a consistently good experience for all students across the University.

2. The policy
a. Aims
The policy provides a basis for:
- Ensuring each student has contact with a specified academic tutor on a regular basis.
- Creating a professional space which is supportive of academic socialisation and personal development within an academic context
- Enabling students to make a successful transition into HE by ensuring that the first year experience constitutes a gradual orientation and induction process

² NUS Charters, one on Personal Tutoring and Academic Support.
• Enabling postgraduate students in the continuation of their studies at a higher level, especially those who are returning to HE study
• Supporting and monitoring the student’s experience, thus facilitating progression to further levels of study and subsequent employment.
• Enabling students to develop both generic and subject specific skills in context.
• Working with students to develop their capacity to use feedback effectively.
• Signposting the support available from professional centralised service providers (e.g. Academic Learning Development Advisors, Financial support, Counsellors, Student Mental Health practitioners etc.) and ensuring a seamless referral experience.
• Ensuring the role of Personal Academic Tutor is valued by the University and its students and resourced accordingly.

b. Principles
• The role is termed ‘Personal Academic I Tutor’ (called an PAT in this document)
• All students\(^3\) have an identifiable PAT on commencing a programme (Combined Honours students will have a PAT for each subject)
• PATs will provide regular scheduled appointments to meet with their tutees either individually or in groups; these will take place at least 3 times per year.
• It is recognised that different programmes will operationalize the policy differently but there is an expectation that there will be consistency in adherence to a minimum schedule of activities.
• PATs are recognised as central to the facilitation of the induction process, especially throughout the first year of undergraduate study but also for those entering postgraduate study.
• PATs should be programme-specific, ideally teaching their tutees early in the programme, and be familiar with the curriculum and its assessment strategy, and able to address the development of generic attributes and skills in context.
• Personal development tutorials will be embedded within the curriculum, as far as possible, linking the development of academic skills to the programme learning and assessment strategies at each level.
• PATs will be supported in facilitating students’ skills development, e.g. by Academic Learning Development Advisors and other centralised resources.
• PATs should be consistent throughout the student lifecycle wherever possible. It is acknowledged, however, that in some circumstances it may be appropriate to change a student’s PAT following Level 4 where a specialised First Year Experience (FYE) tutor operates. Following completion of a Foundation Year, students may be assigned a new PAT within their chosen subject area. In relation to postgraduate students programme teams should try to ensure consistency of support for progression.
• Digital tools are used to support personal development planning and communication.

c. Objectives
• All students entering the University on award-bearing programmes will have access to a PAT.

\(^3\) This includes those on collaborative programmes but excludes an imperative to provide a PAT for students on short courses.
• Timetabled appointments will be provided for tutees to meet and work with their PAT on an individual basis and/or in groups. Part time students will be on a pro-rata arrangement. For some programmes these will be fully integrated within the programme of study. These appointments will occur at least three times within an academic year.
• Students will recognise, value and engage with the PAT provision (this may include credit-bearing arrangements).
• Students’ social and cultural integration into the University will be enhanced.
• The process of personal development planning will be supported.
• Student engagement with the professional support services will be made more effective.
• PATs will provide feedback for programmes and the professional support services on issues affecting students during their studies.
• Students’ experiences of academic support will be more consistent and satisfaction will increase as evidenced in NSS data.
• Effective personal tutoring will make a valuable contribution to student retention and success.

d. The PAT role description
The Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) role is central to the student experience at CCCU, and to the development and maintenance of effective learning partnerships. It goes beyond the traditional pastoral personal tutor role in that it is proactive, developmental and situated within the delivery of academic curricula. The document uses the term PAT to reinforce the academic nature of the role, it is not intended to be prescriptive and other titles, such as Personal Tutor, may be used but the title should be consistent within each student programme of study, e.g. GMS programmes.

Personal academic tutoring should be regarded as a central responsibility of all lecturing staff, a key component of their academic role. Whilst individual programmes are best placed to decide how personal academic tutor services should be structured, there are a number of pre-requisites that every programme should provide.

It is expected that every student will be allocated a key named member of academic staff, from their programme of study who will:

i. Meet with the student upon entry and periodically thereafter throughout the programme of study (either individually or in groups). There should be at least 3 meetings during an academic year.
ii. Help foster the student’s sense of belonging through encouraging opportunities for social and cultural integration.
iii. Help the student reflect upon their expectations of University life and their academic and future goals.
iv. Support students in monitoring their engagement and academic performance within the programme. This would include encouraging students to review feedback from assignments and to plan for the acquisition of programme specific study skills which contribute to success.
v. Support the student in their personal development planning and acquisition of graduate/postgraduate skills with a focus on future employability.
vi. Ensure that, when required, students’ pastoral needs are met through effective referral to professional support services.
vii. Liaise regularly with the Programme Director and Programme Administrator regarding any emergent issues pertaining to their personal tutees.

3. Implementation

The key issues in respect of implementing the Personal Academic Tutoring system across the institution will include the following:

- Current personal tutoring arrangements will need to be reviewed at Faculty level to provide strategic direction and ensure parity across the institution. Faculty Directors of Learning and Teaching will monitor practice and act to moderate parity between departments, programmes and across faculties.
- Personal tutoring arrangements will need to be reinforced within departments and programmes. Induction arrangements for each level of study will need to establish effective tutor/tutee relationships, through ensuring that tutees understand the tutoring system and the PAT role.
- The major issue of staff workload will be addressed by resourcing the PAT role. Departments/programmes will need to identify a model for how PAT time will be resourced to avoid staff overload, e.g. through a proportion of taught curriculum time to provide allocated responsibility for a manageable group of students.
- The University will communicate a clear rationale for, and a commitment to the PAT scheme e.g. through promoting the key role that PATs play in helping students settle into their studies, stay with the University and succeed on their programmes of study.
- Raising the profile of PAT for students to encourage engagement, e.g. through it being credit bearing and having Students’ Union involvement.
- There will be a recognition of the boundaries to the role and an appreciation that, at an operational level, professional services staff will be better able and better placed to meet some of the needs that students may have.
- Training, development and support for the tutoring role will be provided centrally but adapted and implemented through Faculty professional development arrangements to enable Personal Academic Tutors to best meet the demands of the role.
- Heads of School will take responsibility for ensuring that all students receive a tutoring experience that meets the core expectations by establishing the responsibilities and mechanisms for application, monitoring and annual review of the operation of the Policy at local level, e.g. Programme Directors, Faculty Directors of Learning and Teaching and Faculty Directors of Quality.
- Programmes will monitor the outcomes of the tutoring process and review staff/student feedback, particularly within Annual Programme and Periodic Review processes.
- PATs should keep a record of meetings with their students.
- Students should be allowed to change to another PAT but this needs to be recorded.
- Evaluation of progress and effectiveness of the policy will draw on a variety of evaluative data, including the UK Engagement Survey, the National Student Survey, and the work of Student Representatives.

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