

Personal Tutors Policy

Introduction

1. Birkbeck is committed to ensuring that students are provided with effective and appropriate support during their studies; this includes providing support with a personal tutor.
2. Provision of effective personal and pastoral support can make an important contribution to the overall experience of individual students. High quality support in addition to normal academic contact through lectures, seminars and other classroom-based activities can improve retention, particularly in the early stages of study.
3. This Policy outlines the College's approach to personal tutoring. It will identify the responsibilities of departments and schools in the provision of personal tutoring and of personal tutors towards their students. It will also outline the responsibilities of students in working with their personal tutors.
4. This Policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree students.

Principles

5. The following are the general principles of the College's provision of personal tutors:
 - a) Each enrolled student on a taught degree at Birkbeck should have a named personal tutor to provide general guidance on academic and non-academic issues and problems, and to suggest other sources of help. The primary role of the personal tutor is to provide general advice and pastoral support. If students have questions about a specific module (e.g. regarding a deadline for a specific essay) they should talk to the lecturer on that module in the first instance.
 - b) Departments are responsible for allocating personal tutors and notifying students before the commencement of the student's programme of study. Personal tutor's contact details should be available on the 'My Birkbeck' student profile under the tab 'study support'.
 - c) Personal tutors should be available to meet their students as requested provided such requests are reasonable. Students should feel free to initiate contact with their personal tutors as required.
 - d) Personal tutors should invite new tutees to meet with them (either individually or as a group) in the first term of each academic year.
 - e) Personal tutors should keep records of instances of tutorial contact.
 - f) Students should contact their department administrator if they have difficulty in making contact with their personal tutor.

Responsibilities of the Personal Tutor

6. Core responsibilities of a personal tutor are to:
 - Invite new tutees to meet (either individually or as a group) in the first term and invite all tutees to meet at least once annually.
 - Provide a personal contact for the student during the academic year.
 - Provide advice, support and general guidance on academic issues.
 - Recognise when the assistance required is beyond the competence or responsibility of the personal tutor and, in consultation with the student, refer the student to specialist academic or pastoral support services within the College or outside the College.

- Support students in their understanding of agreed College Regulations, Policies and Frameworks.
- Facilitate liaison between the student and other student support services within the College.
- Help students to progress through their academic journey, including by signposting available study skills resources and training.
- Provide students with the opportunity to review and reflect upon their progress.
- Offer guidance in making choices over modules, options, postgraduate/ further study and career opportunities.
- Where appropriate, providing an academic reference for the student.

Responsibilities of the Student

7. Core responsibilities of the student are:

- Maintaining contact with their personal tutor.
- Ensuring that contact details on their student profiles are maintained with current information, and emails are checked regularly for communications from personal tutors.
- Seeking help and advice about the content of modules from the module academic lead, and approaching their personal tutor about pastoral, personal or more generic issues.
- Being an active participant in student and personal tutor discussions.
- Notifying their personal tutor promptly if they are having any problems, such as academic, health or personal, that are affecting their academic performance.
- Informing departmental administrators if they do not get a response from their personal tutors in a timely manner.

Departmental / School Responsibilities

8. Core responsibilities of the department and/or school are:

- Publishing to students the details of their allocated personal tutor and ensuring that this information is provided on the 'My Birkbeck' student profile under the tab 'study support'.
- Ensuring that support provision and the personal tutor role are made available and students clearly directed to the Personal Tutor Policy.
- Explaining to students during induction how they can find out who their personal tutor is and how to make contact with them along with information about the role of personal tutors.
- Where appropriate, consider requests for reallocation of a named personal tutor for cases where student and personal tutor do not work well together.

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- Putting in place procedures to ensure that students are assigned a new tutor where personal tutors are unavailable for an extended period due to illness, leave etc.
- Support for personal tutoring should be given via appropriate departmental or school channels.

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