Personal Tutoring Policy (2013)

1. Introduction

Students can face many difficulties of an academic and/or personal nature during their programmes of study and may also have periods of uncertainty where they doubt their abilities to be successful on their programmes of study. Personal tutoring helps students to adjust to University life and to achieve their goals.

This Personal Tutoring Policy is to be implemented in respect of all students where the University has responsibility for the outcome i.e., on-campus students, University of Bolton students studying at franchised partners, and those with validation arrangements where the University counts the student numbers (UK and overseas). The policy replaces the University's policy on personal tutoring dated 22 June, 2009. The updating has been due to the:

- introduction of the University of Bolton Undergraduate Curriculum Framework (2011) document and the implementation of its curriculum requirements;
- University’s Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, Delivering for Student Success (2012 – 2017);
- introduction of the Bolton Student Charter (2013), the University of Bolton Learning Partnership Statement (2013) and the NUS Charter on personal tutoring;
- organisational restructure of the University.

The University is committed to personal tutoring for all of its students, and has expressed its continued commitment through: the University of Bolton Undergraduate Curriculum Framework (2011), hereafter referred to as the UBUC Framework (2011); the University’s Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2012-17), hereafter referred to as the LTA Strategy (2012-2017); the Bolton Student Charter (2013), and the University of Bolton Learning Partnership Statement (2013).

One of the objectives of the UBUC Framework (2011) was to integrate the personal tutoring scheme with personal development planning (PDP) for students, and embed it within accredited modules. The integration of personal tutoring into the curriculum was in response to the experience of, and feedback on, the implementation of the personal tutoring framework (2010-11), and to recognise the contact time in the KIS. To this end, the UBUC Framework (2011) specifically stipulated that:

- each programme will have a personal tutoring strand which will be timetabled and accredited within modules to align with the Personal Tutoring Strategy and this will be one module per trimester.
- the personal tutoring scheme will be integrated with a revised University PDP scheme to ensure that all students leave with an electronic record of their academic and personal development learning, together with awards/accreditation achieved, which will ultimately be contained in the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) when it is introduced.

Furthermore, the UBUC Framework (2011) identifies a core curriculum which incorporates information/study skills (including research methods), employability and professional development, and Bolton values (which includes ethical responsibility). The UBUC Framework (2011) also states that there is an expectation that these strands can be explicitly identified, quantified, and assessed as part of the Bolton Curriculum.
The UBUC Framework (2011) was (in the first instance) implemented in the University as part of the Undergraduate Curriculum Review which took place in 2011-12 and therefore, for Undergraduate programmes within the remit of the Curriculum Review, elements of personal tutoring have been embedded into the accredited academic modules where appropriate. Hence, some areas that broadly came under personal tutoring (e.g., induction activities, study skills, personal development planning, employability skills, and preparing students for the world of work and progression) are now firmly embedded in accredited modules.

The LTA Strategy (2012-17) seeks to transform and enhance the learning and teaching environment by focusing on student success and student engagement. One of the key outcomes of the LTA Strategy (2012-17) is stated as being a revised personal tutoring framework that enhances the personal tutor’s role in supporting students at risk, the personal development planning process for students, and student engagement and feedback events. Supporting students at risk of academic failure or withdrawal is paramount in improving student retention and an important part of this revised Personal Tutoring Policy.

The Bolton Student Charter (2013) states that the University undertakes to provide a high standard of support for students. Sitting alongside the Charter is the University of Bolton Learning Partnership Statement (2013) which highlights the expectation that the arrangements for the academic and personal support of students will be documented and operationalised.

It is clear from the above that, at the University of Bolton, personal tutoring is not an optional activity, but a compulsory one. It is embedded as a strand running through Undergraduate programmes falling within the remit of the Curriculum Review. Along with other student support mechanisms, the personal tutoring function is an important aspect of the provision of support for students throughout their programmes of study and as they progress to future study and employment. It has a key role to play in the progression and retention of students.

Although some of the discussions above have focussed on undergraduate students, the University is committed to the provision of personal tutoring for all of the University’s students. Whilst there needs to be a degree of consistency in the approach to personal tutoring across the University’s Academic Groups and Off-Campus Division there is a recognition that, due to the diversity of the student body and University programmes, there also needs to be flexibility to allow for students’ needs to be met in the context of their programmes of study and other relevant factors (e.g., professional body requirements).

In many cases, student difficulties arise through a combination of academic and personal matters, consequently, it is recognised that an effective system may involve combining the roles of academic guidance and personal tutor functions. All academic staff have a pastoral responsibility for students in the reactive sense that staff should be available to discuss problems with students as the need arises. The personal tutor role, however, is a proactive one. Further support of a more specialist nature, beyond that envisaged of a personal tutor, will be provided by a variety of services maintained centrally by the University (and partner institutions where appropriate) and through the University of Bolton Students’ Union (UBSU). Personal tutors, however, play a key role in the University’s personal tutoring system.

2. Policy Statement

For University of Bolton students, personal tutoring aims to:

- help with the socialisation and integration of students into higher education, the University and/or partner institutions and their programmes of study;
- support students with their academic and personal development (including PDP);
- give students access to pastoral care;
- ensure the effective monitoring of students’ progress and attendance, the identification of students who may be at risk of academic failure or withdrawal and the provision of support for students at risk;
• provide all students with access to a schedule of personal tutoring meetings/sessions (group and/or individual) appropriate to their programmes of study making use of technology where appropriate.

For University of Bolton students, personal tutoring is a compulsory activity and the provision of personal tutoring will be tailored to the needs of the students and their programmes of study. All University of Bolton students (both on and off-campus) will have a designated personal tutor – if a personal tutor is absent long term, students will be provided with a new personal tutor. If a personal tutor is absent short term, students will be provided with a person to approach in lieu of the personal tutor.

The role of the personal tutor is to:

1. maintain academic oversight of tutees’ progress and help them to achieve their potential – this involves actively monitoring tutees’ progress (liaising with module tutors, programme leaders, student services etc.);
2. periodically check if tutees who have declared a disability feel that their support needs are being met, and liaise with the University/partner institution’s disability service and appropriate other staff as needed;
3. monitor tutees attendance, identify and support tutees who are at risk of failure or withdrawal, and make referrals and/or signpost tutees to the University/partner institution’s support team if necessary;
4. provide pastoral care for tutees, and help them to access information and support at the University/partner institutions as appropriate;
5. devise, publicise, and deliver a planned schedule of personal tutoring meetings/sessions which meets the needs of his/her tutees within the context of their programmes of study, and evaluate its effectiveness;
6. maintain appropriate personal tutoring records including documenting attendance at personal tutorial meetings/sessions which the personal tutor has held with his/her tutees.

Regarding the planned schedule of personal tutoring meetings/sessions, the following will normally be the minimum number provided by the personal tutor:

- full-time undergraduate students taking a one-year programme (e.g., a top-up degree): five over the length of the programme;
- full-time undergraduate students taking a two-year programme: five in year 1 and five in year 2;
- full-time undergraduate students taking a three-year programme: five in year 1, four in year 2, and five in year 3;
- full-time undergraduate students taking a four-year programme: five in year 1, four in year 2, four in year 3, and five in year 4;
- part-time undergraduate students, full-time or part-time postgraduate students: three per year;
- students on short CPD programmes: two over the length of the programme.

Meeting/sessions can be group and/or individual, and can be face-to-face and/or virtual.

Information on the content and positioning of meetings/sessions within the academic calendar can be found in the University’s Personal Tutoring Strategy (2013) and the Personal Tutoring Staff Handbook (2013).

As well as having scheduled tutorial meetings/sessions, Personal tutors will let students know when they are available for ad-hoc one-to-one tutorials.
Local Personal Tutoring Plans

Allowing for a diverse student body and varied programmes within each Academic Group and the Off-Campus Division, it is essential that each Academic Group and the Off-Campus Division makes a clear statement of how it will meet its obligations to students under the Personal Tutoring Strategy through the provision of a local Personal Tutoring Plan. This plan must clearly show how the Academic Group/Off-Campus Division will meet the strategic aims outlined in the Personal Tutoring Strategy and will be approved and reviewed annually by the Quality, Learning and Teaching Standing Panel for the Academic Group/Off-Campus Division.

In particular the local Personal Tutoring Plan should ensure the following:

- each student has an identified personal tutor at the outset of his/her programme of study and the personal tutor’s name and contact details are communicated to the student (any changes thereafter will be conveyed to the student);
- each student’s personal tutor is identified in the appropriate SITS record;
- the personal tutoring process within each Academic Group and the Off-Campus Division should follow the Personal Tutoring Strategy;
- the allocation of responsibility for the personal tutoring functions for each programme (e.g., through course leader, year tutor, pathway leader, module tutors, personal tutors) together with the workload allowance given (for staff employed by the University, the workload allowance will be in accordance with the University’s workload model);
- the availability of any Academic Group-based / Off-Campus Division-based / partner institution-based support systems to which students may be referred by personal tutors is specified.

Plans for off-campus programmes that sit within an Academic Group at the University, will be incorporated into the Academic Group’s local Personal Tutoring Plan. Plans for off-campus programmes that do not sit within an Academic Group at the University, will be the responsibility of the University’s Off-Campus Division.

3. Equality Impact Assessment

The University of Bolton is committed to the promotion of equality, diversity and a supportive environment for all members of it’s community. The commitment to equality and diversity means that this policy has been screened in relation to the use of plain English, the promotion of the positive duty in relation to race, gender and disability and avoidance of discrimination to other equality groups related to age, sexual orientation, religion or belief or gender reassignment.

4. Other Related Policies and Documents

Related University polices and documents are:

- Personal Tutoring Strategy (2013)
- Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2012 – 2017);
- Employability Strategy (2012-14);
- Student Attendance Policy (2013);
- Bolton Student Charter (2013);
- The University of Bolton Learning Partnership Statement (2013);
5. Monitoring and Review

The policy is owned by the Standards and Enhancement Office (SEO). It will be implemented by Academic Group Leaders and academic staff who will seek approval for their local Personal Tutoring Plans from the Quality, Learning and Teaching Standing Panel for the Academic Group each year. It will also be implemented by the Off-Campus Division. As mentioned above, local Personal Tutoring Plans for Off-Campus programmes that do not sit within an Academic Group at the University will be the responsibility of the University’s Off-Campus Division; their approval will be sought from the Quality, Learning and Teaching Standing Panel for the Off-Campus Division each year. Thus the Quality, Learning and Teaching Standing Panels will have a monitoring role.

The policy will be reviewed every twelve months.

6. Dissemination of, and Access to, the Policy

The policy relates to the staff of the University and its partner institutions and will be made available to them via the University’s Learning, Teaching and Assessment website, the SEO website, the University’s staff bulletin and staff email as appropriate. Initial introduction, or changes, to the policy will be disseminated via all staff communications such as the staff bulletin and email. Academic Group / Off-Campus Division staff meetings and staff development sessions will also be used to promote awareness. The Off-Campus Division is responsible for dissemination of the policy to partner institutions.

This policy, once approved, will be held electronically on the University’s SEO and LTA webpages and the staff SharePoint.
# Personal Tutoring Policy

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<tr>
<td>Version Number</td>
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Partners |
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| Approving Committee/Board | SEC / Senate |
| Date approved | SEC Ist Oct. 2013 |
| Effective from | Date of Senate approval |
| Dissemination method (e.g. website) | Website, email, SharePoint, staff bulletin |
| Review Frequency | 12 months |
| Reviewing Committee | SEC |
| Consultation | Academic Group Leaders  
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| Document History | This document replaces the Personal Tutoring Policy (2009) developed by Andy Graham |