Personal Tutoring

a defining thread in the Academic role

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Context for the Research

• Aimed at informing university policy on retention and transition
• And producing guidance materials for staff and students
• focussed on support for Level 4 students – transition into Higher Education.
Methodology

• Commenced November 2011
• Completing October 2012
• Focus groups with staff on each campus
  (involving 31 academics from all 8 schools)
• Focus groups with students on each campus
  (involving 16 students from 6 schools)
• On-line questionnaire for staff
  (88 respondents from all 8 schools)
• Follow-up interviews with students
  (ten)
• Workshops with staff (TFs and CMS)
Which school are you in?
Which school are you in?

How many first year tutees do you have?
Which school are you in?

How many first year tutees do you have?

How often do you see your first year tutees?
Meet them individually or in groups?
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Do you get timetable/workload recognition for PTing?
Meet them individually or in groups?

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What do you think a PT role should be?
What students and staff want in/from personal tutoring

Both staff and students

• Positive about mix of 1:1 and group tutorials

• Positive about
  ▪ personal & social support
  ▪ academic activity
Personal relationship, encouragement and social context

Students connecting in small groups – formed early – help maintain relationships

Genuinely care about the welfare of students

Given space to complain without trying to explain, excuse, justify...

empathising with students

Sociable. Even joins us for coffee if she comes across us in canteen

Made feel less isolated – group tutorial

Friendly and approachable

staff comments

students’ comments
Personal relationship, encouragement and social context

Students connecting in small groups – formed early – help maintain relationships

Structured social interaction

Given space to complain without trying to explain, excuse, justify...

Getting to know the student as soon as possible

Genuinely care about the welfare of students

Assign tutors before arrival

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Sociable. Even joins us for coffee if she comes across us in canteen

Staff comments

students’ comments

Friendly and approachable

Tutor personal input is inspiring

Made feel less isolated – group tutorial

Encouraging and motivating
Personal relationship, encouragement and social context

Students connecting in small groups – formed early – help maintain relationships

Close contact between staff and students

Genuinely care about the welfare of students

Assign tutors before arrival

Structured social interaction

Help shy / less sociable students to open up

Given space to complain without trying to explain, excuse, justify…

Like a father but not my father

Getting to know the student as soon as possible

Sociable. Even joins us for coffee if she comes across us in canteen

Encouraging and motivating

Tutor personal input is inspiring

Made feel less isolated – group tutorial

Friendly and approachable

Staff comments

Students’ comments
Availability. Tailored support and guidance.

Timetabled personal tutorial groups

Support all the way through the studies.

Lunch-time surgeries
Availability. Tailored support and guidance.

- Timetabled personal tutorial groups
- Support all the way through the studies.
- Planned (dates etc) in advance for 3rd year
- Good information resource
- Lunch-time surgeries
- A structured approach to guide the reluctant
- Willingness to discuss personal issues that impact on course (not universal)
Availability. Tailored support and guidance.

- Timetabled personal tutorial groups
- Support all the way through the studies.
- Planned (dates etc) in advance for 3rd year
- able to visit tutor if door open without appointment
- Good information resource
- Tailored to your needs
- 1 staff for small group (15-30) and they remain with them for all 3 years
- Lunch-time surgeries
- A structured approach to guide the reluctant
- Willingness to discuss personal issues that impact on course (not universal)
- (By the end of year 1) I know exactly what to do
Support for learning

Plagiarism – survival

Gives ability to do what you can’t do in class

Ensure their smooth progression through the course
Support for learning

Plagiarism – survival

Act as academic mentor

Ease students into study

Ensure their smooth progression through the course

Gives ability to do what you can’t do in class

Formative feedback on essay writing skills (not universal)
Support for learning

- Rescue / guide through Banner and other systems
- Act as academic mentor
- Ease students into study
- Provide students with an academic contact for discussions and guidance about any aspect of their studies (or personal life that is affecting their studies)
- Plagiarism – survival
- Create enthusiasm for the subject
- Gives ability to do what you can’t do in class
- Mostly academic, Good resources. Eg journal articles
- Facilitating feedback – helped explain Plagiarism – survival
- Gave time management guidance
- Guidance on finance, moodle, course, etc
- Ensure their smooth progression through the course
- Formative feedback on essay writing skills (not universal)
- Rescue / survival – academic mentor
- Provide students with an academic contact for discussions and guidance about any aspect of their studies (or personal life that is affecting their studies)
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Career / PDP

Career advice should come from a personal tutor.

Personal and professional development
Career / PDP

- Encourage participation in university life
- Personal and professional development
- Continued contact post-graduation eg. refs.
- Career advice should come from personal tutor
Career / PDP

- Focus on employability
- Encourage participation in university life
- PDP - as part of course activities
- Personal and professional development
- Make the students feel that someone is monitoring their progress
- Continued contact post-graduation eg. refs.
- Career advice should come from personal tutor
- Developmental – develop students maturity
- Willingness to provide references. Career guidance.
Students’ narratives

Positive and negative experiences of personal tutoring from two first year, mature students.

Student A – weekly, timetabled, 2-3 hour personal tutor group including orientation activities, study skills, social activities, referring on to support services,

“She specifically wanted people to always sit next to someone else... kind of come out of our comfort zones...and then we will get to know each other”
Students’ narratives

encourages the group to come together, learn from one another, takes these barriers down

When you email her she writes back ... She’ll make some time.... She’s doing things beyond the schedule

She’s like a one stop shop

She’s constantly like encouraging every one of the students to continue...

Its confidence that we have someone to approach, if anything happens... You always know who to go to

She’s trying to “culture” us as well, get us to have a wider perspective
Students’ narratives

Student B

Contact with personal tutor(s) only on her own initiative; lack of PT reliability in keeping appointments, communication, pdp role; inappropriate locations; lack of support; follow-up missing in cases needing action
Students’ narratives

He told me what he can’t support but he didn’t tell me what he can support. I haven’t been told what he can support me for.

You don’t expect answering every question, but ... if they couldn’t, should direct you, should be supportive, helpful,

Can’t say yes I’ll be a personal tutor and promise to do things, and when I ask, say no you haven’t had the time.....

Sometimes you need just someone to guide you, tell you what’s right or wrong.

I draw a line under my experience as a student and just focus on the academic

Should I go again and ask for another PT – how can there be a guarantee that it would be a good one?
Shared action points

School-wide (or wider) consistency in approach:

- All students to have a personal tutor
- All students to have a personal tutor include direct entrants, international students, combined student, post_grads
- (appropriately) timetabled 1:1 and (small) group
- Clear communication and mutual respect
- Formal clarification of roles and expectations for all including non-optionality
- Senior tutor role for all Schools

Suitable staff to be tutors

- Skills, ability and interest
- Academics to teach their tutees
- Continuity across all 3 years

Students to have input:

- Choice of tutor
- Nature/content /agenda of tutorials

Separation of personal tutoring from PDP and from assessment
Students’ action points

- Availability of tutors:
  - advertised office hours
  - Appropriate/flexible timetabling

Staff action points

- Resources and recognition
  - Training
  - Systems – eg. Rooming & Banner tagging
  - Admin support
  - Workload / Time allocation – clarify and increase
  - Reward

- Improve allocation and first contact
Personal Tutoring

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