

LEARNING AND TEACHING SUPPORT HANDBOOK

Chapter 8 - Academic Tutoring: Code of Good Practice

1. Introduction

1. This Code outlines the minimum requirements for Academic Tutors (also known as Personal Tutors) and Senior Tutors. It should be read in conjunction with the relevant Tutor Guide produced annually by the Academic Development and Skills team. Please also see the Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study, Mitigation, and Academic Conduct and Practice procedures. Please also see the Academic Tutoring guide in the [EduExe Toolkit](#).

2. Purpose of Academic-led Tutoring Provision

- 2.1 The intention of academic-led tutoring provision is to ensure that each student is assigned a named academic contact within the department who they can talk to about their academic and professional development. This should include conversations around the themes of transition, progress, and realising ambition.
- 2.2 Every student on a taught programme of study will have an Academic Tutor (terminology may vary depending on the discipline). Support for the academic development and welfare of postgraduate research students is covered by the Code of Practice – Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students.
- 2.3 Although the role of Academic Tutor should be distinguished from that of module tutors on the programme of study, it is likely that an Academic Tutor will also be one of the student's programme tutors. The role of Academic Tutor involves providing academic advice and support to the student across the programme of study and reviewing wider academic progress. Their role extends to providing referral guidance to students to sources of specialist support such as Pastoral Mentors (e.g. for academic matters; emotional health and wellbeing issues; academic and language skills support; careers and professional advice etc).
- 2.4 The Academic Tutor is a student's first port of call in matters relating to students' academic progress, employability and career plans. The Academic Tutor is not an expert in terms of support and interventions but will know about support services that are available to students to help them engage with the Students' Guild and Students'

Union, and to access more specialist help from other services on the relevant campus and in the wider community where relevant. Academic Tutors may also refer students to a Pastoral Mentor for more complex, time-sensitive, or confidential issues.

3. Models of Academic Tutoring

- 3.1 Each Department should select from one or more agreed academic tutoring models as best supports their students.
- 3.2 Out of Curriculum model where taught students are offered at least three contact points per year) with their Academic Tutor, delivered through individual or group meetings. These meetings should take place near to the start of each term and include as a minimum a discussion of academic attainment from the previous year/term, academic expectations and ambition for the term ahead, any additional study or pastoral support needs identified by the student or academic tutor, clarity on how to contact their Academic Tutor during the term and a reminder of other support services available including the role of, and how to contact their Pastoral Mentor.
- 3.3 Embedded in Curriculum model where students are taught by their Academic Tutor as part of a core module, as well as receiving at least three contact points of dedicated academic advice as outlined in the out of curriculum model.
- 3.4 Extended Tutoring Model where students attend a series of timetabled one hour group sessions focused on academic, personal and professional development in addition to their core curriculum. Sessions must cover the core items outlined in the out of curriculum model.

4. Responsibilities of Academic Tutors

- 4.1 Academic Tutors must offer scheduled meetings per year to students in line with the departmental model for academic tutoring. These meetings can be academic group tutorials, however students must also be provided with the opportunity to book individual one-to-one appointments, to discuss confidential matters. In addition, an Academic Tutor may request a Pastoral Mentor contact a student to offer a one-to-one meeting where an intervention is required e.g. unsatisfactory progress or poor attendance or welfare concerns. Academic Tutors must provide a structured

curriculum, in line with the requirements of the department (see 6.1), to the programme of tutorials, to support the academic success and graduate outcomes of the student.

- 4.2 Academic Tutors must endeavour to ensure that a one-to-one meeting with new undergraduate student tutees is offered in their first two weeks of study regardless of the departmental model for academic tutoring.
- 4.3 Tutorial meetings may take the form of structured group meetings or one-to-one meetings as appropriate to the departmental model for academic tutoring and depending on the purpose of the tutorial. These meetings can be held in person, over the telephone or online, to be as flexible as necessary to meet the needs of the students.
- 4.4 Academic Tutors should also set aside designated time each week during term-time to be available to see tutees. These arrangements should be clearly communicated to students at the start of the academic year. Individual tutorial hours are not necessarily intended to be in addition to office hours, but to more clearly indicate the times that tutors are available to tutees for individual tutor meetings where needed.
- 4.5 Departments, in coordination with Academic Tutors, should inform students of the structure and purpose of their chosen academic tutoring model and of any preparations that the student should complete in advance of a tutorial. This may include providing, or signposting to, any learning resources which may usefully accompany the tutorials. Tutorials should be scheduled at appropriate times during the year to review progress and to provide advice and guidance as necessary, and linked to the University's three themes: transition, progress and realising ambition.
- 4.6 A record should be kept by the Academic Tutor of each meeting and any follow-up actions agreed. As a minimum this should record the student's name, the date and time of the meeting, the location, what was discussed and agreed actions. This may take the form of a follow-up email with the student outlining the details of the meeting or else captured in a secure case management store such as OneDrive or SharePoint.
- 4.7 Academic Tutors will be familiar with the University's guidance on confidentiality and data protection. Where a student raises matters in confidence, this confidence must be respected, unless there is a risk of harm to the student or others. The student should be strongly advised to seek any further support as appropriate, for example seeking the student's permission to refer them to a Pastoral Mentor.

- 4.8 Academic Tutors should support tutees in considering their academic success and graduate employment outcomes, through the three themes: transition, progress and realising ambition, and help them to develop strategies to achieve these.
- 4.9 Where an Academic Tutor is concerned that a student is at risk of immediate harm or of harming others, they must explain to the student that they have a duty to report it. The Academic Tutor should then contact their Senior Tutor, line manager, Pastoral Mentor and Welfare Consultants via an Urgent Welfare Concern Form. Academic Tutors must be informed of the actions they need to take, should a student be at serious risk of harm, or of harming others. In an emergency, any staff member encountering a student in immediate distress is expected to adhere to the following:
- In Exeter, dial 01392 722222 (internal x2222) for Estate Patrol.
 - In Cornwall, dial 01326 255875 (internal 5875) for Campus security.
 - 01326 254444 (internal 4444) for emergency first aid.
 - And/or contact emergency services directly by dialling 999.
 - If a student discloses harm in the past and are not at immediate threat, this can remain confidential.

5. Responsibilities of students

- 5.1 Students are regarded as active partners in their learning and development at the University, and a degree of professionalism is expected from them. It is therefore expected that students will attend all scheduled meetings requested by Academic Tutors, or agree an alternative time as convenient. Students should be prepared for tutorial discussions and respond to requests for information as required by the Department.
- 5.2 Students should be encouraged to take notes to record the details of each meeting and any follow-up actions agreed. These notes should be uploaded to an appropriate and secure shared space for viewing by both the student and the Academic Tutor for reference in future meetings.
- 5.3 Students are also encouraged to be proactive in identifying and accessing any relevant skills training offered by, the Department, the Faculty (or delegated school) or the University, as appropriate and to take note of, and respond to, feedback and guidance from tutors.

- 5.4 Where a student's personal or other circumstances are impacting on their academic progress, it is expected that they will inform their Academic Tutor who can discuss options for support, advice and guidance.
- 5.5 Students should inform Student Records of any changes in address or similar personal details by logging into the [MyExeter](#) App to amend contact details.
- 5.6 Students should check their University email at least once per day for messages from the Academic Tutor and other members of staff.

6. Responsibilities of the Department or Partner Institution

- 6.1 The Department (or Partner Institution) should make available to students and staff clear information concerning the provision of Academic Tutoring and support for students' academic development within the Department. Departments must develop a structured tutorial curriculum for use by Academic Tutors aligned to their chosen model for academic tutoring (outlined in section 3.1-3.4) in order to provide a consistent tutorial format across the department, underpinned by the three themes of transition, progression, and realizing ambition. The structure must be made available to students. Once a department has developed and agreed their tutorial structure, the structure should be reported to the Academic Development Team for curation. The three core tutorials delivered each academic year in all models should cover the following:
 - 6.1.1 Welcome/welcome back, discussion of aspirations and expectations for the academic year, discussion of prior attainment (for returning students), explaining the tutorial model adopted and how to access other types of support e.g. pastoral mentors)
 - 6.1.2 Discussion of term 1 attainment, progress/performance against expectations and aspirations. Reiteration of support available.
 - 6.1.3 Preparation for graduation/next academic year.
- 6.2 The Department should be mindful of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy when allocating academic staff, and considering any requests from students to change their Academic Tutor.
- 6.3 It is recognised administrators and technicians often provide a listening ear for students outside the tutorial framework. It is therefore important that Departments/Partner Institutions ensure that they, too, are aware of this Code.

- 6.4 The Department must ensure that an appropriate time allocation is made for Academic Tutor and Senior Tutor duties when considering workload models.
- 6.5 The Department must ensure minimum levels of Pastoral Mentor support is maintained alongside Academic Tutors. The baseline for this will be established at the end of the Student Academic Support Project (December 2025) and reviewed by the Student Support Assurance Group twice annually (September/October and February/March) with the view to making recommendations to Departments where levels of support do not appear to be appropriately aligned with student FTE.
- 6.6 The Department must ensure that Pastoral Mentors are sufficiently trained with appropriate University systems access. Mental Health First Aider Level 3, Suicide Awareness training and DBS Specialist Mentor/ Study Skills Tutor checks should also be undertaken as soon as possible when a Pastoral Mentor starts in post. In addition, departments must ensure that Pastoral Mentors are provided with an appropriate confidential and easily accessible office space in which to conduct pastoral duties.

For arrangements at partner institutions, only Sections 6.1-6.4 apply unless stated otherwise in the partnership agreement.

7 Senior Tutor

- 7.1 Each Faculty (or delegated school) should have at least one Senior Tutor or equivalent key contact, who can provide induction guidance, support and resources to Academic Tutors including, where appropriate, schedules, suggested agendas and checklists to maximise consistency in the student experience of tutoring.
- 7.2 The Senior Tutor should be able to signpost Academic Tutors to additional sources of support and guidance (for example, Pastoral Mentors) in the management of more complex cases such as those involving disciplinary and [Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study](#). The Senior Tutor will work closely with wellbeing service and pastoral mentors to oversee more complex and difficult cases where expertise is required. The Senior Tutor is not a source of professional expertise such as that of a counsellor.
- 7.3 Senior Tutors are expected to liaise and share practice with colleagues in similar roles across the University through participation in the Senior Tutor Forum, facilitated by a central coordinator in Academic Development. Senior Tutors may attend SSLCs where appropriate to provide updates on Academic Tutoring. Senior Tutors are expected to provide such updates to Faculty (or delegated school) Education Strategy Meetings.

8 Pastoral Mentor

- 8.1 Pastoral Mentors are responsible for calling a tutorial meeting where there are reports of any cause for concern, such as unsatisfactory attendance, engagement and/or progress, or in the event of health and wellbeing concerns.
- 8.2 Pastoral Mentors should make their available office hours and bookable appointment times clearly visible to staff and students. In addition, Pastoral Mentors should clearly communicate the means by which students can be referred to their services.
- 8.3 In line with data protection, Pastoral Mentors should not be expected to share details of student cases with colleagues, except when a student has disclosed that there is a risk of harm to themselves or others at which point Pastoral Mentors will escalate the case to the Student Welfare team. Where there is a long-term or serious wellbeing concern, Pastoral Mentors should liaise with Education Welfare Advisers on appropriate course of action whilst maintaining confidentiality. In instances where there is no sensitive wellbeing concern, with a students' permission, a Pastoral Mentor may wish to raise a case with an appropriate academic staff member (i.e. Senior Tutor, Module Lead, or Academic Tutor) for guidance on departmental support options (such as in academic cases relating to mitigation or unsatisfactory progress etc.).

9 Allocation of Academic Tutors

- 9.1 Faculties (or delegated schools), and associated Hubs, are responsible for allocating an Academic Tutor to all taught students and recording these in the student record system.
- 9.2 Faculties (or delegated schools) and associated Hubs should also provide clear, transparent information to students on how to change their Academic Tutor, without the need for students to give a reason for their request.
- 9.3 Unless there is a specific need to provide two tutors, Combined Honours students, and FCH students, should be allocated only one Academic Tutor. However, there should also be a named contact in the other Faculty (or delegated school) where this applies, to provide specialist guidance in relation to module choice and any other issues arising that are related to the other Faculty (or delegated school). In the case of such students, Academic Tutors may need to liaise with the named contact in the tutee's other Faculty (or delegated school) from time to time.

10 Support for Academic Tutors

- 10.1 Faculties (or delegated schools), and associated Hubs, must ensure that staff allocated to undertake academic tutoring are properly trained and aware of the relevant learning and development opportunities available to them, including the University's [Academic Tutoring](#) introductory course, additional workshops, [ELE resources](#), [Academic Tutor Resources](#), the [Educator Development Team webpage](#) and resources on the University [Education development pages](#).
- 10.2 Faculties (or delegated schools), and associated Hubs, must ensure that Academic Tutors and students are aware of the University's [Health Wellbeing and Support for Study](#) procedure and to the information on Mitigation in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual.
- 10.3 Faculties (or delegated schools), and associated Hubs, must also provide Academic Tutors with basic information about their tutees at the outset of the programme and ensure access to, or ability to receive information about their tutees' academic progress.
- 10.4 Academic Tutors should be prepared to write a reference for the tutee unless alternative provision is made by a Faculty (or delegated school) employability officer or other individual who knows the tutee.

11 Monitoring and enhancement

- 11.1 Faculties (or delegated schools) and associated Hubs should monitor students' attendance at scheduled tutorials and have in place standard procedures for following up students who fail to attend such pre-arranged meetings. This may include reach-out via Pastoral Mentors.
- 11.2 Faculties (or delegated schools) should also monitor Academic Tutoring through reviewing the results of University surveys, as well as through other Faculty (or delegated school) monitoring and evaluation processes, as appropriate. Academic Tutoring should be a standing item on the agenda for Student Voice Partnerships.
- 11.3 At University level, the effectiveness of academic personal tutoring provision in Faculties will be monitored through the quality processes in line with the [Quality Review and Enhancement Framework](#) (QREF) and inclusion of questions relating to Academic Tutor support in University surveys.

At University level, the QREF provides institutional oversight and assurance of the effective delivery and continuous improvement of student support. This ensure that all aspects of student support encompassing academic tutoring, pastoral mentoring, student hubs, and welfare services are aligned and consistently delivered across both Faculties and centrally provided services.

- 11.4 The Senior Tutor Forum will also produce a yearly commentary, identifying progress and issues regarding academic-led tutoring. The commentary may also refer to the appropriateness of structures; roles and responsibilities; allocation of tutors to tutees; workload; attendance monitoring, student feedback, observations regarding general trends, and examples of good practice.