

## University Campus Oldham (UCO) HE Personal Tutor Procedure

<b>Reference Code:</b>	UCOQH-PR019
<b>Version No:</b>	1.1
<b>Date of Implementation:</b>	September 2014
<b>Originator:</b>	Directors of Learning
<b>Approved by:</b>	HE Management Group
<b>Date for Review:</b>	May 2015

### **Purpose:**

This document sets out guidance and requirements in relation to the UCO Personal Tutoring procedure, together with the responsibilities of the Personal Tutor, Student and Academic Department.

### **Overview:**

The Personal Tutor is seen as central to the provision of effective guidance, personal and pastoral support, with Personal Tutors working alongside and referring students to appropriate colleagues in other UCO professional support services, as necessary. High quality support, particularly in the early stages, can improve retention and increase commitment and attendance. Effective personal and pastoral support can make an important contribution to the overall experience of students.

Students arrive at UCO to begin a new and challenging experience. Most arrive and easily take to higher education study, with few problems. Others will find the transition more difficult and will have little understanding about the standard of work expected of them and struggle with what seems to be a more flexible model of campus life compared to school or college. Students may wish to speak to their personal tutor about difficulties they are experiencing in personal relationships, with illness or with problems at home. In most cases, speaking to their personal tutor can resolve the problem. In other cases there may be a need to refer the student to other services with the institution.

Academic issues can usually be addressed within the academic department with the support of the module tutors, or with study skills support from the Academic Skills Team. Personal tutors can work with students to introduce strategies to help with their studies. Student Services can provide guidelines for staff working with students with specific learning disabilities and can be contacted via Louise Power in the UCO Administration Office.

Students often feel embarrassed about expressing the need for additional help or the fact that some aspects of University life are a greater challenge than they expected. Sometimes students conceal difficulties in the mistaken belief that they will either go away or will rectify themselves. It is often the case that what appears to be a substantial problem to a student is actually something that a personal tutor has seen many times before and can offer a quick and simple solution to. To access this experience however, it is important that students and their personal tutors have an on-going relationship and there is sufficient confidence to be able to raise issues in the knowledge that help is at hand.

The personal tutoring process is subject to internal and external review as a key quality assurance and enhancement process. Increasing, funding is dependent upon student retention and it is in the interest of the institution to address the issue of effective academic and welfare support.

### **First Tutorial Meeting**

The most important aim of the first meeting between personal tutor and tutees in Induction Week is to establish a basis for a good relationship. It is also important to spell out the boundaries of the relationship right at the start. This includes: -

- Supporting the student: Students are legally adults and should be treated as such. They should be encouraged to take responsibility for communicating their needs and for seeking appropriate support.
- Identifying the problem: Try to establish the nature of the problem and do not assume that you know what the problem is in advance. If you have requested to meet with the student always explain your reason for calling the meeting to the student. Remember; listening and asking the student what they want are the main tools for getting a full picture of the situation.
- Offering Support: Personal tutors often choose to offer support to students themselves but at all times remember to never take on more than you can handle and refer the student to appropriate support when needed.
- Confidentiality: The nature and limits of confidentiality need to be made clear to students who seek support. In some instances it will be necessary and appropriate to refer issues to other agencies within and outside of UCO and whenever possible this should be done with the knowledge and agreement of the individual concerned.

*If there are any doubts about what is being disclosed, you are advised to stop the conversation and take advice. The Data Protection Policy and the Disability Disclosure Policy deal specifically with confidentiality in relation to student matters and are a good starting point for delineating what type of information can be disclosed to whom.*

## Summary guidance document for Personal Tutors and Students

A well-planned personal tutorial system can be of enormous value to an institution for various reasons in that it can:

- Create and build professional relationships between staff and students.
- Give the student valuable feedback in their subject area and about the institution.
- Support the student's personal and academic development.
- Provide information to support retention and progression.

### The role of the personal tutor

- To provide a personal contact for the student within the institution.
- To act as a liaison between the student and course leaders to seek any improvements required.
- To offer guidance, assistance and support in helping to manage the student's academic experience.
- To recognise when the problems presented are beyond the tutor's competence and control and seek guidance and support for the student through the appropriate institutional referral processes.
- To work with students to review and reflect upon their own progress and if necessary on ways to improve it.
- To take part in supportive training events.

### The responsibilities of the personal tutor

The personal tutor should:

- Introduce themselves and meet their new tutees before the end of the first week of a new academic year.
- Aim to see their tutees regularly and, at a minimum, twice during the winter and spring term and once in the summer term.
- Ensure tutees know how to contact their tutor at short notice in the case of emergencies and make themselves available to students for some specified period every week. Dates and times of availability should be displayed clearly on department noticeboards or staffroom doors and be lodged within the Administration Office.
- Be aware of any special learning needs of their students.
- Help the tutees allocated to them overcome any problems of adjustment to University life.

- Respond to tutees' requests for advice on matters and refer, as necessary, to the correct department or service, ensuring that appropriate help is offered to the student.
- Encourage tutees to come and see them in the event of needing to seek information or advice or to talk things through with a friendly listener.
- Complete appropriate records of dates, times and outcomes of meetings with tutees.

#### The responsibilities of the student

Students should:

- Respond promptly to requests to see their personal tutor, meeting or having contact at a minimum twice during the winter and spring term and once in the summer term.
- Aim to respect the specified times at which tutors make themselves available to see students.
- Ensure they know how to contact their tutor at short notice in the case of emergencies and, at all other times, try to see their tutor at the specified time
- Keep tutors informed of any academic, health or personal problems which may have an effect upon their studies.
- Complete appropriate records of dates, times and outcomes of meetings with tutors, and store in their PDP.

#### The responsibilities of the academic department

The department will:

- Implement and monitor the system of face-to-face personal tutor support.
- Ensure each student is allocated a personal tutor and has appropriate support.
- Ensure details of the personal tutor system are explained in the student handbook.
- Agree on record-keeping systems and confidentiality.
- Gather feedback on the effectiveness of the system and identify improvements.