

How to be an effective Academic Personal Tutor



Research shows that contact with new students early in their university life is crucial in building an effective relationship. Given the shift to a hybrid delivery model this first contact becomes even more important in guiding students through welcome and induction and enabling them to feel part of the vibrant academic community in your School. The first contact needs to be proactively initiated by the Academic Personal Tutor and should be connected to School based Welcome, Induction and Transition events.

The accompanying [one-to-one meeting prompts resource](#) offers ideas based upon advice shared by University of Leeds colleagues as well as sector leading practice.

What is your role as an academic personal tutor?

- ✓ A formal **point of contact** for general academic queries and initial pastoral support
- ✓ **Help** your tutees settle into University life both during induction and their subsequent re-orientation at the start of each academic stage
- ✓ **Assist** tutees to review their academic progress, helping them to develop independent learning skills
- ✓ **Encourage** tutees to reflect on their learning, both within and beyond the formal curriculum, and to consider how it contributes to their future development and career
- ✓ **Support** personal and professional development providing initial advice and signposting to careers guidance, co-curricular opportunities and other services
- ✓ **Listen.** Adjusting to University life can be challenging. There may be times when tutees need support in relation to circumstances impacting on their studies. They may feel stressed or anxious and it may be appropriate to make referrals to other services in the School, Faculty and wider University as appropriate.

What is not your role as an academic personal tutor?

- Friend
- Personal counsellor – empathic yes, counsellor no
- Disciplinarian
- An expert on all matters

Confidentiality If you are contacted by parents or friends who are worried about a student, listen to and acknowledge their concerns, but no information must be disclosed to third parties without the consent of the student.

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Steps to effective Academic Personal Tutoring

It's a two-way partnership. These steps will enable you to optimise the experience for you and your tutees.

<p>Manage expectations Clarify from the outset the boundaries of the meetings, their frequency and purpose. Refer students to the University Partnership framework (https://www.luu.org.uk/about-us/about-the-leeds-partnership/).</p>	<p>Meeting format Consider alternating group and one-to-one meetings. It is important to meet tutees individually, but in a hybrid delivery model it is also important to stimulate a sense of belonging to a group and support students to meet their peers</p>	<p>Avoid making assumptions about students' previous educational experience, living arrangements (they might commute and not live in halls) or personal circumstance (some students may have caring responsibilities)</p>
<p>Prepare Take a moment to review the previous meeting, the student's current course / performance or any material they have submitted in advance</p>	<p>Build trust Be approachable and accessible, don't offer judgements or interrupt</p>	<p>Communicate effectively Avoid just transmitting information. Meet tutees on their own terms, encourage them to be open with their concerns and listen (tutors should talk 20% and listen 80%)</p>
<p>Maintain regular contact Keep it short, informal and personalised. Regular one-to-one 'check in' communication and contact before meetings plays a key role in effective relationship building</p>	<p>Be proactive Specifically contact those who never reply or never do anything and arrange more regular meetings with those who are facing challenges. Seek support from your Student Support Office.</p>	<p>Be inclusive Avoid using university jargon, colloquialisms and complex language. Consider writing down key terms or showing items such as books that students can photograph.</p>
<p>Make referrals. You don't have to know all the answers – signpost to appropriate specialist support as needed. See accompanying referral points resource and utilise colleagues in your Student Support Office</p>		

There are a range of useful resources relating to Welcome, Induction, Transition and Belonging on the [Welcome, Induction and Transition 2020/21 webpages](#).