Personal Tutoring Policy

Responsibility for Policy:	Registrar and Chief Operating Officer
Relevant to:	All LJMU staff and students not including those studying at an Academic Partner
Approved by:	Academic Board, 10th June 2020
Responsibility for Document Review:	Dean, Teaching and Learning Academy
Date introduced:	September 2013
Date(s) modified:	April 2020, July 2020
Next Review Date:	Sept 2023 (extended by ELT, June 2023 pending outcomes of substantive consultation on a new Personal Tutoring policy/framework to take effect from 2024/25)

RELEVANT DOCUMENTS

- NUS Charter on Personal Tutors (March 2011)
- LJMU Strategic Plan
- LJMU Access and Participation Plan
- LJMU Student Employability & Graduate Employment Strategy

RELATED POLICIES & DOCUMENTS

- LJMU Personal Tutoring Guidance

Introduction to the Personal Tutoring Policy

Personal Tutors have an important cross-module, programme-level role to play in guiding and supporting students' progress through their studies, as well as encouraging their full participation in all that the University has to offer. Personal Tutoring has the potential to raise the aspirations and attainment of all students, irrespective of their starting point. Students' engagement with Personal Tutoring is to be encouraged as a means to extend and enhance their academic, personal and professional development. This is regardless of where they are in their educational journey and whether or not they are facing difficulties.

Role and Expectations of the Personal Tutor

The Personal Tutor's role is to facilitate student engagement with their academic programme, as well as wider University activities, such that students' sense of belonging to the Institution may be strengthened. While Personal Tutors are not expected to have expertise in all areas of student support themselves they are a valuable point of contact to facilitate student access to other Institutional and JMSU services. Personal Tutoring, therefore, connects to wider Institutional frameworks for student support and development. The role, and how it is undertaken, also aligns with ambitions laid out in the Institution's Student Employability, Enterprise and Employment Strategy, particularly in relation to fostering students' confidence, resilience and independence.

To reinforce the above, Personal Tutors need to be cognisant of their tutees' social, cultural and academic background. It is recognised that students will have differing levels of awareness of, and confidence in, how to access and make best use of the student-tutor relationship. Hence, proactive measures to promote and monitor student engagement with Personal Tutoring are needed. This is especially relevant for Level 3 and 4 students who are at most risk of attrition.

Personal Tutors will identify at risk students and offer support, advocacy and signposting to help them continue with their studies. Recognition of risk is enabled through tutors' access to information on student's performance, feedback, attendance and digital engagement, as well as the insight gained directly through Personal Tutoring conversations.

Personal Tutors are expected to provide written references on request.

The Personal Tutor role has two main dimensions:

Academic Advice/Direction

Ongoing review of <u>academic progress</u> to help the student:

- Gain insights into their performance.

- Understand and meet course expectations.
- Be aware of relevant Institutional policies and assessment regulations.
- Cultivate academic literacy.
- Develop independent learning strategies.
- Make sense of and use assessment feedback.
- Reflect on and meet ambitions for academic attainment.
- Acquire and articulate skills and attributes relevant to their future career success through engagement with course-focused employability opportunities and/or to the support provided by Student Advancement – the University's careers, employability and enterprise team.

Pastoral Oversight:

Personal Tutors need to be empathetic and approachable and will often need to support students through typical life issues. However, the pastoral role is often not about giving direct advice or having the requisite expertise to answer all questions. It will instead frequently involve understanding the boundaries to the Personal Tutoring relationship and making effective onward referrals. As such, it is recognised that there is a distinction between knowing when not to engage in support and being unsupportive. Hence, the Personal Tutor's pastoral role often involves:

- Being aware of, and (where appropriate) helping students resolve issues that may be affecting their academic performance.
- Acting as a point of referral to other services that may more effectively and expertly support students in resolving these issues.
- Encouraging student engagement with peer networks and the social life of the University.
- Encouraging student engagement with extra-curricular opportunities for personal and professional development.

University Expectations

How the Personal Tutor role is organised may need to differ depending on the discipline and individual student circumstances. Hence, the following are general principles for the management of Personal Tutoring.

Allocation of Personal Tutors

1. All students undertaking substantive[1] postgraduate taught or undergraduate programmes awarded by LJMU will be allocated a named Personal Tutor. Allocation will usually be by the Programme Leader or nominated academic member of staff.

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[1] There is no expectation for students on CPD programmes to be allocated a Personal Tutor, as defined here, but there will need to be a named point of contact.

a. Usually, Personal Tutors will be members of academic staff from within the Programme Team/subject discipline. Hence, the Personal Tutor should be an individual that the student will also meet through the course of their studies.

b. All academic staff should have the ability to undertake the Personal Tutoring role, but allocation will be managed within the context of the programme and Programme Team requirements.

c. To ensure that staff workloads are manageable, an individual Personal Tutor will normally be allocated a maximum of 10 Personal Tutees per level and/or 30 Tutees across all years. These numbers will be accounted for in workload planning.

d. Where possible and appropriate, students should remain with their Personal Tutor for the duration of the programme. Exceptions to this may be in the transition from Level 3 to Level 4 if a change in Personal Tutor is deemed to facilitate better integration with the new cohort. Likewise, final year project supervisors may assume Personal Tutoring responsibilities given their ongoing engagement with their supervisees.

e. Students will be assigned a new Personal Tutor immediately if their assigned Tutor leaves the Institution or is unavailable for a period of more than six weeks during a semester.

f. Requests from students to change Personal Tutor should be given reasonable consideration and accommodated, wherever possible.

2. The Programme Leader or nominated academic will aim to ensure that all students are informed of who their Personal Tutor is by Induction Week (or within two weeks of enrolment for direct entry/late arriving students). This information will be made available on the VLE as well as in induction meetings.

Frequency of Meetings

3. The minimum expectation is that Personal Tutors will meet their Tutees individually once per semester in each of Levels 3-7. In addition, they will meet new Tutees in Induction Week. It is also expected that Tutees will meet with their Personal Tutor as necessary at other times. Plans should be in place for Level 3 students to meet with their Personal Tutors more frequently - either individually or in groups.

   Good practice indicates that students can often benefit from group tutorials in structured provision. Therefore, Programme Teams may wish to identify opportunities for group tutorial meetings to take place as part of the formal curriculum. These can offer an opportunity for students to acquire knowledge and skills related to the academic programme, but may also be utilised to explore employability-related developments, as well as helping establish peer support networks.

4. Personal Tutor meetings in induction week should be operated as group rather than individual meetings. This will allow students to get to know their Personal Tutor and the value and purpose of Personal Tutoring. However, the group format also supports the establishment of relationships and networks with other students on the programme.

5. In-semester Personal Tutor meetings will be on a one to one basis. These individual *Progress Review Meetings* will be an opportunity for Personal Tutors to assist students in reviewing their academic performance and identifying goals for development. It is expected that Personal Tutors meet all new Level 3 and Level 4 students within the first four weeks of the first semester (first six weeks for part-time students) to support the transition to university life.

6. The use of online video conferencing technologies to deliver tutorials is appropriate.

7. Outside of scheduled tutorials, Personal Tutors are expected to respond to contact from Personal Tutees in a timely manner. Personal Tutors should be available as an initial point of contact for Personal Tutees throughout the academic year. If this is not possible, an alternative contact should be provided.

Supporting Success

8. Personal Tutors will use available information to review students' academic engagement. This includes data related to attendance, digital engagement and performance.

9. Personal Tutors should contact a Personal Tutee in a timely manner if information raises concerns about a student's engagement. This may include poor attendance, poorer than expected results, limited engagement with online learning materials, non-submission of coursework or sudden changes in engagement patterns. Personal Tutors may contact tutees by their LJMU email address and then by telephone. If there is no response then Tutors should advise the Student Wellbeing Team who will undertake to contact the student.

10. Records will be kept of individual meetings between Personal Tutors and Tutees. These will adhere to LJMU's Data Protection Policy and, only with the student's express and written permission, necessary information will be made available to Programme Leaders, Module Leaders or for referral to other support services or where a student is being transferred to a new Personal Tutor.

    The purpose of these is to:

    a) Provide a record of student engagement.
    b) Offer a brief account of what was discussed and identified actions.
    c) Note any referral advice for pastoral, welfare and professional development.

11. Personal Tutors will respect the confidentiality of information shared with them by their Personal Tutees. Information shared by a Personal Tutee cannot be revealed to support Institutional processes, e.g. Personal Circumstances, without the student's written permission.

Management

12. All Personal Tutors should use **SeeMyTutor** as a means to make known to Tutees their availability for meetings. This will facilitate student access to

Personal Tutors and save student and staff time. **SeeMyTutor** is a tool for managing staff/student appointments, and offers the following benefits:

- Online booking for Personal Tutorial meetings. These appointments will be visible in a student's Personalised Timetable and staff Outlook calendars.
- Direct access to the student's results, digital engagement profile and attendance record.
- Facility to confirm that an appointment took place and provide brief notes of the meeting. These can be shared with the student.
- Appointments booked through **SeeMyTutor** could be for telephone/online meetings, as well as those conducted face-to-face.

Use of the **SeeMyTutor** system does not exclude staff/students from making appointments via other means.

Development and Support for Personal Tutors

13. Personal Tutors will have access to details of LJMU information, procedures and policies that are relevant to Personal Tutoring e.g. Academic Framework, student support services such as the Student Wellbeing Team, the Student Advancement Team, and Skills@LJMU.

14. Training and support will be provided for Personal Tutors. This will include basic, mandatory training for all Personal Tutors that addresses expectations of the role and advice on referral processes.

15. Peer review provides an opportunity for staff to discuss and reflect on their Personal Tutoring practices, with due consideration given to confidentiality.

16. Staff will discuss their role as Personal Tutors in Appraisal meetings to recognise good practice, and identify development needs.

17. Personal Tutoring will be included within Institutional processes for rewarding and recognising excellent academic practice.

Expectations for Students

Students will be provided with information and guidance about the role of the Personal Tutor and how they can make best use of this to advance their academic, personal and professional development, as well as wider engagement with all the University has to offer.

The University expects students:

1. To know who their Personal Tutor is and to meet with them during the *Induction Period* according to advertised programme arrangements.

2. To prepare for and attend all group and individual Personal Tutorials/Meetings with their Personal Tutor.

3. To notify the Personal Tutor as soon as possible if there is a reason why they will not be able to attend a scheduled meeting and to make arrangements for an alternative meeting.

4. To make best use of the development opportunity offered by the Personal Tutor, committing to undertake any preparation and follow-up activities from Personal Tutor meetings.

5. To keep Personal Tutors fully informed of any circumstances that are affecting their ability to study/continue with the course. There may be matters that students do not feel comfortable raising with their Personal Tutor and they are not obliged to do so. Students may choose to discuss these matters with, and if necessary seek advice/guidance, from another member of staff with whom they feel comfortable.