School of Natural & Computing Sciences

Personal Tutor statements

Overview
The personal tutoring system will continue to operate in the school of natural and computing sciences in a similar way as previously. The role of the personal tutor will continue to be to allow students the opportunity to review their personal, academic and career development at regular intervals. The tutors role in this will be to help students develop personally and professionally, help students understand the skills necessary to improve their performance and achieve their goals both within and outside of their programme of study as well as provide encouragement and support as appropriate.

The only significant change to the tutoring system within the school will be the assignment of tutees to tutors according to discipline. This will involve little change in the numbers of students assigned to each tutor (being around seven or eight). However, it will offer several key advantages that will be outlined below.

1 Operation of personal tutoring system The operation of the personal tutoring system with the school of natural and computing science will continue much as before with the exception that the tutor and tutee will as far as reasonably possible be within the same discipline for their major component of their degree (for example a Physics or Physics with Geology student, the tutor would be a physicist). Where a degree contains equal components (for example Physics and Maths), the assignment of a tutor will be to a tutor either in Physics or Maths at the discretion of the Head of school /SPT and most probably to on the basis of evenness of tutee load. Where a tutee’s degree is divided equally between different schools we propose that the assignment should be according to which school bears the least tutee load. The assignment of tutees in this way is expected to offer several key advantages in terms of the school retention strategy and student employability.

Retention

- The tutor will be able to offer advice on course selection to the student ensuring that their choice is sensible and so maximizing their chances of success and degree flexibility.
- The tutor (being a lecturer of the student and in constant contact with other lecturers of the student) will be in a better position to identify students with poor attendance or other issues and so take appropriate remedial action.
- The tutor will be able to identify and offer help on academic issues that are blocking the progress of the student.
• The student will gain a feeling of their discipline being their “home” where they come regularly to meet with their tutor and lecturers and will have done this for from their first week of University.

Although the latter item is the most nebulous of the retention issues, it is perhaps the most important. Engendering a sense of belonging has been identified by accrediting bodies such as the IOP as being of high importance in terms of retention, academic performance and general wellbeing.

In terms of employability, the tutor will:

• have a greater knowledge of the job market available to the student and be able to offer the student real and substantive information on how increase and enhance their employability
• the ability to offer the student ways of increasing their employability through extracurricular employability enhancement activities, enhance their personal development within the context of likely future employment and be familiar with how graduate attributes are already developed within the programme of study
• be in a better position to write references requiring detailed academic achievement information.

2 Purpose and timing of meetings There will continue to be three scheduled meetings offered to students each year for years 2, 3 and 4 with one extra meeting offered to 1st year students before their first set of exams in December (to offer advice on revision and exam technique). The three main meetings will occur at the beginning of the first term, the beginning of the second term and in March. The purpose of the meetings will continue to be those outline in the PT web page “Preparing for your Meetings”. However, in line with the statement above, they may contain a higher academic content. This would mean for example that the tutor would be more likely to discuss with the student their particular choice of courses in the September meeting, or discuss in more detail any particular problems the student was facing in exam preparation in the December meeting. These meetings will for the most part be one to one meetings, unless the tutor decides to organize a group meeting.

3 Key Contacts within the school The primary points of contact will continue to be the head of School Prof. Jan Skakle, the SPT for the School, Dr Geoff Dunn and the Director of teaching Dr. Bill Harrison.

The SPT will liaise with heads of discipline and staff seeking information of the success of the PT system by means of informal feedback from tutors in terms of tutor appointment attendance rates, from formal channels such as the staff student liaison committees. Annually, the SPT, heads of discipline and Head of school will identify strengths and weaknesses in the system in meeting the University expectations and develop ways in which it might evolve to meet any shortcomings or implement other good practice identified from other schools. The SPT will report on these various issues to the Student Experience Committee.