UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

UPDATE ON PASTORAL REVIEW TASK AND FINISH GROUP

1. **PURPOSE OF THE PAPER**

   This paper provides University Education Committee with the Recommendations of the Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group (TFG), the Report of the TFG and initial proposals for implementation.

   University Education Committee are invited to **note** this paper and to comment on the Recommendations, the Report and initial proposals for implementation.

2. **PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY / FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED**

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3. **BACKGROUND**

   3.1 The Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group (the TFG) was established in 2021. Updates were provided to SSC on 2 June 2021, 18 October 2021, 8 December 2021, 3 February 2022, 21 March 2022 and 7 April 2022. Updates were provided to UEC on 6 December 2021, 17 February 2022, 17 March 2022, 13 April 2022 (with further opportunities for comment thereafter by email) and on 10 May 2022.

   3.2 An initial academic review on emerging recommendations of the TFG was obtained from Senate on 2 February 2022. The emerging recommendations were then considered with Focus Groups comprising staff and students, Heads of School, Registry, the Centre for Academic Development, Online Education, School Directors of Education and in an internal TFG challenge process. The recommendations and report were then updated for consideration at SSC and UEC in March and April 22 and since then have been considered by the TFG on 25 May 22, with Academic Services and with TFG implementation sub group and TFG meeting in July 22.

4. **RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORT**

   4.1 The present draft report of the TFG is attached as Annex 1 to this paper.
4.2 UEC is asked to comment on and as appropriate approve the Recommendations and the Report in Annex 1. This same report was also being put to SSEC on 23 August 2022 and feedback will be shared at the UEC meeting. An updated version of the report will be shared with Senate on 14 September 2022 for a further academic view.

4.3 A subgroup of the TFG prepared initial thoughts on implementation of the recommendations of the TFG, if the relevant approvals should be obtained in due course. It is hoped that these suggestions, set out in Appendix A to the draft report, will assist Committees and Senate in considering the recommendations.

5. **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Abbe Brown, Dean for Student Support (abbe.brown@abdn.ac.uk).

August 2022

**Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status:** Open

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Executive Summary

Acknowledgements

1. The Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group 2022 (TFG) has carried out its review and it would like to thank all colleagues (internal and external) and students who have kindly shared their views and their time.

2. A list of the TFG members is in pages 52-55. Some members have moved on from this work and we have been delighted to welcome others. Our thanks to the full team.

3. The High-Level Vision of the TFG is set out and then developed in the Recommendations which follow in pages 4 to 8. The context and purpose of the TFG are in pages 8 to 12, the approach taken, consultation undertaken and evidence gathered are considered in pages 13 to 19 and findings and more consideration and reflection on recommendations in pages 20 to 32. There is then some consideration of next steps, implementation and evaluation in pages 32 to 34. Draft implementation thoughts follow in Appendix A (pages 35 to 47) and details of the governance of the TFG and its remit are in Appendix B (pages 48 to 54).

4. The High-Level Vision of the TFG is set out the following section. The changes to the present system are in bold.

Our Vision

1. All undergraduate and postgraduate taught students will be allocated a Personal Tutor. So far as possible, the student will have the same personal tutor during their time at the University and this will be someone who is familiar with the student's area of study and at an appropriate level of seniority. The Personal Tutor will be a first person for the student to contact regarding academic and non-academic support and will then support the student in seeking guidance from more specialist staff as needed. All students are to be offered at least 2 meetings per academic year and are expected to attend. There will be individual and group meetings to support students in their academic decision making, personal development and needs and in building connections and a community. Heads
of School/Line Managers may decide that some staff are not to carry out the role from time to time. Training and resources will be enhanced to support staff and students regarding the scope of the role and its limits. Enhanced use is to be made of existing data sources and further consideration is to be given to the University investing in a live dashboard form of learning analytics to support staff in providing students with targeted, relevant and informed support. Workload is to be allocated for all personal tutor activity in a fair and consistent manner across the University.

2. To bring this about, we make the following recommendations.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

1. The personal tutor will have a holistic and overview role in supporting all UG and PGT students. The personal tutor will triage the provision of support for academic matters (including initial consideration of course selection and its consequences, credits, completion of e-registration) and non-academic matters, for all UG and PGT students, including online students who are registered for a programme. The personal tutors will signpost to other more specialist School and University structures and expertise and engagement as at present, including regarding responses to mental health situations, emergencies, and specific course and curriculum details and visa requirements, and will sit alongside plans to embed resilience in the curriculum.

Recommendation 2

2. All academic colleagues at grade 6 and above, who have their posts funded by the University or AFG, who deliver some teaching or are considered to have relevant expertise by Heads of School/Line Managers, who are on contracts of 12 months or more and who are 0.5FTE or more, are eligible to deliver personal tutor support to UG and/or PGT students. Decisions as to which academic colleagues are not to carry out the UG and/or PGT role from time to time will be made, as is so regarding other roles, by Heads of School/Line Managers as appropriate within the School. Heads of School/Line Managers are to have regard in making these decisions to other
workload and roles of colleagues and their nature, career development and the skills and experience of academic colleagues. A recommended total number of students per academic colleague should be set to avoid colleague overload (to be pro rata-ed as appropriate); in implementing this, there is scope for School flexibility to recognise in particular that some students may need more support than others, a School’s student numbers, the importance accorded by the School to discipline matching, the different nature of some postgraduate professional qualifications and other roles played by colleagues. The system would apply for UG and PGT students who are formally registered with the University on all campuses (Aberdeen, AFG-Qatar, online OnDemand) and in all Schools

Recommendation 3

3. There is a goal of consistency of personal tutor support to be provided to all UG and PGT students. This is to include regularity of meetings and the issues which the tutor will offer to explore with the student. All students are to be invited to at least two meetings a year, one at the start of each half-session (recognising that the timing of this will vary across the University). These meetings will be arranged and timetabled by administrative support. Meetings can be group meetings, although students must also be offered the opportunity to have an individual meeting. It is recognised that some differences will be unavoidable in terms of detail regarding issues to be explored and number of meetings for example to reflect regulatory structures, nature of studies, student’s situation, staff and student ratios and School professional services support and other support, particularly regarding postgraduate professional qualifications; the goal of consistency must, however, remain.

Recommendation 4

4. A new workload allocation framework should be developed and adopted to reflect the new scope of the personal tutor role including regarding providing preliminary academic advice and the PGT role. There is a goal of consistency of workload allocation framework and system for personal tutor support per student and this is to be the same allocation for UG and PGT students, respecting the equal importance of provision of this support to UG and PGT students. Note that this is also for further consideration by the Workload Allocation Group, including regarding the amount to be allocated and it should also be borne in mind that the proposed level of contact exceeds present approaches in some Schools for UG students.
Recommendation 5

5. Each School is to have at least one Senior Personal Tutor, who will likely be an academic. The PGT role is to be distinct from other PGT leadership roles, although it may be held by a person who holds these other roles; if so, additional workload is to be allocated to the colleague. The senior personal tutor for UG and PGT may be the same person, however, specific workload allocation is to apply to each element of the role. If there is more than one Senior Personal Tutor in a School, these colleagues will be expected to liaise. The details of the workload allocated to this role will reflect the number of students in the School. Note that this is also for further consideration by the Workload Allocation Group, including regarding the amount to be allocated. There is a goal of consistency in approaches to these roles bearing in mind possible existing differences within Schools, including regarding roles of professional services colleagues. The Senior Personal Tutor(s) will work closely with relevant central administrative colleagues, Heads of School, Line Managers and other Senior Personal Tutors in supporting staff and students and in arranging allocation of students. Senior Personal Tutors will take a lead in resolving issues regarding the tutor-tutee relationships (with the Head of School or the Dean for Student Support to do so if there is a conflict).

Recommendation 6

6. The purpose of the personal tutor system and expectations of staff and student and how this intersects with other forms of support is to be set out clearly to staff and students. Training and resources for colleagues will continue to be enhanced, including, for all students, preliminary discussions of academic matters and making use of existing IT systems and the information they provide; and new resources, training and details of topics to be offered to be explored will be created as appropriate regarding PGT students. Support (including specialist counselling support) for staff regarding issues which may arise from supporting students will continue to be enhanced, and its availability made clear to all staff.

Recommendation 7

7. Tutor and tutee allocation is to be carried out centrally in the University for UG and PGT students, on the basis of information regarding staff provided by the Heads of School/Line Managers. Tutor and tutee would match with reference to School and within that if possible, by discipline (not degree programme); if colleagues in a School have expertise in a different area from the students in the School, then colleagues should be matched with students from a School which more reflects their expertise. The Senior Personal Tutor will work
closely with the central allocation team to implement this. Additional workload and resource are to be made available to enable this central allocation. Within this, present practices could continue of Schools choosing that colleagues having expertise in supporting students who have shared with the University that they have particular characteristics (such as international, advanced entry, estranged from family); however, this matching is unlikely to be possible or sought in all cases and regard should be had to the possibility of a person having multiple characteristics. In any event, other support will continue to be provided to these student groups and the links between this and the personal tutor system will be made clear. The discipline match, when this is possible, would take priority over this other matching.

Recommendation 8

8. IT development work will be explored to ensure that the most effective use is made of existing information about students and their performance and experiences, including their engagement with the personal tutor system. There should also be further consideration by the University of new systems and approaches to data (such as dashboards drawing together student’s current experiences and use of university services, as appropriate in light of confidentiality obligations); it is not recommended that predictive technology is explored. This increased use of information, and in particular through a live dashboard, would inform in an efficient manner tutor-tutee and other human interactions, the offering of specialist support and assist in the making of risk-based decisions by humans. The focus of this is to enhance support offered to students.

Recommendation 9

9. Processes and support mechanisms will be developed to enhance staff and student engagement with the personal tutor system. For staff, this could include engagement with Line Managers, personal tutoring being part of the induction process, the annual review system, the provision of additional training and ongoing support, and an IT based means of noting staff and student contact and following up with students. For students, this could include references to personal tutoring in the personal development courses available to UG and PGT students in their first year with the University, an IT based system by which students can see their levels of engagement with their tutor and also a dashboard of their present academic performance and engagement and personal tutor engagement to provide assurance that personal tutor meetings will be individualised. Additional workload and resource are to be made available as necessary to bring this about. It is to be made clear to students that it is expected that they attend personal tutor meetings.
Details of the evidence base for these recommendations and more information about the TFG and future related work, including the key questions of implementation, are discussed below (pages 13-34).

Context and Purpose of the Review

“Personal tutoring”

1. Delivery of “personal tutor” support by academic staff is recognised as a norm in the UK Higher Education sector. This support is delivered, however, in varying ways and there are areas of strong debate, including what personal tutor support should cover (notably wellbeing and/or academic advising); whether this should be part of the academic role or provided by specialist colleagues, either centrally or within Schools; the consequences of non-engagement with the system; and of the differences, if any, between support for undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate taught (PGT) students.

2. The present Aberdeen UG model reflects a student partnership and empowerment approach by which students are encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their own learning and personal development. The personal tutor role is to be reflective and challenging and signpost to more specialist support when needed. There is no formal PGT personal tutor system at institutional level, although some excellent support is provided though Programme Leads, and School professional services colleagues and individual School arrangements. Strong support is provided to online on-demand students before they start their studies and the online team provide high quality informal support; (although the position regarding pastoral support provided by Schools when students join us is less clear). The Pastoral Support system as a whole also includes the Regent system for Healthcare students in the School of Medicine, Medical Science and Nutrition and support provided by AFG/Qatar colleagues. The Pastoral Support system does not include South China Normal University (SCNU) partnership students as pastoral support is provided to them by SCNU under the partnership agreement.
External drivers

1. The University of Aberdeen is committed to an enhancement led approach. Reflecting this and the importance accorded to personal tutoring, the Enhancement Lead Institutional Review (ELIR) of 2018’s reflective analysis refers to personal tutoring, including noting that it was recognised that this could improve. The 2019 Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) outcome report identified recommendations for personal tutoring as follows: ‘Continue to monitor its personal tutoring arrangements to ensure they remain fit for purpose, in the context of the University’s changing student population. The University should progress its intention to introduce personal tutoring for postgraduate taught students, including those studying online’.

2. The ELIR One Year follow up Report approved at Senate on 5 February 2020 refers to monitoring and expansion of personal tutoring for online students; to a review of the effectiveness of support for PGT students and to the Dean for Student Support undertaking a holistic review of personal tutors for undergraduate students, identifying good practice, engaging with student focus groups and making recommendations for enhancement; to the UG and PGT reviews being managed coherently so that appropriate consistency emerges across the University taking place review; and that the review would also have regard to students studying online and in Qatar. The review of UG PT and PGT pastoral support were discussed in QAA visit in November 2020.

Internal drivers

1. Carrying out this Review is aligned with the Aberdeen 2040 commitments:

   **Inclusive:**

   “We value diversity”

   “Our commitment to inclusion will guide our education, our research, and the projects we deliver”

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1 2.1.10, 2.2.9-11, 2.2.37 and 2.3.7 regarding improvement
“We aspire to lead our sector in promoting health and wellbeing, and celebrating diversity.”

Inclusive Commitments:

1 “Care for the wellbeing, health and safety of our diverse community, supporting and developing our people to achieve their full potential”
2 “Our students will be able to succeed whatever their personal and social background”

**International:**

“We think across borders”

“We are open to people and ideas from around the world. Whether in Aberdeen or in Qatar, we welcome students and staff from all nations”

International Commitments

11. Provide an international education to learners from all around the world, becoming a more diverse and multicultural community
15. Develop our campuses and processes to create a caring environment that is alert to cultural differences
2. The Pastoral Review is part of the University’s Education plan alongside the Aberdeen 2040 Implementation Plan to 2025 and reports to the Aberdeen 2040 University Education Committees. The Review reflects the importance of pastoral and guidance roles in supporting students and responding to the need for community, and also the need to support staff, which was increasingly seen in the light of COVID-19 and responses to it. Pastoral support forms a key part in the University’s support for students to fulfil their potential and their goals; to choose to remain with the University; student satisfaction; to form part of our wider Community which can enhance mental health and resilience; and to choose to seek support, notably for mental health.

Building the Review

1. In addition to the internal and external drivers, the Review has roots in an informal consultation across the University by the Dean for Student Support when she came into post in early 2020 (the consultation was paused because of COVID-19); a survey carried out by the Aberdeen University Students Association (AUSA) in 2019 (which identified lack of consistency across the University as a key concern); and some surveys and consultation carried out by the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy (as it was then) with staff and students in 2019-2020 (identifying some very positive feedback and also concerns about lack of student engagement, frequent tutor changes, lack of clarity as to the purpose of the system, a lack of confidence in staff in providing support, lack of training, disinterested staff, calls for more training and academic focus and suggested “Super tutors”).

2. Against this backdrop, the Dean for Student support prepared a scoping paper for the Review. This was ultimately considered by Student Support Committee on 2 June 2021 and University Education Committee on 23 June 2021; and an oral update on the proposed review was shared with Student Experience Committee on 10 June 2021. The scoping paper noted the rationale of the Review as being to
-ensure that the pastoral support for all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students is sector leading, to support students in making the most of their time with the University and increasing the prospect of students choosing to remain with the University

-ensure that both staff and students have confidence in the pastoral support regarding its focus, delivery, workload, resources and training.

3. The Pastoral Review Task and Finish Group (TFG) was established in 2021.
Remit and its limits

1. The Remit of the Review provides that the Review will recommend any changes which should be made to the UG personal tutoring and PGT pastoral support on the Aberdeen and Qatar campuses for on campus/blended/online teaching in respect of (i) who is to deliver it; (ii) the nature of the support and information sharing needed to support this; (iii) how to enhance staff and student engagement with the personal tutor and pastoral support systems; (iv) identify priorities and prepare and deliver an implementation plan, including as appropriate requests for additional resource; (v) develop an internal benchmarking and evaluation plan.

2. The Review does not cover PGR students, although there has been engagement with PGR Policy Committee and consideration of support for this group, by supervisors and others, is ongoing. The Regent System for health care students is, as noted, distinct from the personal tutor system. The Review does not engage directly with the Regent system (which includes NHS staff); however, it is hoped that the close engagement between the Regent team and its leaders will continue and that the recommendations made will also be considered for the Regent system as relevant. It is recognised that this will not always be so, given different post holders and regulatory regimes.

3. The Review sits alongside, and also informs, ongoing work regarding the pastoral support systems - reviewing resources (including web pages), orientation and training and other related systems, such as by the Wellbeing and Student Experience Team. The Review also aligns with the QAA Enhancement Theme “Resilient Learning Communities” (including the University’s Community of Practice and its work on supporting students to choose to continue their studies, and funded projects supporting articulating students and resilience courses); and with the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement Task and Finish Group (which is exploring how best to identify and support students who may be in difficulty or there is the potential for this to be so).
Approach, Consultation and Evidence

External: reflections on Literature

1. Resources were reviewed from Wonkhe, Advance HE, AMOSSHE and UKAT and its professional recognition pathway. A common strand is the importance of providing support and community to students to enable them to make the most of their time at University, to belong, and to choose to remain and to complete their studies successfully. Established paths are pastoral (by an academic); professional by specialist experts and support embedded in the curriculum; and the personal development approach based on mutual connections, community and regular meetings between staff and individual student and groups of students, with clear connections to other support in the University – with the student being at the heart of the system.

2. For some personal tutor structures, there is scope for more complex training and professional development opportunities provided, such as in relation to coaching. In the proposed Aberdeen model, however, where most if not all colleagues will take on the role, such detailed approaches are not considered to be appropriate and that, indeed, the more detailed the training, the more staff may feel unable to connect with the role and with students.

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2 Helping students develop a sense of belonging | Wonkhe  
3 Professional Recognition | UKAT - UK Advising and Tutoring  
3. The importance of a student having a person to contact, who will have oversight of the student, including through proactive engagement with them, and direct the student on to specialist academic with relevant knowledge and pastoral support has been argued to be essential and a base to build up a close connection and for the relationship to have a purpose. In terms of how this may be done, the importance of clarity in the expectations of the role and its limits is key, as is the provision of training to make colleagues confident in delivering it; there is also recurring evidence of students not wishing to disturb staff or feeling that staff do not want to see them. The important of a single point of contact is valuable in the light of some suggestions across the sector (and internally) that colleagues feel they are not contributing as all they can do is signpost. This is perhaps because of signposting can have connotations of abandonment, rather than supporting the student to the most effective path and this should be made clear to colleagues. The stressing of limits of the personal tutor role is also very useful. Clearly it is of value for all personal tutors to receive mental health training, for example, but the aim of this is not to turn a colleague into a specialist on any specific issue. Narratives in relation to training should be carefully managed to ensure that colleagues do not then attempt to do too much for and in relation to the student.

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7 Why personal tutoring is essential for student success | Higher Education Academy (heacademy.ac.uk) training and limits


4. It should also be borne in mind the confusion which can arise from different terms – as an example careers advice, professional development or academic writing might be considered part of the personal tutor role, however at Aberdeen they are well embedded in other frameworks, with the present UG personal tutor role including signposting to these services. This raises another theme of the need for a whole university approach - and the need for it to be made clearer which roles are played taken by whom and how the fields interrelate as part of a community of support.

External: reflections on benchmarking

1. In 2020, the UG Aberdeen campus-based system was in line with UK sector norms and practice. It has a focus on academics delivering pastoral support, although there were differing views about how clearly the system is communicated to and understood by colleagues, and different views and experiences of students were shared regarding how effectively and consistently it is being delivered.

2. Very few institutions have formal PGT personal tutor system and when they did there was a reference to it as being the same as UG system without any detailed engagement.

3. Benchmarking with other Universities notably Edinburgh, Bristol, Swansea, City and King’s London, between July and September 2021 revealed that since there have been some developments across the UK with some institutions embracing a more specialist and professional form of wellbeing support, with this to sit alongside academic advising.

4. Edinburgh has shared plans, based on significant international research, of having, separately, academic advising, specialist school based wellbeing officers building on a new learning analytics system, teaching teams and peer support. It is unclear if this will be centrally managed or in School with a strong dotted line to central colleagues. There would be around 30 students with each wellbeing colleague. Significant financial investment would be required. One reason shared for this move was the variety of engagement of the role by staff, with some not committed, some doing too much, and some very worried about the role. In Bristol, colleagues leading the academic support were entirely separate from pastoral support and dealing with emergencies and were unable to share with us any details of those systems.
5. In addition, common themes identified are whether there is to be advising on academic matters or not (and challenges of matching by discipline including whether or not this is possible because of an imbalance in staff and student numbers); by academics or specialist welfare colleagues in School or centrally (or both, largely in parallel then signposting on); all colleagues do it or not (and risks of marginalisation of those who do, and possible impact on their careers, and of particular groups bearing more of a load); timetabled in or not; coaching; central delivery or school flexibility including regarding allocation; handbook or website resources (online or not).

**Internal: Surveys and focus groups**

1. The Review carried out a consultation process with staff and students by focus groups and online surveys between August and December 2021:

   - **In August 2021 an online Facebook survey was carried out with PGT students.** There were 141 replies.

   - **In August 2021 staff focus groups met to discussion UG support (11 participants) for PGT (14 participants) with a spread across most Schools.** These were initial scoping events and the invited participants had been suggested as useful contributors by pastoral leads and in the main were not pastoral leads to enable some wider voices to be heard.

   - **Between 6 October and 22 October 2021, an online survey was open to all UG students.** 209 students responded.

   - **Between 28 October and 11 November 2021 an [online survey](#) was open to all staff.** 112 colleagues completed it.
• 2-17 December 2021 joint staff and student online further survey open to all staff and students. This explores staff and student opinion about some specific elements which could form part of a Pastoral Support system. This did not revisit issues on which there was already a clear view of opinions. 45 replies.

• The December 2021 Pastoral Review TFG meeting carried out a trial exercise to test the ease by which existing information can be used in a sample scenario. This revealed the different approaches people use to search and the need for more alignment between present different sets of online resources.

• December 2021 results of the 2021 Aberdeen Student Experience Survey, section 5.16 of which refers to personal tutoring.

2. From the ASES, there was a theme of variety – some students had very positive experiences, some the opposite. This is aligned with the points seen in the literature and the benchmarking. Some illustrated quotes follow:

  • ASES21 I think the personal tutor scheme is fantastic. It's nice to know there's one person you can go to with any issues even of you know they're not the appropriate person they can direct you to where is best
  • ASES21 My personal tutor was absolutely useless and offered no help and wasn’t interested
  • ASES21 I have been lucky to have an excellent personal tutor, but feel staff should be asked if they want to, rather than lumping some students with a tutor who doesn’t want to be in the role

3. From the online surveys, the following results were obtained regarding possible structures of future support and experiences with the present system.

  • PGT students:
    o 92% would like to have someone to talk to about things other than their studies
    o Who should provide the support
      ▪ 50% someone who teaches and grades me
      ▪ 18% someone who did not teach on the programme
• 23% no preference.

• UG students:
  o 66% been contacted by PT.
  o 56% had gone to PT/contacted them when contacted
  o What one thing would improve system?
    ▪ regular meetings/communication option 40%
  o PT role focus?
    ▪ 51% consider PT evenly focussed studies and personal development and wellbeing
    ▪ 44% primarily on studies with some wellbeing
    ▪ 4% solely on studies

• Staff and student survey
  o if over 0.5 FTE and doing teaching then should be a PT
    ▪ 72% agree or strongly agree
    ▪ 17% disagree or strongly disagree
  o student attendance should be compulsory
    ▪ 27% agree or strongly agree
    ▪ 62% disagree or strongly disagree
  o Academic support including interventionist advice on course choices
    ▪ 40% agree or strongly disagree
    ▪ 47% disagree or strongly disagree
  o Proactive monitoring of engagement including through IT, including wider life such as social
    ▪ 21% include in a choice of 3
  o Proactive monitoring of engagement but not including wider life such as social
    ▪ 37% include in a choice of 3.
  o Proactive intervention based on previous experiences
    ▪ 68% agree or strongly agree, 18.2% no view, 14% disagree or strongly disagree

4. From the focus groups, there were concerns from staff about lack of recognition of the role, of the lack of formal academic advice, of a need for academic advice to match with disciplines, views that personal tutoring should not be a role for academics, strong views that
very few colleagues did not wish to help students but were overwhelmed about the role, of some colleagues having to pick up students who are in difficulty when other colleagues are not supporting students, of the need for workload allocation and concerns about escalating student numbers so that the initial arrange for UG personal tutoring of under 20 students was rarely workable. There was strong variety of views about whether or not the system should be student led or have proactive staff intervention and about the extent to which systems across the University should be consistent to avoid perceptions of unfairness for students, as against arguments in favour of flexibility reflecting the culture, student numbers and other structures of the School.

5. In the light of the focus groups, online surveys, benchmarking, and literature review, “Emerging Recommendations” (ERs) were drafted by the TFG. In February 2022 the ERs were presented to Senate and to Heads of School, and feedback was received. In February 2022 Focus groups with staff and students who volunteered in initial online surveys or in the December 21 survey considered the ERs and feedback was again received. In March 22 the ERs were also shared with School Directors of Education, School Administrative Managers, the Online Engagement and Development Team and the Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum and feedback was received.

6. From this base, the TFG carefully considered the views, evidence base and experiences shared with it throughout and in response to the ERs. The TFG revised its recommendations, to make them clearer and to engage in a balanced manner with concerns raised and suggestions made. These revised Recommendations were presented, together with a draft report of the TFG, to Student Support Committee on 7 April 2022, University Education Committee on 13 April 2022 and to School administrative leads and Registry, Online Education and Centre for Academic Development colleagues in May 2022. Feedback was again received, and the recommendations and report have been considered further and updated.

7. Benchmarking, literature, surveys and focus groups establish a diversity of views. It is not possible to draw clearly on any strand of evidence or combination of them to identify a clear solution to the exclusion of others, however the recommendations we have made are based in the material we have gathered in our work. We have gained feedback from a wide range of colleagues and students through a number of paths, although we acknowledge that the numbers of some of the survey and focus group participants are low. We take comfort from our consideration of the results of the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey and from the opportunity to receive the views of Senate. These also demonstrate a variety of perspectives. We put forward effective and workable recommendations which are driven by Aberdeen 2040, support for students, and respect for staff.
Discussions of findings and recommendations

1. With these recommendations, the TFG’s aim is to harness and stimulate the strong commitment evidenced by staff to providing supported and informed academic and non-academic support to UG and PGT students as a part of their academic role; to provide students with a system which is not only a safety net when asked for but also a base for proactive intervention for students who are reluctant or feel unable to ask for help; and to provide a means for a growing community, to reduce the prospect of the student being in difficulty and feeling unable to ask for help. The TFG considers that fair and consistent workload which reflects the proposed nature of the role and recognition of the importance of personal tutoring as a central part of being an academic, and new resources and administrative support (including further consideration of learning analytics), will be essential to effective delivery of the proposed new system. An initial implementation plan has been developed and this accompanies this report. More detailed reflection and details regarding implementation and resources will be developed in due course, building on the feedback received from committees and Senate.

2. The High-Level Vision and the Recommendations are now presented, with a short headline, a note of their link with the TFG remit and some further consideration of key points when appropriate and potential challenges. The changes to the present system are marked in bold.

Our Vision and Recommendations

1. The TFG High Level Vision for the new personal tutor system for UG and PGT students at the University of Aberdeen is as follows.

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12 Both were also set out in the Executive Summary (pages 1-6.)
2. All undergraduate and **postgraduate taught students** will be allocated a Personal Tutor. So far as possible, the student will have the same personal tutor during their time at the University and **this will be someone who is familiar with the student’s area of study and at an appropriate level of seniority**. The Personal Tutor will be a first person for the student to contact regarding academic and non-academic support and will then support the student in seeking guidance from more specialist experts are needed. **All students are to be offered at least 2 meetings per academic year and are expected to attend.** There will be individual and group meetings to support students in their academic decision making, personal development and needs and in building connections and a community. Heads of School/Line Managers may decide that some eligible staff are not to carry out the role from time to time. Training and resources will be enhanced to support staff and students regarding the scope the role and its limits. Enhanced use is to be made of existing data sources and further consideration is to be given to the University investing in a live dashboard form of learning analytics to support staff in providing students with targeted, relevant, and informed support. Workload is to be allocated for all personal tutor activity in a fair and consistent manner across the University.

What [Remit ii]

**Recommendation 1**

1. “The personal tutor will have a holistic and overview role in supporting all UG and PGT students. The personal tutor will triage the provision of support for **academic matters (including initial consideration of course selection and its consequences, credits, completion of e-registration)** and non-academic matters, for all UG and PGT students, including online students who are registered for a programme. The personal tutors will signpost to other more specialist School and University structures and expertise and engagement as at present, including regarding responses to mental health situations, emergencies, and specific course and curriculum details and visa requirements, and will sit alongside plans to embed resilience in the curriculum.”

2. This is a change. The UG personal tutor system when introduced did not engage with academic advice. The restriction on this has faded, however the potential for a student to have a personal tutor who has no knowledge of their discipline, particularly in one of the
more diverse Schools, means that colleagues feel very uncomfortable about providing academic advice to their personal tutee. Feedback suggests that systems by which Schools can provide a guidance note for use in personal tutor meetings to discuss academic matters have not addressed this issue fully. There is also a strong feeling that academic and curricular knowledge has been lost since Academic Advising came to an end. Relevant knowledge does remain for example in MyCurriculum and with Registry Officers, year leads and Student Progress Convenors, however there are again strong views on this issue. There is also feedback that most of the points which a student may wish to discuss are related to their studies and if the personal tutor is not familiar with them then the student may not engage with the personal tutor system, thereby removing the opportunity to build a connection.

3. Previously, colleagues who had been Academic Advisers received additional payment and this is an issue on which, for some colleagues, there are again strong views. Recommendation 4 engages with this issue to an extent through workload.

4. Another issue is that moving advice on academic choices to be a role for personal tutors raises the issue long encountered in allocating personal tutors to students: the numbers of colleagues with relevant expertise does not match the students who are taking particular degrees – this is particularly so in multi-discipline Schools and in Schools which have experienced significant growth. Accordingly, it is recommended that there is a combined approach of a personal tutor asking students questions to prompt reflection about academic choices and suggesting that students speak to another colleague if seems an issue arises in respect of which the colleague does not have expertise. Established practices of preparing guidance notes on key points for students in a particular discipline should be enhanced. Consideration is to be given to how the giving of initial academic advice and prompting consideration at the start of term sits alongside students being able to make course choices on MyCurriculum before the start of term. For returning students, this may include conversations at the end of the preceding year.

5. Within this academic and non-academic framework, some details will likely continue to vary to extent e.g. for On-Demand online and Qatar/AFG given nature of campuses and experience, different natures of PGT studies, other forms of support which are provided in the School (e.g. research training). There will be some differences in the Regent system.
6. The approaches taken/planned by Swansea, Edinburgh and Bristol can seem appealing (although they would require significant investment) in removing pastoral issues from the personal tutor role and leaving this to more specialist pastoral colleagues. However the challenges identified by Aberdeen colleagues regarding discussion of personal matters without an understanding of the wider academic context would also apply here. This approach is not recommended.

7. Signposting will continue to other services and resources will be reviewed to make clear the relationship between these and the personal tutor: Student Support and Mental Health and Wellbeing Advisers, and their resources and webpages, monitoring, orientation/toolkit, widening access, careers, class rep/Inform, s4s, school administrative team, GoAbroad, chaplaincy, Disability Team, AUSA, Student Support, other specialist services, Liberation and Equality networks, Student Learning Service, visa/international, accommodation support, school progression leads, Student Progress Convenors/School year leads/Registry Officers and support on placement. Personal tutors will continue to be encouraged to “remain with” the student (metaphorically or literally as appropriate) to avoid perceptions of abandonment.

“Who” [Remit 1, iv]

Recommendation 2

1. “All academic colleagues at grade 6 and above, who have their posts funded by the University or AFG, who are on contracts of 12 months or more, who deliver some teaching or are considered to have relevant expertise by Heads of School/Line Managers, and who are 0.5FTE or more, are eligible to deliver personal tutor support to UG and/or PGT students. Decisions as to which academic colleagues are not to carry out the UG and/or PGT role from time to time will be made, as is so regarding other roles, by Heads of School/Line Managers as appropriate within the School. Heads of School/Line Managers are to have regard in making these decisions to other workload and roles of colleagues and their nature, career development and the skills and experience of academic colleagues. A
recommended total number of students per academic colleague should be set to avoid colleague overload (to be pro rata-ed as appropriate); in implementing this, there is scope for School flexibility to recognise in particular that some students may need more support than others, a School’s student numbers, the importance accorded to discipline matching, the different nature of some postgraduate professional qualifications and other roles played by colleagues. The system would apply for UG and PGT students who are formally registered with the University on all campuses (Aberdeen, AFG-Qatar, online OnDemand) and in all Schools.”

2. The PGT personal tutor role is new. This reflects the strong need for support to be provided to these students and the comparative short period which PGT students have with the University.

3. The involvement of Heads of School/Line Managers and the statement of eligible colleagues is a change for present UG practices when all colleagues who engage in teaching and are 0.5FTE or more are personal tutors. In reality, however, often this does not happen with informal arrangements being put in place to have regard to a colleague’s other interests and situation.

4. If a colleague joins on a contract of less than 3 years, it is suggested that they might be better suited to supporting PGT student rather than UG students (to increase the prospect of the personal tutor staying with the student through their studies), however this will depend on individual circumstances. The Grade 6 baseline is retained given the responsibility inherent in the role and the proposal that academic advice is provided. The criteria of posts funded by the University or AFG, who are on contracts of 12 months or more, who deliver some teaching, and who are 0.5FTE or more reflects the initial arrangements for the Aberdeen UG personal tutor system, however, there has been some movement and uncertainty on this over the years.

5. The consultation process and the experience of members of the TFG is that, as with other roles in the University, and reflecting the importance of the provision of this support, the personal tutor role should ideally be undertaken by colleagues who are committed to it and to engaging with the support, training and resources which will be provided.
6. The present Aberdeen UG model reflects practice until 2020 of personal tutor support being embedded in the role of the academic. Feedback across the sector and from the consultation from staff and from students suggests that this should be revisited. Even taking into account the fact that different personalities respond to different personalities, and so one should take care in stating that a particular person will be good at personal tutoring, some staff find it stressful to deliver the role (including if students do not engage with the process); probably reflecting this, some staff do not respond to student emails or engage with the process at all and this in turn creates pressure on students. A new approach accordingly appears warranted to who should take in the role.

How [Remit ii, iii and iv]

Recommendation 3

1. “There is a goal of consistency of personal tutor support to be provided to all UG and PGT students. This is to include regularity of meetings and the issues which the tutor will offer to explore with the student. All students are to be invited to at least two meetings a year, one at the start of each half-session (recognising that the timing of this will vary across the University). These meetings will be arranged and timetabled by administrative support. Meetings can be group meetings, although students must also be offered the opportunity to have an individual meeting. It is recognised that some differences will be unavoidable in terms of detail regarding issues to be explored and number of meetings for example to reflect regulatory structures, nature of studies, student’s situation, staff and student ratios and School professional services support and other support, particularly regarding postgraduate professional qualifications; the goal of consistency must, however, remain.”

2. This is similar to the present position, although it calls for there to be focus on consistency as a starting point. This is a change from the School led approach to UG personal tutoring in terms of implementation. The benefits of this are recognised, and also the challenges for Schools in addressing this; however, providing a consistent student focussed experienced must be the starting point. The Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum would be a place within which consistency can be explored.
3. Two meetings a year is considered to be a minimum base for creating a relationship with of course the ability for there to be further meetings as needed. There have been arguments for only one meeting a year, or for no meetings if the student does not wish to come; but this more open and student led approach runs the risk of losing the opportunity for building a close connection and community (particularly through group meetings) and for some students disengaging or feeling that they are not really supposed to go. It is recognised that for some programmes this might impose a workload challenge particularly for large professional programmes and this is noted in this report in relation to implementation and additional resource, and will be the subject of further discussion.

4. Timetabling meetings has often been said to be a burden for academic staff and that it is unclear for students when there will be meetings. Central organisation would address this and would mean that meetings could be put into MyTimetable or other tool. Feedback is that students may be more likely to attend and that the meeting then appears more official.

5. Issues which run through the consultation and debate are whether meetings are compulsory – in the sense that there are consequences for the student if they do not attend. In previous Aberdeen systems, there was a need to meet with an adviser to make academic course choices at the start of the academic year, and there is a view from staff that this reason to attend was valuable in creating a connection on which to build in the future. There is also the view that having compulsory meetings was disempowering of the student and that having a sanction for non-attendance may pose an additional challenge for those in need. Our present technology does enable access to VLEs to not be available until a student has met with a personal tutor at the start of the year; however, there is a view that this might have a negative impact on the students who are most in need, and leave students in a difficult position at the very start. Removal of access to the VLE for not attending personal tutor meetings could be imposed but it is suggested that this does not create an appropriate relationship - on which would ideally be an ongoing positive one, rather than one in which a tutor responds to problems. In summary, students are expected to attend meetings and if they do not do so they should be contacted and offered support; but there will be no penalty for non-attendance.

Recognition [Remit i and iii]
Recommendation 4

1. “A new workload allocation framework should be developed and adopted to reflect the new scope of the personal tutor role including regarding providing preliminary academic advice and the PGT role. There is a goal of consistency of workload allocation framework and system for personal tutor support per student and this is to be the same allocation for UG and PGT students, respecting the equal importance of provision of this support to UG and PGT students. Note that this is also for further consideration by the Workload Allocation Group, including regarding the amount to be allocated and it should also be borne in mind that the proposed level of contact exceeds present approaches in some Schools for UG students.”

2. This would be a change. Workloads are varied across the University for UG personal tutoring, and most Schools do not have a workload allocation for PGT pastoral support. It is recommended that the importance of the roles and the value of the support should be recognised in the same workload allocation being awarded to the role across Schools and at UG and PGT level. This should be aligned to workload discussions elsewhere in the University and to ensuring that all colleagues have a fair workload. This will go some way to addressing the additional payment issue in respect of Advisers. See also recommendation 9 in relation to annual review.

Leadership [Remit iii]
Recommendation 5

1. “Each School is to have at least one Senior Personal Tutor, who will likely be an academic. The PGT role is to be distinct from other PGT leadership roles, although it may be held by a person who holds these other roles; if so, additional workload is to be allocated to the colleague. The senior personal tutor for UG and PGT may be the same person, however specific workload allocation is to apply to each element of the role. If there is more than one Senior Personal Tutor in a School, these colleagues will be expected to liaise. The details of the workload allocated to this role will reflect the number of students in the School. Note that this is also for further consideration by the Workload Allocation Group, including regarding the amount to be allocated. There is a goal of consistency in approaches to these roles bearing in mind possible existing differences within Schools, including regarding roles of professional services colleagues.”
The Senior Personal Tutor(s) will work closely with relevant central administrative colleagues, Heads of School, Line Managers and other Senior Personal Tutors in supporting staff and students and in arranging allocation of students and will take a lead in resolving issues regarding the tutor-tutee relationships (with the Head of School or Dean for Student Support to do so if there is a conflict).”

2. The role of PGT personal tutoring is a change. It is proposed that Senior Personal Tutors will continue to have an important role in working as a community to lead delivery and support each other and disseminate practice and guidance to their Schools and support their tutor teams in School and assist in allocation. If the Senior Personal Tutor(s) is unable to fulfil the role, such as for research leave or personal reasons, the School is to provide an alternative.

What else [Remit ii and iii]

Recommendation 6

1. “The purpose of the personal tutor system and expectations of staff and student and how this intersects with other forms of support is to be set out clearly to staff and students. Training and resources for colleagues will continue to be enhanced, including, for all students, preliminary discussions of academic matters and making use of existing IT systems and the information they provide; and new resources, training and details of topics to be offered to be explored will be created as appropriate regarding PGT students. Support (including specialist counselling support) for staff regarding issues which may arise from supporting students will continue to be enhanced, and its availability made clear to all staff.”

2. This is not new in relation to UG; however, it reiterates the importance of this ongoing work. Information has been gathered in the Review regarding possible content for PGT pastoral support and this will be built on.

3. Consideration will be given to the development of more formal online training, similar to that for GBV and EDI including in relation to mental health. A key point again is to stress the limits of the PT role and that the PT is not a mental health adviser nor indeed a specialist adviser on any other specific issue.
Recommendation 7

1. “Tutor and tutee allocation is to be carried out centrally in the University for UG and PGT students, on the basis of information regarding staff provided by the Heads of School/Line Managers. Tutor and tutee would match with reference to School (not degree programme) and within that, if possible, by discipline; if colleagues in a School have expertise in a different area from the students in the School, then colleagues should be matched with students from a School which more reflects their expertise. The Senior Personal Tutor will work closely with the central allocation team to implement this. Additional workload and resource are to be made available to enable this central allocation. Within this, present practices could continue of Schools choosing that colleagues having expertise in supporting students who have shared with the University that they have particular characteristics (such as international, advanced entry, estranged from family); however, this matching is unlikely to be possible or sought in all cases and regard should be had to the possibility of a person having multiple characteristics. In any event, other support will continue to be provided to these student groups and the links between this and the personal tutor system will be made clear. The discipline match, when this is possible, would take priority over this other matching.”

2. This is a change. At present there is central allocation for UG students but not for PGT students. There is some informal matching of students with particular characteristics and in relation to discipline by requests made from Schools. The recommendation would create a new emphasis in relation to discipline matching and to enable some colleagues to support students from other Schools when appropriate. Depending on student numbers, this may not always be possible, hence see the fourth paragraph under Recommendation 1. Additional resource and system change would be needed to ensure that relevant information about characteristics which students have shared can be taken into account as appropriate in matching and for this to be able to be done at an appropriate time.
3. For PGT students, when possible, it is recommended that students are not matched with the Director of their PGT programme. There is mixed feedback on this, but some students would find it uncomfortable to discuss personal matters and academic difficulties with someone who they perceive as being in a position of power over them. For PGT students, there would need to be matching process for the growing number of January starts.

With what [Remit ii and iv]

Recommendation 8

1. “IT development work will be explored to ensure that the most effective use is made of existing information about students and their performance and experiences, including their engagement with the personal tutor system. There should also be further consideration by the University of new systems and approaches to data (such as dashboards drawing together student’s current experiences and use of university services, as appropriate in light of confidentiality obligations); it is not recommended that predictive technology is explored. This increased use of information, and in particular through a live dashboard, would inform in an efficient manner tutor-tutee and other human interactions, the offering of specialist support and assist in the making of risk-based decisions by humans. The focus of this is to enhance support offered to students.”

2. It is recommended that the University reopen its discussion on Learning Analytics such as solution path and the Tribal CRM personal tutor system (depending on its functionality) to explore what additional benefits might be gained from these in identified predicting students who may be in difficulty and following JISC guidance. This issue is also being explored in the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement Task and Finish Group. The results set out on page 14 of this report would be relevant to this further consideration. There would be significant resource involved in a Learning Analytics system and there are strong criticisms of a predictive model regarding a lack of empowerment of students, a branding of students and exclusion of students who may also be in need warrants further discussion. It is suggested that making the best use of what the University has from Student Records and VLEs should be the starting point for reasons of financial investment and privacy/student respect. It is also recommended that the live dashboard aspect of Learning Analytics issue should also be re-opened as a topic for discussion in the University.

13 https://www.jisc.ac.uk/learning-analytics
Making it work [Remit iii and iv]

Recommendation 9

1. “Processes and support mechanisms will be developed to enhance staff and student engagement with the personal tutor system. For staff, this could include engagement with Line Managers, personal tutoring being part of the induction process, the annual review system, the provision of additional training and ongoing support, and an IT based means of noting staff and student contact and following up with students. For students, this could include references to personal tutoring in the personal development courses available to UG and PGT students in their first year with the University, an IT based system by which students can see their levels of engagement with their tutor and also a dashboard of their present academic performance and engagement and personal tutor engagement to provide assurance that personal tutor meetings will be individualised. Additional workload and resource would be needed to bring this about. It is to be made clear to students that it is expected that they attend personal tutor meetings.”

2. Research leave and other reasons mean that it is not always possible for a student to have the same personal tutor during their studies, however this should be the goal. Additional support to the InfoHub would help students in being made aware of this and the reasons for it. This should be done sensitively to both staff and student to maintain engagement and support.

3. Queries relating to personal tutoring have been increased in recent years (in terms of queries received by the Info Hub). If the InfoHub is able to respond to these points even more quickly than at present, and with a committed, informed and supportive body of personal tutors, students are likely to have a better experience. Developing a system, perhaps via a VLE when students have not been contacted by the personal tutor could raise this fact, would be an easier way than students emailing the Infohub as at present. It would also be helpful for colleagues to be able to notify the Senior Personal Tutor when they have invited their students to a meeting. See also Recommendation 8 comments regarding Learning Analytics.
Next Steps: Consideration and Implementation

1. The Vision, Recommendations and initial proposals for implementation and evaluation will be considered by Senate for a further academic view in September 22 and then considered for approval by Student Support and Experience Committee, University Education Committee and then by Senate, as appropriate, from December 22 to February 23.

2. After this process is complete, the TFG would then develop more detailed proposals for the further implementation of the Recommendations. This is to include staff and student engagement with the personal tutor system; the issues to be explored in meetings, building as needed on the present practice; the details of a new PGT personal tutor system and its content (including for example regarding international students and its intersection with existing support systems for PGT students in Schools; and the new resource which is suggested would be needed including, if this would be helpful, detailed consideration of evidence relating to Learning Analytics.

3. The recommendations made by the TFG stand as a whole, as a package, and so the implementation plans would be for all of the recommendations together. A draft implementation plan which sets out possible paths is in Appendix A.

4. The consideration and as appropriate approval and implementation process will not be completed before academic year 22/3. For ongoing delivery of pastoral support in academic year 22/3, work continues through the Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum, the Student Experience and Student Support Teams and the Dean for Student Support, to further enhance resources and training (including regarding specific groups such as international students) and to make clear the present scope of the UG personal tutor system. They will also support Schools in any ongoing work to deliver the support for PGT students set out in guidance which was provided to School pastoral PGT leads in January 2022. This is, however, very much an interim solution.
5. For now, it is anticipated that the additional resources set out in the following paragraphs would be needed. See also recommendations 2, 3, 7, 8, 9 which are noted above as requiring additional resource and additional staff in the InfoHub, School offices and academics (in the light of staff student ratios) to enable the proposals to be delivered. Further details would be developed in due course.

6. An extra layer of work would be involved in all School workload allocation processes in identifying who, if anyone, is not to take on the role and the implications of this for other roles to be assumed by colleagues, and the number of students per colleagues. Extra academic staff may be needed to be able to provide to students the consistent support recommended in a workable manner.

7. If the recommendations are adopted, additional resource would be needed in the InfoHub or School offices, to manage PGT allocation (a new role) and to grouping with reference to disciplines and in some cases to characteristics and arranging meeting times.

8. Further discussion would be needed as to the details of the workload to be given, with decisions to be made by the Workload Review Group.

9. Additional resource would be needed in Student Experience/Wellbeing and Student Support to inform and lead training and produce webpages and materials in a coherent and user-friendly manner.

10. IT development time would be needed for VLEs, Student Records and Student Hub and to explore any additional functionality to make the best use of the information that we have. Significant resource would be needed if discussions do continue and any decisions made in relation to a live dashboard and Learning Analytics, and indeed to engage in those discussions.

**The future: Evaluation**

1. This TFG will also consider this more fully once the further academic view is received from Senate. The TFG will develop a set of baselines and questions from which change can be assessed. This will draw on points made, and questions raised in the Review and in the evidence base and arguments supporting the Recommendations.
2. It is proposed that the actions building on the review would be covered for the next 5 years in the first instance (so covering the student journey of all full-time undergraduates) in the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey and also in the Staff Survey or in additional surveys, taking into account the need to avoid survey overload.

3. Annual focus groups and/or listening sessions will also be held with staff and students.
Appendix A

Draft Implementation Plan August 22

This document sets out initial proposals for implementation of the substantive recommendations of the Pastoral Review TFG if the University should choose to adopt them. All references to approval in this document should be viewed in the light of this.

Initial implementation thoughts

The substantive recommendations and these initial implementation proposals will be considered at Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC) on 23 August 2022, University Education Committee (UEC) on 25 August 2022 and then by Senate on 14 September 22 for a further academic view.

The substantive recommendations will be updated in the light of feedback received. They will then be considered with a request for approval at SSEC on 8 December 22, UEC on 16 January 23 and Senate on 8 February 23.

The initial implementations will also be updated and are put forward to assist in these discussions and to provide a base for more detailed consideration in the next phase of the TFG or through a Project Board, including regarding web sources, IT support and change, financial investment and new posts, if the recommendations should be adopted. It is proposed that project management techniques will be deployed to assist in this and initial provisional dialogue has taken place.

Note: related work is ongoing in the Monitoring, Absence and Engagement TFG which will follow the same timetable for consideration and possible approval. It is suggested it may be valuable to explore combining the delivery of some of the outputs of these TFGs.
**Vision from Pastoral Review TFG report (taken from present draft)**

“All undergraduate and postgraduate taught students will be allocated a Personal Tutor. So far as possible, the student will have the same personal tutor during their time at the University and this will be someone who is familiar with the student’s area of study and at an appropriate level of seniority. The Personal Tutor will be a first person for the student to contact regarding academic and non-academic support and will then support the student in seeking guidance from more specialist staff as needed. All students are to be offered at least 2 meetings per academic year and are expected to attend. There will be individual and group meetings to support students in their academic decision making, personal development and needs and in building connections and a community. Heads of School/Line Managers may decide that some staff are not to carry out the role from time to time. Training and resources will be enhanced to support staff and students regarding the scope of the role and its limits. Enhanced use is to be made of existing data sources and further consideration is to be given to the University investing in a live dashboard form of learning analytics to support staff in providing students with targeted, relevant and informed support. Workload is to be allocated for all personal tutor activity in a fair and consistent manner across the University.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recs from TFG report (summarised)</th>
<th>Procedure/step required to deliver</th>
<th>Governance/Committee approval</th>
<th>Inter-Dependencies</th>
<th>Priority level</th>
<th>Timelines</th>
<th>Asks/resource</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
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<td>1 The personal tutor will have a holistic and overview role in supporting all UG and PGT students. (pages 21-3)</td>
<td>PGT personal tutor role to be created</td>
<td>Education Committees -Senate -Policy -? other committees</td>
<td>Approval required for all formal work on PGT</td>
<td>High/first</td>
<td>Approval in Principle through Academic view Senate Sept 22, approval path SSEC Dec 22, UEC Jan 23, Senate Feb 23</td>
<td>Dean for Student Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Approval of wider scope of UG role to cover academic matters</td>
<td>Education Committees, Senate Policy ? other committees</td>
<td>Approval required for academic support for UG to be formalised</td>
<td>High/first</td>
<td>Approval in Principle through Academic view Senate Sept 22, approval path SSEC Dec 22, UEC Jan 23, Senate Feb 23. Detailed policy to follow</td>
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<td>Approval of changes for eligibility and holding UG role and for new PGT</td>
<td>-Education Committees -Senate -Policy -? other committees</td>
<td>Approval required for new system to come about</td>
<td>High/first</td>
<td>Approval in Principle through Academic view Senate Sept 22, approval path SSEC Dec 22, UEC Jan 23, Senate Feb 23. Detailed policy to follow</td>
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<td>expertise by Heads of School/Line Managers, on contracts of 12 months or more and who are 0.5FTE or more, eligible to deliver personal tutor support to UG and/or PGT students. (pages 23-5)</td>
<td>HoS/ALM to set up formal system of identifying any colleague not to take on role</td>
<td>Approval by SSEC</td>
<td>Needs approval Rec 1 and 2 of roles and that not all do it</td>
<td>High/second</td>
<td>Begin after substantive approval of recs 1/2 Will build on existing informal practices</td>
<td>More formal part in School role allocation process (see p28 point 6 report)</td>
<td>Dean for Student Support, Heads of Student/ALM</td>
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<td>Identify recommended total number of students and guidance on how this</td>
<td>Guidance from SSEC</td>
<td>Needs approval Rec 1 and 2 of roles and that not all do it</td>
<td>High/second</td>
<td>Begin after substantive approval of recs 1/2</td>
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<td>Goal of consistency of personal tutor support to be provided to all UG and</td>
<td>Approval of Goal</td>
<td>-Education Committees -Senate -Policy</td>
<td>Aligned with approval of rec 1</td>
<td>High /first</td>
<td>Approval in Principle through Academic view Senate Sept 22, approval path SSEC Dec 22, UEC Jan 23, Senate Feb 23, then decision by SMT and staff recruitment committees</td>
<td>Increased role for academic staff in some Schools for UG and in all Schools for PGT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

can work flexibly particularly with large professional cohorts

If not all colleagues are to take on the role, more academic staff may be needed to deliver it

Commitment in principle from SMT and staff recruitment committees that ability for the School to deliver personal tutor support within the scope of the recommendations is a relevant reason for post approval

High /first

Approval in Principle through Academic view Senate Sept 22, approval path SSEC Dec 22, UEC Jan 23, Senate Feb 23, then decision by SMT and staff recruitment committees

More academic staff (see p28 point 6 report)

Heads of School
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PGT students. (pages 25-7)</th>
<th></th>
<th>Jan 23, Senate Feb 23. Detailed policy to follow</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Materials to be provided setting up expectations of staff and student, regularity of meetings and content – enhanced for UG and new for PGT.</td>
<td>SSEC</td>
<td>Needs approval of rec 1/2</td>
<td>High/second and ongoing</td>
<td>Development of resources and schedule of expectations. Staff resource Infohub, Student Support, Student Experience to ensure aligned approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central or School admin resource to arrange meetings (not to be done by personal tutors)</td>
<td>Commitment in principle from SMT and staff recruitment committees that new posts will be created to enable this</td>
<td>Needs approval of rec 1/2</td>
<td>High/second</td>
<td>Approval in Principle through Academic view Senate Sept 22, approval path SSEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>New resource required in School or Central</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dean for Student Support
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Background/Responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Development of systems to arrange meetings</td>
<td>Needs approval of recommendation 1/2 and commitment to resource (see above)</td>
<td>Medium/third</td>
<td>IT and human systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Begin consideration after Academic view Senate Sept 22 approval path</td>
<td>Dean for Student Support and InfoHub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>completed ending Feb 23 and recruitment approval</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>A new workload allocation framework to reflect the new scope of the personal tutor role (page 27)</td>
<td>Proposals developed by Student Support and Experience Committee, linked with University workload review group</td>
<td>Recs 1 and 3</td>
<td>Will involve increased human hours given growth of role, even with suggested enhanced IT and systems (see)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>High/first</td>
<td>Dean for Student Support/TFG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Each School to have at least one Senior Personal Tutor, likely an academic (page 27-8) | Appointment | Rec 1 re PGT personal tutor to be created and then lead | High/second – are leads however formalising key to entrench system for PGT ongoing have, need one, can continue | Begin after formal approval (Senate Feb 23) Build on existing practices re UG | Colleague(s) to be allocated role and workload | Heads of School

Role description to be formalised and publicised on web pages | SSEC | Rec 1 | High/second | Begin after formal approval (Senate Feb 23) Build on existing practices re UG | Additional IT and InfoHub resource to update webpages | Dean for Student Support, InfoHub

6 Purpose of the personal tutor system, expectations of staff and student, intersection | Create resources, building on existing UG and new resources for PGT resources (especially | Rec 1 | High/second | Begin after formal approval (Senate Feb 23) Build on existing | Additional IT and InfoHub resource to update webpages Build on consultation as a detail | Dean for Student Support, TFG
with other forms of support to be set out clearly (pages 28-9)

| monitoring, academic detail, student learning service, CAD specialist services MyCurriculum and for different student groups eg international, widening access | practices re UG | Will be ongoing process and need resource |

| New Academic training delivered by and for schools in light specific needs eg credits, options, honours issues | Rec 1 | High/first | Begin after formal approval (Senate Feb 23) | Human support to develop training gathering central and school knowledge, building on existing CAD and School training |

Dean for Student Support
Senior Pastoral Leads
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Recs</th>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Responsible Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|    | Enhancing existing pastoral training and turn into online compulsory training like eg EDI | 1, 3   | High/second | Begin after formal approval (Senate Feb 23)  
Build on existing training (see report page 28 point 9)  
IT support to develop training, InfoHub to provide ongoing support | Dean for Student Support, Senior Pastoral Leads        |
| 7  | Tutor and tutee allocation to be carried out centrally for UG and PGT students (pages 29-30) | Rec 1 and 3 | High/first  | Begin after formal approval (Senate Feb 23)  
23/4 action  
Need new Central resources to do this for PGT (entirely new) and to have more targeting matching when possible for UG (report page 28 point 7)  
Resource to match Jan starts | Dean for Student Support                                |
|    | Process established for combining School requests, student characteristic, aligned with other existing systems, Sept and Jan intakes  
Commitment in principle from SMT and staff recruitment committees that new posts will be created to enable this | Digital Strategy Committee | | | |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>central/school administrative to be carried out</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New school resource to identify disciplines and experiences</td>
<td>Rec 1 and 3</td>
<td>High/second</td>
<td>Begin after formal approval (Senate Feb 23)</td>
<td>School workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New training to make better use of MyAberdeen and SRS</td>
<td>High/second</td>
<td>Summer and autumn 22 (building ongoing work and existing training resources)</td>
<td>Ongoing resource allocated to this issue (see report page 28 point 10)</td>
<td>IT training team, Senior Pastoral Leads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Most effective use is made of existing information about students and their performance and experiences, including personal tutor system (pages 30-31).</td>
<td>Digital Strategy Committee</td>
<td>High/first (exploration)</td>
<td>Begin after formal approval</td>
<td>Enhancement of VLEs for staff and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creation of new intersections</td>
<td>Dean for Student Support, Digital</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further consideration by the University of new systems and approaches to data (page 31)</td>
<td>Consideration of reopening live dashboard conversation</td>
<td>Senate, Digital Strategy Committee</td>
<td>High but separate – though links with steps suggested to existing IT systems</td>
<td>Build on discussions leading to Senate 23</td>
<td>New IT systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
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<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processes and support mechanisms</td>
<td>Induction</td>
<td></td>
<td>High/second</td>
<td>Ongoing based on</td>
<td>Materials and inclusion of issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Privacy policy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>between MyAberdeen and SRS/enhancement of MyAberdeen (including possible flag - without detail - of student having engaged with support services or discipline issue so personal tutor is aware and for PT to be notified)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Senate Feb 23) 23/4 action</td>
<td>student, more likely to be used. Flags to humans to then act</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

46
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>to enhance staff and student engagement with personal tutor system (pages 31-2)</th>
<th>Line management, annual review systems, promotion</th>
<th>High/second</th>
<th>Links with existing work in these areas</th>
<th>SVP, Heads of School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students to see on VLE/IT system their engagement with personal tutor system and with their studies</td>
<td>DSC after Senate and committee process</td>
<td>High/second</td>
<td>Begin after formal approval (Senate Feb 23) 23/4 action</td>
<td>Dean for Student Support, Digital Strategic Committee, TFG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement of staff with system to be visible to SPT</td>
<td>Digital Strategy Committee after Senate and committee process</td>
<td>High/second</td>
<td>Begin after formal approval (Senate Feb 23) 23/4 action</td>
<td>Dean for Student Support, Digital Strategic Committee, TFG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B

Governance and Delivery of Remit

1. The TFG remit set out below (5.2.1-3) that the TFG will
   -review the present position, develop more targeted questions to be posed and hold focus groups and consider pulse surveys
   -share its thoughts with the full Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum and the Steering Group of the Enhancement Theme Resilient Learning Communities
   -report to and take views from the Student Support Committee and the University Education committee, Senate and the Student Experience Committee

2. This TFG fulfilled this remit regarding the first item, see pages 12-14. Regarding the second and third items, the work of the TFG was discussed at University Education Committee on 6 December 2021, 18 January 2022, 17 February 2022, 17 March 2022, 13 April 2022, 10 May 2022 and 25 August 2022; Student Support Committee on 18 October 2021, 8 December 2021, 3 February 22, 21 March 2022, April 2022 and 23 August 2022; Employability and Entrepreneurship Committee on 26 October 21, the Steering Group of the Enhancement Theme Resilient Learning Communities on 9 December 2021 and the Senior Pastoral Guidance and Support Forum on 7 March 2022. Details are found in papers for and minutes of these meetings. The TFG met on 9 June 21, 4 October 21, 3 November 21, 8 December 2021, 12 January 2022, 23 March 2022, 25 May 2022 and 28 July 2022. Full notes were circulated to the TEAM site and the TFG also kept in touch in between meetings via the TEAM and email.

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

ABERDEEN 2040 STUDENT PASTORAL SUPPORT REVIEW TASK AND FINISH GROUP
REMIT AND COMPOSITION

(Sub-Group of the University Education Committee (UEC))

1. GROUP TITLE

Student Pastoral Support Review Task and Finish Group

2. TERM OF GROUP

Established June 2021. It is anticipated that the Group will submit its recommendations to the UEC by April 2022 and will provide regular updates before then.

3. CHAIR AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT AREA

Chair: Dean of Student Support
Administrative Support Area: Student Experience

4. PURPOSE

The University’s Enhancement Led Institutional Review (EILIR), published in 2019, identified goals of reviewing the pastoral support provided for PGT students, and also the UG PT system which had been established by Senate in 2013. The ELIR One Year on Report
approved at Senate on 5 February 2020 refers to monitoring and expansion of personal tutoring for online students and to support for PGT students. This group will carry out that review.

5. **REMIT**

The review will recommend any changes which should be made to the UG personal tutoring and PGT pastoral support on the Aberdeen and Qatar campuses for on campus/blended/online teaching in respect of

5.1. who is to deliver it?

5.1.2 the nature of the support and information sharing needed to support this

5.1.3 how to enhance staff and student engagement with the personal tutor and pastoral support systems

5.1.4 identify priorities and prepare and deliver an implementation plan, including as appropriate requests for additional resource

5.1.5 develop an internal benchmarking and evaluation plan

5.2.1 This group will review the present position, develop more targeted questions to be posed and hold focus groups and consider pulse surveys

5.2.2 share its thoughts with the full Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum and the Steering Group of the Enhancement Theme Resilient Learning Communities

5.2.3 report to and take views from the Student Support Committee and the University Education committee, Senate and the Student Experience Committee
6. **COMPOSITION**

Chair:  Dean for Student Support

Membership:  Representatives from Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum  
Representatives from Enhancement Theme Resilient Learning  
Communities Steering Group  
Students’ Association Representatives (Sabbaticals and School Conveners)

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**ACCOUNT TO BE TAKEN OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN MEMBERSHIP**

7. **MEMBERSHIP**

The review will be led by Dean for Student Support, with a small working group drawn from the Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum, Enhancement Theme Resilient Learning Communities Steering Group, AUSA sabbatical officers and School Convenors

The group will comprise

Martin Barker (Senior Personal Tutor SBS)  
Anna Bokedal (Senior Personal Tutor LLVMC)  
Abbe Brown (Dean for Student Support)
Amy Bryzgel (PGT Lead LLVMC) *(moved on)*

John Cavanagh (Senior Personal Tutor Engineering)

Isobel Crane (Senior Personal Tutor MMSN)

Ivana Drdakova (AUSA VP-Welfare) *(joined)*

Nick Edwards (Head of Student Support)

Tania Fahey Palma (DHPA PGT Senior Personal Tutor) *(joined)*

Grainne Ferrigan (Online Learning)

Fiona Findlater (InfoHub)

David Green (PGT Lead Geosciences)

Tracey Innes (Lead Careers and Employability)

Ken Jeffrey (Senior Personal Tutor, DHPA) *(moved on)*

Ondrej Kucerack (AUSA Vice-President Education)

Jo Kunzlik (PGT Support Lead Law) *(moved on)*

Sally Middleton (Widening Access)

Farhana Mustari (PGT student)

Jemma Murdoch (Lead Student Support Adviser (General))

Helen Pierce (DHPA Resilience Learning Communities Community of Practice) *(moved on)*

Emma Richards (Business School, Student Progression) *(joined)*

Ian Robotham (IT) *(joined)*
Karen Scaife (Student Experience)

Emily Strickland (Student Convenor)

Steve Tucker (MMSN, Lead Resilience Learning Communities Community of Practice)

Max Vallarino (Student Convenor)

Mel Viney (Lead Go Abroad Officer)

Alina Zorn (Student Convenor)

8. REPORTING LINE/ PARENT COMMITTEE AND INTERFACE WITH OTHER COMMITTEES

Formal reporting line: Student Support Committee (SSC)

University Education Committee (UEC)

Interface with other committees: Student Support Committee (SSC)

School Education Committees,

Senior Pastoral and Guidance Forum

Resilient Learning Communities Steering Group

9. FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF MEETINGS

Meetings to be at least monthly for the duration of the working group.

10. PUBLICATION OF PAPERS

The agenda and meeting papers will be made available at least one week prior to meetings of the TFG. Where these papers are
draft, this will be clearly identified.