Introduction

This document provides information about the roles and responsibilities for students registered at all levels (attending and distance learning) and personal tutors in the personal tutoring relationship. You will find key information that you need to fulfil these roles effectively. If you have any questions about the information within this document, please contact the Teaching Support Unit (TSU) in the first instance.

You can email the TSU team on scharr-pt@sheffield.ac.uk, or for attending students, come to ScHARR reception on floor 1 of Regent Court. Reception is open 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday and a member of the TSU team should be available to help with your query.
Student support and development

The University is committed to ensuring that all students have access to the best student support and development available. This requires a coordinated effort across both ScHARR and student service departments. ScHARR has a range of provision intended to help students maintain and improve their wellbeing, personal and academic development, and understanding of University practices, employability, and sense of community. Personal tutoring is one of several mechanisms by which ScHARR delivers this. The personal tutor is not expected to directly help students with all of their support and development needs. However, it is expected that they will be able to provide tutees with the information that enables them to access the services and support they need as outlined below.
Staff support and development

Being a personal tutor can appear to be an overwhelming prospect and some students can have complex problems and expectations. Staff should familiarize themselves with the content of the Handbook and particularly the roles and responsibilities of the PT.

The University provides information for personal tutoring and academic support via Learning and Teaching Services: http://www.shef.ac.uk/lets/toolkit/support/tutor. This is information that personal tutors will find useful while undertaking the role, and they are advised to familiarise themselves with the content.

There will be a number of staff training opportunities relating to being a PT starting with a Bite Size in early November. The senior tutor in ScHARR is Dr Jennifer Burr (j.a.burr@sheffield.ac.uk). She can be contacted for additional support.
Aims of handbook

- To define the roles and responsibilities of a personal tutor and student in this relationship.
- To provide information on policies and procedures within the University relevant to a personal tutor.
- To provide information on student support services within the University.
Student entitlement

- All students will be allocated a named personal tutor within the first month of commencing their programme.
- All students will be provided with a clear statement regarding the role of the personal tutor and their own responsibilities in respect of personal tuition.
- In the event of a tutor leaving or being absent from the University for an extended period of time, or of a breakdown in the relationship between tutor and student that cannot be resolved, students will be allocated a different tutor.
- Arrangements for meetings with personal tutors, including the time and location, will be communicated to students.
- Meetings (or equivalent for distance learners) will occur once per semester, as a minimum, and a record of these meetings will be made.
- Distance learning students will be able to ‘meet’ their personal tutor via email, Skype, or whichever means best suits both parties.
Responsibilities of the personal tutor

- Provide help and guidance for students to progress through their programme.
- Mark and provide basic feedback on the writing skills test essay in semester one (details at the end of this document).
- Act as a gateway to other support services. In particular, personal tutors should ascertain whether there are any obstacles to a student’s progress and should provide information on available help.
- Take the initiative in arranging an initial tutorial meeting early in the first semester (potentially after the submission of the writing skills test essay if appropriate) and offer one tutorial meeting (or equivalent for distance learners) each semester.
- Wherever possible a student should remain with the same tutor throughout the duration of their study.
- Emphasise to students that attending personal tutorials is an important part of their academic development.
- Provide information for staff writing references for students.
- Keep an agreed record of meetings. All meetings should be recorded on the Student Attendance Monitoring System. Further details will be given to tutors.
- Respond to requests for meetings promptly, and refer to other sources of help if an early meeting is not possible.
- Be aware of the broader network of support services and to be ready to refer on when appropriate.
- Act as a link with other members of academic staff and as an advocate for the student if they are required to do so.
Responsibilities of the student

- Attend all scheduled personal tutor meetings and/or respond to email correspondence with your tutor.
- If they are unable to attend a personal tutor meeting they must inform the tutor of the reason for their inability to attend at the earliest possible time.
- Undertake any preparation necessary to make full use of the meeting.
- Complete, and submit for the required deadline, the writing skills test essay in semester one of the first year of study.
- Respond promptly to requests from their personal tutor for a meeting.
- Know how best to contact their personal tutor in the event of an emergency.
- Keep the personal tutor informed of circumstances that may have an effect on their studies.
General guidance for tutors

The role of the personal tutor is to refer the student to appropriate support, both within the University and externally. Personal tutors are not trained to provide specialist support (for example, as counsellors), but will instead do the following:

- listen carefully
- help students explore what possible solutions there may be
- identify what support students have access to (see below)
- assess their capacity to help by considering whether the problem falls within or outside their personal tutor role
- explain sensitively the reasons for a referral, encouraging the student to participate in the decision
- encourage students to self-refer where at all possible

Different combinations of pressures may affect a student at particular times of the year. As well as a brief check on academic progress, it is useful to check that things are going well in general, and whether there are other issues which may mean the student requires advice on a source of support or guidance.

It can help to ask about a few general pastoral care areas as a prompt – but only as a way of directing a student to a source of support. Areas could include:

- For attending students, accommodation
- Time pressures – family, travel, paid work, stress?
- Seasonal pressures – holidays, finance?
- Contact with peers – making friends, meeting other students to discuss study with, isolation for distance learners?
Confidentiality

The Freedom of Information Act and the Data Protection Act govern good practice in confidentiality. The guidelines below are based on general good practice.

- Ensuring confidentiality is vital in encouraging students to come forward and seek help when they need it. Students need to know that any information they give will be treated with respect and passed on only with their agreement to those who need to know.

- If a personal tutor is in receipt of sensitive information, which has implications for the student’s academic process, the student needs to be clear what will happen with that information. This includes who is told, what they are told, why they are told, and where the information is to be held or stored. The student needs to understand any steps to be taken, and give their consent to the information being passed on to the appropriate parties.

- If the information does not have immediate implications for their academic work, the personal tutor may want to recommend another source of support or information, but there should be no need for the information to be passed on to a third party.

- Confidential information about students should not be sent by email. Written information should be marked ‘confidential’.

- There are exceptional circumstances in which there might be a need to break confidentiality without the student’s consent: if it is felt that there could be safety issues for the student, or for others and if there is a legal requirement to disclose information.
Writing skills test essay

All new ScHARR students will attend or have online access to a session on academic writing skills. Following this, students will be required to complete a short test essay of about 800 words. This should demonstrate that students can:

- summarise the arguments from published papers;
- consider differing views on a topic;
- show which of two contrasting views students consider the most persuasive and why

Students are not expected to do background reading or literature searching for this task and will be provided with two source documents, presenting for and against arguments on a specific issue.

Personal tutors will give feedback on the test essay and students will be able to discuss the essay with them. Further details about the marking process will be circulated to staff.

Further information is available in MOLE or from students’ personal tutors.
Useful University web pages

Students’ Union
www.shef.ac.uk/union

Student Services Information Desk (SSiD)
general information for all students
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid

Student Advice Centre
independent confidential advice for all students
www.shef.ac.uk/union/student-advice-centre/index.php

SSiD On-Line Forms
student status forms, add/drop forms, module correction forms, change of address forms, change of status forms, medical certificates, council tax exemption certificates
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/forms

Frequently Asked Questions (Ask Sheffield)
ssid.sheffield.ac.uk/asksheffield/

Your University Record
your registration information, update your contact details, add/drop information, list of modules available
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/record

Things Not Going Right?
help and support for students
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/sos

Financial Information
includes fees, financial help and student loans
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/finance
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/fees

Disability & Dyslexia Support Service
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/disability

Essential Guide for Mature Students
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/welfare/mature

Information for International Students
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/international

University Health Service
www.shef.ac.uk/health

Nightline
classified anonymous listening and information service
www.sheffieldnightline.co.uk

Counselling Service
www.shef.ac.uk/counselling

University Administration
www.shef.ac.uk/ssid/administration

The University of Sheffield Governance
sets out the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations of the University
www.shef.ac.uk/govern

Careers Service
www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students

Student Job Shop
www.shef.ac.uk/careers/students/jobs/jobshop

Accommodation
www.sheffield.ac.uk/accommodation

Transport and Parking
www.sheffield.ac.uk/parkingservices