Personal Tutor Manual 2012-13

(Streatham and St Luke’s campuses)

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**Introduction**

Whether you are new to the role of personal tutoring or you have been one for a number of years, welcome to this Personal Tutor Manual. Exeter values very highly the role of the personal tutor and views it as an integral part of the student experience. This manual has been prepared to ensure that you are as well prepared as possible for your role as a personal tutor, and to ensure that you are aware of the full range of support available to you and your tutees.

**Why is the role of the personal tutor important?**

Personal tutoring provides a framework for each student to have a named academic contact within the College who they can talk to about their personal development, career planning and pastoral concerns. As the personal face of the University you can therefore be extremely influential in enhancing the quality of their experience.

As a personal tutor, you are not expected to be a specialist advisor or counsellor but you do have a key role in identifying students in difficulty, and signposting them to appropriate sources of help and guidance. You will need to be supportive, helpful and try to understand (though not necessarily share) the student's point of view. At times, it may also be necessary for you to challenge students over their progress, performance or attendance.

**The undergraduate profile**

Whether a student is young or mature, from the UK or overseas, familiar and comfortable with the ‘culture’ of higher education, or not, coming to university can bring with it a range of positive but also difficult experiences. Pastoral issues commonly occur at times of transition, particularly when arriving or about to leave university. But there will be other changes – moving out of hall, starting a new academic year, returning from a year abroad or a period of interruption, relationship break-downs and bereavement – that can put additional pressure on students and lead them to seek one-to-one support.

The following provides a brief outline of different student cohorts, though it must be emphasised that the categories identified below are far from mutually exclusive. The Students Guild[^1] and International Student Support[^2] offer targeted support for mature and international students.

**First year students**

The first semester is a particularly critical one for new students. As a personal tutor, you are likely to be a vital piece of the jigsaw in helping your tutees make the adjustment to university. If they are young and leaving home for the first time, they may feel lost and bewildered, having left behind the security of everything they regarded as familiar. The difficulties of struggling with acute homesickness should never be underestimated. Anxieties can also build up as students approach the deadline for their first piece of assessed work. Equally they may also need reminding as to how critical the acquisition of work experience and career planning is in their 1st year in order to apply for graduate opportunities in their 2nd and 3rd year. It can take several weeks or months for students to settle in to university life and to feel comfortable and confident in their academic abilities.

**Second year students**

It is not always appreciated that second year students may also encounter difficulties. They may struggle to adjust to having to work at a higher level, and this can be coupled with the dawning realisation that their marks from now on will ‘count’ towards their degree classification. Some may be concerned about debt, and trying to balance part-time work with their studies, and increasingly students will be aware of the competition they face for graduate level employment. Tutors can play a vital role at this point, reminding tutees of the academic and professional skills development opportunities offered by the university, all of which can play an important part in enhancing their employability.

[^1]: http://www.exeterguild.org/
[^2]: http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/international
Final Year students
When students enter their final year they sometimes struggle, both academically and emotionally. They may feel unprepared for the world of work and the thought of leaving university may be terrifying. They may be experiencing anxiety about final exams or worried about trying to build a career around a subject they no longer wish to pursue. Parental expectations can be debilitating. Some international students may be apprehensive for a range of reasons regarding returning to their own country.

International students
Pastorally, the biggest issues you will need to be aware of are culture shock and loneliness. Even for those students whose first language is English there will be cultural differences with which they are not familiar. Parental expectations, acute isolation, often exacerbated by struggling to cope with the English language and British culture, can all impact on students’ academic progress. Similarly, if the model of teaching is different to that at home, students may feel overwhelmed by the requirements of their course. They may have difficulty adjusting to a model of higher education firmly based on independent learning.

Mature students
Mature students are defined as being 21 years or more on 30th September on year of entry for an undergraduate, and 25 for a postgraduate. The decision to enter higher education is likely to have been a more complex and far-reaching one for them. For some it may be a while since they last studied; therefore the academic environment will be wholly alien to them. Mature students often feel that they have to work harder to prove that they can keep up and have lower expectations of their academic ability. They often report concerns about study skills, and also their ability to adjust to an ‘academic’ way of thinking. They may feel isolated in an educational environment where individual contact time with tutors is more limited than they had anticipated and there is a greater emphasis on students taking responsibility for their own learning.

Some students with families may find themselves on a complex combination of student financial support, benefits and income from other family members, and this will often lead to worries and concerns about money issues. These circumstances may affect a student’s commitment to their programme. Some students may be combining the degree with a job, making social time with other students very limited. It can be hard to maintain the levels of motivation required over many years.

Postgraduate students
All Postgraduate Taught (PGT) students at Exeter should have a named personal tutor, and receive personal and academic support which addresses their needs. This can present particular challenges, given the relatively short duration and wide variety of such programmes. However, for the same reason, the timing of progress checks and review of feedback is particularly important. The Code of Practice: Personal Tutor System suggests that PGT students should have at least three personal tutor meetings per year.

Tutors should be particularly mindful of issues that might disadvantage the learning of PGT students, directing tutees to specialist services where appropriate. Support for the personal development and welfare of postgraduate research students is covered by the Code of Practice – Supervision of Postgraduate Research Students.

Code of good practice
The University has a Code of Good Practice for its Personal Tutor System with which personal tutors are encouraged to familiarise themselves. The Code defines a set of minimum standards, and is available at the link below. Some of the key principles are as follows:

5 http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/Part%206B%202010%20Personal%20Tutor%20System%20CoP%20FINAL.pdf
6 http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/Part%207%20Epgsuper.pdf
7 http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/Part%206B%202010%20Personal%20Tutor%20System%20CoP%20FINAL.pdf
Every College must ensure that all its students receive: regular one to one and (where appropriate) group meetings with personal tutors, to discuss students’ academic progress and encourage them to engage in Personal Development Planning (PDP). For a more detailed description of what this involves, see page xx of this manual.

Personal tutors should also be a port of call for students’ pastoral concerns, although where appropriate, tutors are advised to signpost students to specialist support services.

Tutors should meet with their first year tutees at least twice each semester and non-first year undergraduates and PGT students should have at least three personal tutor meetings per year.

Personal tutors should ensure that their first meeting with new taught student tutees (undergraduate and taught postgraduate) is held by the end of their first week of study, although this does not need to be through a formal one-to-one tutorial and may take place in the context of the College’s induction programme.

Personal tutors should also initiate a tutorial where there are reports of unsatisfactory attendance or performance from module conveners, or in the event of any other cause for concern.

Each College should have at least one Senior Tutor or equivalent key contact for personal tutors, who can provide guidance, support and resources to others in the College, including, where appropriate, schedules, suggested agendas and checklists for tutorial meetings. This individual should be able to assist, as appropriate, in the management of more complex cases such as those involving disciplinary and Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study procedures.

Colleges must provide personal tutors with basic information about their personal tutees at the outset of the programme. They must also ensure that personal tutors have access to, or receive information about, tutees’ academic progress throughout their degree programme.

New personal tutors should be encouraged to attend training opportunities provided by Education Enhancement and be provided with a copy of the Personal Tutor Manual or College-based version of it, as appropriate.

The roles and responsibilities of the personal tutor

The University has the following formal role description for personal tutors.

<table>
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<th>Role Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Personal Tutor will have primary responsibility for:</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Developing and maintaining a safe and confidential relationship with their tutees</td>
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<td>● Providing advice and support to tutees in matters related to academic work and students’ personal development</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Working with tutees to find appropriate pathways to resolve difficulties</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Representing the University to the tutee and the tutee to the University.</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Maintaining effective communication with other support services on behalf of tutees.</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Main duties and responsibilities</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Maintaining regular contact with each tutee</td>
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<td>2. Giving appropriate support to tutees</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Documenting tutorial support</td>
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<td>4. Providing guidance on Personal Development Plans (PDP)</td>
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<td>5. Supporting tutees in their career development</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Following up tutees who are not making satisfactory progress</td>
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<td>7. Liaising with other members of academic and administrative staff, as appropriate</td>
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<td>8. Maintaining awareness of other sources of support within the University</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Providing information regarding academic progress, assessment and examinations</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Writing references on request</td>
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Whilst personal tutors are not expected to be experts in counselling or careers advice, it is important to support students and help them to access specialist guidance.
Training and resources to support the personal tutor

A series of awareness-raising sessions relevant to personal tutoring can be arranged for your College through Education Enhancement⁶. Bookable training sessions can also be accessed centrally through Learning and Development⁷.

Some student services provide resources for staff, whether in their capacity as personal tutors or more generally. A good example is the Guide to Helping Distressed Students⁸, produced by Wellbeing Services⁹. The Student Counselling Service provides useful self-help support¹⁰. The Taught Faculty Office ¹¹ provides the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual (TQA) which includes information about interruption, appeals, critical incidents and misconduct. Student complaints and appeals¹² explains clearly the way the University deals with student cases. The student record system¹³ is a good way of finding more information about your tutees, including how to access student marks, email tutor groups and access ePDP records.

The Student Services Centre in the Forum is a focal point for all Student Services Support. The Student Information Desk offers a single access gateway to Student Services including: Accommodation, Student Fees, Student Funding, Study Skills Support, AccessAbility, International Student Support, Wellbeing, UniCard, Registry Services, Chaplaincy, Exams and Graduation. The Student Information Desk team are well placed to respond to questions or signpost to the appropriate service.

Further resources to support your role as a personal tutor are:

- Education Enhancement’s Academic Practice web pages on Personal Tutoring¹⁴ - including guidance, policies and resources
- Student Service Centre website¹⁵, a web resource designed to clearly signpost students (and tutors) to appropriate support services

Responsibilities of tutees

Your tutees have responsibilities in their relationship with you, and it is important that you make these clear to them. At minimum they should include:

- To attend all scheduled and other requested meetings or agree an alternative time if it is inconvenient.
- To check e-mail every day and their internal post at least twice weekly for messages from you and to respond as appropriate.
- To seek support from you when needed.
- To be familiar with the College’s procedures and practices in personal tutoring and to respect the limits of the personal tutor’s role.
- To tell you about any disability or health condition for which they wish arrangements to be made.
- To notify the College Office or equivalent if they are ill and unable to attend University.
- To notify you if they are experiencing problems which are affecting their attendance or having an adverse effect on their academic progress.
- To contact you immediately if they feel that their performance in forthcoming examinations is going to be affected by ill health or other extenuating circumstances.
- To keep the College Office or equivalent informed of any change in addresses.
- To tell you about any part time work they are doing during term – you might need to discuss how this fits in with their course requirements.

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⁶ http://as.exeter.ac.uk/divisions/ee
⁷ http://services.exeter.ac.uk/learninganddevelopment
⁸ http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/studentandstaffdevelopment/documents/Helping%20Disstressed%20Students.pdf
⁹ http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing
¹⁰ http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/resources/online-resources/
¹¹ http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/admin/taught/
¹² http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/admin/staff/studentcomplaintsandappeals/
¹³ http://srs.ex.ac.uk
¹⁴ http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/staffdevelopment/aspectsofacademicpractice/personaltutoring/
¹⁵ http://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/services/ssc/
To attend mandatory co-curricula sessions such as the eXfactor in the 1st year and '3,2,1' career talks delivered each year.

**Preparing yourself to be a personal tutor**

The primary objective is to maximise the time you spend tutoring and minimise the time spent on related administration. You are encouraged to seek clarification regarding the following questions:

- Who is the Senior Tutor or other advisory contact for personal tutors in your discipline and/or at College level?
- How and by whom is a personal tutor allocated to each student in your College?
- Who ensures that basic information on your tutees is given to you?
- Who arranges a change of personal tutor? It is good practice for a student to be able to request a change without having to give a reason.
- Who allocates a replacement personal tutor in the event of you leaving or being absent for a significant period of time during a semester?
- What procedures are in place for following up students who fail to attend meetings?
- Who monitors the operation of the tutor system in the College?
- What assistance is available in arranging referrals?
- Who is your College Disability Representative?
- Who is your College Employability Officer?
- Who is your College Careers and Employability Representative (academic)?
- Who is your College Academic Misconduct Officer?
- Who is your College Equality and Diversity representative?

**The importance of first meetings with your tutees**

The key feature of the induction of first year students is good communication. Naturally, you will have administration and formalities to talk about, but it is particularly important in your first meeting with a tutee to **ask questions** about their expectations, aspirations and concerns and to **listen carefully** to their responses. Before you meet with a tutee for the first time you may find it useful to familiarise yourself with some background information about them by reading their UCAS form. This will help you to ask the right questions and pre-empt possible difficulties. It may also highlight the need for referral to specialist services at an early stage. You may find it helpful to use the following checklist:

- Clarify for the student your role as personal tutor.
- Explain how your tutees can contact you, including your office hours.
- Establish the basis for a good relationship by asking them about themselves, about their decision to come to Exeter, their particular interests in the subject, their longer term aims.
- Show care, concern and respect.
- Check your tutees’ accommodation arrangements and whether they have received financial support.
- Check whether they have received their academic timetable.
- Encourage your tutees to prepare for the meeting in advance.
- Encourage students to use the Student Information[16] pages and the Student Information Desk Online (SID)[17].
- Help the student understand their own responsibilities.
- Ensure your tutees know the arrangements for changing personal tutors.
- Ensure your tutees know what support is available in an emergency.
- Check that your tutee knows the Residence Life Tutor[18] for their University accommodation.
- Both you and your tutee should note action points agreed at the meeting and any deadlines.

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[16] http://www.exeter.ac.uk/students
[17] http://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/services/ssc/
In addition to students having the opportunity to meet with you one-to-one, group tutorials are a valuable means of assisting the students in building networks of peer support. Standard agendas are increasingly being used to provide the structure for timetabled tutorial activities and discussion.

**Personal Development Planning (PDP)**

At a time when graduate recruitment is highly competitive, it is important for students to be able to articulate the skills they have acquired during their time at university, and to plan for their personal, academic and professional development. Since 2005 it has been a national requirement that universities provide structured support for students' personal development as well as opportunities to reflect on progress throughout their programme. In common with many other institutions, the University of Exeter provides PDP opportunities through personal tutorials. If in doubt, you are advised to check with a Senior Tutor or your College Office how PDP is integrated and whether there are particular resources provided by your department. You can also familiarise yourself with Education Enhancement's Academic Practice pages for staff, where there is a whole section devoted to it.

ePDP, the University’s online PDP system, gives students a place to record their academic, work and extra-curricular experiences, and to develop action plans and personal statements. It is important that unless your department provides an alternative PDP resource, you encourage your students to use it. It is worth pointing out that if students keep their records up to date, these can be invaluable as a source of information for job or further study references, even several years later.

Students can access ePDP via the University’s PDP website or their student portal pages, and, as their personal tutor, you can view these records unless the student flags them as private. There is an ePDP User Guide for Tutors available from the ‘PDP and Personal Tutoring’ section of the University’s PDP website.

**Signposting and support from other services**

The Counselling Service and the Mental Health team from AccessAbility have recently joined to form an integrated Wellbeing Service. The aim is to provide a single point of entry to the service for students experiencing emotional, psychological or mental health difficulties, and to extend the range of support pathways on offer. The Wellbeing Service is located in the Reed Mews building.

Students who struggle academically often do so because of underlying personal problems which are beyond the remit of the student/tutor relationship. When a student is experiencing problems which require help that you believe to be beyond your abilities, remit or role, it is important to consider what other support is available to them and to signpost them to someone more appropriately trained. Such services may be within or outside the University, and are detailed in the Helping Distressed Students booklet.

It is good practice to encourage the student to take responsibility themselves for contacting support agencies. In some circumstances, tutors may feel it would be helpful to have a conversation with a professional Wellbeing consultant, which can be done on a confidential basis without disclosing the identity of the student. This can help you understand what help might be available, so that you can pass this information on to the student. The only exception to maintaining confidentiality is when you believe the student is at serious risk of harming themselves or others. When in doubt, contact Wellbeing Services. It is important to continue to maintain contact with the student until they have established the help they need, or until the problem has been resolved in another way.

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19 [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/staffdevelopment/aspects_of_academic_practice/personal_development_planningpdp](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/staffdevelopment/aspects_of_academic_practice/personal_development_planningpdp)
20 [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/development/taughtstudents/personaldevelopmentplanningpdp/whatsdoineedtodo](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/development/taughtstudents/personaldevelopmentplanningpdp/whatsdoineedtodo)
21 [http://www.exeter.ac.uk/epdp](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/epdp)
22 [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/studentandstaffdevelopment/documents/Helping_Distressed_Students.pdf](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/studentandstaffdevelopment/documents/Helping_Distressed_Students.pdf)
23 [http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/)
To signpost a student on to other agencies is not an admission of failure but recognition of your understanding of your role and boundaries as a tutor. For some students it is helpful to have a variety of support from different agencies that can provide for their different needs, whether those are academic, health-related, financial or social. It is also important that signposting to other services should not be seen as a punitive sanction to address academic failure or non-attendance. Through involving other services, a joint approach can often provide an effective and supportive network which enables the student to progress successfully.

If your tutee will not accept help, then ensure the student understands the implications of this decision and that this may impact on their ability to achieve their potential. It is important they understand that by refusing support, it may not be possible for them to access special exam arrangements, specialist equipment or suitable university accommodation, for example.

It is important to note your concern in their records and raise the issue or any ongoing concerns within your College tutoring organisational structure. It may also be appropriate to refer to and implement the University guidance and policies such as the Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study\textsuperscript{24}, Fitness to Practice and Guidance on Supporting Students experiencing Mental Health Difficulties.

If the student is at serious risk of harming themselves or others, see the sections titled Mental Health and Emergency Problems in this Manual, or refer to the Helping Distressed Students booklet\textsuperscript{25}.

**Boundaries**

Setting boundaries around the relationship you have with students, its purpose, when and where you meet, what you can and can’t help with, can provide a reliable framework for both yourself and your tutees. Clarifying these boundaries at the beginning can help you to avoid difficulties in the future. It is also important that you do not encourage your tutees to become emotionally dependent on you. You will need to be accessible but also encourage them towards self-reliance.

You cannot be a substitute parent. It is unusual for tutors to extend their one-to-one relationship to include social contact, and you should consider the implications of doing so very carefully, especially in cases where there are no other students or staff present.

**Confidentiality**

Professional counsellors, such as doctors and clergy, operate under professional codes of ethics which prevent them disclosing information about a student without their express consent other than in an emergency, but there is no such professional code for academic staff in such matters. If you enter into discussion with your tutee about a serious problem, the nature of any confidentiality being offered by you must be made clear and if you consider you need to share information about your tutee with someone else, you should first seek the students’ consent. Nevertheless, confidentiality is an important factor in building up a trusted relationship with your tutees. You must remember that nearly all students are over 18 – the University does not act in loco parentis. In such cases, the Data Protection Act does not allow the release of information about students to third parties, even to parents, without the explicit consent of the student. There are a number of areas where you will need to use your judgement:

- If a student reveals that they are suicidal or self-harming in any way, you should encourage the student to seek immediate professional help from their GP. If necessary, offer to assist them in making an appointment by offering to ring the service with them. The student may decide, however, that they do not want to access support at that time. In such cases you are strongly advised to contact Wellbeing Services\textsuperscript{26}, to talk the situation through, to clarify if there is anything else that can be done at this stage and to receive support for yourself.

\textsuperscript{24} http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/health/
\textsuperscript{25} http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/studentandstaffdevelopment/documents/Helping_Distressed_Students.pdf
\textsuperscript{26} http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing
Where a registered student has declared a criminal conviction or it becomes known they have a criminal conviction and is on a relevant programme of study i.e. working with children or vulnerable adults, then you should inform the Student Conduct and Welfare\(^{27}\) office. In the case of students who disclose a criminal conviction but are not on a course where that is necessarily relevant, there would be no expectation that you should pass this information on. If in doubt, you can contact the Student Conduct and Welfare office and – without revealing the identity of the student – give the circumstances of the case, seeking further advice, as appropriate.

**Encouraging independent learning**

Research shows that one of the biggest barriers to students progressing in their first year is their inability to adequately develop independent learning skills. Such skills are increasingly being recognised as vital to a students’ employability. Personal tutoring can be a valuable forum for students to discuss their learning needs.

**Student skills development**

Helping students to develop their transferable skills should not be seen as a set of bolt-on activities, but an integral part of the academic experience. The Academic Skills Development\(^ {28}\) team within Education Enhancement has a variety of online resources on a number of skills-related themes including:

- Time management
- Assignment and dissertation planning and writing
- Information searching, speed reading and note-making
- Presentation skills, revision and exam techniques
- Referencing

You may wish to direct your tutees to these, depending on their needs.

The skills team can also provide workshops, to support the embedding of skills-based activities into core modules. These are available subject to demand.

**Employability and Graduate Development**

Experience of the world of work can make a real difference to students’ employability, and personal tutors can have a major role in encouraging students to make the most of the opportunities available to them – at University and in the wider community. It is essential that you make students aware of the services provided by the Career Zone\(^ {29}\) and the role that independent learning and generic skills acquisition can play.

Employability and Graduate Development and in particular the Career Zone, can help students at all stages of career planning. The professional careers staff will guide students towards making an informed choice of career. The earlier career planning starts, the easier it becomes. The Service based in the Forum, provides a comprehensive range of support including: careers information, an extensive employability programme, careers fairs, a mentoring scheme and one-to-one careers guidance.

Students can have their participation in the employability programme recognised by registering to complete The Exeter Award. The skills sessions counting towards the award include:

- Two hour Personal Development Sessions and workshops for entrepreneurial students;
- the eXfactor, a two day mandatory course aimed at first years
- the Aspirational Teachers Programme
- ‘Careers in...’ a series of half day conferences aimed at students who wish to work in specific sectors.

\(^{27}\) [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/admin/staff/studentcomplaintsandappeals/contactdetails](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/admin/staff/studentcomplaintsandappeals/contactdetails)
\(^{28}\) [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/development](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/development)
\(^{29}\) [http://www.exeter.ac.uk/employability/exeterandyourcareer/](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/employability/exeterandyourcareer/)
Information about all of these can be found at [www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/events](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/events).

**My Career Zone**[^30] is the website that supports students with accessing careers appointments, information, events and vacancies. Students need to log in using their Exeter credentials and update their preferences to ensure the information they receive is targeted to their interests. Face to face support is also available in the Career Zone in the Student Services Centre.

**Employer Engagement**

Students can access the latest job, internship, events and skills opportunities lead by employers through My Career Zone. They can also attend careers fairs, employer presentations and employer drop-ins in the Employer Zone. Students are encouraged to consider part-time, casual work to provide a flexible means of earning additional income whilst gaining valuable employability skills. Local employers have a variety of ways in which to liaise with our students on campus to showcase these opportunities.

Alongside placements organised through Academic Colleges, centrally organised paid internships such as Student Campus Partnerships, Student Business Partnerships and Graduate Business Partnerships can provide valuable work experience. The Global Employability Team offer support to students interested in working overseas including 1:1 Erasmus placement appointments.

It's not just the standard large recruiters with whom students want to engage, so our Widen Your Options programme showcases opportunities from more diverse areas through employer-led panel discussions, workshops and activities. Key areas are followed up with more detailed insight through our ‘Careers In...’ half day conferences based around the top six aspirational career destinations of our students - Education, Media, PR and Marketing, 3rd Sector, Environment and Sustainability and Management Consultancy.

The Mentoring Scheme offers second-year undergraduates the chance to link up with an enthusiastic Mentor in an industry or profession of their choice. This allows them to discover what it’s like to work in that sector and benefit from personal advice and insights on how to get ahead.

Linked to the theme of encouraging independent learning, there is a range of interdisciplinary employability-related module options available within the University that is designed to enhance students’ employment prospects. These focus on a range of themes from creative media, ICT and leadership to teaching in schools.

All of the above are promoted to students through their programme in a series of ‘3, 2, 1’ talks. Through this initiative students in each year group are invited to attend a talk which covers what they should be doing to develop their employability. Personal tutors can play an important part in encouraging students to attend these opportunities.

**Information and resources for staff**[^31] on the Career Zone website outlines what staff need to know to support students in PDP, career planning, accessing training and events and making the most of the opportunities available to them. You will also find a series of **materials**[^32] that you can use in group tutorials to encourage your students to explore employability issues. In particular, you may want to look at the Career Timeline which is designed to give students clear messages about what to do, and when. You may also wish to use the Subject Career Factsheets which contain information about the skills developed through the study of your discipline and the career destinations of students.

**Writing references**

Writing references is part of your role. A student should always ask your permission before naming you as a referee. If you are not a student’s tutor, it is reasonable to decline. You are normally expected to provide at least incontestable factual information in a reference. You should copy a letter of the reference to the student’s departmental file. Reference requests can come in when you are not available to deal

[^30]: http://www.exeter.ac.uk/mycareerzone/
[^31]: http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/staff/
[^32]: http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers/staff/resources/materials/
with them personally, so it is important that your opinions are accessible so someone else can provide a meaningful reference. Before you write the reference, ensure you are familiar with the data protection guidance.33

**Recording tutorial progress and attendance**

It is important that you keep brief notes of what has been discussed with the student. These should include the date and time of appointment, issues discussed and details of decisions made. You should also make a note of any concerns that you have about a student’s wellbeing and note also what actions you have taken. You are advised to check with your Senior Tutor or College office whether there is a template you should use for this. An example of a template is attached as Appendix-4.

The Data Protection Act34 requires that you must tell your tutees that you are keeping notes and for what purpose, how they will be stored and who has access to them. You must check within your College the procedures for storing such information. Ensure that the notes you make are accurate and sensitive and that you would be happy for the student to read them if this were requested. It is good practice for you and your tutee to jointly agree and sign a record of each meeting held.

If you are made aware of repeated unexplained absence from classes on the part of your tutees, you are advised to contact your tutee and request a meeting. If no reply is forthcoming you should discuss the matter using the organisational structures appropriate to your College. Non attendance is often one of the early indications of difficulty. The Code of Good Practice - Unsatisfactory Academic Progress35 in the TQA manual identifies the formal process dealing with unsatisfactory attendance and academic progress.

**Communication skills**

Communication is critical to a good relationship between tutor and tutee. The following guidance should be noted:

- **Acceptance** – do not making snap judgments about someone based on the way they look, talk, dress, behave, etc.
- **Listening** – put your own pre-occupations to one side to allow you to be focussed and attentive, making eye contact and being clearly interested in what is being said. Don't come over as if you are too busy to listen or indeed too ready with a quick answer.
- **Empathy** – distinguish this from sympathy, which may suck you into attempting to do too much for the student or becoming inappropriately involved in their problem.
- **Paraphrasing** - briefly paraphrase what has just been said reassures the student that you are listening and have understood what they have said. It gives them an opportunity to clarify if you have not heard them accurately.
- **Questioning** – beware of bombarding the student with too many questions. Depending upon the context, discern the relative merits of asking a closed questions such as “How many A-levels do you have?” compared to an open question such as “Could tell me a bit about your A-levels?”.
- **Summarising** - give a brief summary of the conversation from time to time and at the end, to check your understanding and clarify what has been covered and move it on to the next step.
- **Considering options** – explore, with the student, possible courses or action they might take towards resolving a difficulty.

**Student complaints**

Your tutee is encouraged to discuss their complaint with you first but if they wish to pursue their grievance then the Student Complaints Procedure36 in the TQA manual outlines how the student may pursue a complaint and the stages of the process.

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33 [http://www.admin.ex.ac.uk/academic/datapro/data_protection/guidance.shtml](http://www.admin.ex.ac.uk/academic/datapro/data_protection/guidance.shtml)
34 [http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/datapro/data_protection/guidance.shtml](http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/datapro/data_protection/guidance.shtml)
35 [http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/acadprog.htm](http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/acadprog.htm)
36 [http://www.admin.ex.ac.uk/calendar/live/ugfaculty/complaints.htm](http://www.admin.ex.ac.uk/calendar/live/ugfaculty/complaints.htm)
Identifying that a student may be experiencing difficulty

As the person with regular contact with particular students, you are often the first person to notice that a student may be developing difficulties. Your tutee’s behaviour may give cause for concern and alert you to potential problems. You are likely to encounter a very wide range of issues, each with their own level of need.

Common problems – welfare

Homesickness
Homesickness can result in poor health, lowered concentration and poor focus, depression, absent-mindedness and psycho-somatic symptoms. Students may feel ashamed of being homesick and are reluctant to tell anyone. It can be reassuring to tell them that although their feelings may be very debilitating, they are a normal response to the transition they are going through. If symptoms persist and are seriously inhibiting their ability to function, socially or academically, then it’s probably a good idea to consider Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Procedures\(^ {37}\) and recommend that they seek help via Wellbeing Services\(^ {38}\). In some cases it may be in the best interest of the student to interrupt studies and return home for a period of time. International students in particular often display symptoms of culture shock. The greater the differences from home, the more likely it is that a student will find the transition difficult.

Revealed disabilities
If your tutee has already disclosed to the University that they have particular disability related needs which require particular support then this information will be recorded on SITS or AccessAbility will have informed your College Disability Representative. Check that students are aware of the support and advice available through AccessAbility\(^ {39}\) and strongly recommend that they visit it if they have not already done so. The most common need is support for dyslexia and other specific learning difficulties, for which, along with a wide range of other disabilities, a range of support strategies are available.

Unrevealed disabilities
For students who might be underperforming, again, dyslexia or other specific learning difficulties is a very common reason. You could ask colleagues whether the student shows a discrepancy between the standard of their oral contribution in class and their written work – a common indication of dyslexia and semantic pragmatic language disorder. They may have problems taking notes in lectures and find it hard to organise their thoughts into a coherent and well organised essay. Students may have a range of other physical disabilities, long term health conditions or mental health difficulties. In such cases, and any other where you think your tutee may need additional support, encourage them to contact AccessAbility\(^ {40}\).

Harassment
In the event of a case of harassment being brought to a member of staff, the University has a Policy on the Protection of Dignity at Work and Study\(^ {41}\), which should be used as the basis for how the case is managed.

Financial problems
For many students, part time work is now essential and is the main way that they make up the shortfall between their income and expenditure. It is better to acknowledge this at the start of their course and encourage the student to work a manageable number of hours each week, rather than get into financial difficulty towards the end of the academic year.

As outlined in the Student Finance\(^ {42}\) web pages, the Student Information Desk team and staff in the Students’ Guild Advice Unit, can help your students to plan the most effective balance between study and

\(^ {37}\) http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/health/
\(^ {38}\) http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing
\(^ {39}\) http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/disability
\(^ {40}\) http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/disability
\(^ {41}\) http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/equality/harassment/protectingdignity/
\(^ {42}\) http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/students/studentfinance/
work, to access all the potential sources of income available to them, negotiate with creditors and find ways of reducing their expenditure. If students would rather not visit these services, both based in the Forum, they can also ‘Log an Enquiry’ via their MyExeter portal or send an email to sid@exeter.ac.uk.

**Dealing with absence**

If you are not teaching your tutees yourself, you will rely on module or programme organisers and other teaching and support staff to notify you if your students are failing to attend or are making insufficient academic progress. Colleges should ensure that module staff are aware of these responsibilities, so that such reports can be followed up as soon as possible. You should certainly follow up repeated or sustained periods of absence. Contact the student and encourage them to come and see you to talk about their recent absence. In the first instance, this should not be done within the disciplinary process. Early intervention may be all that is needed.

If, however, your student fails to respond to your invitations, and you have concerns about the student's ability to progress to the next stage of their studies, you should discuss the matter using the organisational structures appropriate to your College. This may mean referring the student to the Senior Tutor or reporting the matter to your College office for action. If the student is absent through illness, and the absence is between four and six consecutive days, then your tutee should complete a Personal Sickness Certificate and submit it to their College. Blank certificates can be obtained from your College Office. For full details, see [Statement of Procedures – Student Illness](http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/stuillness.htm) in the TQA Manual.

If the student has a known or suspected disability, including mental health difficulties, that are affecting their progress or the cause of absence, you should consider implementing [Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/health/) as an alternative to any disciplinary procedures.

Since March 2009 universities have been required to check on the attendance of international students and report repeated absence to the UK Borders Agency (UKBA). It is unlikely that in your role of personal tutor such issues will affect day to day dealings with your tutees. However, this requirement underlines the importance of keeping records of tutorial attendance in case they are needed by College professional services.

**Common problems – academic**

**Voluntary withdrawal or interruption of studies**

Students may feel that they are unable to continue on their course - either permanently or temporarily. In such cases, they are required to discuss their options with you as their personal tutor. It is important, though, that you allow them time and space to think about the real reason for their decision and that you help to support them in finding their own solutions.

A decision to leave a course or change course usually has considerable practical and financial implications to say nothing of the emotional impact. The guidelines you should follow, including possible referral, are therefore outlined in the [Guidelines for the Interruption and Voluntary Withdrawal of Undergraduate Studies](http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/uginterrupt.htm) in the TQA Manual. Withdrawal and interruption forms are available from your College Office.

**Extenuating Circumstances**

You should encourage your tutees to tell you about any extenuating circumstances that might be affecting their performance as soon as possible and whether they want to submit information about their situation to your College's [Mitigation Committee](http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/Part%208/8V%20MitigationCttees_CoP.pdf). Remind students that it is difficult for extenuating circumstances to be taken into account in retrospect, and that they should be submitted prior to the exam or assessment. Explain your College’s procedures for considering extenuating circumstances clearly, and the deadlines involved. (Consult your College Office for details of these.) Ideally, the student will be able to provide medical supporting documentation to authenticate their extenuating circumstances, but some students might not have seen anyone for help, so
will need to explain their situation themselves. In some instances Wellbeing Services may also support students’ requests for mitigation, but this will only usually be the case when the student has been supported by the service prior to the request. It is advisable to inform students that disability is not a mitigating circumstance in itself where reasonable adjustments for the disability have already been made.

Plagiarism and cheating (Academic Misconduct)
Plagiarism and cheating are regarded by the University as very serious offences and a range of penalties can be applied, including expulsion. The Taught Faculty Office has produced some useful Information for Students. This information defines the terms, links to the TQA manual and explains the University’s procedures to assist students from falling foul of the regulations. Please refer to the Code of Good Practice on Managing Academic Misconduct (including plagiarism, cheating and collusion).

Some students may genuinely not understand how plagiarism is defined. You are therefore strongly encouraged to direct your tutees to this information and to the ‘Academic Honesty and Plagiarism’ resource available to all students and staff on the University’s Virtual Learning Environment, ELE. Colleges also use the plagiarism detection tool, Turnitin for certain types of assessment. (For more information on Turnitin, visit the Turnitin pages.)

Discipline
In the first instance, advice should be sought from the Student Welfare and Conduct Administrative Officer on non-academic related disciplinary matters and the Deans of Taught Programmes and Graduate Research for academic-related matters. For further information please see the University Disciplinary Procedures.

Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study
If a student is not performing to the required level academically, or if you are concerned about their level of attendance and you suspect that the underlying cause is related to disability or other possible barrier to wellbeing, then there may be reason for the Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study procedures to be implemented.

This process is intended to provide a supportive alternative to the disciplinary procedure if wellbeing issues are evident. There are three levels of the procedure and the level at which the procedure operates depends upon the level of concern.

If you wish to find out more about the procedures that may impact on your work as a personal tutor, a short course on Fitness to Study is provided by Learning and Development.

Academic failure
Your tutee might be angry, disappointed, confused or surprised about their results, so it is important to offer them time to absorb the news, and to be clear about their options. It might help to arrange to see them again a few days later when they have had a chance to think about what you have discussed. Make sure you are familiar with the University’s Undergraduate Degrees and Awards: Assessment Procedures regarding referrals, deferrals etc. in the TQA manual. If your tutee wants to appeal against an exam board decision, refer them to the Students’ Guild for academic representation services.

Referral and deferral
If a student fails a module for the first time, and that module cannot be condoned, they have a right to referral in that module. In cases of valid mitigation (with supporting evidence), a student can be deferred.

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47 www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/mitigation/
48 http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/admin/taught/
49 http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/faculty/taught/Part%208/8Lplag1.pdf
50 http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/staffdevelopment/assessments/procedures/academicplagiarism/turnitin-moreinformation/
51 http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/admin/staff/studentcomplaintsandappeals/contactdetails
52 http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/discipline/
53 http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/health/
54 http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/development/courses/coursedetail/?code=20017
55 http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/faculty/taught/ugexams2.htm
56 http://www.exeterguild.org/
Referred and deferred exams are normally taken in August/September. For referrals, the mark is capped at the pass mark. Referral has financial implications for the student. International students may take referred or deferred exams in their home country provided that they apply to do so with the Exams department via the Student Information Desk in the Student Services Centre or online. A student who is absent from an exam without reasonable explanation will be ‘deemed to have withdrawn’ by the Board of Examiners.

Repeating a module
Under certain circumstances, as a consequence of failure in up to 30 credits of referred modules, the Board of Examiners can permit a student to progress carrying the failure, i.e. to retake the failed module(s) in their next stage of study. As a result of studying more than 120 credits in one year, there could be timetabling and workload issues for the student which they may wish to discuss with you.

Repeating a period of study or exams (with or without attendance)
If a student has been given permission by the Board of Examiners to repeat part of their course in full time or part time attendance, there will inevitably be funding implications for them. For international students, a repeat year will have immigration implications. Students who are repeating their exams without attendance the following year should be referred in the same way, as they need specific advice and guidance about practical matters and financial entitlements during their time out. Rules about these issues are complex and change frequently so please refer your students to advice from the Fees and Funding team, or from International Student Support. Again, both of these teams are accessible in person via the Student Information Desk in the Student Services Centre.

Academic appeals
Students have a right of appeal against academic decisions and recommendations made by Boards of Examiners and Faculty Boards (or Deans acting on their behalf) that affect their academic progress. The University has an Academic Appeals procedure which sets out the scope of the process, the grounds of appeal that will be allowed and how an appeal will be considered. Students should be directed to the Guild Advice Unit who can help them with the appeal process. Appeals can be made with respect to:

- formal assessment result
- degree classification
- decision consequential to an academic failure

Further advice can be sought from the Faculty Office in Northcote House, or the Students’ Guild Education Office.

57 http://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/services/sid/  
58 http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/students/studentfinance/index.shtml  
59 http://offices.exeter.ac.uk/international/information/support/index.shtml  
60 http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/calendar/live/taught/appeals.htm  
61 http://www.exeterguild.org/advice/
Critical and emergency incidents

It is one of your vital roles to identify a student who may be at risk. Students may be at risk in a number of ways, e.g. risk of suicide, self harm or harm to others, a victim of assault or experiencing harassment. You may become concerned about use of alcohol and/or drugs. If you are very concerned about a student, you should also tell the person within your College designated for such receipt of information. This would usually be your Assistant College Manager (Education), but you should check with your College office to be clear about procedures and protocol for escalating your concern. For incidents that may require extremely timely or emergency action, see the policy: Welfare incidents and the Helping Distressed Students booklet. In emergency cases involving immediate danger to yourself or others, you should contact Estate Patrol (phone extension 3999).

Mental health
You may well be the first person to notice that a student is struggling and it is impacting on their mental health. Whilst the role of the personal tutor does not extend to counselling or mental health advice, it is important that you act on any concerns you may have to ensure your tutees are signposted to appropriate professional services. Under the Disability Discrimination Act, the University and each individual employee of the University, has a legal responsibility to respond to students with mental health difficulties and needs.

Student mental health may be exhibited with relatively mild symptoms or by presenting with more severe problems, bizarre experiences and changed behaviour. As a first step you should try to talk to the student to find out more about their situation and how they understand what is happening. This may be a situation that they have experienced before and they may already have strategies that help them manage - they may even have sought professional help. However this may be the first time they have experienced these difficulties and they may feel very distressed as a result.

In either situation ensure that you inform the student of the services available to them by noting the support as identified in the Helping Distressed Students booklet and the Support for Students sheet (these can be found on Education Enhancement’s web pages on personal tutoring. You may also consider whether these concerns should be addressed through the University’s Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study Procedures.

At a later time check back with the student to see if they have chosen to access any support. If you remain concerned, the Helping Distressed Students booklet will help you think the situation through or you can contact Wellbeing Services to discuss the situation. You can do this in confidence and without identifying the student.

If you have concerns about a student but they decline to accept help, ensure the student understands the implications of this decision and how not seeking support may impact on their academic studies and other aspects of university life. Examples could be given to the student including, not being able to access special exam arrangements, specialist equipment or applying for ongoing university accommodation.

Any contact with a student in relation to their wellbeing and mental health needs to be documented, including issues discussed, support offered and agreements made. Any decision by the student not to access support and any concerns you have should also be noted with any ongoing concerns raise the issue within the relevant structures within your College.

Student death
In the rare instances where the University needs to handle matters relating to the death of a student, this should be coordinated by a senior member of staff from Student Services using the guidelines in The Welfare Incidents policy. On occasion, bereaved parents may wish to contact you, and this will obviously

62 http://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/pdfs/welfare_incidents.pdf
63 http://www.exeter.ac.uk/businessandcommunity/university/estatepatrol
64 http://as.exeter.ac.uk/divisions/ee/
65 http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/health/
66 www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing
67 http://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/pdfs/welfare_incidents.pdf
place you in a sensitive position. In responding to such requests you should consult relevant staff in your College, such as the College Manager etc. It is **not** your role to deal with media.

**Meningitis**

If you learn that one of your students has been diagnosed with meningitis, treat the information as confidential, but tell the University Meningitis Policy Coordinator (see Appendix-II in the [Meningitis University Policy and Code of Practice](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/safety/hspoliciesandguidance/meningitis/)) and your line manager immediately. Do not speak to the media directly, but refer enquiries to the Registrar. If any of your tutees have suspected meningitis or want further information contact the [Student Health Centre](http://www.exeterstudenthealthcentre.co.uk/).

**Breaking bad news**

Sometimes someone at the University is the first to know that a student’s close relative has died. In some instances it is possible that you may be identified as an appropriate person to inform the student. If this happens you should make sure that you are prepared and that you have talked things through with your line manager/College Management and/or staff from The Counselling Service. Ensure you:

- provide time and privacy
- avoid platitudes
- arrange for someone else to be available for the student to be with after they have been told
- check with the student who else they would like to be told, and then arrange for staff/students to be informed in a sensitive manner

After breaking the news it is advisable to de-brief with a colleague. [Wellbeing Services](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing) and [Chaplaincy](http://university.exeter.ac.uk/chaplaincy) can provide support, advice and information to staff and students on these matters.

**Emergency problems**

In rare situations, students may exhibit behaviour that gives rise to very real concern and require urgent intervention. Clearly some critical incidents will overlap with emergency situations.

In extreme circumstances, where there is an immediate need for help, or if you consider the student is seriously at risk of harming themselves or others, and you require assistance without their permission, then call Estate Patrol on phone extension 3999. Estate Patrol hold details of the Student Services senior management rota for responding to critical incidents, and they will refer to the relevant staff. If they do not respond immediately, contact the emergency services (999) yourself.

The [Helping Distressed Students](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/studentandstaffdevelopment/documents/Helping_Distressed_Students.pdf) booklet gives guidance on what to do if the situation is urgent and who may be able to offer support. These include:

- The [Student Health Centre](http://studenthealth@exeter.ac.uk) and principle medical officer (01392 676606 or 264414)
- Estate Patrol (3999)
- The Emergency Services (999)
- Out of Hours GP service (01392 824600 or 08456 710270)
- [NHS Direct](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) (0845 4647)
- [Residence Support Team](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/accommodation/currentstudents/residencesupportteam/)
- [Chaplaincy](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/chaplaincy/)

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68 [http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/safety/hspoliciesandguidance/meningitis/](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/safety/hspoliciesandguidance/meningitis/)
69 registrar@exeter.ac.uk
70 [http://www.exeterstudenthealthcentre.co.uk/](http://www.exeterstudenthealthcentre.co.uk/)
71 [http://university.exeter.ac.uk/chaplaincy](http://university.exeter.ac.uk/chaplaincy)
72 [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/studentandstaffdevelopment/documents/Helping_Distressed_Students.pdf](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/studentandstaffdevelopment/documents/Helping_Distressed_Students.pdf)
73 studenthealth@exeter.ac.uk
74 [http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)
75 [http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing)
76 [http://www.exeter.ac.uk/accommodation/currentstudents/residencesupportteam/](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/accommodation/currentstudents/residencesupportteam/)
77 [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/chaplaincy/](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/chaplaincy/)
Some general pointers on what to do include:

- Remain as calm as possible.
- Talk to the student, remembering that they may well be frightened. Try to establish whether your tutee has had any such difficulties previously and if they are on any medication.
- Be as honest and open as possible.
- Reassure the student that there are people available who can help.
- If the student is willing to accept help, refer them to their GP. If necessary, contact the GP and make them an appointment as a matter of urgency.
- Send someone else to get help, if the student gives permission, so that they are not left on their own—and so that someone else knows what is happening.

Wellbeing Services[^78] can also offer advice to staff in relation to thinking the situation through without necessarily disclosing the identity of the student. If the student is at serious risk of harm to themselves or others the student may need to be identified so it is important not to give undertakings of absolute confidentiality. It would also be advisable to discuss the situation with your line manager as well as making a note of what has happened.

As students are normally over 18, the University is not in *loco parentis*, therefore parents cannot be informed about a situation, however worrying, without the student’s permission. Students should be encouraged to give their permission for their parents to be contacted if this is considered appropriate.

Try to avoid putting yourself in danger by ensuring that, whenever possible, another member of staff is aware of the situation; doors should be left open and/or you should have a colleague with you if you fear you may be facing a potentially volatile situation. In the case of a direct physical assault, try to extricate yourself: do not exacerbate it by retaliating.

An emergency always arouses strong feelings in everyone. Remember that staff in Wellbeing Services[^79] are always happy to discuss a crisis before, during or after the incident.

### Managing information as a personal tutor

It is important for each College to clarify the roles of personal tutors and administrative staff, with administrative staff normally providing a backup role. You will need to determine that relationship within your own College, ensuring that you are familiar with your discipline or College’s processes for arranging meetings with your tutees, the handling and storing of tutorial records and administrative functions.

**SITS**[^80] is the central student record system used by the University. It is used to record information about the student's academic lifecycle from application through to award. Installation of the software and access to the data held is restricted to authorised staff but your College administrative staff will have such access. SITS also has a web interface module called eVision[^81] which enables a student to register and to select modules via the Internet. It also gives the student instant access to certain course and personal data and provides transcripts and other reports. If a student has difficulty in accessing this, direct them to the IT helpdesk within Academic Services[^82]. For further information about how to get help on SITS visit the ‘How do I?’[^83] pages.

A further link to SITS is SIDOnline (Student Information Desk Online). This the system used by the Student Services Centre and specialist teams attached, to record interactions with students in order to provide a full picture of their enquiries and interactions with Student Services staff. The student can also see their record via their MyExeter portal.

[^78]: [www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing)
[^79]: [http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing](http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing)
[^80]: [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/it/systems/sits/](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/it/systems/sits/)
[^81]: [https://srs.exeter.ac.uk](https://srs.exeter.ac.uk)
[^82]: [http://as.exeter.ac.uk](http://as.exeter.ac.uk)
[^83]: [http://as.exeter.ac.uk/it/systems/sits/howdoi/](http://as.exeter.ac.uk/it/systems/sits/howdoi/)
Evaluation of the Personal Tutoring System

The effectiveness of the Personal Tutoring System at University level is monitored in a number of ways. In part this is done through analysing the results of internal University surveys and the National Student Survey84 (NSS). However, the students’ experience of tutoring is often reported on through internal quality processes such as Periodic Subject Review85 and during external audits by the Quality Assurance Agency86.

Just as reflecting on student feedback is an important aspect of your teaching role, it may be useful to you – from time to time – to ask your tutees directly about the support you’ve provided as a personal tutor – what has worked well for them, and what they would like improved. Their comments can be extremely helpful when thinking about your own professional practice and can encourage students to play an active part in what should be a two-way conversation between you.

The good practice guidance over the page is a good place to start when thinking about how to build a good working relationship with your tutees.

Good luck!

Summary of good practice for personal tutors

- Establish ground rules at the first meeting.
- Develop a supportive rapport with your tutees.
- See your tutees in a group from time to time.
- Encourage your tutees to make the most of their time with you by preparing for the meeting in advance.
- Use the PDP process to ensure that discussions stay focused and productive.
- Listen before offering advice or guidance.
- Know your own limitations. You can’t fix everything.
- Always seek advice if you are unsure how to proceed.
- Make students aware of the times when you are available. Allow for some unscheduled consultation, by person, phone or email (stress they must use their University email account).
- Be pro-active in contacting your tutee if you are aware they are having problems.
- Make students aware of arrangements for cover during your absence.
- Ensure you are aware of other student support services available and that you refer your tutees to them where necessary.
- Make students aware how to access emergency support.
- Keep brief notes of all conversations with students and ensure that your tutees know that they have a right to see them.
- Be aware that under the Data Protection Act students may be entitled to request copies of these notes and all other notes, including emails held by the University about them. Stress that email is not a suitable means for transmitting sensitive information.
- When it comes to action points ensure ownership by getting students to “sign up” to what they are promising to do by agreeing that this might be done by "...
- Keep your sense of humour.
- Know where to locate University regulations.
- Encourage students to stay in touch and inform you of issues to be raised before the meeting.
- Stay in role.

84 http://www.thestudentsurvey.com/
85 http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/admin/staff/qualityassuranceandmonitoring/periodicsubjectreview
86 http://www.qaa.ac.uk
Appendix-1: Support Services within the University

Academic Services
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/

Access2Learning
http://www.access2learning.org.uk/
Email: disability@exeter.ac.uk

AccessAbility
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/accessability/
Tel: 3880 Email: AccessAbility@exeter.ac.uk

Accommodation
http://www.ex.ac.uk/accommodation.shtml
Tel: 4724 Email: sid@exeter.ac.uk

Career Zone
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/careers
Tel: 4493 Email: careers@exeter.ac.uk

Chaplaincy
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/chaplaincy/
Tel: 4724

Data Protection
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/dataprotection/
Email dataprotection@exeter.ac.uk

Equality and Diversity
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/equality/
Contacts: http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/equality/aboutus/

Estate Patrol
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/businessandcommunity/university/estatepatrol/
Tel: 3999

Family Centre
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/services/family/
Tel: 5416 Email: familycentre@exeter.ac.uk

Harassment Advisors Network
http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/misc/harassment/networkofharassmentadvisors.shtml

International Student Support
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/international/
Tel: 4724 Email: sid@exeter.ac.uk

Personal Development Planning and ePDP
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/development/taughtstudents/personaldevelopmentplanningpdp

Residence Life Tutors
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/accommodation/currentstudents/residencelifeteam/
Student Information Desk
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/forum/ssc/
Tel: 4724   Email: sid@exeter.ac.uk

SITS
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/it/systems/sits/

Student Counselling Service
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/counselling/
Tel: 4381

Student Health – Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study
http://www.admin.exeter.ac.uk/calendar/live/council/health.htm

Student Health Centre
http://www.exeterstudenthealthcentre.co.uk/
Tel: 6606   Email: studenthealth@ex.ac.uk

Students Guild Advice Unit
http://www.exeterguild.org/advice/
Tel: 3520   Email: studentadvice@exeter.ac.uk

Student Skills Development
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/development/
Email: sid@exeter.ac.uk
Tel: 4724

Taught Faculty Team
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/admin/taught/
Tel: 3328   Email: facultyoffice@exeter.ac.uk

TQA Manual
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/support/admin/staff/qualityassuranceandmonitoring/tqamanual/

Voice (Nightline)
Tel: 4000 (Information), 4001 (Listening)
External: 01392 275284 (Local Rate)

Wellbeing Services
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/wellbeing/
Tel: 4381   Email wellbeing@exeter.ac.uk
Appendix-2: Outside agencies who can help

The Counselling Service provides guidance for students on circumstances where they may wish to choose an Outside Referral. You should advise students that they could contact the Students Guild Advice Unit, Wellbeing Services or relevant Student Health Centre in the first instance and for information on any other agencies not listed below.

- **General/Depression**

  **General Practitioners**
  The University advises students that they should register with a local doctor, at the University's Student Health Centre.

  **NHS Direct** - http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/
  Nurse led telephone helpline offering confidential service with information and advice in relation to physical and mental health. Available 24 hours a day.
  Tel: 0845 4647

  **Rape and Sexual Abuse Line** - http://www.therapeandsexualabusehelpline.co.uk/
  Tel: 08088000188 (Devon) or 01752 223584 (Plymouth)

  **Samaritans** - http://www.samaritans.org/
  For telephone support 24 hours a day
  Tel: 08457 909090

  **MIND Exeter and East Devon** - http://www.mindex.org.uk/
  For information on mental health issues
  Tel: 01392 204499

  **Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide (formerly SOBS)** - http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk/
  Tel: 0844 5616855

  **Hearing Voices Network** - http://www.hearing-voices.org/
  Tel: 01392 204495

- **Eating Disorders - Anorexia/Bulimia**

  **BEAT (Beating Eating Disorders)** - http://www.b-eat.co.uk/
  For counselling help and support
  Tel: 0845 6341414

- **Family Planning**

  **Family Planning Clinic**
  Advice/contraceptives/tests/counselling/etc
  4 Barnfield Hill, Exeter
  Tel: 01392 276892

  **Margaret Jackson Centre** - http://www.margaretjackson.org.uk/index.htm
  A specialist health information and resource centre offering telephone helpline/specialist bookshop/counselling/etc
  Unit 4, 31 Sidwell Street, Exeter
  Tel: 01392 256711
• **Relationship Problems**

  For relationship problems, including sexual
  Tel: 01392 275681

  *Lesbian and Gay Helpline, Intercom Trust -* [http://www.intercomtrust.org.uk/portal.htm](http://www.intercomtrust.org.uk/portal.htm)
  Gay/Lesbian counselling services
  Tel: 0845 6020818

• **HIV/AIDS/Infections**

  *GU Clinic -* [https://www.drthom.com/sexual_health_clinic/south%20west/exeter](https://www.drthom.com/sexual_health_clinic/south%20west/exeter)
  Confidential advice, testing and treatment for HIV and all sexually transmitted infections at
  Heavitree Hospital, Gladstone Road
  Clinics on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday (by appointment only)
  Tel: 01392 284983

  *ABC*
  Advice, HIV testing, Counselling. Thursday 2.00-4.30 pm only (by appointment only)
  Tel: 01392 494441

  *Positive Action South West -* [http://kernowps.co.uk/pasw.htm](http://kernowps.co.uk/pasw.htm)
  For support, counselling and therapies
  Tel: 01392 494441

  *Sexual Health Information Line*
  Tel: 0800 567123

• **Drug or Alcohol Problems**

  *DART – Drug and Alcohol Resource Team*
  (Drug and Alcohol Resource Team)
  Wonford House, Exeter
  Tel: 01392 208210

  ADDACTION Prevention Partnership
  ADDACTION Residential Service
  Alcohol problems counselling
  59 Magdalen Street, Exeter
  Tel: 01392 255151

  *EDP Drug and Alcohol Services -* [http://www.edp.org.uk/](http://www.edp.org.uk/)
  Counselling/support to drug users
  Uplands, Ground Floor, 81 Heavitree Road, Exeter
  Tel: 01392 492360

• **Bereavement**

  *Cruse -* [http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk/)
  For support, counselling and social activities for those who are bereaved
  Tel: 01392 272406
Appendix-3: Review and Policy documentation

Code of Good Practice

Data Protection Act
http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/academic/datapro/data_protection/guidance.shtml

Equal Opportunities
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/equality/

Fitness to Practise
http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/calendar/live/sas/fitness.htm

Guidance for Supporting Students with Mental Health difficulties
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/policies/calendar/part1/otherregs/mentalhealthdifficulties/

Harassment Policy
http://www.admin.ex.ac.uk/misc/harassment/page1.shtml

Health, Wellbeing and Fitness to Study
http://admin.exeter.ac.uk/calendar/live/sas/health.htm

Helping Distressed students Booklet
http://as.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/studentandstaffdevelopment/documents/Helping_Distressed_Students.pdf

Meningitis University Policy and Code of Practice
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/wellbeing/safety/hspoliciesandguidance/meningitis/

Policy on the Protection of Dignity and Work and Study
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/staff/equality/

Student Health Centre
http://www.exeterstudenthealthcentre.co.uk/

TQA manual
http://www.admin.ex.ac.uk/academic/tls/tqa/

Welfare incidents
http://www.exeter.ac.uk/media/level1/academicserviceswebsite/pdfs/welfare_incidents.pdf
# Appendix-4: Personal Tutoring Record Template

## Personal Tutoring Record
This information is confidential and must be kept securely on the Students’ File

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Student ID Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>Department/Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact Number</td>
<td>Mobile</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On first meeting your tutee at the beginning of the academic year please check whether or not they have the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Timetable</th>
<th>Disability</th>
<th>School/Programme Handbook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Use this space to make a general note of your discussions and any actions taken. If the student declares a disability please make sure that they are aware of the disability support within the University (http://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/disability.shtml)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tutor’s signature:</th>
<th>Date:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student’s signature:</td>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>