

Union Theological College Personal Tutoring Scheme

2020 Guide

CONTEXT: A STUDENT-FRIENDLY COLLEGE

For Union Theological College, students matter. Students are at the heart of the College's mission and their support and wellbeing are central to the College's duty of care. It has long been the ethos of the College to provide a community context in which all students, from whatever background and on whatever study pathway, have opportunities positively and profitably to engage with staff – whether in learning and teaching activity or in College life more broadly – through cordial and open working relationships built on mutual respect, face-to-face contact (or meaningful digital interaction) and structured informality. During your time in College, as an enrolled student you have freedom – and we hope you will take the opportunity – to build relationships with staff who teach or support you, including Faculty, adjunct Faculty, Library and administrative staff.

Ministry students.

Throughout their application process and subsequent training, Union students on ministry pathways enjoy the support of the Presbytery from which they come, through its Student Convener. During their formal training – largely within College – oversight of their academic, personal and professional development is the responsibility of the Dean of Ministerial Students, whose role equates to that of the personal tutor in certain respects. In addition to this, ministry students entering College since the 2019-20 academic year are also assigned a personal tutor, thus enjoying the same opportunities for support in personal and professional development as Union College students who are on other pathways. You are encouraged to make the most of the Personal Tutoring Scheme during your time in College. For **arrangements**, please see under Ministry Students below.

Queen's University students.

In some University Schools, personal tutoring is offered for first- and second-year students only, while third-year students relate especially to those staff who may supervise their dissertations and projects. Union College is committed to offering undergraduate students the support of a personal tutor throughout their degree. The College recognises how your final year of study brings the additional challenge of decisions about life after University. To help you think about this and plan for what is next, make the most of the advice, help and support given by your tutor who knows you well.

Academic Year 2020-21 is also the final year of teach-out of Theology at Queen's. As a QUB student, you are either part of the final full-time third-year cohort of QUB Theology students, due to graduate in summer 2021, or perhaps a part-time student due to graduate in 2022 or 2023. Even though there are no new QUB Theology students joining you in College, we are as committed as ever to supporting you through the Personal Tutoring Scheme.

As you know, Union College enjoys excellent student-staff relations. For your remaining time here, you may be sure that the frequency and variety of student-staff interaction that you are used to, within the College environment, will be maintained. Faculty will continue to make themselves available to you on a day-to-day basis, to help insure that you feel you belong, that you matter as an individual and that your personal growth and development remains a priority for the College.

Within this relational proximity, between staff and students, the personal tutoring scheme in operation has assigned you a tutor who knows you and who will continue to help, advise and support you in your studies. Under the guidance and management of the Lead Tutor, the scheme parallels the University's practice as documented by its Personal Tutor Guide.¹ Please make full use of the scheme and its benefits this year. For **arrangements**, please see further under Queen's University students below.

Online students. If you are an online student at Union College, on one of the PTFI pathways, you share the same status as on-campus students: you may expect appropriate student support for your learning experience. The bespoke support from Union College on which online learners may count for their learning and development is set out in Ensuring excellence in online programmes.² Like your on-campus counterparts, you are assigned a personal tutor whose active contact and support in the digital space –mirroring arrangements for on-campus QUB students or ministry students – is in addition to that of academic tutors who help deliver your programme. Typically, your personal tutor will be a member of staff involved with you academically. For the personal tutoring **arrangements** for online students, see please see further under Online students below.

UNION COLLEGE PERSONAL TUTORING ARRANGEMENTS

Ministry students

As a ministry student currently in either your first or second year of study, you were assigned to one member of Faculty at College welcome and induction. Your tutor takes a course-long special interest in your personal, academic and professional development. A personal tutor's duties are outlined below. During any planned study leave, tutees of the tutor on leave are routinely re-assigned to another member of Faculty.

Appendix 1 set outs a schedule for meetings between tutor and student. Over and above the activities outlined there, all tutors are free to enhance operation of the scheme for their

¹ [QUB-PersonalTutorGuide-2019-20.pdf](#)

² [..\..\PTFI Documents\Policy and Procedure Documents\EnsuringExcellenceInPTFIPGTOnlineProgrammesV06Draft.docx](#)

own tutees in appropriate ways: an annual audit provides opportunity to alert the Lead Tutor to effective or innovative practice or to suggest future enhancements to the scheme. The Lead Tutor makes an annual report to the Principal which helps inform future operation of the scheme.

Appendix 4 contains a grid to help you gainfully prepare for a meeting with your personal tutor; in advance of every meeting with your tutor, you will be sent this grid. For each meeting, and between meetings, it will help you take stock of your personal development and progress, while the “taking action” outcomes will identify key beneficial changes to make as you learn and grow.

Queen’s University students

As a Union student on a Queen’s University pathway, you were assigned to one member of Faculty at College welcome and induction. Your tutor takes a course-long special interest in your personal, academic and professional development, following the University guidelines, with their principal aims and objectives, in supporting you as an undergraduate Queen’s student. A personal tutor’s duties are outlined below. During any planned study leave, tutees of the tutor on leave are routinely re-assigned to another member of Faculty.

Appendix 2 set outs a schedule for meetings between tutor and student with students. Over and above the activities outlined there, all tutors are free to enhance operation of the scheme for their own tutees in appropriate ways: an annual audit provides opportunity to alert the Lead Tutor to effective or innovative practice or to suggest future enhancements to the scheme. The Lead Tutor makes an annual report to the Principal which helps inform future operation of the scheme.

Appendix 4 contains a grid to help you gainfully prepare for a meeting with your personal tutor; in advance of every meeting with your tutor, you will be sent this grid. For each meeting, and between meetings, it will help you take stock of your personal development and progress, while the “taking action” outcomes will identify key beneficial changes to make as you learn and grow.

Engagement with your personal tutor is not compulsory at Queen’s. Some students need little or no help in achieving the aims which personal tutoring seeks to address.

Nevertheless, Union College recognises that tutoring arrangements provide an important means of identifying students whose progress, health or wellbeing may be at risk and of helping such students take appropriate action or signposting them to relevant support services.

The University’s Personal Tutor Guide provides a list of Services and mechanisms available to University students. In addition, the College in partnership with the Presbyterian Chaplaincy at Queen’s assures a weekly presence from the chaplaincy team and advertises the support it offers students of all denominations and none. Denominational or other faith-based counselling services, where appropriate, are also among those to which students seeking help or support, may be referred by their tutor.

Online students

Appendix 3 set out a schedule for meetings between tutor and student via the digital space. Over and above the activities and timetable outlined there, all tutors are free to enhance operation of the scheme in order to serve their own tutees in appropriate ways: an annual audit provides opportunity to alert the Lead Tutor to effective or innovative practice or to suggest future enhancements to the scheme. The Lead Tutor makes an annual report to the Principal which helps inform future operation of the scheme.

Tutors routinely help online students to do the following:

- access bespoke academic support and advice throughout their studies, in conjunction with their academic tutors;
- access e-resources which promote good academic skills, notably through the Gamble Library;
- take active ownership of their own academic development, set and review appropriate goals and reflect on their progress throughout their course;
- understand the dynamics of academic progression on their particular pathway;
- profit from formal and informal interaction with peers in the online learning community;
- identify and engage in appropriate activities and experiences, in their home environment, and in parallel to studies in Union College, that will promote or enhance their personal or professional development – notably concerning careers, employability and skills;
- recognise whether, at any point, it would be beneficial to identify and access additional specialised help and support in meeting any challenges they may face in their learning.

Appendix 4 contains a grid to help you gainfully prepare for a skype or similar meeting with your personal tutor; in advance of every meeting with your tutor, you will be sent this grid. For each meeting, and between meetings, it will help you take stock of your personal development and progress, while the “taking action” outcomes will identify key beneficial changes to make as you learn and grow.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PERSONAL TUTORING SCHEME

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE UNION COLLEGE OFFICE

- co-ordinates all personal tutoring arrangements, under the guidance of the Lead Tutor;
- assigns tutees, under the guidance of the Lead Tutor, and manages each tutor’s group and their contact details;
- timetables personal tutor meetings each semester for individual tutors, in accordance with the scheme calendar (see Appendix 1);
- invites tutees to attend and keeps a record of their attendance;
- archives and manages securely all logs of tutors’ interactions with individual students, with the sensitive personal data they may contain;

- administratively supports the Lead Tutor in running the scheme and managing an annual audit of its operation (see Appendix 3) typically undertaken in June.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TUTORS

Guided by the student's own input, as focussed by their preparatory sheet for each meeting, tutors routinely help students:

- access bespoke academic support and advice throughout their studies, in conjunction with their module conveners and academic tutors;
- access resources which promote good academic skills, whether through the QUB Learning Development Service or the Gamble Library;
- take active ownership of their own academic development, set appropriate goals and reflect on their progress throughout their course;
- understand the dynamics of academic progression from secondary or high school to University and/or across the stages in higher education (at undergraduate, master's or doctoral levels), with the incremental challenges posed by each;
- identify and engage in activities and experiences, over and above their studies, that will enhance their personal or professional development, notably concerning careers, employability and skills;
- know when and where to find more specialised help and support, and how to access relevant support services, should they make a disclosure to tutors about any area of risk and within the boundaries of confidentiality
- provide the Lead tutor with data concerning the operation of the scheme during the past academic year, at the close of the second or third semester (see Appendix 3).

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE LEAD TUTOR

The Lead Tutor's role is:

- to oversee the student experience in College, within which personal tutoring is embedded;
- to facilitate all tutors in their work during the academic year;
- to inform and resource fellow tutors concerning the College's personal tutoring scheme, including customised operation of the QUB personal tutoring scheme;
- to alert colleagues to opportunities for personal tutor training as provided by QUB, including as appropriate participation in the University's inter-School Personal Tutor Forum;
- to report on or interpret, for colleagues, developing best practice of relevance for the College environment;
- to assist colleagues in complying with Data Protection principles;
- to advise colleagues as appropriate on all relevant QUB policies and provision of support services;
- to assist fellow tutors, as appropriate, in interfacing with the Institute of Theology or its Director of Education on adviser of studies issues relating to students' academic pathways;

- to monitor the operation of the personal tutoring scheme, conducting an annual audit, compiling a report and promoting desirable change;
- to update and develop the present Guide, in consultation with fellow-tutors and students.

At the close of the academic year, on the basis of data and comment supplied by tutors (see Appendix 5), the Lead Tutor conducts an audit, reviews the operation of the scheme, reports to the Principal with any recommendations for change, disseminates effective practice among fellow-tutors and makes arrangements through the College office, and with tutors, for implementation of the scheme in the following academic year.

<p>Remainder of semester</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are emailed a preparation sheet to help them maximise the benefit of the meeting • Students' first semester of ministerial formation is reviewed, centred on learning lessons and making changes and on setting or adjusting goals for the new semester and remainder of academic year <p>Second-year students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weeks 2 – 4: Following publication of draft results for first-semester modules and course units, a second scheduled one-to-one meeting with the personal tutor takes place • Students are emailed a preparation sheet to help them maximise the benefit of the meeting • Success in making the “step-up” of academic progression and/or on-going ministerial formation is reviewed and the furthering of on-going goals for personal, spiritual, academic & professional development discussed <p>All students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weeks 6 – 8: mid-semester themed group meeting (e.g. informal discussion of issues relevant to student development) • Ad hoc, informal contact is maintained between tutors/Lead Tutor and tutees, with use of email where appropriate (e.g., to inform students about up-coming activities, events or initiatives targeting employability and skills for ministry contexts)

APPENDIX 3

Personal Tutoring schedule (online students)

<p>At point of enrolment or at the start of each new year</p>	<p>New students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New students receive a video conference call from their personal tutor to welcome them onto the programme and pathway and guide them through induction issues and materials
<p>Start of first semester</p> <p>Remainder of semester</p>	<p>New students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once studies have begun, new students have their second video conference call with their personal tutor, with a twin focus on settling in and on the setting of some personal, spiritual, academic & professional development goals for their studies • More informal ad hoc contact is maintained, mainly by email but with further video conferencing as appropriate, with a view to helping students manage their early expectations and goals for, and gauge their initial progress in, the programme of study
<p>Start of new semester of each new year</p> <p>Remainder of semester</p>	<p>Students in at least their second semester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the new semester of study has begun, students have a scheduled video conference call with their personal tutor. This is a review meeting, centred on students' progress towards their goals for goals for personal, spiritual, academic & professional development, with an emphasis on marks obtained and feedback received for their academic work • For enhancement of their academic progress in particular, students are helped learn lessons, make appropriate changes and set or modify their goals for the new semester • More informal ad hoc contact is maintained, mainly by email but with further video conferencing as appropriate, with a view to helping students locate their academic progression and broader development within the wider context of attainment of their personal and professional goals • As students' final semester approaches, discussion of their post-graduation plans, and related personal or professional goals, becomes desirable
<p>Start of new semester</p>	<p>Students in their final semester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once the final semester of study has begun, students have their final scheduled video conference call with their personal tutor. This is a review meeting, centred on students' remaining work and progress towards completion of their course, graduation and obtaining the relevant award. • Some discussion of students' post-graduation plans takes place (including for any further study) and related personal, spiritual, academic or professional goals are reviewed.

Remainder of semester	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More informal ad hoc contact is maintained, mainly by email but with further video conferencing as appropriate, in support of students undertaking concluding academic work – notably where heightened commitment or a major tariff are involved (such as for researching, writing and submitting a dissertation)

APPENDIX 4 PERSONAL TUTOR MEETING – STUDENT PREPARATORY SHEET

For emailing to tutees with their invitation to attend a scheduled in-person or video meeting with their personal tutor (exists as a stand-alone document)

USE THIS GRID AS PREPARATION FOR GETTING THE MOST FROM MEETING YOUR PERSONAL TUTOR AND UPDATE IT DURING OR FOLLOWING THE MEETING

FOR THINKING THROUGH	FOR TAKING ACTION
<p>SPECIFIC GOALS which you have set yourself for this semester / academic year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">----	<p>IDEAS of practical ways to meet your goals</p>
<p>SKILLS which your learning and feedback has identified as in need of further development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">----	<p>STEPS already taken or which you intend to take to improve these skills</p>
<p>CHALLENGES you wish to overcome or PROBLEMS to solve in succeeding with your course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">---	<p>WAYS you have already found helpful (or worth pursuing) to get over these obstacles</p>
<p>COMMITMENTS or INTERESTS outside College which contribute to your personal development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">---	<p>OPPORTUNITIES you can identify for broadening or deepening your experiences</p>

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CAREERS (one or more) in which you are interested as future directions following graduation - - -	STEPS already taken or which you intend to take to sample these or explore them further
Other information to share, matters to discuss, questions to ask, help to request	

APPENDIX 5 (TUTORS ONLY)

Personal Tutoring Summary of Activity

Academic Year: 20.... -

Please send this summary to the Union College Lead Tutor by 31st May (two-semester pathways) or 31st August (pathways with a summer semester).

1. Activity completed this academic year: please see schedule in Appendices 1 – 3
Please itemise and briefly describe your scheduled one-to-one meetings – in person or digitally – with your tutees, highlighting any particular leitmotiv(s) or focal point(s) these may have had, plus any additional activities, formal or informal, individual or as a group, that took place.

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2. Student engagement
Please supply as much of the following data as you are able.

- Total number of tutees assigned to you this academic year:
- Number who attended a scheduled meeting with you in BOTH semesters:
- Number who attended a scheduled meeting with you in only ONE semester:
- Number who attended no personal tutor meeting this academic year:
- Number who availed of ADDITIONAL meetings or help this year:

3. Comments on activity this academic year
Please reflect on the contribution which you believe your engagement as a personal tutor may have made, this year, in support of the development and success of your tutees; please also identify what went well, what was challenging or what didn't work; finally, please suggest any ways in which you think tutoring arrangements for staff could be enhanced (including how your own role might be better supported or resourced) or pass on any improvements that your tutees may have suggested.

Thank-you! Your comments will be used to help with monitoring and enhancing the scheme.