

Union Theological College Personal Tutoring Scheme

2019 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 and structured informality. During their time in College, any enrolled student has freedom and opportunity to build relationships with staff who teach or support them, including Faculty, adjunct Faculty, Library and administrative staff.

Students on ministry pathways. 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. As ministerial students are deemed to be appropriately supported by these arrangements, they are not therefore assigned to other Faculty members' tutor groups, even if they are concurrently Queen's students.

Students on Queen's University pathways. In contrast to what may characterise Schools in the University, especially larger ones, frequency and variety of student-staff interaction within the College environment facilitates and enables excellent student-staff relations: Faculty make themselves available to students on a day-to-day basis; students develop a strong sense of belonging and of individual worth. Embedded within this relational proximity between staff and students, a personal tutoring scheme is in operation for such students: taking account of the College's promotion and support of a positive student experience, and with appropriate adjustment, under the guidance and management of the Lead Tutor the scheme is patterned on the University's practice as documented by the

Personal Tutor Guide.¹ Appendix 4 provides a preparatory sheet to help students prepare for meeting their personal tutor and get the most out of the opportunity.

Online students on PTFI pathways. The bespoke support from Union College on which online learners may count is set out in Ensuring excellence in online programmes.² Because all Union students, whether on campus or online, share the same status, online students like their on-campus peers may expect appropriate student support for their learning experience. Like their on-campus counterparts, online students are assigned a personal tutor whose active contact and support in the digital space – largely mirroring the arrangements for on-campus QUB students – is in addition to that of academic tutors who help deliver their programme. For the personal tutoring arrangements for online students, see below.

THE UNION COLLEGE PERSONAL TUTORING SCHEME (ON-CAMPUS STUDENTS)

Union students on Queen’s University pathways only are each assigned, at College welcome and induction, to one member of Faculty who will take a course-long special interest in their personal, academic and professional development. When acting as tutors, Faculty follow the University guidelines in supporting undergraduate Queen’s students, aligning their tutoring with the principal aims and objectives which it expresses. Each member of Faculty has personal tutor duties, as outlined below. During any planned study leave, tutees of the tutor on leave are routinely re-assigned to another member of Faculty.

Meetings with students involve, as a minimum, the schedule as set out in Appendix 1. 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; these will feature in the Lead Tutor’s annual report to the Principal and inform the future operation of the scheme.

Whereas some University Schools promote personal tutoring for first- and second-year students only – devolving any tutoring of third-year students to their supervisors of dissertations and projects – Union College is committed to offering undergraduate students the support of a personal tutor throughout their degree: the College recognises how, for students, the final year of study is overlaid with the additional challenge of decisions about life after University; this creates a context in which students greatly value the advice, help and support given by tutors who know them well.

Engagement with a personal tutor, while commended as worthwhile to all students, 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

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<https://home.qol.qub.ac.uk/University%20Documents/Staff%20Documents/Supporting%20Students/Personal%20Tutor%20Guide%202018-2019.pdf>

² Link to this PTFI document.

or wellbeing may be at risk and of helping such students take appropriate action or signposting them to relevant support services.

A list of Services and mechanisms available to University students is provided by the Personal Tutor Guide. 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.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE PERSONAL TUTORING SCHEME

The 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;
- administration supports the Lead Tutor in running the scheme and managing an annual audit of its operation (see Appendix 3) undertaken in late April.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR TUTORS

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

- access bespoke academic support and advice throughout their studies, in conjunction with module conveners and tutors;
- access resources which promote good academic skills, notably through the University's Learning Development Service;
- 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 School to University and across stages in higher education, with the incremental challenges posed by each;
- identify and engage in activities and experiences that will enhance their personal or professional development, notably concerning careers, employability and skills and the University's Development Weeks;
- know where to find more specialised help and support, when needed, and how to access it.

In cases where students make a disclosure to tutors about any area of risk, and within the boundaries of confidentiality, tutors signpost relevant support services. At the close of the second semester, tutors provide the Lead tutor with data concerning the operation of the scheme during the past academic year (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 inform and resource fellow tutors concerning the University's personal tutoring scheme and its expectations, together with the College's customised operation thereof;
- to alert colleagues to opportunities for personal tutor training as provided by the University;
- to participate in the University's inter-School Personal Tutor Forum and report on or interpret as appropriate developing best practice for the College environment;
- to assist colleagues in complying with Data Protection principles;
- to advise colleagues as appropriate on all relevant aspects of University policy and its 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 conduct an annual audit of the personal tutoring scheme, compile a report and promote desirable change;
- to update and develop the present Guide, in consultation with fellow-tutors and students.

During the academic year, the Lead Tutor facilitates all tutors in their work and monitors the operation of the scheme. At the close of the academic year, on the basis of data and comment supplied by tutors (see Appendix 3), 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.

TUTORING OF ONLINE STUDENTS

Contact with students via the digital space involves, as a minimum, the schedule as set out in Appendix 2. Tutors are free to enhance operation of the scheme for their own tutees in appropriate ways: they should alert the Lead Tutor to effective or innovative practice or suggest future enhancements; these will feature in the Lead Tutor's annual report to the Principal and inform the future operation of the scheme.

Tutors routinely help online students:

- 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 appropriate goals and reflect on their progress throughout their course;
- profit from interaction with fellow-learners in the online community;
- understand the dynamics of academic progression on their pathway;
- identify and engage in appropriate activities and experiences, in their home environment, that will enhance their personal or professional development, notably concerning careers, employability and skills;
- recognise whether, at any point, they should access additional specialised help and support in meeting the challenges of learning.

<p>Remainder of semester</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' first semester in higher education is reviewed, centred on learning lessons and making changes and on setting or adjusting goals for the new semester and remainder of academic year • Module choice and the module fair for stage 2 may be anticipated <p>Second- & third-year students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weeks 2 – 4: Following publication of draft results for first-semester modules, a second scheduled one-to-one meeting at stage 2 with their 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 is reviewed and the furthering of on-going goals for personal, academic & professional development discussed • With second-year students, module choice and the module fair for stage 3 may be anticipated • With third-year students, a focus on successful course completion and post-graduation plans is appropriate <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 relating to their personal, academic & professional development)

APPENDIX 2 Personal Tutoring schedule (online students)

At point of enrolment	<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
Start of first semester	<p>New students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Once studies have begun, new students have their first scheduled video conference call with their personal tutor, with a twin focus on settling in and on the setting of some personal developmental 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
Remainder of semester	
Start of new semester	<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 their second (or subsequent) scheduled video conference call with their personal tutor. This is a review meeting, centred on students' progress towards their goals for academic development, as evidenced by marks obtained and feedback received for their academic work • For enhancement of their academic progress, 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 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
Remainder of semester	
	Students in their final semester

APPENDIX 3

Personal Tutoring Summary of Activity

Academic Year: 20.... -

Please send this summary to the Union College Lead Tutor by 30th April.

1. Activity completed this academic year: please see schedule in Appendix 1

Please itemise and briefly describe your scheduled one-to-one meetings 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.

APPENDIX 4 PERSONAL TUTOR MEETING – STUDENT PREPARATORY SHEET

For emailing to tutees with their invitation to attend a scheduled 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>
<p>CAREERS (one or more) in which you are interested as future directions following graduation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">---	<p>STEPS already taken or which you intend to take to sample these or explore them further</p>
<p>Other information to share, matters to discuss, questions to ask, help to request</p>	