Undergraduate School of Social and Political Science
Personal Tutoring Statement 2015/16

Your Personal Tutor

Your Personal Tutor will be a member of staff familiar with your general area of study and the expectations of academic work in your discipline. He/she will have a clear understanding of their role in supporting your studies and how to direct you to any other support you might need during your time at the University.

Working in partnership with your Personal Tutor will help you to:

• become a more confident learner in your discipline and play an active part in your academic community.
• reflect on your academic progress and make the most effective use of your academic feedback.
• develop the range of skills and attributes required for success at university and beyond.

More extensive details on all aspects of the Personal Tutoring system, including each School Personal Tutoring Statement from across the University, can be found at the following link: Your Personal Tutor system

Discussions between you and your Personal Tutor will be confidential, but notes of the meeting will be available to a small core group of staff who are responsible for supporting you. You should discuss with your Personal Tutor if you have any concerns about how a specific issue will be recorded, or the level of confidentiality it will be afforded. Further information on this is available on your personal tutor area of MyEd.

The Personal Tutor system in the Undergraduate School

As an undergraduate student you will have a number of scheduled meetings with your Personal Tutor each academic year. During your early years at the University your School will schedule meetings to enable you to settle in and build a rapport with your Personal Tutor. Contact will gradually become less formal in the latter years of study however you are actively encouraged to schedule meetings with your Personal Tutor as required throughout your time at the University. Some of these of will be individual meetings with your Personal Tutor and others will take place in a group.

Individual meetings provide you with an opportunity to check you are enrolled in appropriate courses, discuss your progress on your degree programme, reflect on your learning and use of feedback, and raise any issues or concerns regarding your studies. They also provide opportunities for you to discuss any support you may require during your studies, consider ways of becoming more involved in your academic community, and identify ways of developing skills relevant to your time at university or beyond.

Group meetings will typically involve students in the same year and degree programme as you, and will be led by your PT (often with input from other staff in the University, for instance your Student Support Officer, the Careers Service or the Institute for Academic Development). They may take place within a Fundamentals course, if this is part of your
degree programme. The group meetings allow you to engage with your peers and to share experiences. They will also be used to provide information about opportunities to enhance your learning experience, and develop your academic skills while at university. Content will vary depending on your year group but could include talks from the careers service, discussion of opportunities to study overseas, details of internships and volunteer opportunities.

Year 1 Undergraduate Students

During Semester 1, Year 1 students will have an individual meeting with their Personal Tutor in week 0 (‘Welcome Week’). It will be introductory and will ensure you are aware of the responsibilities and opportunities available under the PT system. You will have a second individual meeting in Semester 2, which will typically take place mid-way through the semester and will be used to review academic progress, and for preliminary discussions around course options for the following academic year. You will have at least two further meetings with your Personal Tutor across the year, which may take place in group settings.

Continuing Undergraduate Students

As a continuing undergraduate student, you will have an individual meeting with your Personal Tutor in week 0 or week 1. In preparation for this meeting, you should reflect on your main achievements and challenges in your studies thus far. The meeting will be used to discuss those reflections, discuss coursework feedback and marks, and direct you to additional support and opportunities available. As a Year 2 student, you will have at least two further meetings with your Personal Tutor over the course of the year, one of which may take place in a group. If you are in Year 3 or following, you should contact your Personal Tutor to request further meetings as required.

Your Personal Tutor will contact you via your university e-mail account to arrange or notify you of meetings. You are responsible for checking and responding to meeting requests, and for attending meetings. You may also request additional meetings with your Personal Tutor by contacting them via e-mail or using the meeting request function in MyEd.

If you are not on campus (e.g. studying abroad for a period, or on placement, or studying an online degree) then your meetings may take place by telephone, live internet call, or a web conferencing application. Email exchanges are not considered to be meetings unless they take place within a pre-agreed timeframe to enable you to have a “conversation” (e.g. if you are overseas and emailing within a 24-36 hour period to take account of time differences).

Peer Support

A variety of Peer Support activities are available within the School and we encourage you to get involved with these as they’re a great way to engage with other students. These include:

- Sustainable Development Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (SDPALS)
  - Website: http://sdpals.weebly.com/
  - Contact: Ms Sue Renton sue.renton@ed.ac.uk
- Politics and International Relations Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PIRPALS)
  - Website: http://pirpals.weebly.com/
  - Contact: Dr Claire Duncanson C.P.Duncanson@ed.ac.uk
• Q-Step (‘with Quantitative Methods’) Peer Assisted Learning Scheme
  o Contact: Dr Alison Koslowski alison.koslowski@ed.ac.uk
• Social Anthropology Academic Families

Most of the subject areas in SPS have student societies, which provide opportunities for you to develop your interests, network and meet like-minded people:
http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/current_students/student_support_and_community/student_societies

Information about other Peer Support activities across the University can be found at the following link: EUSA Peer Support

Support Contacts

You will be allocated a Personal Tutor; you can find out who your Personal Tutor is through MyEd. There is also a Senior Tutor and Student Support Team. Details of the Student Support Team can be found here:
http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/current_students/student_support_and_community/student_support_team

Information on other key contacts in the Undergraduate School, including the Director and Deputy Directors of the Undergraduate School, and the Senior Tutor, can be found here:
http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/undergrad/current_students/the_undergraduate_school/meet_the_team

Tips for contacting the most appropriate person:

• Your Personal Tutor can advise on academic issues relating to your degree, such as applying for a degree transfer if you wish to change your programme. They may also be able to offer generic advice on improving your academic performance (for instance if you keep receiving similar feedback comments from different courses). Feedback on specific feedback comments should be sought from your course tutor or course organiser in the first instance.
• You should ensure your Personal Tutor is aware of any issues which you feel may adversely affect your studies. Your Personal Tutor will be able to advise you on university procedures for dealing with difficulties which might affect your academic performance, and advise you as to possible support networks within the University.
• You can contact your Personal Tutor via e-mail or MyEd. All PTs also hold feedback and guidance hours at least once a week during semester time. You can visit during these hours without an appointment. Details of these hours for your PT will be noted on their staff webpage and displayed on their office door.
• When contacting your Personal Tutor, you should receive an initial response within three working days.
• Each subject area also has a Student Support Officer. Your Student Support Officer can act as a first point of contact if you wish to discuss an issue relating to your studies.
• Student Support Officers can deal with routine issues, such as course changes in the first two weeks of a semester, and assisting with completing Special Circumstances Forms, without you needing to arrange a meeting with your Personal Tutor.
• If for any reason both your Student Support Officer and Personal Tutor are unavailable please visit Reception on the Ground Floor of CMB, where the Undergraduate Teaching Office will be able to assist with your enquiry.
• If you require a change of Personal Tutor, please contact the Senior Tutor in SPS.