

PERSONAL ACADEMIC COACHING POLICY

Introduction

1. The University of Suffolk is committed to providing personal academic coaching as an essential feature of its programmes of study. This policy specifies what academic coaching is and outlines its purpose. It also identifies student entitlement, the responsibilities of/support for personal academic coaches and relevant review and quality enhancement mechanisms. This policy applies to all students enrolled on undergraduate and taught postgraduate courses at the University of Suffolk. Students enrolled at a University of Suffolk partner institution will be covered by the [Tutorial Policy](#).

Key principles underpinning personal academic coaching practice

2. Key principles which underpin personal academic coaching practice:
- Coaching - emphasises the type of relationship to be fostered, one in which students develop self-awareness, resilience and autonomy, their own ability to solve problems and to grow through their academic course.
 - Learner-centredness – respect for each student as an active learner and as an individual with their own particular set of needs.
 - Concern for all aspects of students' learning – educational, career, personal and social.
 - Equity of opportunity and diversity – ensuring and promoting equity of opportunity and diversity including eliminating unlawful discrimination.

These principles significantly help to create the conditions for learning and to empower students to feel sufficiently secure and confident to make increasingly mature and responsible decisions.

Personal Academic Coaching

3. Personal Academic Coaching has a proactive role to play in supporting student's transition to University life and in supporting them through the various stages of their journey and achieving their goals. In the first term this includes settling in and getting established. Later on this will involve raising engagement with the wider opportunities available at the University including employability, co-curricular and volunteering opportunities.

4. Personal Academic Coaching is considered critical in fostering student confidence and stability and in promoting the skills, attitudes and behaviours to enhance students' current learning and nurture lifelong and reflective learning. They are not a passive model where the coach gives all the answers to the student. Students are expected to take an active part in planning for their futures, recognising personal strengths, and addressing any issues through honest discussion.

5. Personal Academic Coaching is focussed on the academic performance and skills of the students and is inherent to the academic experience of the student. It provides planned, structured, continuous and confidential support for students on programmes of study at the University of Suffolk.

6. Personal Academic Coaching recognises the importance of getting to know students by name, and building a relationship, understanding interests and what motivates them. This can foster a sense of belonging and engagement. This can help students to set personal goals and targets.

7. At undergraduate levels, students are expected to engage with Personal Academic Coaching, as outlined in the University's Student Attendance and Engagement Policy. Coaching will take place on a one-to-one basis and as part of cohort groups.

Subject-specific tutorials

8. In addition to Personal Academic Coaching, students will usually have access to subject-specific academic support for their learning and assessment needs at module/course level. Time for these subject-specific tutorials is met from within module/course taught hours, determined by module tutors and approved as part of the initial validation and subsequent re-approval processes. These can be group and/or individual tutorials.

9. Academic skills sessions may be offered as an integral aspect of these subject-specific tutorials. These may be embedded into programmes and timetabled, or provided as additional sessions.

10. Often on, for example, small part-time courses, these two types of tutorial may be combined and the functions of both fulfilled in one meeting between tutor and student. Tutors should ensure students are fully aware of the dual role of these personal/subject-specific tutorials.

Purpose of Personal Academic Coaching

11. Personal Academic Coaching provides a personal contact point for all students and is intended to help them to:

- Settle into the University, and to engage effectively in their studies through a review of the academic progress and engagement on a regular basis at each level of study.
- Consider their progress holistically across all modules on the course, through personal reflection upon their feedback and grades achieved.

- Identify their strengths, weaknesses and developmental opportunities reflecting on how they can address these to progress effectively, including those developmental opportunities with Library and Learning Services, Student Life and Careers, Employability and Enterprise.
- Set goals and targets.
- Consider career ambitions.
- Become more effective and confident learners who take increasing responsibility for their learning as they progress through their programmes of study.
- Develop a positive attitude to lifelong learning.

12. Personal Academic Coaching does not:

- Provide counselling, financial advice, disability and dyslexia support, health or wellbeing or any other specialist advice, but rather refers students to the appropriate service, providing support to book if needed.
- Duplicate the role of the module leader / tutor, who provide specific subject advice.
- Replace the role of any requirements for some professional registration programmes where there are additional support mechanisms.
- Give personal advice, based on own or others' experience.

Personal Academic Coaching – the University of Suffolk commitment:

13. All new students will be allocated a Personal Academic Coach post enrolment, and by the end of the first week of teaching. This includes Foundation Year (Level 3 or Year 0), Level 4 (Year 1) as well as direct entrants to Level 5 (Year 2) and Level 6 (Year 3). Personal Academic Coaching will be explained to all new entrants as part of their induction and Welcome to the University.

14. Where possible the coach should remain with the student on their academic journey from induction through to graduation.

15. For all years, there will be a minimum of two one-to-one meetings per year. Suggested content for each meeting is included in the [Personal Academic Coach Handbook](#). The pattern of Personal Academic Coach meetings is:

- For new entrants at Level 3 to Level 6, an initial one-to-one Personal Academic Coaching session will be timetabled during the first two weeks of the first semester.
- During or shortly after induction: a group or individual tutorial where each student will be allocated to and meet their Personal Academic Coach, agree expectations and timings of meetings.

- After feedback from the first assessment: an individual student meeting, reflecting on their learning experience and the first assessment.
- At the end of the Block 4 (single block) or Block B (double block) to review completed work and grades achieved.

16. If appropriate, for Level 6 (Year 3), the role of the Personal Academic Coach may be combined with that of the Dissertation or Independent Project Supervisor. Meetings must still take a whole course, holistic approach.

17. Individual personal academic coaching sessions will be approximately 30 minutes in duration.

18. Personal academic coaching sessions will be formally timetabled, in consideration of taught sessions to avoid clashes, and wider student experience to maximise and promote engagement and attendance while on campus. Guidance is provided to staff as part of annual timetabling processes and through the Personal Academic Coach Handbook.

19. A record of the personal academic coaching session is made using an online form, which is published in the [Personal Academic Coach Resource Hub](#) and is available to all academic staff. A copy of the completed form is sent to all participants in the meeting (group and individual). A copy of the form is also retained by the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) as host of the online form.

20. In the event of a problem arising in the student/tutor relationship, students have the right to take the matter to their Course Leader or Dean of School (or equivalent manager).

Disclosure of Personal Information and the General Data Protection Regulations.

21. Under Data Protection Regulation students can access most of the information held by the University on them. The template record is designed to summarise key points of discussion and action planning only, such that the detail of your meetings are kept between the PAC and the student. The template specifies that it will be added to the student's central record, to which staff will have access, if needed.

Support for Personal Academic Coaches

22. Support for Personal Academic Coaches is provided through CELT as follows:

- Full training in the principles and practice of the Personal Academic Coach for new coaches. Training provides part of the academic probation for all academic staff joining the University with responsibility for teaching.
- Annual 'refresher' training.
- A Personal Academic Coach Handbook outlining principles of practice.
- The [Personal Academic Coach Resource Hub](#).

Monitoring and Evaluation.

23. Data gathered through the submission of Personal Academic Coach session forms is reviewed annually by the Quality Enhancement function within CELT. Data is reviewed to:

- Ensure that meetings are being timetabled as outlined in Paragraph 15.
- That the forms completed are a helpful tool for Coach and Student and provide a student-centred, solutions focussed approach to issues identified.
- Additional training and or guidance can be provided to Personal Academic Coaches as required.
- Themes running across modules, courses, Schools, level of study or pan-university can be identified and responded to as needed.
- An annual report on the practice of Personal Academic Coaching will be presented to the CELT Committee.

24. Data gathered may also be used as part of research and evaluation activity related to the achievement of the University's published targets and milestones in the Access and Participation Plan.