



# Personal Tutor Handbook

A guide for Personal Tutors on their role and the range of support and resources available for tutors and students.

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# Introduction



Professor Julia Clarke

We have a vision for inclusive student success. By transforming our (and our communities') leadership and workforce, we hope to offer all those who can benefit a higher education experience that equips them to make a significant contribution to their communities both as students and as graduates.

We will set the bar high of our students' expectations; supporting them in all aspects of their University experience, but challenging them to do their best for themselves and their communities.

Excellent personal tutoring is fundamental to this vision of inclusive student success at the University of Wolverhampton, and to the Students' Union's call for all students to be able to believe, belong and achieve. For this to happen the Students' Union has asked the University to ensure that all students can identify their personal tutor, how to contact and engage with them.

Personal tutors provide a consistent and focused source of support for students in developing the knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits that are essential to achievement in their studies and to their future success.

Successful personal tutoring comes from developing a strong and respectful relationship between tutor and tutee. To build that relationship there should be clear roles and responsibilities on both sides that are communicated to personal tutors and tutees. These are set out in the Personal Tutoring Principles.

This handbook gives an overview of your role as a personal tutor and sets out the support on offer to you and your students. It is intended as a first point of reference to cover the basics and to point you towards other specialist sources of information and support when these are needed.

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University of Wolverhampton Students' Union  
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Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)



Ayo Falana



# Our commitment to personal tutoring

At the University of Wolverhampton, our delivery of quality personal tutoring is dependent on Personal Tutors. From establishing contact with students to maintaining a suitable level of support throughout their studies at University, it is a meaningful role.

## Personal Tutor Principles

The University has produced a number of documents around personal tutoring:

- A Personal Tutor Policy
- A Personal Tutor Role Descriptor
- A Personal Tutor Handbook
- Information for Students

Given the range of views which exist about this topic, it has been decided that it would be helpful to have some general principles, around which these documents would be written.

The principles produced are below.

1. Every student (full-time and part-time) should have a Personal Tutor who is an academic member of staff from the University of Wolverhampton. The Personal Tutor would normally be from the same School/Institute but local decisions would need to be made as to if they are from the same subject group.
2. It would be responsibility of the Personal Tutor to access and discuss the Individual Learning Profile (ILP) which is completed by the student.

3. When working with partner colleges (for example Transnational Education), the partner college would be responsible for providing the Personal Tutor.
4. The ratio should be 25 students: 1 Personal Tutor.
5. All academic staff, who are appointed as Personal Tutors, should undertake Personal Tutor training when available.
6. The key responsibilities of Personal Tutors are to ensure a strong provision of and to be the first point of contact for:
  - pastoral role (growth, progression, social and wellbeing)
  - data informed guidance and timely intervention for retention and progression
  - advice on University regulations and procedures
  - acting as advocate for the student where required
  - keeping in touch during long-term periods of sickness / Leave of Absence
  - promoting work placements, job opportunities, Graduate Attributes Framework and the Employability Framework.
7. Students retain the same Personal Tutor for a minimum of one year.
8. Minimum of 3 meetings per year for full-time students and 2 meetings per year for part-time students in an appropriate medium which would be auditable by the Programme Leader. (Clearly where a student has more severe issues this might need to be more flexible.)



9. Personal Tutors will contact their tutees once a month to check in with them pastorally in a medium which suits the student(s) in order to foster a tutee and tutor relationship rather than focus on issues alone.
10. In order to support the development of academic skills, such as the development of academic integrity, Personal Tutors will signpost their tutees to the resources provided by the Skills for Learning team and to additional provision in Faculties. Personal Tutors will support their tutees through any allegations of academic misconduct and ensure that they receive appropriate support and guidance going forward.
11. Information given to Personal Tutors will usually be treated as confidential; however there are rare exceptional circumstances, where Personal Tutors would need to share information with others within and / or outside the University. Confidentiality would be overridden in, for example, the following circumstances:
  - PSRB requirements
  - vital interests of student (e.g. Health and Safety)
  - disclosure is required by law or the Prevent Duty or concerns regarding safeguarding

This list is not exhaustive. In any of these rare situations the Personal Tutor should try to discuss this with the student.
12. Personal Tutors will carry out exit interviews with their tutees.
13. Appropriate training will be provided to Personal Tutors and will be mandatory during the probationary period. For existing Personal tutors, this training would be offered if the need is identified during appraisal or other similar meetings with line managers.

**Outlined below are just some of the key responsibilities of a Personal Tutor to their student(s).**

- As a Personal Tutor, you should notify students of your identity within one week of their enrolment on their course. Ideally, you will introduce yourself by email prior to Induction, establishing yourself as a friendly source of support and emphasising the importance of personal tutoring – thereby helping to increase student engagement.
- You will initiate the first meeting with tutees within three weeks of the student starting a course of study at the University and within five weeks for tutees who are returning to a new course or level of study. Ideally, a meeting of the whole tutor group should be held in the first week of their programme (Induction), to help students get off to the best possible start.
- You will maintain regular communication (virtual and/ or face-to-face) with designated tutees, at least three times throughout an academic year for full-time undergraduate students and twice for part time students. Plus, at each significant phase for all other modes of study (including part-time, postgraduate, apprenticeships and work-based learning). Suggestions on timings and subjects for discussion are included in this handbook.
- You are responsible and accountable for: assisting students in their personal and academic development, planning and progression; offering advice and guidance to help students liaise with other staff and support facilities in faculties and the University; and follow up students, according to University procedures, who are not making satisfactory progress or are at risk of withdrawal in a time frame that facilitates potential recovery of the situation.
- You will engage the new tutees to complete the Independent Learner Profile (ILP or similar, as endorsed by the Faculty).
- Each of the meetings should be formally timetabled using Microsoft Teams as all personal tutor meetings will be virtual. Guidance can be found here: <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/its/digital-campus/teams/meetings/#d.en.21663521>



## The University's Personal Tutor Policy

[The Personal Tutor Policy \(2020\)](#) sets out a series of commitments to every student enrolled on our undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. The defining principle of the policy is that all students on taught programmes, including postgraduates, will be assigned a named member of academic staff who is responsible for general academic, pastoral and career support throughout the entirety of their programme, via a series of structured tutorial sessions.

### **What personal tutoring is not**

As a Personal Tutor, you should not stray into providing counselling or specialist advice. For further information, we have produced a 'signposting to services guide' (appendix 1). Similarly, Personal Tutors should not replace or duplicate the role of module staff.

# Your role as a Personal Tutor

As a Personal Tutor, you will provide dedicated support to a small group of students throughout the duration of their studies, from enrolment to graduation. This support involves getting to know each tutee and giving guidance on academic and pastoral matters as well as the student's personal and professional development.

## Being available

Given the nature of the support provided, this will not always occur during timetabled sessions – or even face-to-face. Students may need to contact you when they are facing particular problems or have a pressing query, so you should ensure your tutees know your office hours (if applicable) or when you are available and how to contact you.

It is not unusual to be anxious about the potentially serious nature of the issues students will raise. You should always be ready and confident to refer to specialist services that are attached in Appendix 1.

## Main duties

The role of Personal Tutor is to provide academic guidance, pastoral care, careers direction and support to your tutor group. This includes a responsibility in three different areas.

### Pastoral

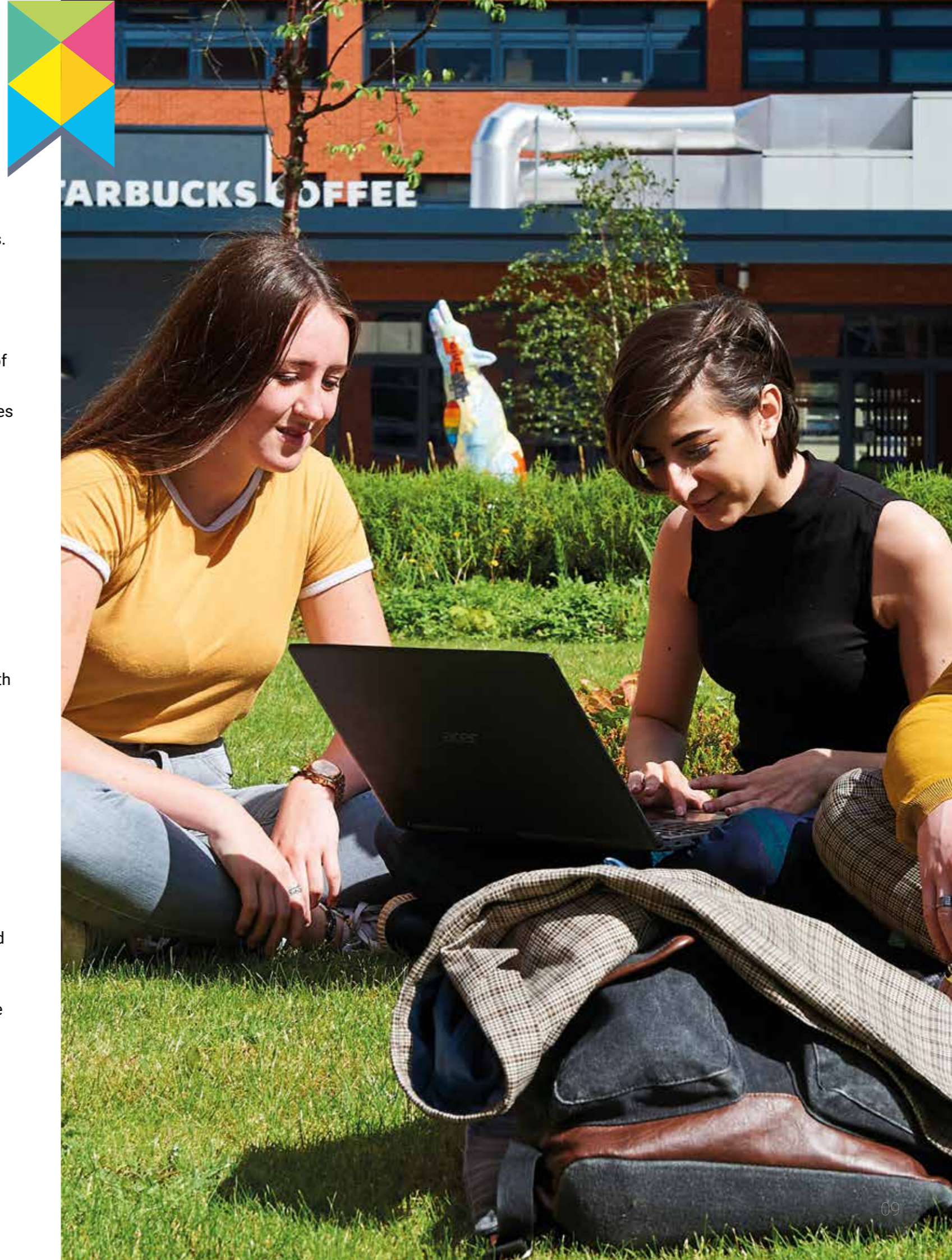
- Know your tutees by name.
- Help students to settle in at University and develop their understanding and awareness of higher level study.
- Offer an accessible point of contact for queries about academic or professional progress and a point of referral to appropriate support services, where required.
- Support interventions with international students to ensure their compliance with the attendance conditions of their visa.
- Know your SU representatives.

### Academic

- Deliver tutorials, as per our commitment.
- Regularly discuss each student's progress with them.
- On notification of a tutee's non-attendance, seek to discuss the issue with them.

### Developmental

- Support students to identify where their strengths and weaknesses are, in terms of academic study skills, and take up opportunities to develop these.
- Support students to reflect holistically on the various pieces of feedback they have received formally and informally on assessed work.
- Support students to consider volunteering, sandwich placements, international exchange and their career ambitions – and how they can make the most of the support on offer to achieve their goals.
- Encourage students to engage with extra-curricular opportunities beyond their programme.





## Recommendations for topics to cover in tutorials

### Tutor group meetings in Welcome Week

- First things first: it is good practice to take a list of attendees.
- Remind students to make an appointment to see you individually within the next three weeks.
- Check students have completed and submitted the Individual Learning Profile form, ready for the first individual tutorial.

#### Aims:

- To check that students are settling in.
- To check that all students have registered for their modules.
- To introduce Faculty Student Services as a place for advice and support around logistics.
- To encourage students to take advantage of the Personal Tutor system. There is some evidence that new male students find one-to-one tutorials more 'threatening' and are less likely to take advantage of them.
- To get students thinking early on about what it means to study at a university, how it might differ from their previous experiences of education and what the expectations of the staff are.
- To reinforce the importance of being proactive, taking charge of their own learning experience right from the start and that developing this sort of independence is a key graduate skill.
- To encourage students to think about how they will balance and prioritise the potentially conflicting demands of academic study, paid employment, family commitments, social life, etc. They need to understand that maintaining an appropriate balance and being proactive will be key to their success at university.



#### Suggested prompts to stimulate discussion:

- Introduce yourself and remind students of your role.
- "How is everyone settling in?"
- "Has everyone got somewhere to live and somewhere to study?"
- "Are you registered for computer access?"
- "Remember to use your University email account. This is the one which will be used by staff for communication with students."
- "Do you know how to make appointments to see staff?"
- "Do you know where central facilities such as Student Support and Wellbeing are located and what is available there?"
- "Are you aware that full-time study means 40 hours per week, and that is the staff expectation of effort?"
- "University education is concerned not only with acquiring subject knowledge, but also personal and graduate skill development."
- "How will you balance study, paid employment, family commitments, social life, etc?"
- "It is good to study with friends; the University has plenty of social learning areas – but take care to avoid plagiarism and collusion when submitting assignments."
- "Have you considered taking part in overseas exchange or in the University's Mentoring Schemes?"

### Meeting One with tutees: Individual meetings in the first three weeks

- These should take place by the end of the first three weeks of semester one.
- Please keep a record of appointments so that if some of your tutees have not booked, they can be followed up.
- The University has a rule regarding engagement within the first 50 days, and so non-attendance should be recorded and Faculty Professional Services should be notified.
- Check tutees have completed and submitted the electronic Individual Learning Profile and if not, remind them to do so.

#### Aims:

- To provide an early warning of non-engagement and actual or potential problems.
- To help students to develop effective study habits.
- To encourage students to plan for their achievement and to think about their future career.



#### Suggested prompts to stimulate discussion:

##### *Adapting to university study*

- “Do you have somewhere to live and somewhere to study?”
- “Do you feel you are settling in OK?”
- “Are you having any problems attending classes?”
- “How are you balancing conflicting demands on your time?”
- Review the Individual Learning Profile and direct students to support services as appropriate.
- Reassure students who will be finding it difficult: many students feel that they are not coping but ‘everyone else is’.

##### *Support systems and support facilities*

- Be familiar with the role of Faculty Student Services, Registry, e:Vision, etc..
- “What do you know about the central student support facilities such as the Library, Gateway, Chaplaincy etc?”

##### *Teaching and learning facilities*

- “Are you registered for computer access?”
- “Do you have computer and internet access at home?”
- “Are you remembering to use your University email account?”
- “What sort of things have you used the Library for?”
- “In what ways are you using Canvas?”

##### *Confidence and commitment*

- “In what ways is studying here different from what you expected?”
- “How confident do you feel that you can solve problems yourself, eg. personal, academic, time management? How would you go about solving such problems?”
- “What made you decide to study the course you are on?”
- “What are your goals in studying for your degree?”
- “Besides planning to solve problems, how do you think you can actively plan for your success and achievement on your degree and your future career?”

## Subsequent meetings

Personal Tutors should ensure that their tutees schedule at least two further meetings to discuss progress during their first year. While these will clearly be opportunities to discuss any problems students are having, you also have a role in these sessions in supporting their academic and personal development and their career planning.

Faculty Student Records are able to contact a student to discuss the reasons for their potential withdrawal and to suggest alternative options; it is appropriate that, upon receiving such notification, the Personal Tutor liaises with Faculty Student Services to confirm their student has responded and to offer the student an urgent meeting to discuss the situation.

### Suggested prompts to stimulate discussion:

#### Learning

- “Which teaching and learning styles do you prefer or which suit you best?”
- “How are you using Canvas to support your studies?”
- “How are you using the Library to support your studies?”
- “Have you experienced any problems with attending classes?”
- “Are materials in Canvas or lectures made available in ways which are accessible to you?”

#### Assessment

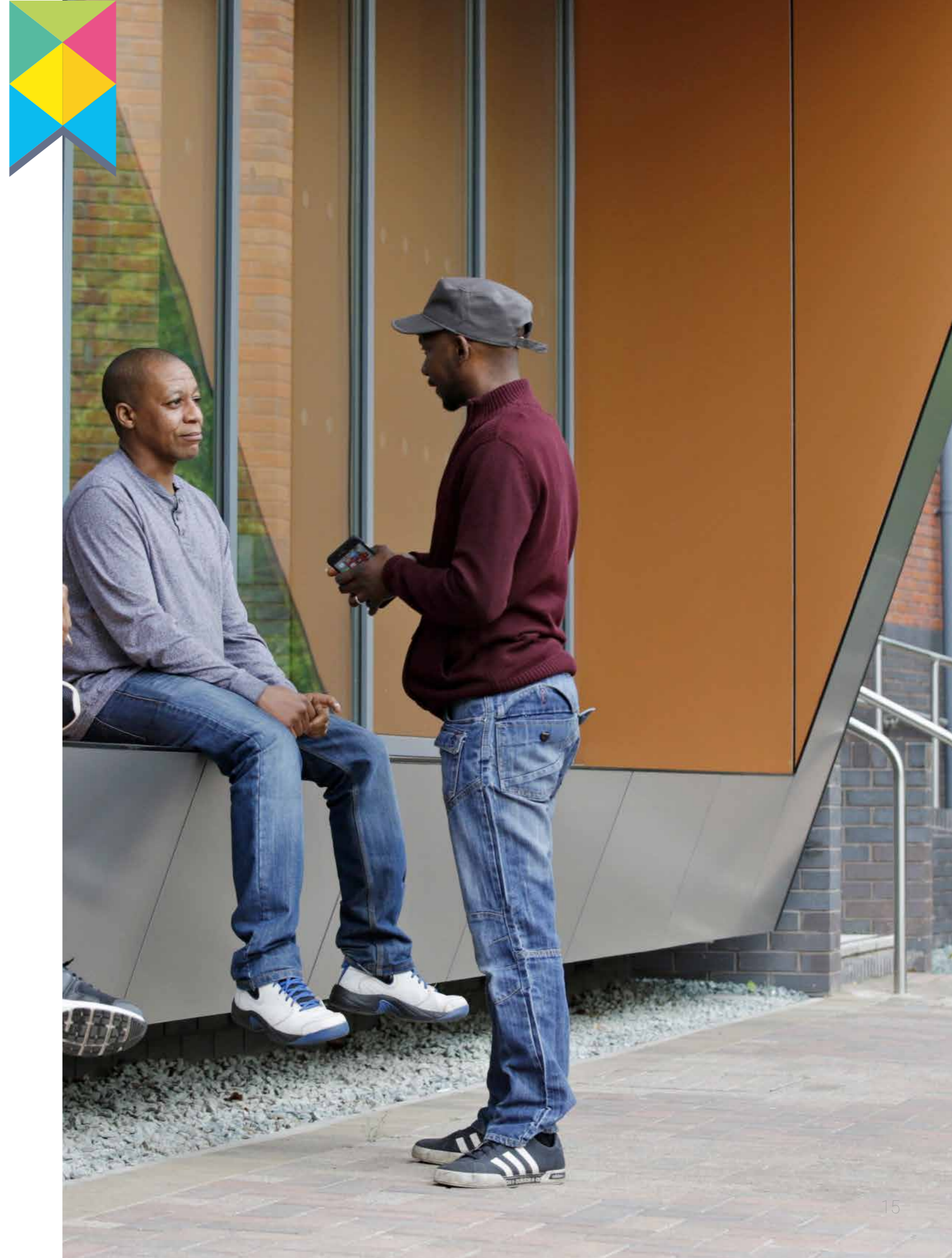
- “What styles of assessment do you feel you do best/worst?”
- “How do you revise for tests and exams?”
- “How have you solved any problems you have encountered so far?”
- “How have you used the feedback you have received so far?”

#### Progress

- Review progress in modules so far. Reinforce progression rules, resit opportunities and the rules on compensation.
- Track progress in assessment throughout the year – is it improving?

#### Personal development

- “What achievement, inside or outside of university, has given you the most satisfaction this semester?”
- “How have you set about coping with any problems that you have encountered?”
- “Do you have an up-to-date CV? What guidance did you seek in formulating content and format?”
- “What plans do you have to gain relevant work experience during your degree to enhance your employability?”





# Appendix 1

## Signposting to services

The following are current web resources that a personal tutor should be able to signpost a student to for:

- ▶ [Student support](#)
- ▶ [University Accommodation](#)
- ▶ also see
- ▶ [Students' Union](#)
- ▶ [Careers, Enterprise and The Workplace](#)
- ▶ [Conduct and appeals](#)
- ▶ [English Language support](#)
- ▶ [Financial support](#)
- ▶ [Mental health](#)
- ▶ [Responding to a student in distress](#)
- ▶ [Student Support and Wellbeing](#)

Note: Mental Health and Disability Services are specialised services and because of that require more initial information from students in order to be more efficient. Hence the two forms, one for each service. Please note that the Mental Health and Wellbeing registration form must be filled by the student, no third parties are allowed to do that on behalf of the student. This is because of the need for risk assessment carried out on the basis of the submitted forms.

- ▶ [Welfare Check Form](#)
- ▶ [Student Support and Wellbeing contact form](#)
- ▶ [Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)
- ▶ [Disability Service Self Declaration Form](#)
- ▶ [For students with disabilities](#)
- ▶ [Students' Union](#)
- ▶ [Study Skills](#)

# Policy on Exit Interviews

## Introduction

It is important that we understand the circumstances around student withdrawals in order that we can identify any patterns and provide students with any support that they need through this transition. We should offer all students who withdraw the opportunity for an exit interview with their academic coach or personal tutor.

Exit interviews are designed to understand the student's experience around leaving and to signpost any support that may be helpful to them in the future. They are not meant to be a conversation to try to get the student to change their mind or to talk through their decision – these meetings may have happened previously.

## Invitation to exit interview

Students should only be invited to exit interviews when they have actively declared their intention to leave the University or confirmed that they have already left (for example, in response to a chasing communication from the University).

The invitation to an exit interview should be recorded on the student record.

## Suggested script for an exit interview

- Thank the student for attending, express regret at their decision but be clear that purpose of interview is to understand reasons and support them rather than to try to change their mind.

- Explain that their reason for leaving will be recorded on their student record using a code. Any details that they provide in the interview will be treated in confidence.
- Ask student to describe why they came to the decision to leave.
- What do they think the University has done well, what has it not done well?
- Check on their wellbeing.
- Confirm if they have sufficient credits for a certificate/diploma and explain how this will be awarded.
- Highlight opportunities for student to use any learning from their time with us for APL/ advanced standing, particularly through the Midlands Credit Compass <https://midlandsenterpriseuniversities.co.uk/creditcompass>

## Recording of exit interview

Notes of the exit interview should be made and stored in line with policies on personal tutorial meeting notes/confidential student information.

Record that the interview has taken place together with code for leaving, which should be added to student record.



