

### Introduction

Personal tutoring continues to be a key student support resource at Heriot-Watt University. It is central to student retention and to the wider student experience, and the University is committed to providing training and support to enable academic colleagues to fulfil the role effectively. This paper outlines some key elements of how personal tutoring will operate in the 2023-24 academic year. In 2022-23 personal tutoring was reviewed and recommendations approved by UCLT which will be taken forward this year. Central to future developments will be lessons learned from a SoSS pilot being launched in 2023-24, where responsibilities for academic and non-academic/wellbeing advice are divided respectively between academic staff and a new team of Student Advisors.

### The paper will address:

- **Personal Tutor and Tutee Contact Points**
- **Personal Tutor Training and Guidance**
- **The Personal Tutoring Review**

### Personal Tutor and Tutee Contact Points

A contact point is an occasion where the personal tutor initiates a conversation or consultation with a tutee and these take place at regular intervals throughout the academic year. This may be a face to face meeting, an online meeting via MS Teams, an email exchange or a phone conversation. Personal tutors can judge the appropriate contact, for example, whether an email check in is sufficient, or whether a more in depth online or face to face discussion is required. The latter would be the case where there are particular concerns about a student. In addition to one to one contact, personal tutors can also use MS Teams for group sessions with their personal tutors where common issues affecting tutees can be discussed. The personal tutor group can also be developed as a peer support network.

Since 2020-21, the minimum number and frequency of contact points are three per semester:

### September Semester

- Start of semester – Welcome Week (new and continuing students) or Teaching Week 1 (continuing students). This is to introduce, or re-introduce, students to their personal tutor, explain how personal tutoring will work and answer any questions.
- Consolidation Week – this is a time for students to reflect on their progress and discuss any issues or questions they have with their personal tutor.
- Teaching Week 10 – an opportunity for students to discuss any issues around end of semester assessments and preparing for semester 2

### January Semester

- Start of semester – for all students, but for January semester start students, this initial meeting is particularly important.
- Consolidation Week – a time for students to reflect on their progress and discuss any issues or questions they have with their personal tutor, also an opportunity to discuss any concerns or questions about September semester results or assessment feedback.
- Teaching week 10 – an opportunity for students to discuss with their personal tutor any issues around end of semester assessments and preparing for the next academic year.

Additional contacts can be arranged as required and initiated by personal tutor or tutee.

**It is proposed that this minimum number and frequency of contact points continues for AY2023-24.** [Student Survey data](#) indicates that students have felt more supported by their personal tutor under these arrangements than previously.

### **Personal Tutor Training and Guidance**

Training and support resources are available to personal tutors. In particular, the [WorkRite](#) online training module and the [Supporting Our Students Sharepoint Site](#). training continues to be mandatory for all personal tutors and in addition to the online module, Student Wellbeing Services are now offering live sessions, both online and on campus. Schools and subject teams at Scottish campuses can contact Keith MacAskill, Student Experience Manager, ([K.MacAskill@hw.ac.uk](mailto:K.MacAskill@hw.ac.uk)) to arrange training sessions with groups of staff, so participation can be maximised.

### **Personal Tutoring Review**

Training and guidance materials will be updated to reflect the implementation of the recommendations of the Personal Tutoring Review. In the meantime, the development of campus specific versions of the WorkRite training module is on hold.