Table of Contents

Introduction and overview .......................................................... 2
First year PA tutorials .................................................................. 2
2nd year PA tutorials ................................................................. 5
Finalist PA tutorials .................................................................... 6
College PA Guide - Student First: RHUL Personal Tutor system reforms .......... 7
Introduction and overview

This guide is designed to help structure your interactions as a PA with your advisees. It should be read in conjunction with the college PA guide, available on the information for staff page.

For first and second years, PA tutorials are structured to provide 2 group meetings/year and 1 x one-to-ones. Finalists should be seen in welcome week, Year meet ups and a one-to-one in Spring term.

**Maintaining student record files**

One of the main modes of ensuring students remain on-track and engaged with studies, as well as building department relationships with them, is through notes kept by Personal Advisors.

It remains the responsibility of the PA to make sure that the notes all his/her personal advisees are up-to-date. Please make sure that you do this, inserting detailed comments in the relevant space on the record card following any meeting. All record cards are the in the individual student file located on the shared drive. Details on how to map to the shared “N” drive can be found on the website at: https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/it/faq/itfaqs/networkconnectivity/mapdrive.aspx

to access these files off campus you will need to connect via the VPN, instruction on how to do this can be found on the website at: https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/it/faq/itfaqs/vpn/faqwebvpn.aspx

It is expected that PAs will meet with their advisees at 3 points a year after welcome week along with attending the relevant ‘year meet up event’.

**First year PA tutorials**

First years should be given a mixture of one-to-one and group tutorials, as well as ad hoc meetings where support is required.

Attendance at first year tutorials is compulsory, as it is at all teaching sessions. Any absences should be chased up by the PA via email, and also reported to the Office.

The best time to schedule meetings are lunchtimes or Wednesday mornings.

In detail, tutorial are as follows:

1. **Welcome week: Group tutorial Ice-breaker**
   A simple ice-breaker and getting to know you, session with Q&A for new students to ask simple questions. You should ensure you cover:
   - routine times when you are in your office;
   - students leave confident that they can contact you at other times by e-mail or (if more appropriate) office telephone;
   - Student-Staff Committee nominations
2. Autumn Week 4/5: Group tutorial on communications and concerns

In week 3 the First Year Meet Up Meet (Friday 11:00-12:30) will require students to write an email to their PA, outlining their expectations of the course, any concerns and where they hope the degree will take them. These emails should be used to find common (anonymous) issues for discussion in a group tutorial.

You will need to set up the group tutorial in advance, using AG2, your office or booking a space via the admin team. **You will need to advise your PAs of the time and place of the meeting.**

The group discussion should cover:

- The importance of professional communications – what makes an email different from social media/texts; how communication is a form of self-presentation key for the job market. Students are shown how to communicate via the wikhoo resource here:
  - [http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor](http://www.wikihow.com/Email-a-Professor)
  - If you receive a poorly written email, direct them to this helpful response: [https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay](https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2015/04/16/advice-students-so-they-dont-sound-silly-emails-essay)
- Shared areas of concern
- Shared expectations
- Time management skills
- How to find help:

Centre for the Development of Academic Skills (cedas@rhul.ac.uk)
https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/cedas/home.aspx
Counselling & Wellbeing: welfare@rhul.ac.uk  / 01784 443 128

- What “Office hours” are for: availability of lecturers/tutors to discuss a specific course
- Remind students of attendance monitoring and how to complete a ‘notification of absence form’: [https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/academicsupport/attendance/notificationofabsence.aspx](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/academicsupport/attendance/notificationofabsence.aspx)
- Make students aware of upcoming events:
  - Autumn term Alumni event Autumn Term / Creative Careers Week
  - Spring term
  - Media Arts-Communications Intern Scheme
- How to get involved:

Passport Awards: [https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/rhpassport/home.aspx](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/ecampus/rhpassport/home.aspx)
Volunteering: [https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/campus-life/volunteer/volunteer.aspx](https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/students/campus-life/volunteer/volunteer.aspx)
Societies: Media Society; Rhubarb TV; etc. [https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/activities/societies/](https://www.su.rhul.ac.uk/activities/societies/)
3. **Autumn Week 10/11 or Spring Week ½: One-to-one on understanding feedback**

PAs offer a series of one-to-one appointments for students to bring in their first theory and practice feedback to discuss areas of strength and weakness. Individual PAs can decide to focus on the practice or theory feedback, but should discuss:

- How is feedback used to improve?
- Reminding students, the first year does not contribute to final grade
- Areas of strength
- Identify areas for development and where support might best be found:
  - Other tutors
  - CeDAS
  - Identifying any issues of personal or educational support needs
- How to apply for an extension and what grounds may generally be considered and not considered: https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/mediaarts/informationforcurrentstudents/home.aspx

4. **Spring term week 6: Group Meeting – Understanding Options**

PAs should call a meeting prior to the Options Fair to discuss how options work and explore what students are interested in. Go through the options booklet briefly and ensure students are aware of the online video pitches.

**Theory** set out the need for students to broaden their horizons via picking 1 option from each of 3 baskets: mainstream, international, visual culture (see student handbook for more detail).

**Practice** set out how options are divided into 2 baskets: lens based and non-lens based. Allowing students to explore a role with and without a camera.

A group discussion can help tease out the need for a distribution to students across options: after all, if all students want to direct a straight linear fiction film, there will be insufficient opportunities. Encourage students to explore creativity across different options in practice.

Encourage students to talk to a wide variety of staff at the options fair.

5. **Summer term: Ad hoc and email follow ups**

Any ad hoc meetings to support students should be supplemented by simple email contact to the group:

- **Week 1 of Summer term:** wishing them good luck for their exams and final film shoots ahead (as appropriate to pathway);
- **Week 6:** 1st of June: congratulating them on finishing their studies and notifying students when pass/fail results will be posted.
2nd year PA tutorials
Second years should be given a mixture of one-to-one and group tutorials, as well as ad hoc meetings where support is required.

Attendance at second year tutorials is NOT compulsory, but should be strongly encouraged and written as invitations to official meetings. However, you should note any absences and send an email to those missing.

The best time to schedule meetings are lunchtimes or Wednesday mornings. All 2nd year students are on campus Tuesday in Spring term.

In detail, tutorials should be structured as follows:

1. **Welcome week: group tutorial:**
   Check in/ice-breaker, expectations for the year ahead
   Reminder of key resources and notification of events, such as Alumni event, working with Children workshop

2. **Autumn Week (as convenient): Employability Group meeting.**
   Students asked to write professional email in Welcome Week focused on where they want the degree to take them. This will inform the employability series we launch in the summer term. Schedule group meeting (NB 2nd year ‘Year Meet Up’ is scheduled for 2nd December).

   You will need to set up the group tutorial in advance, using AG3, your office or booking a space via the admin team. **You will need to advise your PAs of the time and place of the meeting.**

   The group discussion should cover:
   - Where they want the degree to take them and what they would like to learn from employability series of events in summer term.
   - Identifying any common areas of concern about their studies, the degree, or department.
   - The importance of professional communications – what makes an email different from social media/texts; how communication is a form of self-presentation key for the job market;
   - Identifying skills learnt on the course outside of subject specialisms (theory or practice): e.g. handling pressure, good comms skills, time management etc).
   - We will have some initial shared resources on on where to look for jobs, what to expect from creative industries course (NC working on website resource)
   - Importance of passport scheme
   - Identifying any areas of support individual might need.

3. **Spring week 4-6: One-to-one Dissertation ideas and options for final year.**
   Invite students for a one-to-one discussion to explore what ideas they have for their dissertation, their final year options and how their first term studies have progressed. **This must take place after week 4: when students will have had feedback.**
It is a good idea to invite students to bring two samples of their theory or practice feedback with them to identify common areas of strength, weakness and how to read the feedback.

4. **Summer term: Ad hoc**
Any ad hoc meetings to support students should be supplemented by simple email contact to the group:

- Week 1 of Summer term: wishing them good luck for the start of their dissertations and stressing the importance of engaging with supervision.
- Week 3: congratulating them on finishing their 2nd year studies and notifying students when pass/fail results will be posted (after exam board).

**Finalist PA tutorials**
Finalists will generally require less group tutorials, but may require more ad hoc support. As such the requirement for PAs is less in this year.

1. **Welcome week: group tutorial:**
   Check in/ice-breaker, expectations for the year ahead.
   Ensure students are aware and on course for:
   - Dissertation
   - That working with children now requires registered training for fiction and a careful ethical process for documentary
   - New Employability extra-curricular course [link to follow]
     This includes:
     - Raising film finance – crowdfunding – masterclass: 26th October
     - Working with Child Actor training 11th/12th October
     - Numeracy for psychometric tests for ‘broader horizons’ careers
     - Lunch time series of lectures/workshops late Autumn and through Spring on:
       - Where to find a job, how to progress and employment rights
       - Social networking: like a Pro: online and offline
       - Speed date a company
       - How to set up as a freelancer
       - Film festival entry, shorts and other job routes.

2. **Attend year meet up: 26th October**
   This is followed by an Alumni event on first careers in creative industries. You should use this as primarily a social opportunity to reconnect with PAs, but check in with any potential issues as relevant.

3. **Spring week 5/6: One-to-one on employability:**
   Where do they want the degree to take them; identifying their transferable skills learnt across the course e.g. communications, presenting, time-management, tackling unfamiliar problems; problem solving; managing a crises. We will have basic shared resources of where to find work Making sure their CV contains their outside activities.
College PA Guide - Student First: RHUL Personal Tutor system reforms

Chair 2016: David Gilbert / PM:
Catherine Thorin Project Lead
2017: Mark Crompton

Further contributors: Richard Hawley, Alana James, Justin O’Brien, Ellie Rayner, Helen Shore, Hannah Thompson. Based also on broader Discovery phase consultations, external workshop at UCL (DG, MC 29/11/16), discussion and feedback from RH100 meeting (6/12/16), consultation with Katie Normington, and feedback from Academic Departments (March 2017).

These reforms of the RHUL Personal Tutor System respond to a high proportion of student expectations, as published in the RHUL Student Union Education Policy 2014 and expressed through RH100 (see Appendix).

Initial implementation in academic year 2017-18

Personal Tutors

- All UG and PGT students should have a designated personal tutor. (In smaller PGT programmes this may be the course director).
- Personal Tutors should be members of academic staff, rather than visiting staff/PG Tutors etc. Fixed-term Teaching Fellows with appropriate experience, and after specific PT training, can act as Personal Tutors, on a pro rata basis if not in a full-time post. The decision as to the suitability of a Teaching Fellow acting as a Personal Tutor would lie with the HoD, and the circumstances should be limited to occasions when a temporary absence is being covered (e.g. sabbatical) to ensure the greatest possible continuity for students.
- For students pursuing Joint Honours and Liberal Arts programmes, there should be a Personal Tutor in the lead Department, and either a secondary Personal Tutor or designated point of contact in the other Department(s). The academics concerned should be allocated on the basis of good knowledge of the role of the partner department in the programme, or of appropriate staff contacts in the partner department. Departments may want to allocate a Joint Honours Tutor for multiple such Programmes where this is logistically preferable. Responsibility for ensuring an appropriate overall number of meetings for students on such programmes will lie with the lead Department.
- Students should remain with the same tutor for their full course duration where possible, whilst recognising that there will be unavoidable exceptions.
- Students have the right to request to change tutors: the departmental Senior Tutor (see 3) would be responsible for evaluating whether the
circumstances of such requests warrant a change, and arranging a timely re-allocation.

Baseline expectations for Departmental Personal Tutors systems

There should be a minimum expectation of meeting frequencies:

- At the beginning of each academic year, Personal Tutors will send ‘welcome back’ emails to their tutees.
- There should be five meetings in year 1, and three in each of years 2 and 3, for UGs as a minimum over the three years, of which a minimum of three in year 1 and two in each of years 2 and 3 are individual meetings (please note there is no prescribed length of any meetings, nor a prescription of group sizes other than the minimum number of individual meetings). There should be an individual meeting in the induction week of the first year if possible, otherwise before the end of the first teaching week of the first year.
- There should be two meetings per year for PGT students.
- Meetings should be explicitly planned and instigated by the department, and attendance monitored/logged (e.g. on the student dashboard when this functionality is available). Whether student attendance is compulsory is at the Academic Department’s discretion.
- Timetabling of meetings should be within normal working/timetabling hours, 9am-6pm (with a preference for the 10am-4pm Athena Swan core hours where feasible).
- Personal Tutors should normally also commit to be available at other times through a system of term-time ‘consultation hours’ (or another designation to clarify that they are distinct from the scheduled Tutor meetings and intended for meetings with students) set by individual Tutors, with a clear protocol for informing students if these are changed for exceptional reasons. The specific commitments that accommodate student and staff needs (e.g. 2 hours a week on 2 separate days) would be at the Academic Department’s discretion: students should be able to have responses (see below) and meetings with their Personal Tutors within reasonable timeframes. In those Academic Departments where pre-timetabling of consultation hours is deemed inefficient, there should be a clear and explicit commitment to timely email responses with the offer of rapid face-to-face meeting follow-up.
- Personal tutors should be contactable via email, and there will be an expectation of a defined reasonable response time (excluding weekends) (e.g. within 48 hours excluding weekends) during term-time.
Students will be made aware of alternative points of help and contact, particularly the new Student Services Centre. Personal Tutors should be recorded officially on Banner and the new Student Dashboard system.

These are minimum expectations that should be enforced by College and disseminated to staff and students. Many Departments already exceed this standard with examples of good practice and innovation, including group meetings. It is expected that PT meetings will be themed around key events in the student ‘journey’ (e.g. induction, exam preparation and feedback, employability, course choices etc., with centrally-provided, non-prescriptive, guidance where appropriate from Educational Development, Careers and Employability, CeDAS etc.) The strongest existing Personal Tutor systems overlap teaching and focused academic support systems with the Personal Tutor role, particularly at the start of degree programmes. Future years will seek to extend this good practice.

**Departmental support and oversight**

- It is required that each Department has a **Senior Tutor** role (either bundled with an existing role or a stand-alone role, recognised in promotion criteria and workload models). This role will involve coordinating, developing, networking, and evaluating the system. This person will be a point of contact for students who have concerns about how the system is working, and for requests for reallocation. Accountability for the operation of the system within Academic Departments lies with the HoD, with oversight by the Dean of Faculty.
- The effective working of the PT system should be explicitly addressed in Annual Review and Periodic Reviews.
- Personal Tutorial work should be a normal expectation for academic staff, and should be included in workload models with appropriate review of departmental workload expectations by the HoD. The circumstances of staff in part-time employment should be reflected in reduced Tutee allocations.

**College support and oversight**

- The College will establish and resource an overseeing, fractional, **Principal Tutor** role, to co-ordinate the implementation, support and development of systems College-wide. This role will be in the Educational Development unit (currently Mark Crompton, Head of Educational Development). The Principal Tutor will work with Educational Development/CeDAS/Careers and Employability (and other colleagues) to develop optional lesson plans for use in PT meetings, collate and disseminate examples of good practice, provide/source consultancy on Academic Departments’ aspirations, co-ordinate IT support solutions, produce accessible guidance/training for Personal Tutors, etc.
- College should support the Personal Tutor system through changes to promotion and professorial banding criteria that recognise this activity as an expected and important element of academic duties.
The PT role should be added as a prompt for discussion with academics at annual appraisal.

**Student Dashboard**

- The Student Dashboard will be implemented for 2017-18, with all Personal Tutors having access to relevant data, with appropriate and agreed access controls. Access to the Student Dashboard will only be available to staff who have completed mandatory Data Protection training (currently an on-line provision at RHUL). From September 2017 there will be pilot attendance and note logging electronic systems for Personal Tutor meetings: whether note-logging by Personal Tutors is required is at the Academic Department’s discretion.

**Training and Support for Personal Tutors.**

The opening of the Student Services Centre and the roll-out of the Student Dashboard provide an opportunity for training and a step-change in awareness of systems and expectations for Personal Tutors. This is an opportunity to provide useful, practical training that can also help culture change.

- Mandatory short, simple, on-line training for all PTs will be co-ordinated by Educational Development (guideline of 15-20 mins commitment by staff.) This will include training about the Student Services Centre, sources of advice, and appropriate referral strategies.
- There will be a new enquiry management solution that will give clear advice on central College services and student support.
- Development of a web portal with accessible PT guidance, and links to the Student Dashboard and other student support resources, will be co-ordinated by Educational Development. This guidance will clarify that there are circumstances in which Personal Tutors will not be expected to have the appropriate specialist knowledge, but will contact other specialist College staff to make appropriate referrals.
- A guide for students on the PT role/expectations, allowing for flexibility regarding Academic Department-specific approaches, will be co-ordinated by Educational Development, and will highlight the expectation that students fully engage with the Personal Tutor system and fulfil any attendance requirements.

Examples of good practice have been seen at other institutions – these systems should be simple, concise and ‘flat’, and not overburdened with details and regulations.

**Further developments and issues**

As noted above, there are already many examples of excellence in Departments that exceed these expectations, and Departments should remain relatively free to innovate and to respond to particular disciplinary cultures while fulfilling baseline expectations. The
Principal Tutor and Senior Tutors will be sharing good practice and encouraging the
development of PT systems.

There should be centrally provided guidance material (e.g. by CeDAS, Careers, Library)
coordinated by Educational Development, with non-prescriptive recommendations for
themed personal tutor meetings at different stages in student degree programmes.

The most successful Personal Tutor systems in College embed the PT-student
relationship in the wider curriculum (particularly in year one teaching and development
of study skills). This is a pattern found in examples of strong systems in other
institutions. This should be encouraged across College, and discussed in Periodic
Department Reviews, Curriculum reviews and the design and validation of new
programmes.

- Able to provide guidance on issues, or point us in the right
direction/actively seek more information.
- Act as a support network for students.
- Able to help with referencing issues.
- Able to provide personal and academic references for jobs and placements.
- Review academic and extracurricular progress, provide help and guidance.
- Help with essays, possibly providing guidance on ideas/structure.
- Be available at the set times.
- Get to know students both academically and personally.
- Tutors of students following joint honours, or taking modules from outside
the department, should have appropriate knowledge of the other department.
- Meetings should be semi-structured to combine ‘getting to know’ with
support.
- Timetable/booking system to allow forward-planning.
- Meetings should be mandatory to ensure engagement.
- A feedback system should allow monitoring to ensure the effectiveness
of the Tutor system and individual Tutors.
- Allocations should be consistent, avoiding un-necessary changes of Tutor.

The RH100 student panel discussion (6/12/16) provided a variety of views on
Personal Tutors, many of which addressed the themes below:

- Tutors should know their role.
- Tutors should have the ability to offer academic advice, and therefore know
or be familiar with the students’ courses.
- Tutors should have the ability to discuss personal progress, and provide
advice for general wellbeing/extra-curricular activities/finances etc. They
therefore need to be aware of other College and SU support.
- Tutor allocations should not change un-necessarily, and could consider
gender matching in relation to personal issues.
- Personal Tutors should organise the meetings.
- Tutor meetings should be 1-1 tutorials and small groups, and there should
be a commitment to an expected number of meetings and group size.
• Tutors should commit to their advertised times, and communicate any changes. Available times should be published.
• There should be commitment to email response times, and welcome (back) emails.
• There is a need to give extra consideration to Joint Honours students. There needs to be care that two tutorial meeting series don’t overburden students, and that the meeting schedules don’t clash with teaching timetables. There needs to be provision for course-specific questions to be responded to.