The Natural Science approach to the Personal Tutor System

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Our Aims

• Staging students through key events in their University Career
  – Alongside existing Natural Science Society’s ‘Buddy Scheme’ and this year’s campus wide Buddy Scheme.

• “Flipping the Personal Tutor Session”
  – Students should see the value in the sessions for themselves by preparing beforehand.
  – A *reflective* process - where do they need help? Tailored inventions and support.

• Joining up existing interventions / student support activities
  – e.g. Separate ‘Reflective Practice’ sessions now incorporated in PT system.
  – Build upon staff expertise and experience.

• Generates good information for references.
Overview of System

• **Mandatory and opt-in** sessions throughout Year 1-4.
  – Slots every ~5 weeks (5 slots per year)
  – Open door policy for immediate issues
  – No marks attached to mandatory sessions

Year 1

**Session 01:** Welcome to Natural Sciences
**Session 02:** Note Keeping and Organisation
**Session 03:** Critical reflection on Assessment Feedback
**Session 04:** Exam technique and Feedback

Year 2

**Session 01:** Skills Audit

Year 3

**Session 01:** Skills Audit - Progression
**Session 02:** Personalised CV Feedback

Year 4

**Session 01:** Applying for Jobs/PhDs and Online Professional Portfolio

• More interventions in the first year – tailing off as time goes on – early interventions should forestall later ones.
A structured discussion of their Research Portfolio intended to help students develop the skills that will help them to get academically the most out of their degree.

Please make sure that you bring your Research Portfolio (electronic or hard copy) to this session.

Reflect upon the following questions and provide brief answers to each:

- What do you need to improve as far as note keeping is concerned?
- What is your technique for preparing for facilitation sessions/CLEs?
- How would you rate your overall time management (i.e. do you manage your time effectively)?
- Have you backed up your Research Portfolio on an external cloud storage/harddrive/laptop/PC? Yes/No
## An Example: Year 1 (2/2)

### Year 1: Session 2: Note Keeping and Organisation

Using the following 0-5 mark scheme how would you score the following in your Research Portfolio:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Student Mark</th>
<th>Tutor Mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A highly useable research record, showing interaction with the material on a thoughtful level and synthesis of multiple sources of information. Goes beyond the baseline material required for the module. Would form an excellent revision resource.</td>
<td>Pre-Session Preparation (Core modules)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A good research record that contains materials from several sources; significant evidence that all of the material has been understood and independent conclusions drawn. Goes beyond the baseline material required for the module in some areas. Would make a good revision resource.</td>
<td>In-Session Notes (Core modules)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Expected minimum level showing a comprehensive coverage of baseline module materials. Would make an adequate revision resource.</td>
<td>Expert Session Notes (Core modules)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There are significant gaps in the baseline module material. Research notes are dominated by a single source or copy-and-pasted material with little evidence that the material has been understood. Would make a poor revision resource.</td>
<td>Tutorial Session Annotations/Notes (Core modules)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There are very significant gaps in the baseline module material. Research notes are dominated by a single source or copy-and-pasted material with little/no evidence that the material has been understood. Would be extremely difficult to use as a revision resource.</td>
<td>Preparation Notes (Maths module)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No materials present.</td>
<td>Unit Annotations/Notes on submitted work (maths module)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No materials present.</td>
<td>Computing workshop notes (Method and Techniques module)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Skills workshop notes (Method and Techniques module)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elective notes (Elective module)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overall organisation of Research Portfolio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This session builds upon the “Methods and Techniques: Skills: Employability II 2: Articulating Skills in CVs and Covering Letters workshop”.

Please make sure that you bring a current copy of your CV and any draft cover letters you may have prepared to this session.

Reflect upon the following questions and provide brief answers to each:

- What careers are you interested in pursuing? Do you have a ‘back up’ plan if you do not get the job/graduate scheme/further education that you want? Has this changed since your first year?

- If you are not sure about a future career: what subject areas and transferrable skills do you enjoy using?

- What do you want to emphasise on your CV and in your covering letter?

- Is there anything in particular that you would like to receive guidance/feedback on pertaining to CV/covering letters/applications procedures?
What happens if a student doesn’t engage or if there is some other issue?

• Lack of engagement
  – **One off:** Up to the Personal Tutor and their schedule: rearrange the session or catch up at the next slot.
  – **Persistent non-engagement / non-attendance:** Results in student being flagged in degree-wide engagement monitoring system. Escalated to meeting with Senior Tutor (and then Centre Director).

• Other issues
  – Obviously if a pastoral care issue arises then this is dealt with as a priority over the scheduled session!
  – Personal Tutors should use this as a framework not a be-all-end-all approach.
An evolving system

- Summer review of pre-session prompt sheets to review what worked well and what could be re-emphasised based on this year’s experiences.

- Is anyone else doing something similar? We are always looking to improve! 😊

- I am happy to provide all session materials upon request (cph9@le.ac.uk)