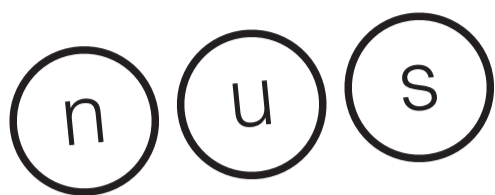


# Key attributes of a good personal tutor...



Charter on...

# Personal Tutors

Kind  
Approachable  
Open-minded  
Knowledgeable  
Friendly  
Good at signposting to other services  
Enthusiastic  
Available  
Good communicator  
Good listener  
Personable  
Caring  
Encouraging  
Responsive to communications  
Understanding  
Accessible  
Supportive

## Reasons to reform personal tutoring

The responses to the National Student Survey show that students are on average **10% less satisfied** with access to academic support compared to the overall satisfaction rating they give for their course.

Having good quality personal tutors will help to retain students because they will feel part of a learning community and know that there is support available if they have any problems. Personal tutors give a **personalised approach to higher education**, which is often lost when students are part of big departments and schools where students often feel like they are just a number.

**Personal tutoring is cost effective.** A study from the Open University which is highlighted in the book *Personal Tutoring in Higher Education*<sup>1</sup> found that their retention rates increased by 5% when personal tutors were reintroduced. When you look at on average how much additional income an institution will receive from continuing students, plus the savings in recruitment and the grant from HEFCE for students who successfully complete, this yielded them a 550% return in their investment in personal tutors.

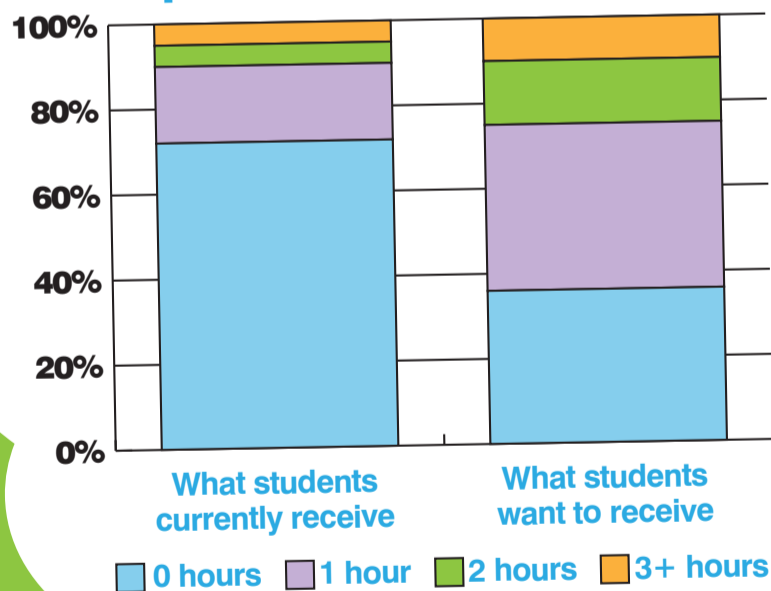
Although the QAA have found many instances of good practice within institutions, their 2006 publication *Outcomes from Institutional Audit: Academic Guidance, Support and Supervision, and Personal Support and Guidance*<sup>2</sup> suggested that more could be done to **ensure that student support systems are regularly monitored** for effectiveness and compliance with the institution's regulations.

Research has shown that students are still wanting more from tutors with regards to feedback on their work. Personal tutors could be key to helping students **understand the feedback they receive** and help them to put an action plan together for them to progress academically.

1) Hixenbaugh, Paula, and Liz Thomas. *Personal Tutoring in Higher Education*. Trentham, 2006 p33-43.

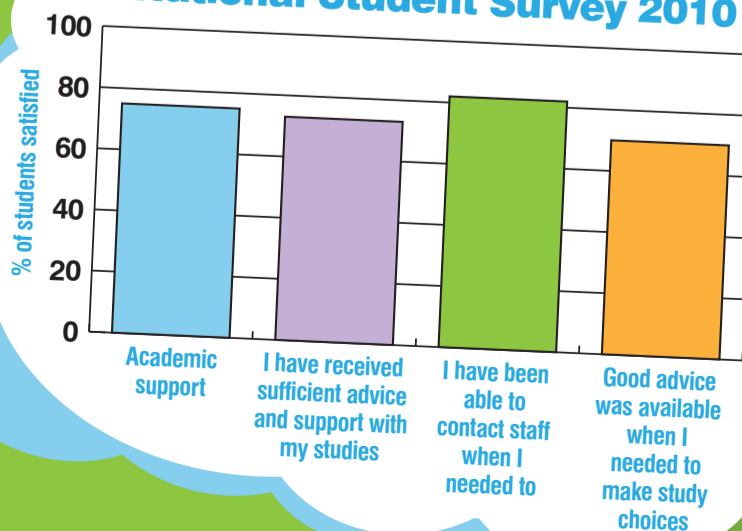
2) <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/outcomes/AcademicGuidance.pdf>

Number of hours per week spent with a personal tutor



Taken from 2010 NUS/HSBC Student Experience Report

National Student Survey 2010



# Personal Tutors

Charter on...

## 1 All students should be entitled to a named personal tutor.

This tutor should be a member of academic staff within their subject discipline. If a member of staff leaves, students should automatically be assigned a new tutor and students should also have the right to change their personal tutor. Postgraduate taught and distance learning students should also be allocated a personal tutor in the same way.

## 4 There should be institution-wide procedures for personal tutoring.

Every institution has a different model of personal tutoring and there is often variation in how personal tutoring is delivered in different subject disciplines. It is important that students get a comparable experience across the whole institution so that they feel part of the same learning community but without limiting schools and faculties creativity in exceeding the minimum requirements. These standards should be published so that both staff and students understand the minimum expectations, what the purpose of tutoring is and are accountable to the minimum requirements.

## 8 Understanding assessment feedback should be integrated into personal tutoring.

We know from the National Student Survey that students are very dissatisfied with the feedback they get on their work. This is for a number of reasons including students often finding it difficult to translate the feedback into meaningful actions to take forward. Personal tutors have the capabilities of being able to help students navigate through the feedback they receive and can work with them to produce academic development plans which could help to improve student attainment.

## 2 All students should meet their tutor at least once a term.

It is important for both the tutor and tutee to automatically check in with each other once per term to ensure that everything is ok with the students' studies and personal circumstances. Making these meetings regular and timetabled will help both tutor and tutee to build a rapport with each other to ensure students have someone who they know and trust to talk with if they get into difficulty. These should be structured meetings and link with the institution's induction.

## 5 Staff and students should set mutual expectations.

Students need to know outside of any required meetings per term how best to speak with their tutor both quickly and efficiently and this should be established in the first meeting of the year. Staff and students should set clear boundaries and encourage communication through a mutually preferred method such as email or published open office hours.

## 9 Personal tutoring should be recognised in staff reward and recognition schemes.

Teaching and learning is often seen as secondary occupation to research within reward and recognition schemes in institutions. Good quality teaching, including personal tutoring is vital to student progression and should be given the same emphasis in staff reward and recognition as research currently does.

## 10 Personal tutoring should make full use of appropriate new technologies.

Staff should have access to as much information as possible in order for them to undertake the role of a personal tutor most effectively. Ensuring student feedback is available electronically as well as data on student attainment is really useful for a tutor to have a coherent picture of how their tutee is progressing. Technology can also be used to enhance the communication methods used by both tutors and tutees to make the process more accessible.

## 3 Staff should be given full training on being an effective personal tutor.

Personal tutors should be specifically trained in how to recognise students who are at risk of withdrawing as well as spotting mental health problems and understanding a mix of cultural backgrounds prevalent within the institution. An effective personal tutor should know where to signpost students and be given training on key attributes such as being a good communicator. Staff should also have access to a network to share their experiences of being a tutor and talk through issues which may have arisen from student consultations.

## 6 The personal tutoring system should be adaptable to students needs.

There are many reasons why students go to university and many types of students within them such as part time, mature, postgraduate etc. Institutions should make clear the purpose of their personal tutoring programme but enable tutors to tailor the personal tutoring programme for students with different needs to the traditional undergraduate student.

## 7 Personal tutoring should support both academic and personal development.

Personal tutoring should not just be about giving students the opportunity to talk if they have a problem, but to encourage them to develop their academic and professional skills. Often students do not have the oversight of their progression to understand what skills they need to develop in order to improve their academic performance, or a good understanding of where their degree can take them in the future. Using personal tutor sessions as a development tool is a far more rewarding experience for students and makes the process more meaningful for them. This does not mean that both academic and personal development must be delivered by the same personal tutor, but there should be a coherent strategy in place to ensure students are given personal support in both areas and these are joined up.

