Personal Tutor Survey for Postgraduate Taught Students
Key findings

Student Surveys Unit
July 2015
Introduction

Background
The purpose of the survey was to assess the experiences of Postgraduate Taught students in relation to the Personal Tutor System, Group Meetings and Student Support Teams. This survey was a continuation of similar work conducted with Undergraduate Students in 2014.

Method
Postgraduate Taught (PGT) Students were invited to take part in an online survey requesting feedback on their experience of the Personal Tutor System in their previous academic year. The PGT Personal Tutor Survey opened on 15th June 2015 and closed on 13th July 2015. The survey used the same questions as used in the Undergraduate version of the survey.

Response
In total, 4,650 students were invited to complete the survey. Of that number, 963 completed it meaning an overall University response rate of 21%. This was a similar response rate to the Undergraduate survey (20%).

Justification for this report
This report provides an overview of the key results from the survey. Full supporting data is also available on request. This survey was the final element of the evaluation process for the implementation phase of the Personal Tutor system.

Further information
Contact the Student Surveys Team at student.surveys@ed.ac.uk
Key Findings

Personal Tutor Meetings
• Positively the majority of PG students attended at least 2 meetings with their Personal Tutor and found these meetings to be helpful
• Over half of the students had arranged additional meetings with their Personal Tutor – some of the students noted in the comments that more scheduled meetings would be welcomed
• There is an opportunity to make more use of MyEd for arranging meetings as a high proportion of meetings were arranged via email
• The amount of preparation students stated they were expected to undertake for meetings was varied, with only a low proportion noting that they were ‘always’ expected to share notes from the meeting with their Personal Tutor
• Over a third of students were unaware of whether their Personal Tutor had kept a record of the meeting
• View all Personal Tutor Meeting Results

Small Group Meetings
• Two thirds of students had attended a small group meeting with others on their degree programme, and the majority found these meetings helpful
• The number of meetings attended was polarized with students more likely to have attended 1-2 meetings or 5+ meetings
• Meetings were predominantly focused on academic discussion
• View all Small Group Meeting Results

Student Support System
• Just over a quarter of students sought advice from the Student Support Team
• Students were most likely to contact the Student Support Team via email
• Students requested advice from the Student Support Team on both academic and personal matters
• In the majority of cases, the query was responded to quickly
• 40% of those who used the Student Support Team found the support to be ‘very helpful’
• View all Student Support System Results

Overall support and advice
• Students stated that their Personal Tutor was generally the first point of contact for queries and concerns
• PG students found the overall advice and support to be helpful
• View all Overall Support and Advice Results

Response rates, Comparison to Undergraduate findings and Results by School are also provided at the end of this document
One to One Meetings with my Personal Tutor
One to one meetings - Attendance

- PG students had attended an average of 2 Personal Tutor meetings during the previous academic year

No. of one to one meetings with Personal Tutor attended in previous year

79% had attended 2 or more meetings

- Of those who had not attended any meetings, students were most likely to state they felt there was no need for a meeting, or that one had not been arranged

Base: All respondents answering question (950)
One to one meetings – Meetings arranged with Personal Tutor

- Students were most likely to state that they had been requested to attend 2 meetings with their Personal Tutor during the previous academic year.
- 61% of students arranged additional meetings with their Personal Tutor.

### No. of meetings requested

- 10% were requested to attend 0
- 25% were requested to attend 1
- 39% were requested to attend 2
- 14% were requested to attend 3
- 4% were requested to attend 4
- 4% were requested to attend 5 or more
- 4% couldn’t remember

### No. of additional meetings arranged

- 39% arranged 0
- 25% arranged 1
- 15% arranged 2
- 7% arranged 3
- 3% arranged 4
- 6% arranged 5 or more
- 5% couldn’t remember

Base: All respondents who attended a Personal Tutor meeting (868)
One to one meetings – Method used to arrange meeting

- 8 in 10 Students stated meetings were arranged via an email with their Personal Tutor
- Others mentioned organising a meeting via MyEd or in person with their Personal Tutor

Method of meeting request

- Email with Personal Tutor: 82%
- MyEd: 25%
- In person with Personal Tutor: 22%
- Via the School Office (email/telephone/in person): 4%
- Telephone with Personal Tutor: 2%
- Other e.g. doodle poll, sign up sheet: 2%

Base: All respondents who attended a Personal Tutor meeting (869)
One to one meetings – Effectiveness of method for arranging meeting

- Students found most methods for arranging a meeting to be effective
- 7 in 10 students stated that arranging a meeting by telephone was ‘very effective’
- Students who arranged a meeting via the School Office were least likely to find this method ‘very effective’
- Only a very small proportion of students found any method for arranging the meeting to be ineffective

### Effectiveness of method for arranging meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Very effective</th>
<th>Fairly effective</th>
<th>Neither effective nor ineffective</th>
<th>Fairly ineffective</th>
<th>Very ineffective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Via the School Office</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In person with Personal Tutor</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone with Personal Tutor</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email with Personal Tutor</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MyEd</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Base:** All respondents who attended a Personal Tutor meeting (712)
One to one meetings – Preparation and meeting notes

- Just over a quarter of students stated that they were ‘always’ expected to prepare material in advance of the meeting, while 37% suggested they sometimes did this.
- Students provided mixed responses with regard to keeping notes from the meeting, with over half of students stating they ‘always’ or ‘sometimes’ did this
- Students were least likely to agree that they shared notes with their Personal Tutor - 62% stated they ‘never’ did this

Preparation and meeting notes – expectations for the meeting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare material in advance of your meetings?</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep your own notes of your meetings?</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share your notes with the Personal Tutor?</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents who attended a Personal Tutor meeting (866)
One to one meetings – Record of discussion

- Just over half of students recalled their Personal Tutor keeping a record of the discussion from the meeting
- A further 41% were unsure whether any record had been kept
- Of those who recalled a record of the meeting being kept, 60% stated they could access the notes through MyEd
One to one meetings – Helpfulness of meetings

- 8 in 10 students found the meetings with their Personal Tutor to be helpful
- Positively, only a small proportion found the meetings unhelpful

Helpfulness of meetings with Personal Tutor

- 80% found the meetings helpful
- 40% found the meetings very helpful
- 40% found the meetings fairly helpful
- 12% found the meetings neither helpful nor unhelpful
- 5% found the meetings fairly unhelpful
- 3% found the meetings very unhelpful

Amongst the small proportions who did not find the meetings helpful, students mentioned that they felt the meeting was not required, or they did not learn any new information.

Base: All respondents who attended a Personal Tutor meeting (866)
Small Group Meetings
Small Group Meetings - Attendance

- Two thirds of students had met with a group of other students studying on their degree programme during the previous academic year

![Pie chart showing attendance at group meetings]

Proportion attended at least one group meeting

- Yes, 67%
- No, 33%

Base: All respondents answering question (932)
Small Group Meetings – Number and size of meetings

- Students were more likely to state they had attended either 1-2 meetings or 5 or more small group meetings with other students
- Groups of between 2 and 10 students was the most common size

Base: All respondents who attended a group meeting (648)
Small Group Meetings – Focus of the meetings

- Students were most likely to suggest that meetings were focused around academic discussion, with 83% stating discussion was around the academic programme of study and further 54% stating general academic studies were discussed.
- A third of students suggested there was discussion around personal and professional development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main focus of group meetings</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To discuss your academic programme of study</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To discuss general academic studies</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To discuss our personal and professional development</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To discuss career development</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other responses (dissertation, social events, topics, group work)</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: All respondents who attended a group meeting (629)
Small Group Meetings – Helpfulness of meetings

• Overall, 83% of students found the small group meetings helpful, with 30% finding them ‘very helpful’

Helpfulness of the group meetings

- 85% found the meetings helpful
- 55% found them fairly helpful
- 30% found them very helpful
- 11% found them neither helpful nor unhelpful
- 2% found them fairly unhelpful
- 1% found them very unhelpful

Base: All respondents who attended a group meeting (626)
Student Support Teams
Student Support Team – Seeking advice

- Just over a quarter of students sought advice from the Student Support Team during the previous academic year
- The number of times advice was sought was varied, with 89% of students requesting advice between 1 and 5 times

Base: All respondents answering question (929)
Student Support Team – Contact with Student Support Team

- Of those students who had contacted their Student Support Team, the majority had made contact via email.
- Positively, students generally found all methods to be effective for contacting the Student Support Team.

**Contact Method**

- MyEd: 21%
- Email with Student Support team: 73%
- Telephone with Student Support team: 5%
- Via the Personal Tutor: 7%
- Via School office: 21%
- Other: 4%

**Effectiveness of contact method**

- **MyEd**
  - Very effective: 62%
  - Fairly effective: 32%
  - Neither effective nor ineffective: 2%
  - Fairly ineffective: 6%
  - Very ineffective: 2%

- **Email with Student Support team**
  - Very effective: 49%
  - Fairly effective: 43%
  - Neither effective nor ineffective: 6%
  - Fairly ineffective: 2%
  - Very ineffective: 1%

- **Telephone with Student Support team**
  - Very effective: 58%
  - Fairly effective: 42%
  - Neither effective nor ineffective: 0%
  - Fairly ineffective: 2%
  - Very ineffective: 1%

- **Via the Personal Tutor**
  - Very effective: 61%
  - Fairly effective: 39%
  - Neither effective nor ineffective: 0%
  - Fairly ineffective: 0%
  - Very ineffective: 1%

- **Via School office**
  - Very effective: 57%
  - Fairly effective: 37%
  - Neither effective nor ineffective: 0%
  - Fairly ineffective: 0%
  - Very ineffective: 1%

- **Other**
  - Very effective: 49.8%
  - Fairly effective: 42.4%
  - Neither effective nor ineffective: 3.8%
  - Fairly ineffective: 1.2%
  - Very ineffective: 0.6%

*Base: All respondents who contacted the student support team (254)*
Student Support Team – Reason for contacting the Student Support Team

- Students contacted the student support team for a variety of reasons, with nearly three quarters stating it was for academic advice or support.
- 93% stated their query had been responded to ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ quickly, with half of students stating their query had been responded to ‘very quickly’.

### Main reason for contacting Student Support Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic advice / support</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal advice / support</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would rather not say</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Promptness of request being responded to

- Very quickly: 50%
- Fairly quickly: 43%
- Neither quickly nor slowly: 6%
- Fairly slowly: 1%
- Very slowly: 0%

Base: All respondents who contacted the student support team (254)
Student Support Team – Record of enquiry

- 31% of students recall a record of their enquiry being kept by the Student Support Team, but around two thirds were not sure whether a record was kept
- Students were most likely to note that a record of their enquiry had been kept via email

Record of enquiry kept by Student Support Team

- Yes, 31%
- No, 2%
- Don’t know, 68%

Access to notes from enquiry

- MyEd: 24%
- Email: 42%
- Paper Copy: 7%
- Via Student Support Officer: 4%
- Via School Office: 1%
- I didn’t receive any notes about my enquiry: 22%

Base: All respondents who contacted the student support team (248) All respondents who recall a record being kept of enquiry (76)
Student Support Team – Helpfulness

- Positively, 90% of students who had contacted the Student Support Team found the advice they received was helpful, with 43% stating it was ‘very helpful’.

Helpfulness of advice received from student support team

90% found the Student Support Team advice helpful

- Very helpful: 43%
- Fairly helpful: 47%
- Neither helpful nor unhelpful: 6%
- Fairly unhelpful: 2%
- Very unhelpful: 1%

Base: All respondents who contacted the student support team (246)
General support and advice – First point of contact for advice

- Students were asked who they would contact first for advice or support regarding a number of situations
- Students stated they were most likely to initially contact their Personal Tutor for support or advice in each situation
- For course choices, academic advice and queries about progression of studies, some students noted they would contact the course organiser
- Almost a third of students were unsure of who they would contact first regarding Degree Programme transfer options
- Regarding career plans, those noting ‘Somewhere else’ were most likely to mention the Careers service, family and friends, or their supervisor

Who or where would you go first for support or advice about the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal Tutor</th>
<th>Student Support Team</th>
<th>School Teaching Organisation / Office</th>
<th>Course Lecturer/Organiser</th>
<th>Central University Department/Service</th>
<th>EUSA</th>
<th>Online Resources</th>
<th>Another Student</th>
<th>Somewhere else</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course choices</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General academic advice / support</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties with academic performance or progression</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How you are progressing with your programme of studies</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of career plans</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Request for academic reference</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree Programme transfer options</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal problem/special circumstances</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each row, the green shading denotes who students would be most likely to contact first, while red is least likely.

Base: All respondents answering question (923)
General support and advice – Overall experience

- 82% of students found the academic advice and personal support received during the previous academic year to be helpful, with a third of students finding it to be ‘very helpful’

Overall rating of academic advice and personal support received

82% found the advice overall helpful

34% Fairly helpful
12% Neither helpful nor unhelpful
4% Fairly unhelpful
3% Very unhelpful

Base: All respondents answering question (924)
Suggestions for improvement

- Students provided a variety of comments in response to being asked what one key change they would make to improve the system of academic advice and support.
- A number of comments related to a preference for more meetings with the Personal Tutor, while others requested further information be made available on where to access advice and support.
- Positively, a number of students also suggested they felt the system was working well in its current format.

Examples of comments provided

- More meetings with the Personal Tutor who should keep a close record of progress through academic and extra curricular activities.
- Make sure that the students know who their Personal Tutor is and what their role entail.
- No changes, the current system suited my needs.
- I have a great Personal Tutor, that was beyond any of my expectations and could not find a flaw to comment on.
- Introduce more mandatory meetings for postgraduate students to meet with Personal Tutor.

Base: All respondents answering question (575)
About the respondents
School

- Responses from the Business School, the College of Art and Education accounted for higher proportions of the total responses received
- The highest response rates to the survey were from Medicine, Biomedical Sciences, the Vet School and the Business School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School, School of/College of</th>
<th>% of total responses</th>
<th>Number of responses</th>
<th>% response rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biological Sciences, School of</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biomedical Sciences, School of</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business School</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry, School of</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Sciences, School of</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divinity, School of</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics, School of</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh College of Art</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, The Moray House School of</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering, School of</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GeoSciences, School of</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health in Social Science, School of</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History, Classics and Archaeology, School of</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informatics, School of</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law, School of</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literatures, Languages and Cultures, School of</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics, School of</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medicine, College of</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molecular, Genetic and Population Health Sciences, School of</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences, School of</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physics and Astronomy, School of</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and Political Science, School of</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary Studies, Royal (Dick) School of</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>963</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison to Undergraduate results

Personal Tutor Meetings
- The same proportions of PG and UG students had attended 2 or more Personal Tutor meetings during the previous year
- PG students were slightly more likely to arrange the meetings via email
- In terms of meeting preparation, and keeping & sharing notes, PG students were more likely to always or sometimes do this compared to UG students
- PG students were slightly more likely to find their Personal Tutor meetings helpful (80% PG v 75% UG)

Small Group Meetings
- PG students were slightly more likely to have attended a group meeting compared to UG students
- PG students were more likely to have attended 5 or more meetings
- Discussing the academic programme of study was more of a focus for PG students
- PG students were more likely to find the Group meetings helpful (83% PG v 67% UG)

Student Support System
- 26% of PG students had sought advice compared to 17% of UG students
- Similar proportions of PG and UG students had requested advice via email
- 90% of PGs found the advice to be helpful compared to 88% of UG students

Overall support and advice
- For UG and PG students, their Personal Tutor was generally the first point of contact for queries and concerns
- Slightly more PG students found the overall advice and support to be helpful (82% PG v 78% UG), with PGs generally more likely to rate their Personal Tutor and overall advice received as very helpful.
Results by School

Data filtered by School is provided in a separate excel document.

Personal Tutor Meetings

• **Attendance**
  • DIV and BMS students most likely to have attended 5+ meetings (64% and 40% respectively)
  • LAW students were least likely to have attended a Personal Tutor Meeting (32% attended no meetings), and were least likely to have been requested to attend a meeting
  • BMS students were most likely to have arranged any additional meetings (100% arranged at least 1 additional meeting)

• **Arranging meetings**
  • Students in ENG and VET were most likely to have arranged a meeting via MyEd (45% and 42% respectively)
  • Students were most likely to arrange meetings via email in the following Schools - ECN 100%, PHY 100% HCA 96%, PPLS 97%
  • By comparison, DIV students were most likely to have arranged meetings in person (83%)

• **Preparing for meetings**
  • Students in ECN (43%) were most likely to ‘always’ have prepared for a meeting. Over half of students in PHY (62%), VET (54%) never prepared in advance for meetings
  • SPS students were most likely to have ‘always’ kept notes from the meeting (41%)
  • Less than a quarter of students in any school ‘always’ shared notes with their Personal Tutor
  • PHY (85%) MAT (78%), EDU (74%), DIV (73%) were most likely to report that the tutor kept a record of the meeting.
  • Notes were most likely to have been accessed via MyEd

• **Helpfulness of meetings**
  • Students in DIV (100%), SPS (60%), HEA (54%), PPLS (52%), and LAW (52%) were most likely have found the Personal Tutor meetings very helpful
Results by School (cont.)

Small Group Meetings
- Students were most likely to have attended a group meeting in ECN (92%), DIV (85%), and PPLS (80%)
- ECN students were most likely to have attended 5 or more meetings (92%)
- The main focus of the meetings was similar across the Schools
- Students were most likely to find the group meetings very helpful in PPLS (46%) and HEA (43%)

Student Support System
- Students in the Business School were the most likely to contacted the student support team (58%)
- There is insufficient responses to provide full breakdown by School for these questions

Overall support and advice
- In most Schools, the Personal Tutor or Course Organisers were the first point of contact for advice or support, particularly concerning academic issues.
- DIV students were most likely to consider the overall advice and support as ‘very helpful’ (77%)