Personal Tutor System
Phase 1 Evaluation - Staff Survey

ST & SST Network Meeting 16th June 2014
Personal Tutors
Key Finding

Smaller tutee groups are preferable
Tutor / Tutee Ratios

- Whilst 78% of staff who are the personal tutor for fewer than 10 students think that this is the optimum size for a tutee group, just 6.3% of staff who are the personal tutor for 51 or more students are satisfied with the size of their current tutee group.

- Staff who are responsible for groups of ‘fewer than 10’ or ‘10 to 20’ are the most likely to cite their current arrangement as the most agreeable (78% and 57.8% respectively),

whilst the ‘21 to 30’ and ‘31 to 50’ each select the are most likely to see ‘10 to 20’ as the preferable option (51.1% and 37.0% respectively).
Key Finding

High use of, and confidence when using, IT tools
Confidence in using IT Tools

- Of the 89.9% of staff who do not use EEMeC or EEVeC, 70% use the Personal Tutor IT Tools. Of this sample, 88.7% of whom are confident in doing so (25% Very confident, 63.7% Somewhat confident).

- Only 0.7% of respondents said that they were not confident at all in their use of the IT Tools.

- Of the 93.8% of respondents who gave an opinion on the topic, 80.2% of are satisfied with training provisions available for the Personal Tutor IT Tools.
“The last thing I need is another 'helpful' online tool. Unless you mean the stupid forms I have to click every time I have a meeting, which I use begrudgingly”

“I don't like using IT things for personal tutor work - I think that interactions should be by talking as much as possible (personal!)”

“They de-personalise the relationship. I have an open door policy, I think there is no substitute for face-to-face conversations”

“I like to keep things simple. Email students if I need to contact them, tell them to email me if they need me. For me the role is mainly pastoral support which I provide in person wherever possible, or via email discussion when a minor problem or there are difficulties meeting. The less different kinds of software I have to use, the less overloaded I feel.”
What type and format of training would be most helpful?

- Visual demonstrations showing the staff view and the student view of the interface and the various options for use of it.

- In house i.e. School training session held in a computer lab so that we can actually have a go as it is explained e.g. how to record a group meeting.

- I want tools that are well designed, easy to use, and perform well, none of which is true of the current system. The services provided are simple enough that no training should be required. The fact that you are asking about training already indicates one problem with the system.
Key Finding

Nearly 9 out of 10 tutors have fewer than 3 meetings with each student per semester
Average numbers of 1-1 tutee meetings

- 87.6% of respondents have either 1 or 2 meetings with each of their tutees in a semester (46.9% said 1, 40.8% said 2)
Key Finding

Tutors want long term contact with their tutees, but are split on whether mandatory actions are desirable.
The idea of students staying with the same personal tutor throughout their University career was received positively, with 91.1% of tutors saying that this would be helpful.

Nearly 4 out of 5 tutors think that it would be helpful if students were assigned personal tutors based on their specific area of study (79.2%).

Staff were less enthusiastic about ideas that imposed mandatory requirements on both tutor and tutee, with ideas such as a compulsory mid-semester one meeting for first year students and tutors being provided with a structured template on how the meetings should run being met with sub <50% levels of perceived helpfulness (49.5% and 48.6% respectively).
Key Finding

Tutors are confident in dealing with student issues, but are less confident when the issues involve other members of staff.
92.2% of tutors said that they feel confident enough to deal with a student approaching them with a personal problem.

Slightly fewer staff felt confident in dealing with a student who is clearly anxious and distressed (84.4%), although this is still a high rating.

However, only 75.3% of tutors feel confident in dealing with a student who wishes to make a complaint about another member of staff.
Key Finding

Whilst staff are confident enough to run group meetings, there is confusion about how to do so successfully.
Group meetings

• Of the 93.9% who expressed an opinion, 82.2% of tutors feel confident in their ability to facilitate a group meeting.

• However, the group is split on how to best do so;
  • 58.7% thought a meeting where all students are studying the same subject would be the best option, whilst
  • 33.6% believe that a meeting where all students are from the same year is preferential.
  • The remaining 7.7% believe that another structure altogether would be a better option
“Group meetings do not work. We have tried all kinds of things and students do not turn up. Dump them”

“This should be decided locally and not imposed as a one size fits all dictate from the University”

“Group meetings have been failing. They should be cancelled. Different students have different interests. In the last 2 years, the group meetings I held have failed to achieve their goals: only few--1 or 2--students come to meetings. Less meetings is better”

“I think mixed years is good because older students can provide advice to younger students.”
Key Finding

Just 1 in 3 tutors feel that they receive sufficient recognition for their work as a personal tutor
Recognition for the Personal Tutor role

- Of the 93.9% who offered their opinion, only 35.5% of PTs expressed the opinion that they feel they receive sufficient recognition for their work as personal tutors.
“More significant weighting in the workload model and being seen as more than a safe pair of hands!”

“As with all aspects of teaching it is not valued sufficiently for promotion purposes”

“Linked to the number of students supported. Imbalance is hidden in the system”

“The EUSA award is good”
One key change you would make?

- I, for one, think it's working ok!

- I am new to the system this year, I think it is very positive for the students and I am happy with the current arrangements.

- I think it is working well. It would be useful for my own annual appraisal to have feedback from the students in my group that I could submit with appraisal documentation - e.g. a survey

- Actually I think that the personal tutor system in our school works very well.

- Perhaps a more robust system of dealing with tutors who do not fulfil their duties.
One key change you would make?

- Remove the requirement for notes on Euclid. Most of the sensitive information a student gives I never put there. Basically I use that only formally to write very little, just to satisfy the requirement of having to use it.

- Link to a set of online forms (Special Circumstance; Extension request; Illness reporting) with a place to upload evidence / medical certs.

- I wish more burden were on the student to write up notes, define the agenda, schedule the meeting, etc.

- Some kind of welcome meeting with tutors and students (coffee and biscuits provided!) where new students and their tutors can meet informally.

- Have the tutees better informed as to what the PT can and should provide.
One key change you would make?

- Only allow people to be tutors who are competent. I see a large number of students who are not comfortable seeing their own tutor on top of my own tutees.

- More personal tutors, making use of Grade 7 staff.

- The name is stupid. I kind of see why PT was chosen, but it confuses people, particularly when writing letters of recommendation, or dealing with anyone outside the university, or explaining what the role actually means to new students. "Director of Studies" was a much better name. "Academic Mentor" would also be better. Many possible names would be better.

- Get more staff involved, so the number of students per mentor is lower.
One key change you would make?

- Abolish it!
Student Support Teams
Key Finding

The majority of students use email to contact their SST
Contacting the SST

• 93% of SSTs are contacted by students through email, with the remaining 7% contacted via ‘face-to-face’ interaction

• 0% of the responding SSTs said that they were contacted by students using the telephone
Key Finding

Staff are confident in their ability to provide ‘first-point-of-contact’ support for distressed students
Confidence with distressed students

- 92.9% of staff said that they are confident in their ability to do this
- although just 42.6% are satisfied with the training provisions available
What type and format of training would be helpful?

- ‘How different scenarios should be handled, more easily obtainable information of who to contact when dealing with distressed students, areas which are best placed to assist students with specific issues. Easily found information on the website’

- ‘Training on how to help very stressed students calm down. Demonstrations on how to deal with different scenarios. (Aggressive students, emotional students, students having panic attacks)’

- ‘A group ‘face-to-face’ training session’.
Key Finding

Although usage is relatively low, staff are confident in their ability to use the Personal Tutor IT tools.
Use of the PT System IT Tools

- Of the 98% who do not use EEMeC or EEVeC, 65.3% of respondents said that they use the Personal Tutor IT Tools.

- 93.9% of respondents who use the IT Tools are confident in their ability to do so, and 78.8% are satisfied with the training provisions available.
If you don’t use the IT Tools, why not?

- ‘Because our Personal Tutors use it, we have no need to.’

- ‘System is very slow and students are happier to contact the SST via email.’

- We already have a comprehensive records system which works very well. Adding notes in to EUCLID is laborious and it takes too long to open the student record every time you want to check their file.

- Also, the more notes that there are in EUCLID, the harder they become to follow. You would find yourself scrolling down pages and pages of notes if every relevant piece of correspondence over a student's 4 years was recorded in EUCLID. The software is too clunky and does not lend itself to ease of finding information.

- I think it is fine for arranging meetings with PT's but not for much else.’
What IT Tools enhancements would encourage usage?

- ‘Special circumstances forms and Learning Adjustment information visible as attachments or embedded in student’s record’
- ‘Getting rid of the 90-day period and substituting it for 'Semester', otherwise audit is inaccurate.
- Students could record meetings instead of only creating notes’
- ‘Spell check in the notes section’.
Key Finding

Staff are relatively unsatisfied with Student awareness of their SSTs
Student awareness of their SSTs

- ‘Just 46.7% of staff are satisfied with the level of student awareness of Student Support Team in their School’.
How can we improve student awareness SSTs?

• ‘Introduction to new staff members within student facing roles, explanation of what the Student Support Team does.’

• ‘Encourage all PTs to make students aware of SST during 1:1 meetings in S1.’

• ‘I think a logo associated with student support used University-wide and throughout schools will help them to easily identify us. More presence at open days and central university run events for students would also help, inclusion in leaflets etc.’

• ‘Raising the profile in induction meetings within the school, posters, wrap around banners with details of Student Support.’

• ‘More prominence on webpages and quicker links directly to us instead of long route via, school, teaching organisation etc.’
One key change to improve the PT system?

• ‘The group meetings aren't really working, very poor attendance (2 or 3 students showing up). Students don't seem to know what they are for and so don't value them as important. need more central guidance and promotion.’

• ‘I think it would be much better if we could allocated PTs earlier, - i.e. as soon as a student arrives or ideally before they arrive. I think once students have a named PT then they feel secure that there is a real human individual they can turn to if they need too, even though they may not require or request a meeting immediately.’

• ‘Employ academics who actually want to be PT's and are interested in UG students.’
Student survey summary

• Inconsistency of quality and effectiveness of individual Personal Tutors

• More scheduled 1 - 1 meetings; *particularly* mid-semester

• Preparation for meetings and effective note taking, reflection and actions

• Future of group meetings - *inconsistent, purpose, ‘transition’ and sense of community*

• Current anonymity of Student Support Teams
SSIG focus for the final year: Session 2014/15

1. PT student experience - very good, good and poor at around 20% - 25%

2. Addressing line management and the issues around staff underperformance

3. Inconsistent use and understanding of the importance of creating online records

4. Enhancement of the Personal Tutor System - the future?

5. Preparation for handover, ongoing review and enhancement