Enhancing Student Support (ESS) Post Project Review Report

Executive Summary

This paper presents the post project review report of the Enhancing Student Support (ESS) project.

How does this align with the University / Committee’s strategic plans and priorities?

The paper aligns with the University's Strategic Goal of ‘Excellence in Education’ and the Strategic Theme of ‘Outstanding Student Experience’.

Action requested

The Committee is asked to note formally the post project review report.

How will any action agreed be implemented and communicated?

Communication and implementation of project deliverables is complete. Communication and implementation of post project activities will be considered throughout 2015/16. The post project review report will be made available on the project wiki. An end of project staff event is being held by Academic Services in October where project achievements will be outlined.

Resource / Risk / Compliance

1. Resource implications (including staffing)
   The paper does not have resource implications.

2. Risk assessment
   A risk register was maintained as part of the project management.

3. Equality and Diversity
   Equality impact assessments have been carried out as appropriate.

4. Freedom of information
   The paper is open.

Key words

Personal Tutor, Student Support

Originator of the paper

Nichola Kett, Academic Services, 21 September 2015.
## POST PROJECT REVIEW REPORT

**Date**  
21 September 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Project Name</strong></th>
<th>Enhancing Student Support (ESS) project</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Sponsor</strong></td>
<td>Professor Ian Pirie</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project Manager</strong></td>
<td>Brian Connolly, Nichola Kett, Sara Welham (Academic Services)</td>
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</table>

### Project Objectives

The framework is designed to bring about more consistent quality of provision, while also helping students to monitor their progress and performance more systematically and relate these to their longer term aspirations. It seeks to blend a clear set of University wide requirements, well understood by all students and staff, with scope for Colleges and Schools to tailor provision to reflect differences in programme structures, subject needs and professional accreditation requirements.

There are six principal strands:
- articulating roles, responsibilities, and remits within a new Personal Tutor scheme: for Personal Tutor, Personal Tutee, Senior Tutor and Dean of Students
- rolling out peer support ‘families’/buddy systems across the University
- strengthening central student services
- compiling IT tools and other resource materials for advisees and advisors
- planning communication, briefing and training strategies
- and revision of the present *Standards and Guiding Principles for Academic and Pastoral Support*

### Project Dates

- **Phase 1** – 2011/12
- **Phase 2** – 2012/13
- **Phase 3** – 2013/14 and 2014/15

### Project Summary

**Aim**
The overriding aim is to ensure that, over the next decade and beyond, students have access to a framework of guidance and support that builds on the best of current practices, meets contemporary needs, and is of a quality and consistency appropriate to a university of high global standing. Project wiki: [http://edin.ac/14LWjDd](http://edin.ac/14LWjDd)

### Project Benefits

**Deliverables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articulating roles, responsibilities, and remits within a new Personal Tutor scheme</th>
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**Delivered**

- Personal Tutor system for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, including:
  - The appointment of a Dean of Students in each college.
  - The appointment of at least one Senior Tutor in each school.
  - The creation of Student Support Teams in each school.

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1 Project on Enhancing Student Support, Senatus Academicus, 8 February 2012
2 Project on Enhancing Student Support, Senatus Academicus, 8 February 2012
- The development of descriptors for each of these roles along with the descriptor for a Personal Tutor and a descriptor for student responsibilities in their role as a Tutee.
- The creation of the Senior Tutors’ Network and the Student Support Teams’ Network.
- An agreed number of scheduled ‘one-to-one’ and small-group meetings for each student.
- The establishment of School Personal Tutoring statements to make explicit to students the model of Personal Tutoring adopted in their school.
- A set of resources and training made available to all schools to support the development and implementation of Personal Tutors.

**Rolling out peer support ‘families’/buddy systems across the University**

The Peer Support strand of activity moved across to the Student Experience Project enabling the Enhancing Student Support project’s Student Support Implementation Group (SSIG) to focus exclusively on the development, implementation and evaluation of the Personal Tutor system, supporting resources and infrastructure.

**Strengthening central student services**

The recommendations from the review of central student services indicated the need for a separate, multi-faceted project to run in parallel with the Enhancing Student Support project, and the Student Experience Project was initiated.

**Compiling IT tools and other resource materials+ for advisees and advisors**

Delivered

- A new suite of online tools to support recording and scheduling meetings was created.
- An online facility for students to formally request a meeting with their tutor was created.

**Planning communication, briefing and training strategies**

**Communication**

Delivered

- A Communication Strategy for Phase One
- A Communication Timetable
- Personal Tutoring Statements for each school
- Resource materials about the project, e.g. Roles and Responsibilities; Personal Tutor System; material available via the Institute for Academic Development website, e.g. student FAQs, staff FAQs
- Key networks for communication, e.g. contacts in schools, services and colleges, Senior Tutor Network, Student Support Team Network
- A project wiki
- A benchmarking event
- Information events in schools and colleges
- Powerpoint presentations that provide general information about ESS and the Personal Tutor system and on the IT tools which schools can use for local delivery
- Workshops and briefing events, e.g. “Personal Tutor IT Tools: Train the trainer”, “Personal Tutors: running lively and useful group meetings.
- Monthly e-updates
- Bulk emails and MyEd announcements when appropriate
- Video interviews for broadcast online explaining the new initiative
- Articles in appropriate locations of the website
- A final report on Phase One

**Training and Resources**

Delivered

This included support for staff in their new roles and for some with new responsibilities, training in the use of the new suite of online tools, advice on individual and group meetings, and information on broader student support arrangements at a local and University level. Key elements of this provision included presentation material for use in college and school briefing events, and web-based information and resources. Frequently Asked Questions on the new arrangements for students and staff, a benchmarking event to build awareness and engagement...
Revision of the present Standards and Guiding Principles for Academic and Pastoral Support
Delivered
Now forms part of the Academic and Pastoral Support Policy.

Postgraduate Research Students
Phase three of the original Enhancing Student Support (ESS) project intended to focus on the supervisory and support framework for postgraduate research students. The support needs of postgraduate research students was scoped and it was agreed that a Personal Tutor in the form developed for taught students was not the exact ‘fit’ needed for research students. It was recognised however that an additional and importantly ‘neutral’ layer of support was required beyond the normal academic supervisory arrangements. It was also recognised that additional time would be required to fully redevelop the postgraduate research support framework (far beyond what was envisaged for the original three-year duration of the ESS project). Consequently, it was recommended that phase three of the project, focusing on postgraduate research students, became a new strand to be overseen by the Senate Researcher Experience Committee (REC). In 2014/15 the Assistant Principal (Researcher Experience) worked with relevant support areas to develop a proposal for the Postgraduate Researcher Enhancement Project (PREP) to take forward this agenda. While PREP did not secure resources through the 2015/16 planning round, Student Systems was able to deliver some ‘early win’ system enhancements through existing resources. REC is overseeing the development of proposals for further work in relation to PREP.

Project Timescales

Phase 1 (2011/12)
- Develop Personal Tutor system for all undergraduate on-campus students, with supporting IT Tools, resources and training, and communication

Phase 2 (2012/13)
- Implement Personal Tutor system for all undergraduate on-campus students
- Develop Personal Tutor system for all postgraduate taught students and all remaining undergraduate students, with supporting IT Tools, resources and training, and communication
- Develop peer support systems for undergraduate on-campus students
- Develop the monitoring, evaluation and enhancement process for the Personal Tutor system

Phase 3 (2013/14 and 2014/15)
- Implement Personal Tutor system for all postgraduate taught students and all remaining undergraduate students
- Develop and implement enhanced support for postgraduate research students, with supporting IT Tools, resources and training, and communication
- Implement the monitoring, evaluation and enhancement process for the Personal Tutor system

Were the planned project timescales adhered to?
Yes. Any changes to deliverables timescales were reported to the Project Board.

Project Resources

Planned Project Resources
Funds were provided directly to Colleges. Neither SSIG nor the Project Team were accountable or responsible for the management and allocation of this resource.
The IT Tools were initially developed using existing resources (Information Services) and thereafter, further enhancements were resourced as part of the Student Systems Partnership.

**Successes**

Detailed in the ELIR\(^3\) Case Study 1 (Enhancing Student Support, pages 5 to 23) under ‘Reflections on approach’.

**Lessons Learned**

Detailed in the ELIR Case Study 1 (Enhancing Student Support, pages 5 to 23) under ‘Reflections on approach’.

**Mainstreaming of Activity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agreed post project activity (15/16)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IT Tools+</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>“Relaunch” at STN(^4)/SSTN(^5) Symposium on 31 August 2015 (provide examples of usage)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed 31 August 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourage Schools to develop the use of the online system</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussed at Heads of School meetings and at symposium on 31 August 2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small enhancements(s), potentially:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Standard text for confidential matters</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explore links to other longer-term activities</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Path developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Notes/student record</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality Assurance and Enhancement (Transitional) – QAC 14/15 6 D</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicate decision to appropriate stakeholders via College Deans of Students, College Deans of Quality and Senior Tutors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completed 19 June 2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Sub Group of Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC(^6)) and set up and support meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post project review report provided to the SQAC Sub Group on behalf of SSIG(^7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting (see below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Sub Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training and Support</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Training (face-to-face central and bespoke local) and online materials on online tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain existing resources (e.g. adaptable slides and adaptable meeting materials) Training (central and bespoke local)</td>
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<tr>
<td>All Schools will offer a training session for Personal Tutors and Student Support Teams at the start of each academic session</td>
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\(^3\) Enhancement-led Institutional Review  
\(^4\) Senior Tutor Network  
\(^5\) Student Support Team Network  
\(^6\) Senate Quality Assurance Committee  
\(^7\) Student Support Implementation Group
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Communication</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Key outcomes communication shortly after end of project to focus on actions</td>
<td>Academic Services to coordinate Complete (August) – changes to PGT communicated to STs and SSTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a joined up start of academic session communication for Personal Tutors and SSTs</td>
<td>Academic Services, Student Systems, Institute for Academic Development Complete (September email re training and resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion of project communication – after final report to LTC⁸ in September 2015</td>
<td>Academic Services to coordinate</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Reporting</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Final project report to LTC in September 2015</td>
<td>Academic Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From SQAC Sub Group to SQAC on annual reports (May 2016) and from SQAC Sub Group to SQAC and then SEPB⁹ on PT statements and enhancement plans for 16/17 in relation to KPIs and performance of the system (summer 2016)</td>
<td>Academic Services to coordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To SEPB as required</td>
<td>Academic Services</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Website</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Maintain content (PT section of student thematic website; staff thematic PT website)</td>
<td>Academic Services, Student Systems, Institute for Academic Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consider expanding content as appropriate</td>
<td>Academic Services, Student Systems, Institute for Academic Development, Colleges</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Measuring the Effectiveness of Individual Personal Tutors</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Further work to take place</td>
<td>To be confirmed</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Staff Networks</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Retain the Senior Tutor Network (with the potential to join up with the Student Experience Network)</td>
<td>Academic Services to support STN</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Postgraduate Taught (including online distance learning)</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>Identify and implement actions from the evaluation</td>
<td>Academic Services to coordinate Complete August 2015 – changes to meeting type requirements</td>
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⁸ Learning and Teaching Committee  
⁹ Student Enhancement Programme Board
Evaluation and Impact

Evaluation

Personal Tutor System Phase 1 evaluation (7 March 2014)
Personal Tutor System Phase 1 evaluation – Staff Survey (16 June 2014)
On-campus Postgraduate Taught – Student Survey (July 2015)
Online Distance Learning – Student Survey (August 2015)

See also ELIR\textsuperscript{10} Case Study 1 (Enhancing Student Support, pages 5 to 23).

Transitional governance and reporting arrangements for the Personal Tutor system can be found in the Senatus Quality Assurance Committee’s May 2015 meeting papers (paper QAC 14/15 6 D).

\textsuperscript{10} Enhancement-led Institutional Review