Enhancing Student Support – Senior Tutor Network

Meeting from 13.00 – 14.30 on Wednesday 12 December 2012
Alrick Building Seminar Room D/E, King's Buildings
Action Notes

Convenor
Professor Alan Murray, Dean of Students, CSE

CHSS
Dr Colin Roberts, Economics
Mr Arno Verhoeven, Edinburgh College of Art
Mr Neil Houston, Education
Professor Tonks Fawcett, Health in Social Science
Dr Arianna Andreangeli, Law
Dr Julian Ward, Literature, Languages and Cultures

MVM
Dr Philip Larkman, Biomedical Sciences
Dr Kirsty Dundas, MBChB
Dr Geoffrey Pearson, Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies

CSE
Dr Steven Henderson, Chemistry
Dr Martin Reekie, Engineering
Dr Paul Jackson, Informatics
Professor Simon Harley, Geosciences
Dr Maximilian Ruffert, Mathematics
Dr Judy Hardy, Physics and Astronomy

Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Dr Jon Turner
Ms Nora Mogey

Project Team
Professor Ian Pirie, Assistant Principal
Ms Sara Welham
Ms Victoria Bennett

In Attendance
Mr Robert Chielewski, Information Services
1. **Apologies**

   Apologies received were noted by the Convenor.

2. **Note from the last meeting**

   The notes from the last meeting were approved.

3. **Matters Arising**

   3.1 Jon Turner addressed actions from previous meeting:

   **Action:** Jon Turner to explore the development of training for Personal Tutors regarding conducting difficult conversations.

   **Update:** The following has been included in the phase 2 plan for staff development and resources:

   1.8 Using PT meetings to help students make sense of assessment feedback

   **Lead – Daphne Loads (IAD)**

   **Approach – Training and development (initially for Deans and Senior Tutors) on two related topics:** (i) helping students to make sense of their assessment feedback, and (ii) having difficult conversations (e.g. reality check on likely final degree classification)

   **Timescale – January – March 2013**

   Resource requirements – intention is for this to be managed from within current resources.

   **Action:** Jon Turner to consider the comments relating to integrating the contents of Sue Rigby’s presentation into Personal Tutor training and resources.

   **Update:** This will be built into the following element of the phase 2 plan for staff development and resources:

   1.2 Review of resources designed to support College and School briefing sessions (undergraduate focus)

   **Lead – Jon Turner (IAD)**

   **Approach – work with representatives from STN, SSTN and SSIG to review and recommend any changes to the resources (presentations, handbook text) hosted on Senior Tutor wiki for Colleges and Schools to run local briefing events, prepare handbooks etc.**

   [Senior Tutor wiki - https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/PESS/Senior+Tutor+Network]

   **Timescale – February/March 2013**

   Resource requirements – unknown, aiming for modest updating and changes (with main additions linked to other activities – see below) which can be managed within current workloads. Will need to involve a range of support services and others (eg EUSA, SACS, Academic Services) in responding to feedback.

   If a major overhaul is needed we will need to review staff capacity.
3.2 Confidentiality/Record Keeping Scenarios

Jon Turner advised the Network regarding resources being developed on confidentiality and record keeping issues:

Approach – Develop a set of scenarios around record keeping and confidential/sensitive discussions suitable for use as written/online guidance and for use in staff development workshops. This was first discussed in September and put on hold to see if the enhanced briefing note released in October 2011 would be sufficient. Feedback indicates that this is still a source of uncertainty and additional advice would be valued. The focus in developing these scenarios will be to link the guidance and procedures to specific examples of Personal Tutor/student discussions (e.g. where a student raises a sensitive/personal issue in a meeting and then says that they want this to be treated as confidential). We will prepare a set of short scenarios and associated guidance in January 2013, use this to run a pilot workshop with Senior Tutors and Deans, and then make the material available for use in local staff briefing sessions and add it to the staff facing web site.

Timescale – January 2013

Resource requirements – intention is for this to be managed from within current resources.

3.3 Jon Turner highlighted the study development 'quick consultations' on 16th and 23rd January 2013.

Copies of the flyer aimed at staff who may that wish to refer/direct students to these sessions can be downloaded from:

http://www.docs.hss.ed.ac.uk/iad/About_us/Study_consultations_Jan_A4.pdf

3.4 Agenda items

Alan Murray advised Network members to raise topics for the STN agenda if they have issues they wish discussed. These should be emailed to Victoria Bennett (v.bennett@ed.ac.uk) by 8 January 2013.

4. Presentation on PebblePad

Robert Chielewski from Information Services gave a presentation demonstrating PebblePad and how it may be utilised in the Personal Tutor context. The Network was advised that as of 1st January 2013 Robert would be seconded to IAD looking at PebblePad as an accompaniment to the Personal Tutor scheme.

Elements of PebblePad highlighted to the group included:

- Potential as a space for developing online communities.
- A forum for students to share their work.
- A space for students to reflect on their learning.

After the presentation, discussion focused on the following themes:
• The issue of students being able to delete content from PebblePad. The Network were advised that a model could be developed to prevent this happening.

• Concern over duplication of work or confusion between multiple systems (Pebblepad, eLearning, Personal Tutor IT Tools, email, individual school custom systems)

• Engaging students to use systems.

• Using systems as a way of enhancing, not replacing face-to-face meetings. For example, students could share reflections on their learning. A tool such as PebblePad could be open and used as a focus point during a meeting.

• Concern that support would no longer be given to custom school systems if PebblePad is taken up by the University.

**Action:** Any member who wishes to share their views on using PebblePad and how it might fit with their school practices should email Robert Chmielewski before the next meeting. Robert.Chmielewski@ed.ac.uk

5. **Guidance for students on the consequences of not engaging with the Personal Tutor system**

It was acknowledged that it was frustrating when tutees did not engage with the system. There was agreement that as a consequence of not engaging with the system students did not receive support and that we did not want to allow this to happen. It was agreed that often those not engaging were the students that needed support the most. Therefore it was agreed that some kind of sanction for dealing with non-engagement must be established.

Members described local systems that triggered an action when a student did not engage, for example recording a note of concern which would be picked up by the Senior Tutor who would then speak to the student; or bringing up the non-engagement as a professionalism concern in the medical programmes.

It was noted that compliance issues came into play with certain students being required to engage in contact with their Personal Tutor as in the case of Tier four visa requirements. It was agreed that we should not have a two tier system with a different level of expectation for International students.

It was proposed that any non-engagement on the part of a student would be noted in some form in the IT system and that there would be a standard University position concerning non-engagement and that each school would articulate explicitly the consequences of non-engagement in the school personal tutoring statement.

**Action:** Ian Pirie to circulate draft wording to STN members for the standard university expectations for engagement that would be additional to the school Personal Tutoring statement.

**Action:** All to send comments on draft wording to Victoria Bennett (v.bennett@ed.ac.uk) to collate for the next meeting.

6. **Further discussion on practical matters to be dealt with at the start of semester**
Members agreed that the meeting taking place in semester two may be most useful to students once the exam results were released. It was also thought that a chat about results and feedback would act as a hook to get students engaged with a second meeting with their Personal Tutor as it was reported that some students had been querying the need for this second meeting. It was acknowledged that a meeting in semester two is a requirement of the Personal Tutor system and not just for students experiencing difficulties.

Concern was noted that results are not always available to Personal Tutors before a meeting with a tutee as results are not officially released until after boards of examiners have met. It was generally agreed that Personal Tutors required these results in order to conduct a meaningful discussion around the topics of progress and feedback and that they would like access to provisional marks. It was requested that this would be put on the agenda for a future meeting.

7. Exploring the possibility of testing the Personal Tutor IT tools

Members expressed no worries about systems at this time.

8. Senior Tutor Away Day

Sarah Welham advised the group that the Senior Tutor away day would take place on the afternoon of the 18th April 2013. This event will be an opportunity for Senior Tutors to share experience and best practice.

9. AOCB

7.1 A concern was raised that some members were experiencing issues in their schools around the definition of roles between Personal Tutors and Directors of Teaching, and between the teaching office and the student support office. After some discussion it became clear that this was an issue experienced by some schools in the College of Science and Engineering and it was agreed that Alan Murray and would meet with Graeme Reid to address these concerns.

Action: Alan Murray to address concerns in CSE schools with Graeme Reid

7.2 Issues raised by Senior Tutors for future meeting agendas included:

- Staff non-engagement with Personal Tutor system.
- Visibility of provisional marks to Personal Tutors before the post result meeting.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 17 January 13:00-14:30pm in room G.01 at 55 George Square (with lunch).

Victoria Bennett
19 December 2012