Enhancing Student Support – Senior Tutor Network

Meeting from 13.00 – 14.30 on Wednesday 13 February 2013
Chancellor’s Building, Little France
Action Notes

Convenor
Professor Allan Cumming, Dean of Students, CMVM

CHSS
Dr Paul Norris, Social and Political Science
Mr Arno Verhoeven, Edinburgh College of Art
Dr Sara Parvis, Divinity

MVM
Dr Kirsty Dundas, MBChB
Dr Philip Larkman, Biomedical Sciences

CSE
Dr Neil Stuart, Geosciences
Dr Paul Jackson, Informatics
Dr Maximilian Ruffert, Mathematics
Dr Judy Hardy, Physics and Astronomy
Professor Alan Murray, CSE

Institute for Academic Development (IAD)
Dr Jon Turner

Project Team
Ms Nichola Kett
Ms Sara Welham
Ms Victoria Bennett
Ms Dawn Gray

IT Tools
Ms Sheila Fraser, Project Services Team Manager, IS Applications Division

Student Support Services Project Strand
Dr Sue Rigby, Vice Principal
1. Apologies

Apologies received were noted by the Convenor.

2. Note from the last meeting

A correction regarding the 'Peer Support Toolkit' was noted by the Convener. This Toolkit is due to be finished in May; it is not already complete as stated in the notes. The notes from the last meeting were then approved.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 SSIG Update

The Convener informed Members that the challenge of Senior Tutors having no line management responsibility for Personal Tutors will be discussed a future SSIG meeting. This issue was raised by a Member at a previous STN meeting.

3.2 IT Tools

The Convener advised Members that the recommendation to remove the reference to 'semester one' and 'semester two' meetings in the IT Tools and to label all meetings as simply 'meetings' was approved at SSIG.

3.3 Training and Resources

a) Resources for College/School Briefing Events.

STN Members confirmed that the lack of volunteers to review these resources for College/School briefing events reflects an overall satisfaction with what was produced for last year. There was support from the STN for the production of two sets of resources for College/School briefings in the lead up to academic year 2013/14. One set (updated version of last year's materials and also covering PGT) for new PTs and SSOs; and a second set suitable for use at shorter update sessions for continuing PTs and SSOs (that covers updates and key reminders).

**Action: Jon Turner** will arrange production of the first draft of these resources in April/May 2013. Drafts will circulated to the STN, SSIG and others for feedback and the final versions will be added to the STN wiki in June. The format will be similar to last year - simple content and format that can be easily adapted and modified for use in Schools and Colleges.

b) Online resources for PTs and other staff providing academic and personal support to students

Judy Hardy (Physics), Kirsty Dundas (Medicine) and Paul Norris (Social & Political Science) kindly volunteered to provide critical friend feedback on IAD and other online resources.
**Action:** Jon Turner will contact Judy, Kirsty and Paul with a set of questions and links for them to view when reviewing these resources. The key objectives will be to comment on the appropriateness and relevance of the current resources, identify any gaps, and provide advice on if and how these resources should be promoted to support take up.

Jon Turner will be contacting colleagues (in IAD and elsewhere) to ask them to check their suitability for UG, PGT or both audiences. Donna Murray (IAD) will run a short briefing event on PGT requirements and the student experience in May/June for those developing/adapting resources, including any new resources linked to recommendations from the encouraging excellence working group.

c) Using PT meetings to help students make sense of assessment feedback

STN Members were positive about the proposal from Daphne Loads (IAD) and Nick Bowry and asked Daphne to go ahead and set up the session as suggested. There were two comments on timing. It is essential that exam time is avoided. It might be useful to have it before resit time (so that staff can benefit from the training before having to discuss resits with students).

d) Spring Series of practice-sharing workshops on academic and pastoral support.

Information on the three sessions planned so far has been circulated to the STN. Senior Tutors have also been encouraged to contact Daphne Loads from IAD (daphne.loads@ed.ac.uk) with requests and suggestions for further workshops.

4. **School Personal Tutoring Statements Review**

The STN was informed that a research exercise has taken place looking at existing School Personal Tutoring Statements with a view to enhancing them ahead of the next academic year and the move into phase two of the Project for Enhancing Student Support. Statements were reviewed against the checklist originally provided to Schools by the ESS team in order to identify commonality, gaps and additional information. The subsequent discussion at STN was an opportunity for Network Members to shape any future checklist or template in order to make it most useful. Themes of this discussion centered on the following:

- There was support for a move towards a School Personal Tutoring Statement template rather than a freer structure based on a checklist. This template would allow for local differences but contain a core set of common paragraphs in order to establish greater consistency in the way standard information is presented across the University. Information identified in the research exercise would inform the compilation of this template.
- Members would welcome an examination of the voice used in the Personal Tutoring Statements to refer to the individual student ‘you’, perhaps with emphasis on the individual.
- It was suggested that it may be useful to revisit the ‘benefits for Students’ document to reflect both benefits and consequences of engagement with the Personal Tutor System, particularly in the context of illustrating the Personal Tutor/Tutee relationship as a partnership with responsibilities on each side.
• It was agreed that Senior Tutors would appreciate clear guidance from SSIG regarding actions to be taken when a student does not attend a meeting.
• Members advised that it may be useful to articulate what will not happen if students do not engage with the system rather than stating consequences.

5. Off-Campus Students

There was a short discussion regarding the following proposal referred from the Off-Campus Brainstorming group:

Schools should hold a small budget to allow PTs or other nominee to visit an off-campus student in academic extremis. Extreme pastoral issues are not within a PT’s responsibilities or skills, but Schools should be prepared to send a PT on an “academic rescue mission” (or a return trip for the tutee back to UoE) if that is deemed to be the only solution to a problem.

Members agreed that Schools should be prepared to dip into contingency funds to undertake such an “academic rescue mission” in circumstances of academic emergency; however it was felt that there was no need for a specific budget to be assigned for this.

6. PGT Developments

Network Members were advised that a communication was sent to key School and College staff outlining PGT developments in relation to the Personal Tutor System.

7. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 11 March 2013 at 1-2.30pm in Forresthill - Room B1 (with lunch).

Victoria Bennett
18 February 2013