UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

COVERSHEET FOR COMMITTEE PAPERS

For formal approval	
Item for discussion	√
Item for report	
Recommend Approval	

Committee:	Taught Student Education Board		
Date of Meeting	24 February 2021	Paper Reference:	TSEB/20-42
Title of Item:	Academic Personal Tutoring - Institutional Review initial report		
Author:	Simon Lightfoot and Rebecca Evans		
Sponsor:	Paul Taylor, Dean: Student Education (Experience)		

Executive summary and purpose of paper: (*200 words max*)
This paper outlines the initial findings of the institutional review of academic personal tutoring. The paper highlights a range of tasks that need to be undertaken to fully embed the updated core purpose of academic personal tutoring in our current practice. These include: 1.   Expectations of the academic personal tutors role and core systems   2.   Workload   3.   Recognition   4.   Development, Training and support   5.   Leadership (including academic personal tutor lead role)   The paper is intended to update TSEB on the activities of the institutional review and to act as the basis for further discussion and consultation.
Action required from Committee: (*include a clear indication where formal approval is required*)
To note the need for the review to continue in order to ensure we fully capture the holistic ask of academic personal tutors.   To consider the initial finding and recommendations and provide feedback and thoughts on the direction outlined. In particular considerations as to how we provide institutional support for the key transformational issues is welcome.
At which Committee(s) (if any) has this paper been considered previously?
Student Experience and Success Strategy Group   LeedsforLife Strategy Group
Next Steps: (outline what will happen next/who will action items and timescales?
Task and finish groups will be created to take forward the recommendations in the following areas: 1: Development, Training and recognition   2: Expectations and core systems   3: The PGT experience   4: The academic personal tutor lead role   These groups will report back via the usual governance structures.

TAUGHT STUDENT EDUCATION BOARD

STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND SUCCESS STEERING GROUP

Academic Personal Tutoring - Initial Report of Institutional Review

This paper outlines the initial findings of, and recommendations arising from, the institutional review on academic personal tutoring. The Board is asked to consider the findings and recommendations and provide feedback on the direction outlined, with particular reference to how institutional support can be sourced and utilised.

Academic personal tutoring is central to the student education offer at Leeds. In recent years, there has been an update of the policy (see TSEB 19-77, June 2020) and principles and an increased focus on support for academic personal tutors (see TSEB 20-05, September 2020).

In light of these changes, it was deemed important to review the practice of academic personal tutoring across the institution and identify any issues in supporting schools to deliver its core purpose.

This report outlines initial findings as a basis for discussion and consultation and sets out initial next steps. This review has been based upon partnership working with LUU, extensive stakeholder engagement (full list available), existing faculty/school reviews, LITE research projects, analysis of student voice data and awareness of current good practice as identified in the academic literature.

Strategic importance of Academic Personal Tutoring at Leeds

Academic personal tutoring is fundamental to the successful delivery of an outstanding, research-based education that supports all of our students to gain the outcomes they will need to flourish and succeed. It is also a key part of the LUU executive's priorities. The institutional challenge is to ensure that this significance is communicated clearly and effectively to both staff and students and that the value of the role is explicitly linked to the achievement of core strategic priorities.

Academic personal tutoring is key to the successful realisation of the Access and Student Success Strategy Implementation Roadmap, specifically with respect to the following priorities: implementing learning analytics (priority 4A), advancing academic personal tutoring (priority 5B), enhancing wellbeing support (priority 5C), redesigning induction for underrepresented groups (priority 6A) and removing barriers to continuation between levels (priority 6B). The specific role played by academic personal tutors in Study Success meetings is crucial to the achievement of priority 6B.

The ambitions within the Curriculum Enhancement Project are that our students will benefit most from a curriculum that helps them to develop attributes such as critical thinking, leadership, entrepreneurship, global citizenship, sustainability, ethical thinking, resilience

and adaptability, alongside deep subject knowledge, research, technical and professional skills, and well-developed digital literacies. These will need to be embedded in the LeedsforLife refresh given the ambition that academic personal tutors will support and guide students throughout their time at Leeds.

The renaming of the role stresses the importance of the academic components of student support and ensuring students feel a sense of belonging within their specific academic context. The evaluation of Welcome, Induction and Transition highlights the crucial role semester one of year one plays in supporting our students to feel they belong. This is the distinctive role of academic personal tutors within a research-intensive university. It also recognises the collaboration with colleagues from a variety of services, especially the SES, and the complementary roles that both academic and professional service colleagues play in supporting students and linking them to relevant services and opportunities throughout their time at Leeds. The acquisition of core systems such as PebblePad and Learning Analytics will provide the technological tools to support academic personal tutors to perform their roles, their full impact and the benefits they can offer are still being realised. Research from the pilots will be used to inform this review as will the evaluation of WIT and study success.

Main findings of the review

The report sets out current expectations, outlines the main findings so far and then provides recommendations for future work. The major challenges that students and staff identified were:

1. **Expectations of the academic personal tutor role and core systems**
2. **Workload**
3. **Recognition**
4. **Development, training and support**
5. **Leadership (including academic personal tutor lead role)**

1: Expectations of the academic personal tutor role and connections to core systems

Current Practice: Three one-to-one meetings per year per tutee minimum. Current practice is that an academic personal tutor will:

1. Advise and support you on academic matters

2. Help you to navigate wider support structures, in particular:

- Where to access personal and pastoral support
- Where to access career development opportunities and support

3. Support you to develop a sense of belonging

4. Help you to develop and improve

The specific role is set out in terms of the Core Purpose (which will be carried out by everyone in this role) and Main Responsibilities (with flexibility to accommodate local contexts and/or pedagogical requirements).

Findings: It is clear that there is some excellent practice across the institution. Many academic personal tutors are working hard to support and guide students. However, there is a still a lack of clarity around the purpose of academic personal tutor meetings amongst both students and staff which leads to a sense of dissatisfaction with our current provision. It is clear that elements of the core purpose need further work to become embedded within current structures.

Amongst students there is a strong feeling that there is a variability of practice and that as there is no monitoring or review of academic personal tutors (described by students as accountability) in many cases the fundamentals (the "duty of care" aspects) of the relationship do not happen. This leads to inconsistency of practice within schools, with research suggesting that students feel a good academic personal tutor relationship depends on the 'luck of the draw'.

Amongst staff there is strong evidence that it is felt to be a low status element of the role which lack clarity and the volume of students' impacts upon other / wider aspects of their role. There is also a need to ensure a sufficient number of touchpoints at each level of study to allow academic personal tutors and tutees to build a relationship.

Research also identifies challenges for academic personal tutoring in the area of joint honours and study abroad/work placements for undergraduate students plus a general need to review postgraduate provision.

Recommendation 1: Review how the role is defined and communicated to students and staff. Recent revisions to the principles have set out that the role encompasses academic support combined with basic pastoral support and signposting/referral. This needs further recognition at an institutional level to help them to become embedded. Work is needed to provide a clear shared and agreed definition of the APT and SES roles in supporting students. Further work is needed to map the relationship between academic personal tutors, Student Support teams, Employability teams etc. and the role of group meetings v 121.

Recommendation 2: Further work to ensure school guides to academic personal tutoring are visible to students and staff. Review the academic personal tutor website and student facing communications especially in relation to the concept refresh of LeedsforLife.

Recommendation 3: Evaluation of how schools are addressing the principals within their academic personal tutoring provision and assessing its effectiveness is important. Identify how school policies are reviewed within existing Student Education governance structures.

Recommendation 4: Review how the number and frequency of meetings sit with the findings from the PebblePad / Learning Analytics pilot. This will need an understanding of how academic personal tutoring is monitored and reviewed to provide accountability.

Recommendation 5: Share good practice around how different models work with a focus on ensuring models are compliment work around sense of belonging.

Recommendation 6: Establish a group to explore the specific issues raised for PGT students.

2: Workload allocation clarified

Current Practice: Academic personal tutoring must be resourced and recognised in workload models

Findings: It is clear that how academic personal tutoring is recognised in workloads is variable across the institution and to some extent this reflects different models and practice within schools. This is manifested in a number of ways both in terms of numbers of tutees per individual academic and hours provided per tutee. There is also a feeling in some parts of the university that academic personal tutoring is a role for staff on specific contracts.

Recommendation 1: To define parameters of workload norms within each school; how and by whom are students allocated to academic personal tutors. This work will need to incorporate PebblePad/Learning Analytics evaluation from the pilots.

Recommendation 2: Restate the expectations that academic personal tutoring is a central aspect of all academic contracts.

Recommendation 3: Transparency around how the work undertaken by academic personal tutors (etc) is recognised in the workload credit allocation.

3: Enhanced Recognition of the academic personal tutor role in the promotions process

Current practice: Academic personal tutoring is recognised in the different promotions criteria in the following ways:

Grade 8 & 9 (Student Education/Research & Impact: providing effective personal tutoring or other support and guidance to students.

Grade 10 (all): You have provided effective personal tutoring or other support and guidance to students

Findings: The brief references to academic personal tutoring in the promotions criteria reinforced a view that academic personal tutoring was a low status activity for academic staff.

Recommendation 1: Review these criteria to ensure they reflect the aspirations of the other criteria i.e. excellence in research or student education. This will need the institution to consider by what means it evidences excellence in this area in line with HEA/UKAT good practice.

4: Clear development, training and support provision established

Current practice: there is an expectation that training is provided

Findings: It is not clear that all academic personal tutors currently feel valued, trained or supported. This is a crucial aspect given the feeling of uncertainty around the role and its boundaries, especially in light of the revised core purpose.

Recommendation 1: How are academic personal tutors developed and supported? Examine what type of training is needed and for whom? Explore how to maximise take up of training? How is training recorded and evidenced? Is training compulsory? How are Inclusivity/Equality and Inclusion aspects incorporated into development, training and support?

5: Leadership requirements defined (including the academic personal tutor lead role)

Current expectations: each school identifies an academic personal tutor lead

Findings: The new academic personal tutor lead role has generally been welcomed by staff although the challenge of identifying a further student education leadership role within schools is acknowledged. The core message is to identify leadership rather than create a specific role. There is some confusion around who should undertake the role, the formal role of the academic personal tutor lead in overseeing practice within schools and links to line management and accountability. The relationship between academic personal tutor leads and the new Deans of Student Education need mapping.

Recommendation 1: Review existing role descriptors and responsibilities of academic personal tutor leads as well as development and training.

Recommendation 2: Enhance and develop the academic personal tutor lead network

Recommendation 3: Consider ways in which the institution can help raise the profile of academic personal tutoring. A culture change is needed in some areas in terms of the value and importance of academic personal tutoring.

Final observations and next steps

The strategic importance of academic personal tutoring within student education is clear. However, given recent and future initiatives there is a need to ensure that, as an institution, we have a holistic view of what is asked of academic personal tutors and that we consistently recognise and value the role going forward. This means further work is needed in specific areas as outlined in this report. These next steps will occur under the leadership and guidance of the Dean: Student Education (Experience). As a basis for discussion, TSEB is asked to consider the initial finding and recommendations and provide feedback and thoughts on the direction outlined. In particular considerations as to how we provide institutional support for the key transformational issues is welcome.

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