

Table of Contents:

1	Introduction and scope	1
2	Allocation of personal tutors	1
3	Role description and relationship with other services	2
4	Meetings with tutees	3
5	Record-keeping	3
6	Training	3
7	References	4
	Appendix: Personal Tutor Role description	5

**1** [Introduction and scope](#)

- 1.1. All students on a higher education Programme at Escape Studios are allocated a personal tutor who supports them in their academic progress throughout their studies and is a first point of contact for their pastoral support. Students will be assigned a personal tutor, wherever possible, that suits their specialism and level of study.
- 1.2. The role of personal tutor is central to the retention, progression and achievement of students. This policy sets out the basic expectations of personal tutors and the support provided by Escape Studios to enable them to carry out their role effectively. The Schools are able to develop more detailed procedures, which would be consistent with this policy.

**2** [Allocation of personal tutors](#)

- 2.1. Student Services, in consultation with the Deans of the Schools, or their nominees, are responsible for allocating personal tutors to students and notifying students and personal tutors of the allocations. All students will be allocated their personal tutors immediately after registration on their Programme of Study.
- 2.2. It is expected that personal tutors remain with their personal tutees throughout the duration of their Programme of Study. However, it is acknowledged that changes to personal tutor allocation may need to be made, for example where a student transfers to a different Programme of Study or a personal tutor leaves Escape Studios. Equally, allocation may be

changed to better suit a student's needs. The Deans of the Schools, or their nominees, are responsible for any re-allocation of personal tutors which may become necessary.

- 2.3. If a student asks for a different personal tutor because, for example, they have come into conflict with them, the request will be considered by The Deans of the Schools, or their nominee, who will investigate the issues and re-allocate the student to another personal tutor if, at their discretion, they think that is an appropriate course of action. The Director of Registry or Student Services may also make other recommendations, if appropriate.

### 3 Role description and relationship with other services

- 3.1. The main responsibilities and duties of personal tutors are set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.2. The role of personal tutor is primarily to be an academic adviser and to assist students to meet their academic and career goals while on their chosen Programme. However, it is recognised that students' general well-being has a profound effect on their ability to engage with their studies, optimise the other developmental opportunities available to them at Escape Studios, and achieve their potential more broadly. Personal tutors, therefore, work closely with Student Services, the Talent Development team and others to ensure that students have the benefit of the support available to them both within and outside Escape Studios.
- 3.3. Personal tutors recognise that each student has different strengths, weaknesses, goals and starting points and commit to adopting personal, individualised approaches to each of their tutees.
- 3.4. Personal tutors are careful not to give advice outside their area of expertise. In particular, when students have domestic or personal problems or mental health issues, it is important that personal tutors do not stray into adopting the role of counsellor or therapist, but refer students to appropriate agencies. A list of appropriate services and agencies is maintained by Student Services and published on the OLE.
- 3.5. Personal tutors proactively monitor the academic progress of their tutees. They check their module results and progression status, so that they can contact and advise tutees who have not achieved expected results. In particular, any tutee who:
  - a. has failed to attend or submit an assessment;
  - b. has failed a module or component of a module;
  - c. is at risk of not progressing to the next Stage in a timely fashion;
  - d. has choices to make regarding re-attempts or re-attendance.
- 3.6. Absence from classes or failure to attend appointments with personal tutors or others is an indicator of risk of non-progression. Personal tutors have an important role to play in the Escape Studios Attendance and Engagement policy, by following up tutees who have missed classes or appointments. The purpose of follow-up is to identify the reasons for absence, encourage students to attend and take steps to remove any obstacles to attendance, including referrals to other services or agencies, if required.
- 3.7. All students have the opportunity to inform Student Services whether they have Additional Learning Needs (ALNs) and whether they would like this

information shared with their Personal Tutors. If students disclose ALNs, PTs may request further support on how to effectively support them. It is not expected that PTs have expertise in ALNs, but they should be aware of the broad areas of needs (communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social/emotional/mental health difficulties, sensory/physical needs) and look to develop sympathetic strategies to assist students with their academic development accordingly. When faced with situations that PTs feel unable to manage, they should always seek support from their Programme Leader, Student Services, or other Escape Studios department.

#### 4 Meetings with tutees

- 4.1. The minimum Escape Studios requirement for meetings between personal tutors and their tutees is as follows:
  - a. A Welcome Meeting within the first three weeks of the tutee's commencement on their Programme of Study which could be an individual meeting or a group meeting.
  - b. An individual Annual Appraisal Meeting, which shall take place in the second term of each Stage of the Programme of Study, shortly after results are published for the modules taken during the first term of that Stage.
- 4.2. Schools may set their own minimum requirements for more frequent meetings and are encouraged to set more frequent meetings in exceptional external or student-related circumstances.

#### 5 Record-keeping

- 5.1. Personal tutors keep records of the meetings with tutees at which significant matters are discussed, using approved templates/ platforms.
- 5.2. Personal tutors store the records of meetings with tutees securely in accordance with Escape Studios' Data Protection Policy and procedures agreed between their School and Student Services.

#### 6 Training

- 6.1. Personal tutor training is organised at least once a year, prior to the start of the academic year. All personal tutors must attend annual training.
- 6.2. Personal tutor training will include:
  - a. Scope and nature of the personal tutor role
  - b. Approaches to the retention and progression of students
  - c. Role of other agencies and services
  - d. Key Escape Studios policies (e.g. attendance, additional learning needs, extenuating circumstances)
  - e. Data protection and confidentiality
  - f. Record-keeping
  - g. Dealing with common scenarios
  - h. Writing references

## 7 References

- 7.1. Personal tutors are responsible for writing academic references for their tutees.
- 7.2. Before writing an academic reference, personal tutors must ensure that they have their tutee's written permission covering the reference in question. They should ensure that they have up to date information about the tutee, which can be obtained from Student Services and/or by asking the tutee for a copy of their CV or their application.
- 7.3. Academic references should be provided promptly, usually within five working days or any deadline set by the recipient.
- 7.4. Personal tutors should only provide written references and should not provide oral references or discuss their tutees on the telephone. If, exceptionally, an oral reference is necessary, the personal tutor shall follow up the conversation with an email confirming the content of the reference. Personal tutors do not give "off the record" references in any circumstances.
- 7.5. References must be factually accurate, fair and not misleading in the overall impression they give to the recipient. Any comments must be based on evidence and opinion should be clearly distinguished from fact.
- 7.6. Personal tutors must bear in mind that writers of references owe a duty of care both to the recipient and the subject of the reference. Care must be taken in relation to difficult cases, such as where the student has been found guilty of a malpractice offence, has a poor attendance record or has been involved in a disciplinary matter. As a general rule, there is no obligation on personal tutors to mention such matters unless they are directly relevant to the duty of care owed to the recipient of the reference. This could arise where the reference is required for a job involving a high degree of trust and integrity.
- 7.7. Personal tutors should seek the advice of Escape Studios Data Protection Officer in difficult cases, or if they are specifically asked questions about malpractice or disciplinary matters.
- 7.8. Under Data Protection law, tutees are entitled to ask for a copy of any references written about them. Personal tutors must therefore ensure that copies of all references are forwarded to Student Services to be kept on the student's file. Any requests from students to see copies of personal information kept by Escape Studios (including references) should be forwarded to the Data Protection Officer.

## Appendix: Personal Tutor Role description

Through the provision of academic, personal and professional support, Personal Tutors play a pivotal role in the retention, progression and achievement of Escape Studios students. Personal tutor responsibilities sit alongside other responsibilities, for example, teaching.

The key responsibilities of the Personal Tutor are:

- Delivering high-quality personal tutoring in accordance with Escape Studios' Personal Tutor Policy.
- Acting as a primary point of contact for all allocated personal tutees, specifically, though not restricted to, personal and academic matters relating to their studies and professional development. This will involve:
- Meeting every term with their tutees to review their academic performance, supporting them with their assessments (especially in cases of underperformance), and providing them with mentoring on their professional aspirations (including providing feedback on their CVs, giving advice on finding job opportunities and networking)
- Keeping a record of their meetings as per agreed protocols
- Pro-actively raising any issues/recurring patterns early in the term or as appropriate with the Programme Leader/Student Services.
- Answering *ad hoc* questions from their tutees
- Monitoring classroom attendance of tutees and contacting tutees when there are concerns about attendance
- Meticulous handing over of a tutee to a new Personal Tutor when required.

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