

# A4.1 Being inclusive in personal academic tutoring

## Check out individual needs

### How?

You can check on SOLE whether a personal tutee has disclosed a disability to the University. Ask your tutee how their disability impacts on learning and academic tasks in general. Ask about support needs and any support they are already receiving. Be sensitive and focus discussion on support rather than on the details of the condition itself. Refer the student to the [Disability and Dyslexia Service](https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/) (DDS) if necessary.

### Why?

Students should be encouraged to disclose disabilities so that those involved in teaching and supporting them can make use of this information. Students may not be aware of support available to them so a referral to DDS will ensure they are aware of the support they are entitled to.



## Be aware of barriers created by cultural factors

### How?

International students, mature students and those from non-traditional backgrounds may need greater support with understanding the context of personal academic tutoring and how to engage with it. Don’t assume prior knowledge of university terminology and explain terms such as ‘mitigating circumstances’ and ‘first attempt’.

### Why?

The concept of a personal tutor-tutee relationship may be unfamiliar to some students. Depending on background, some students may see the personal tutor as an authority figure and this may affect their engagement. Many students will be new to HE or to the University and won’t know about the processes and procedures in place, or the language used to talk about them.

## Arrange appointments

### How?

Schedule initial meetings and follow up if the student does not attend. Be prepared to spend more time with some students than others. Help students to develop strategies to ensure good organisation and time management.

### Why?

Students who are vulnerable and / or new to HE may not know what is expected of them. Due to their personal circumstances (including those relating to health, disability, cultural and domestic issues), some students may require more support than others. Students with organisational difficulties may need additional support with keeping to appointments.



## Respect students’ boundaries

### How?

Be aware that your personal tutees may have a range of personal issues or responsibilities that impact on their day-to-day health and ability to study. For example, transgender and transitioning students may or may not choose to talk openly about their situation. If you are not sure how to address or refer to someone, politely ask them how they would like to be addressed, including which pronouns they would prefer to be used.

### Why?

Students may not wish to disclose very personal information or provide a lot of details about their personal circumstances. Gender identity is a very personal and individual experience. It is polite and respectful to accept a person’s gender identity as a legitimate expression of who they are.



## Set clear boundaries

### How?

Offer a range of methods which tutees can use to contact you to make an appointment and communicate these clearly to your tutees.

Be aware of the limits of your role and your knowledge: refer the student to other services as required or contact the DDS yourself in the first instance for advice on which service would be most suitable for your student.

### Why?

Some students may have difficulty with the concept of a window set aside for drop-ins and may interpret this to mean you are available to spend all that time with them. It is much better to set clear times and appointments. Different students will have different preferences for communicating and arranging appointments.

It is better to give no advice at all than to give the wrong advice. If you refer the student on to another service, explain this process to them and follow up with the student to see how they are getting on. Remember that you are not solely responsible for the student’s wellbeing and you are not expected to provide support and advice beyond your expertise.

A sign post with trees and mountains in the background

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## Signpost to appropriate services

### How?

Refer to the University guide [Signposting Student Support](https://www.worcester.ac.uk/documents/signposting-student-support-guide-for-university-staff.pdf) for guidance on which services are available. Ensure that students know that you cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality in some situations.

### Why?

Being aware of the signs that a student may be experiencing difficulties and having an overview of the services available will help you to refer a student to the most appropriate place when they need support.

Highlighting that confidentiality cannot always be maintained protects both you and the student and ensures that any serious concerns are dealt with in a timely manner. If in doubt, seek advice from Student Services.

## Provide clear information

### How?

Back up any important points discussed verbally in writing as well so that the student has a record of what was discussed and has the information on hand if they need to take action.

### Why?

Some students may find it difficult to understand and retain everything that is said to them. For example, dyslexic students may struggle to retain all spoken information and students who are stressed or anxious may only take in some of what is said to them.

A group of women in a boat

Description automatically generated with low confidence

## Encourage students to engage in opportunities outside the curriculum

### How?

Acknowledge that some students’ opportunities for extracurricular development will be more limited than others. Students can find out more about additional opportunities by looking into the [Worcester Award](https://www.worcester.ac.uk/life/help-and-support/services-for-students/the-worcester-award.aspx) and / or opportunities via the Students’ Union such as [volunteering](https://www.worcsu.com/volunteer/), [sports and societies](https://www.worcsu.com/sports_activities/), and [academic representation.](https://www.worcsu.com/yourvoice/reps/coursereps/)

Avoid making assumptions about what a student can or can’t do based on their age, personal circumstances, or disability. Discuss opportunities in relation to personal, academic and career goals and the time that the student feasibly has available.

### Why?

Students with caring responsibilities may have less time available, and some disabled students may find it difficult to find work experience where their needs can be supported. The University and the SU can provide additional guidance and support. This will help the student make a realistic, informed choice about their participation in these activities or allow them to find alternative activities.

# Useful links and resources

[Education for Mental Health: Getting students back on track](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/teaching-and-learning/curricula-development/education-mental-health-toolkit/getting-students-back-on-track), Advance HE, 2022

[Exploring the impact of Covid19 on disabled students’ experiences](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/exploring-impact-covid-19-disabled-students-experiences), Advance HE, 2021

[Improving Direct Entry Student Experience of Transition to Top-Up/Honours Degree](https://rteworcester.wp.worc.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/improving-direct-entry-student-experience-of-transition-to-top-up_honours-degree.pdf), University of Worcester, 2019

[SCALE](https://scale.wp.worc.ac.uk/), University of Worcester

[Signposting Student Support: A guide for university staff](https://www.worcester.ac.uk/documents/signposting-student-support-guide-for-university-staff.pdf), University of Worcester

[Supporting students who stammer in higher education](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/news-and-views/new-guide-support-students-who-stammer), LSBU, 2021

[Supporting successful student transitions](https://www.membershipresources.qaa.ac.uk/teaching-learning-and-assessment/flexible-pathways-and-student-transitions/supporting-successful-student-transitions), QAA, 2021

[UK Advising and Tutoring Association (UKAT resources](https://www.ukat.ac.uk/resources/) including ‘top tips’ series

[Worcester Award](https://www.worcester.ac.uk/life/help-and-support/services-for-students/the-worcester-award.aspx)

[Worcester Students’ Union](https://www.worcsu.com/yourvoice/reps/coursereps/)

With thanks to colleagues at the University of Leeds and Plymouth University, for allowing us to use and adapt their series of guides

Weblinks reviewed and updated: July 2022

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