

# A4.1

Inclusion at the University of Worcester



## Being inclusive in Considering Issues of Inclusivity within Personal Academic Tutoring

### What?

Check out  
individual needs.

### How?

If you are aware a personal tutee has a disability (check on SOLE), ask about how it impacts on learning and academic tasks in general, and ask about support needs. Be sensitive and focus discussion around support rather than on the details of the condition or impairment itself. Refer students to the Disability and Dyslexia Service (<https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/>) 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. Discuss it directly with the student and ask about what support they are receiving (if any). They may not be aware of support available to them, in which case, referral to DDS will ensure they take advantage of support available.

Be aware of  
barriers created by  
cultural factors.

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 – you may have to explain things like 'mitigating circumstances' and 'first attempts'.

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, rather than a supportive role. This may affect their engagement.<sup>1</sup>

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.

Arranging  
meetings and  
appointments.

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 develop strategies to ensure good organisation and time management.

Students most at risk and/or new to HE may not know what is expected.

Due to their personal circumstances or changes in their personal/social identity, including health, disability, cultural and domestic issues, some students may require more support than others.

Students with organisational difficulties may need additional support with remembering appointments.



## What?

Respect boundaries.

## How?

Be aware that your personal tutees may have a range of personal issues or responsibilities that impact on their personal identity, and in some cases, their day-to-day health and ability to study. Transgender and transitioning students, for example, 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?

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.

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Set boundaries.

Be clear about methods of contacting you, and offer a variety of ways to do this.

Be aware of the limits of your role and your knowledge – refer the student to other services as required, or contact the other services yourself to discuss the matter.

Some students will have difficulty with the concept of an 'open door' and may interpret this to mean you are available to spend the whole of 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, explain this to them and ensure you keep an overview of the situation with the student.

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## What?

Discuss confidentiality.

## How?

Ensure that students know that you cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality in some situations. See the University guide Signposting Student Support (<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/documents/signposting-student-support-guide-for-university-staff.pdf>) for further advice on issues where student confidentiality may not be appropriate.

## Why?

This 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.

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Provide clear information.

Back up any important points discussed verbally in writing as well so that the student has a record, or is encouraged to take action.

Some students may find it difficult to understand and retain everything that is said to them. Dyslexic students, for example, may have weaker working memories, and students who are stressed or anxious may only take in part of what is said to them.

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Encourage students to engage in development opportunities outside the curriculum.

Acknowledge and make provision for the fact that some students' opportunities for extracurricular development will be more limited than others, by referring them to, e.g. the Worcester Award (<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/life/help-and-support/services-for-students/the-worcester-award.aspx>) and/or volunteering opportunities (<https://www.worcsu.com/volunteer/>).

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 may feasibly have available.

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 and/or allow them (or you) to find alternative activities if necessary.



## What?

Keep up to date with knowledge about University services.

## How?

Refer to the University guide: Signposting Student Support: a guide for University staff (<https://www.worcester.ac.uk/documents/signposting-student-support-guide-for-university-staff.pdf>) for additional guidance.

## Why?

Conditions such as mental health and long-term medical conditions can be classified as disabilities, and the Disability and Dyslexia Service (<https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/>) may be able to offer specialist support and advice to enable the student to cope with their studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Scudamore, R. 2013. Engaging home and international students: A guide for new lecturers. [Online]. [Accessed 3 August 2018]. Available from: <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/system/files/rachelscudamorereportfeb2013.pdf>

Based on a guide written by Jenny Brady

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<https://inclusiveteaching.leeds.ac.uk/>; <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/teaching-and-learning/inclusivity>.

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