

# The Academic Tutor System

A guide for tutors 2023/24



## Background

The Academic Tutor System enables students, academic and professional services staff to work together in partnership to enhance students' academic, personal and professional development.

Support provided by Academic Tutors is appropriate to the context of the discipline and integrates effectively with the wide range of other support available to students at Reading.

### ACADEMIC

Support Centres/  
Programme and Student  
Support Administration  
Academic Tutors  
Study Advice  
Liaison Librarians  
Peer Assisted Learning  
Maths Support  
English Language Support



### LIFE

RUSU Advice Service  
Wardens  
STaR Mentors  
International Student  
Advisory Team  
Chaplaincy Centre  
Life Tools



### HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Student Welfare Team  
Counselling and  
Wellbeing Team  
Disability Advisory  
Service  
Medical Practice



### CAREERS AND EMPLOYABILITY

Careers Team/Henley  
Careers Team  
Campus Jobs  
Placements and  
Internships  
THRIVE Mentors  
Red Award



### Key features of the Academic Tutor System

- Focuses on students' academic, personal and professional development.
- Works in partnership with our professional support services to support students with any personal challenges that may impact their studies
- School-level leadership is provided by School Directors of Academic Tutoring.



# Your Role as an Academic Tutor

Academic Tutors work in partnership with their tutees to support their academic, personal and professional development.

**As an Academic Tutor, you are responsible for providing support across the following themes at appropriate points in the student journey:**

## Academic support and study skills

- Help students to reflect on their academic progress to date using tools such as the Student Progress Dashboard.
- Work with students to identify their strengths and weaknesses in relation to academic study skills.
- Encourage students to develop their study skills through Study Advice, Liaison Librarians, Maths Support, English Language Support, etc.
- Help students make decisions in relation to their course and to connect with other academics in their field of study.

## Assessment and feedback

- Support students to review and reflect holistically on feedback they have received on assessed work, developing their ability to build on knowledge and progress successfully.
- Work with students to identify consistent patterns in feedback (e.g. poor referencing/structure, insecure research base, etc.).
- Discuss the steps they can take to improve their performance in future assessments.

## Careers and employability

- Discuss students' career ambitions and employability goals, and encourage students to work towards realising those goals whilst at Reading.
- Signpost relevant opportunities (e.g. gaining work experience, careers training participation, study abroad, student societies, volunteering, etc.).
- Help students to identify and overcome barriers through tutor referral to specialist Careers support.
- Reflect on progress made to maintain motivation and build resilience.
- Write references for students, when requested.

## Engaging beyond the programme

- Raise awareness of extra-curricular opportunities to encourage students to engage beyond their programme in order to develop transferable skills, build social networks and contribute to the development of the University (e.g. Course/School Representatives, discipline societies, STaR Mentoring, sports clubs/societies, etc.).

## Specialist support services

- Establish proactive and effective relationships with your tutees that help to identify student support needs.
- Refer students to specialist support services as appropriate (see flowchart on **p9**).





# Your Responsibilities

You will act as a key contact for your tutees within your School / Department, establishing proactive, effective and long-lasting relationships that promote their positive engagement within the academic community.

## You should:

- Invite students to meet at least once a term (twice in Autumn Term for Part 1), and arrange the meetings.
- Help students reflect on their academic progress and personal and professional development – discuss work, feedback and marks (using the Student Progress Dashboard), attendance, careers etc.
- Actively encourage engagement of all your tutees.
- Get to know them as individuals to enable you to write references.

See the **ATS policy** for further details of the role.

## Meetings

### In your Welcome Week meeting with tutees:

- Explain your role and how you can support and work with them.
- Explain how you plan to run future meetings (e.g. one-one or group tutorials, possibilities for Teams/phone meetings), and how they can contact you.
- Find out how they're settling in.
- Ask if they've been able to access RISIS, Blackboard etc, and if not explain where to go for help.
- Remind students about Study Smart, and their STaR mentors.

See the **"Suggested Outline for Academic Tutor Meetings"** document on the Academic Tutor toolkit for more suggestions.

[sites.reading.ac.uk/academictutors](https://sites.reading.ac.uk/academictutors)

Suggested topics for discussion are also provided for students on the tutor toolkit on **Essentials**.

### In all meetings:

- Listen and ask questions about their academic, personal and professional development.
- Agree action points.
- Signpost students to other services where appropriate (e.g. for welfare support, or academic study advice).
- Keep records of meetings on RISIS (e.g. of action points and signposting advice provided). Use the confidentiality button when appropriate.



## As an Academic Tutor, you can refer students to other services for:

**Administrative problems relating to their studies**



**Direct to Student Support Coordinator or Programme Administrator in HBS**

**Counselling or specialist advice**



**Refer to the appropriate specialist support service on campus (see flowchart on last page)**

**Module-specific or specialist academic or practice guidance**



**Advise how to get guidance, including connecting students to other academics in their field of study, Study Advice, Library etc**

## The role of the Disability Advisory Service

The Disability Advisory Service (DAS) offers advice and guidance to students with any disability, health condition, mental health condition, or specific learning difficulty (SpLD).

DAS may be able to assist in study related support for students in the following ways:

- assessing the impact of a disability on the student's studies and recommending any reasonable adjustments required. These are then shared with the School/Support Centre through Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).
- providing information on funding for study support, including the Disabled Students' Allowance and how to apply.
- liaising with Departments/Schools/Hubs including SDATs and Disability Representatives on reasonable adjustments, including extensions to deadlines and alternative modes of assessment where appropriate.
- highlighting students (with permission) in order that tutors are made aware of individual requirements.
- providing assistance on arranging non-medical helpers e.g. one to one support arrangements such as mentors and specialist study skills.
- liaising with the Exams office re special exam arrangements which are then confirmed by the Exams team.
- assisting with referral and signposting to other appropriate services.

As an academic tutor you can liaise with DAS for any clarification needs around disability and reasonable adjustments. You should encourage students to register as soon as you become aware of a disability.



## The Role of the Counselling and Wellbeing Service

Counselling & Wellbeing provide specialist short term support for specific areas of emotional or mental health difficulties, and work throughout the year to help students manage a wide range of issues, working to minimise the impact of any problems on their academic progress and wellbeing.

We assess and review the needs of students who connect with our service and liaise with external teams to provide a holistic support mechanism.

**Counsellors** aid students in better understanding themselves and their behaviours in order to be able to focus on their studies.

### Issues they can support include:

- depression or anxiety
- attachment disorders
- identity/ gender identity
- relationships/family conflicts.

**Mental health advisors** provide emotional support for students with a mental health diagnosis and will encourage them to develop the practical skills to manage their lives and their studies.

### Issues they can support include:

- psychosis/early onset of psychosis
- personality disorders
- autistic spectrum disorder
- obsessive compulsive disorders
- eating disorders
- trauma.

The Counselling & Wellbeing service is based in the Carrington building on Whiteknights campus and is free of charge.

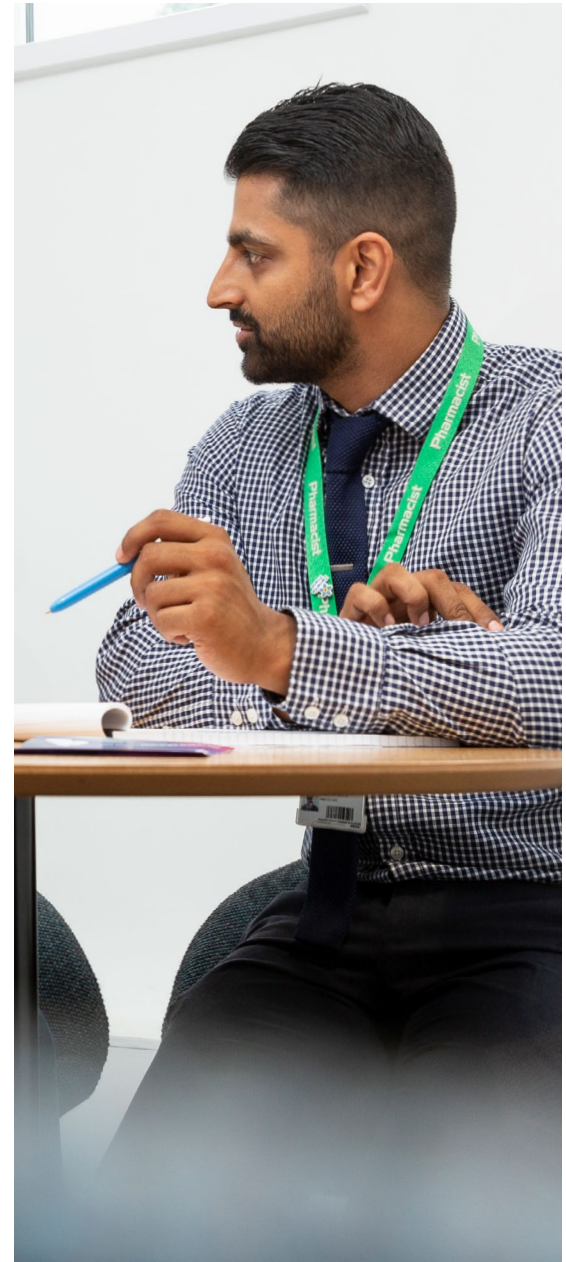
Reception opening times are 09:00–17:00, Monday to Friday, but times may vary outside of term time. To make an appointment to assess their needs students will need to register online.

### Other types of support offered by Counselling and Wellbeing are:

#### The Life Tools programme:

free talks with the aim of increasing student self-awareness and helping them learn practical skills to help achieve their potential.

**NHS self-help guides** – available through the **Essentials webpages**.





## The Role of the Student Welfare Team

The Student Welfare Team are responsible for providing advice, guidance, support and signposting for students who are experiencing a level of personal difficulties outside study that may have a significant impact on their studies if not supported.

Students should be referred to the Team when they are seeking practical guidance relating to a specific incident or problem, often which has just arisen.

The team work closely with Academic tutors, support centre staff as well as a range of other professionals across the University to ensure all presenting support needs for students are joined up and well co-ordinated to try and mitigate any impacts on their studies and experience of University life.

### Issues the Welfare Team are likely to deal with include:

- severe home-sickness/problems settling in
- friendship/house-mate conflicts
- family crisis/conflict
- bullying/harassment
- concern about a friend
- victim of crime
- domestic violence
- substance abuse
- struggle with caring responsibilities
- concerns relating to radicalisation, exploitation (Prevent) or safeguarding.

The Student Welfare Team are centrally located in the Carrington Building, with each team member dedicated to working with students in particular Schools.

Students can access support directly through a "Drop in" service and speak to a duty Welfare Officer. For current drop-in hours see our page on **Essentials**. Students can also request guidance and appointments by email using [studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk)

### As an Academic Tutor you can:

- Suggest that your student makes contact with the Student Welfare Team through the direct contact options.
- Contact the Student Welfare Team directly on **4777** or by email ([studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk](mailto:studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk)) to discuss any concerns and consider appropriate next steps.
- Speak to your SSC (or Programme Administrator in HBS) about submitting a notification of concern which the team will then follow up.



## Support for Academic Tutors

The online Academic Tutor Toolkit ([sites.reading.ac.uk/academic\\_tutors](https://sites.reading.ac.uk/academic_tutors)) contains information to support you in your role, e.g. suggested meeting outlines, links to policies and training, and information about student support services.

The Teaching & Learning programme of workshops and events, run by CQSD, includes many sessions that will be useful for Academic Tutors. The programme varies each year, but recent sessions have included:

- Scaffolding Academic Literacy Development
- Supporting your Tutees with their Career and Professional Development
- Helping your students use their feedback
- Supporting Students with Mental Health Difficulties
- Showcases of best practice.

For more information, and to book, visit UoRLearn.

Your **School Director of Academic Tutoring** is responsible for strategic oversight of the ATS within your School, and for supporting you as an Academic Tutor.

## The Role of the Support Centres

The Support Centres are your first point of contact for all questions, help or advice throughout your time at the University, providing you with the support you need to be successful in your studies and beyond. They are able to advise you or point you in the right direction for a range of academic and non-academic issues, including:

- Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study; Fitness to Practise
- Academic misconduct
- Coursework and exams queries
- Exceptional circumstances
- Module selection and registration
- Transfers, suspensions and withdrawals
- Timetable queries
- Disability, Welfare and wellbeing (signposting to a specialist team).

There are four Support Centres located across the Whiteknights and London Road campuses. See the **Essentials** pages for their contact details and opening times.

## Support in Henley Business School

**Henley Business School students should visit the Help Desk in the Henley or ICMA buildings for all support.**

**Programme administrators can advise students and staff on a range of topics, including:**

- modules & programmes
- timetables
- coursework & exams
- Disability: support for implementing reasonable adjustment

**Henley Student Support Team can assist with:**

- Welfare and wellbeing (initial conversation and possible direction to a specialist team)
- Exceptional circumstances
- Transfers, suspensions and withdrawals
- Appeals and complaints.





## Where to get help/support/information about ...

### Personal

An emergency  
or immediate  
risk of harm



**999**  
**Campus security**  
0118 378 6300

Disability,  
chronic health  
condition and/  
or diagnosed  
mental health  
condition



**Disability Advisory  
Service**  
Carrington Building,  
0118 378 4202  
disability@reading.ac.uk

Mental health,  
emotional  
difficulties



**Counselling & Wellbeing**  
Carrington Building,  
0118 378 4216  
counselling@reading.ac.uk

Immigration or  
visa issues



**International Student Advisory Team**  
Carrington Building, 0118 378 8038  
immigration@reading.ac.uk

Accommodation  
or housing:  
University Halls



**Halls Hotline**  
0800 029 1984  
**Hall Wardens**

Private sector



Financial  
issues



**Student Financial  
Support team**  
Carrington Building,  
studentfunding@reading.ac.uk  
**blackbullion.com**  
24 hour access to financial  
education for students

**RSU Advice  
Service\***  
Students' Union Building,  
0118 378 4100  
advice@rusu.co.uk

\*Confidential and  
independent advice.  
No information will  
be shared with the  
University without the  
student's permission.

Effects of  
bullying/  
harassment,  
victim of crime,  
abuse, sexual  
violence, drugs/  
alcohol



Report incidents via  
**#NeverOk**  
neverok@reading.ac.uk

Radicalisation  
and exploitation



**Student Welfare Team**  
Carrington Building,  
0118 378 4777  
studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk

Difficult  
issues e.g.  
homesickness,  
loneliness conflict  
with friends,  
difficulties  
adjusting to Uni  
life



**Chaplaincy**  
Park House Lodge  
0118 378 8797

Faith/religion  
(any), exploration  
of belonging,  
meaning and  
values



**Life Tools  
Programme**  
Developing tools  
for academic  
and personal  
development

### Academic/Professional

ECFs, suspension/  
withdrawal



**Support Centres**  
Edith Morley – x4243  
JJ Thompson – x4101  
Earley Gate – x8020  
London Road – x2608  
see details on previous page

**In HBS:**

Please contact  
the Henley  
helpdesk in the  
HBS or ICMA  
buildings for all  
support: x4007

Timetabling



Advice on/  
support through  
university policies  
and procedures  
(incl. appeals,  
complaints etc)



**RSU Advice Service\***  
Students' Union Building, 0118 378 4100  
advice@rusu.co.uk

Work experience,  
job hunting, career  
advice & training,  
placements



**Careers**  
Carrington Building  
0118 378 8359  
careers@reading.ac.uk

**Henley Careers**

HBS Room 107  
henleycareers@henley.ac.uk

Academic  
language skills  
for international  
students (incl.  
academic writing)



**ISLI – Academic English Programme**  
reading.ac.uk/aep  
0118 378 6610  
aep@reading.ac.uk

Assignments,  
exams, coursework



**Teaching Staff, Module Convenor,  
Programme Director**

Screening for  
specific learning  
disability



**Disability Advisory Service**  
Carrington Building,  
0118 378 4202  
disability@reading.ac.uk

Reasonable  
adjustments  
to teaching  
and/or assessment



**Study Advice**  
Library  
studyadvice@reading.ac.uk  
reading.ac.uk/studyadvice  
https://libguides.reading.ac.uk

Academic study skills  
e.g. academic writing,  
critical thinking, time  
management



**Life Tools Programme** Support with  
concentration, avoiding procrastination,  
and skills to manage academic work

Motivation/  
productivity



**Maths Support Resources**  
reading.ac.uk/library/maths-support

Maths or statistics

Information Skills  
e.g. finding, using  
and referencing  
information and  
Library resources  
for your studies



**Academic Liaison Librarians**  
reading.ac.uk/library/liaison

Blackboard/IT

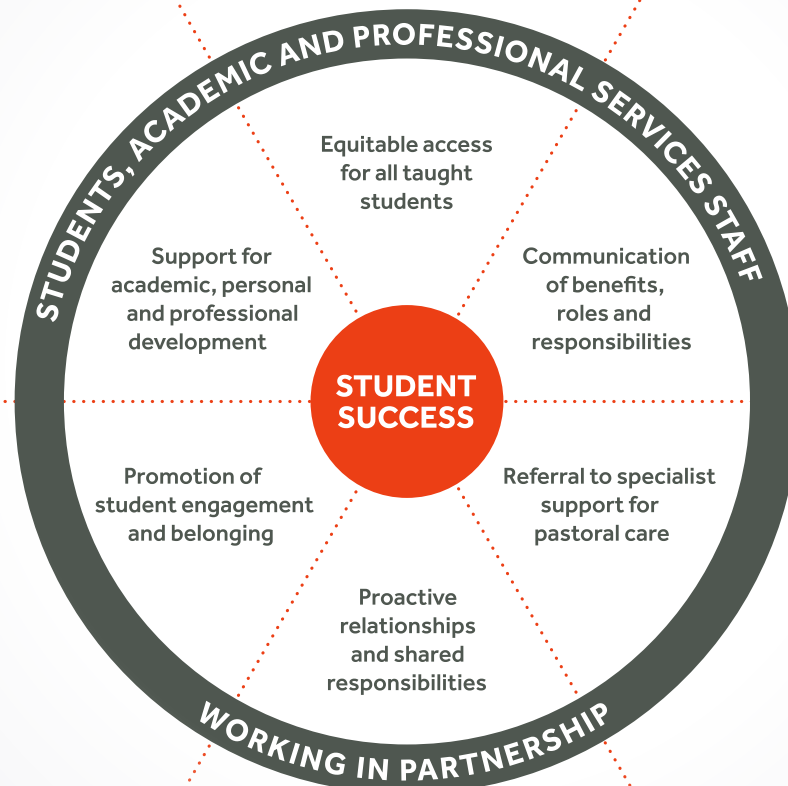


**Digital Technology Services (DTS)**  
Library first floor  
0118 378 6262  
dts@reading.ac.uk

If you are unsure who to contact or to refer your student to, please talk  
to your School Director of Academic Tutoring, or refer your student to their  
Support Centre/Programme Administrator (HBS). Phone Student Services  
Reception (0118 378 5555) for help signposting to specialist services.

# Principles of the Academic Tutor System

The ATS is underpinned by six core principles to provide consistency of experience for staff and students across the University.



## Equitable access for all taught students

All taught students have access to effective academic and personal support, including a named Academic Tutor, and understand what minimum contact they can expect.

## Supporting students' academic, personal and professional development

Support is aligned to discipline needs and requirements and delivered in partnership with professional services.

Academic and professional services staff are able to focus on their areas of expertise.

## Communication of benefits, roles and responsibilities

All students and staff understand the benefits of academic tutoring.

## Referral to specialist support for pastoral care

Academic Tutors and other staff are able to identify student support needs and refer students to specialist support services.

## Promoting student engagement and belonging

Support from Academic Tutors is for all students, not just those facing issues or in need of help.

Students are supported to engage fully with their studies, developing essential graduate attributes and fulfilling their potential.

## Proactive relationships and shared responsibilities

Students are active participants, working in partnership with their tutor to support their academic, personal and professional development.