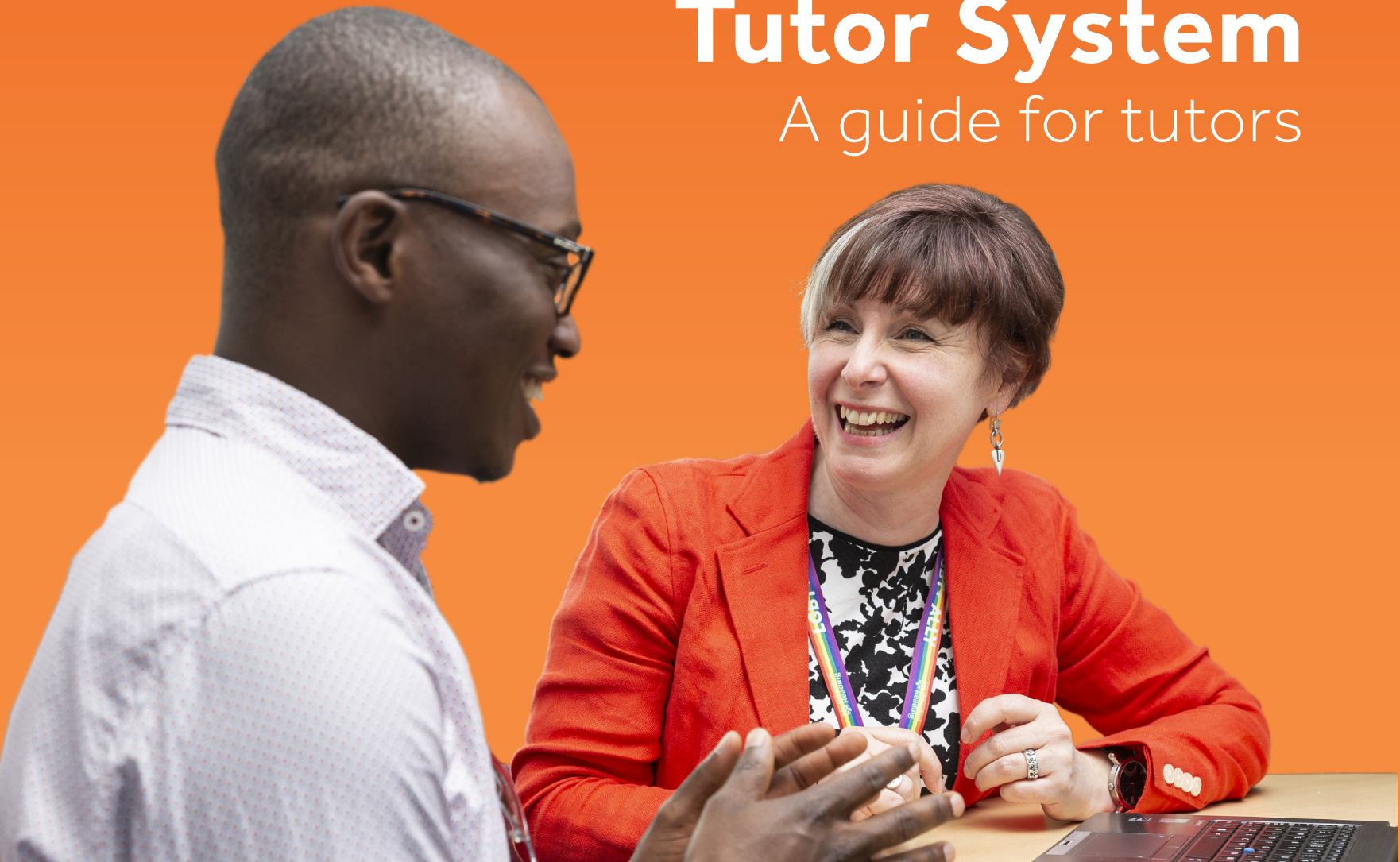


The Academic Tutor System

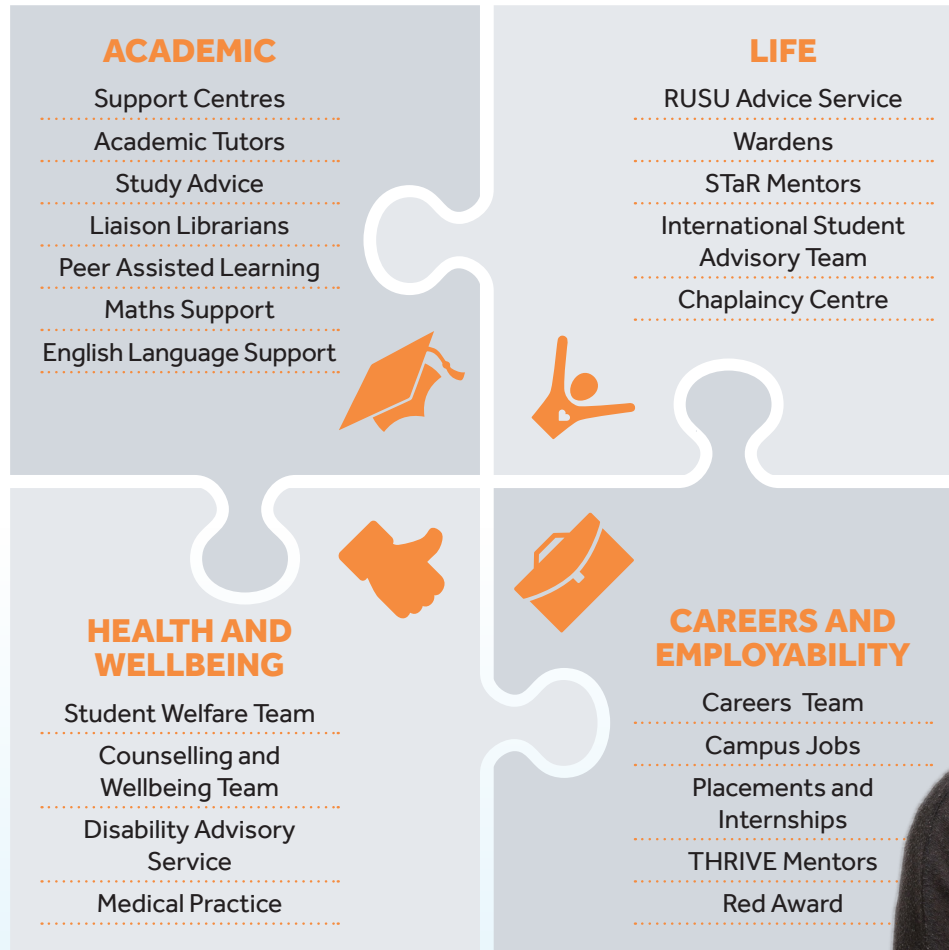
A guide for tutors



Background

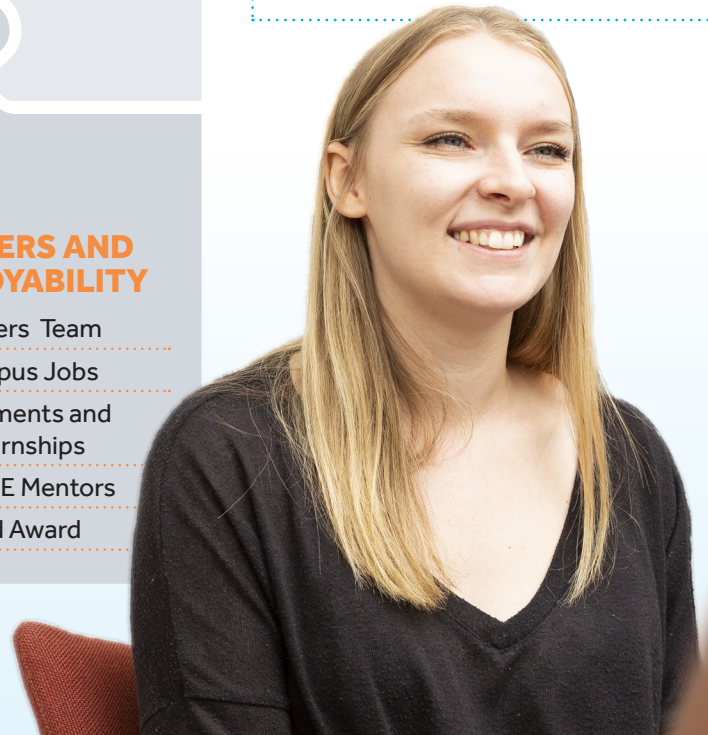
The Academic Tutor System enables students, academic and professional services staff to work together in partnership to enhance students' academic, personal and professional development.

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.



Key features of the Academic Tutor System

- Focuses on students' academic, personal and professional development.
- Increases student welfare provision through the introduction of a new dedicated Student Welfare Team.
- 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
- 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 & 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 & 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 p7)



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 & marks (using submodular mark screens on RISIS), attendance, careers etc.
- Actively encourage engagement of all your tutees.
- Get to know them as individuals to enable you to write references.

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 Skype/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 handbook webpages for more suggestions.

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 (eg. 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

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 Student Welfare Team

The Student Welfare Team are responsible for providing specialist advice, guidance and signposting for students who are experiencing difficulties outside study. 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.

Issues the Welfare Team are likely to deal with include:

- Home-sickness
- Friendship/house-mate tensions
- Family crisis/conflict
- Bullying/Harassment
- Concern about a friend
- Problems settling in
- Accused perpetrator of crime
- 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, but each member is dedicated to working with students in particular Schools.

Students can submit a query to the Student Welfare team via Me@Reading 'Ask a Question', or walk in and speak to someone between 10am & 4pm, Mon-Fri. They can also book an appointment through the Student Support Coordinators (SSCs) or the Carrington Student Services Reception.

As an Academic Tutor you can:

- Suggest that your student makes contact with the Student Welfare Team
- Make an appointment for them via your SSC or the Carrington Student Services Reception
- Speak to your SSC about submitting a notification of concern which the team will then follow up

The Role of the Counselling & Wellbeing Service

Counselling & Wellbeing provide specialist support for specific areas of emotional or mental health difficulties. Students should be referred to the Service when issues are previously diagnosed or appear to have a long term impact, or are complex and require looking into personal history to assess and develop different behaviours.

The Role of the Support Centres

Student Support Coordinators, based in the Support Centres, can advise students and staff on a range of topics, including:

- Modules & programmes
- Timetables
- Coursework & exams
- Extenuating circumstances
- Placements
- Transfers, suspensions and withdrawals
- Appeals & complaints

Although students can visit any of the five Support Centres for advice, each centre is assigned to support students from particular Schools (see back cover for details).

Support for Academic Tutors

The online Academic Tutor handbook 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, including:

- Coaching Skills for Academic Tutors
- Are our Undergraduates Prepared for University: Supporting Students through the Transition to HE
- How the Careers Service can support you as an Academic Tutor
- Helping your students engage with feedback

Sessions can be booked through ESS.

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.

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.

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.

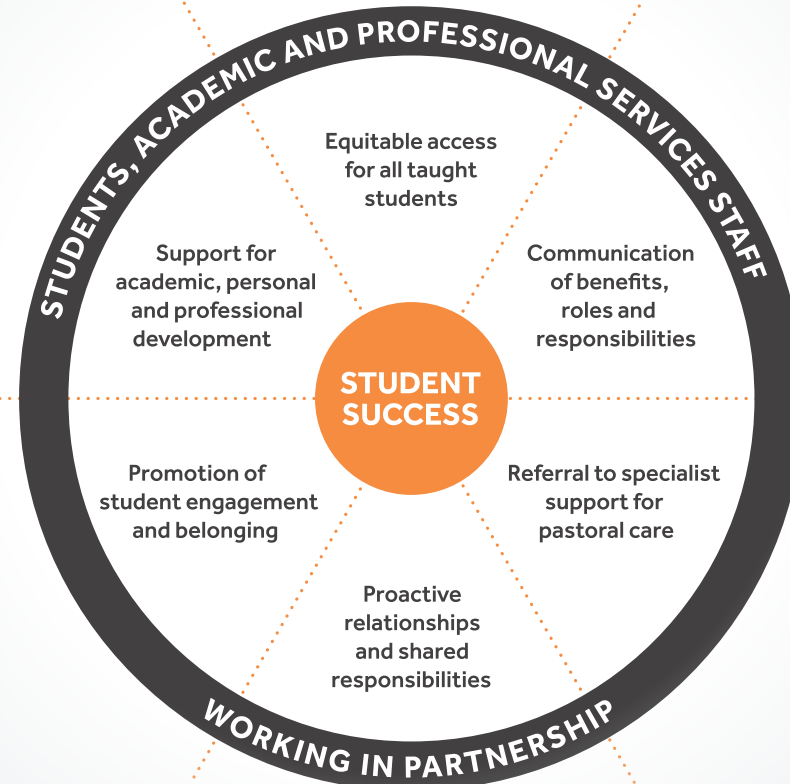
Promoting student engagement and belonging

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.

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.



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.

Proactive relationships and shared responsibilities

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

Is your/your tutee's concern about.....

Personal

An emergency or immediate risk of harm

999
Campus security
0118 378 6300

Disability or chronic health condition

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

Student's GP

Mental health, emotional difficulties

Counselling and 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
0118 378 7777
Hall Wardens

Accommodation or housing: Private sector

Financial issues

Student Financial Support team
Carrington Building,
studentfunding@reading.ac.uk

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

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

Radicalisation and exploitation

Student Welfare Team
studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk
(email for staff use only)

Difficult issues e.g. homesickness, loneliness, conflict with friends

Chaplaincy
Park House Lodge
0118 378 8797

Faith/religion

Academic/Professional

ECFs, suspension/withdrawal

Support Centres
Edith Morley – 0118 378 4243
JJ Thompson – 0118 378 4101
Agriculture – 0118 378 8020

Timetabling

Advice on university policies & procedures (incl. appeals, complaints etc)

London Road – 0118 378 2608/2611
Foxhill House – 0118 378 5671
see details overleaf

RUSU Advice*

Students' Union Building
0118 378 4100
advice@rusu.co.uk

Work experience, career advice & training, placements

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

Academic language skills for non-native speakers (incl. writing)

ISLI – Academic English Programme
reading.ac.uk/aepp
0118 378 6553
aep@reading.ac.uk

Assignments, exams, coursework

Teaching Staff, Module Convenor, Programme Director

Screening for specific learning disability
Reasonable adjustments to teaching and/or assessment

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

Academic study skills e.g. academic writing, critical thinking, referencing

Study Advice
Within the Library (bookable sessions)
0118 378 4242
studyadvice@reading.ac.uk

Maths or statistics

Maths Support
Within the Library (drop in)
mathssupport@reading.ac.uk

Information Skills e.g. Finding resources for assignments and using Library e-resources

Subject Liaison Librarians
reading.ac.uk/library/liaison

Blackboard/IT

IT helpdesk
URS Building
0118 378 6262
it@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. Phone Student Services Reception (0118 378 5555) for help signposting to specialist services.

Although students can visit any of the five Support Centres for advice, each centre is assigned to support students from particular Schools:

- **Edith Morley foyer** - School of the Built Environment (SBE), School of Humanities (HUMS), School of Politics, Economics and International Relations (SPEIR), and School of Literature and Languages (SLL)
- **JJ Thomson foyer** – School of Mathematical, Physical and Computational Sciences (SMPCS), School of Biological Sciences (SBS), School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy (SCFP), and School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Sciences (SAGES)
- **Earley Gate, Agriculture building foyer** – School of Agriculture, Policy and Development (SAPD), School of Arts and Communication Design (SACD), and School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences (SPCLS)
- **London Road, building 16** – Institute of Education (IoE) and School of Built Environment (Architecture)
- **Foxhill House foyer** – School of Law


Exceptions:

- **Henley Business School** students should visit the Admin Decks in the HBS or ICMA buildings for all support.
- **Pre-sessional English or International Foundation** Programme students should visit the ISLI Admin Office (room 224 in the Edith Morley building) for any support or queries.
- Support for **postgraduate research** students is provided by the Graduate School.

Whiteknights
Reading
Berkshire
RG6 6AH

Find out more at
www.reading.ac.uk

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 facebook.com/theuniversityofreading

