

ATS FAQs – January 2019

Section 1- Operationalising the ATS

Q. Is there a Policy for the Academic Tutor System?

A. Yes, the Academic Tutor System Policy was approved by the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience in October 2018. The [Policy](#) is published in the Guide to Policies and Procedures for Teaching and Learning.

Q Has a role description been developed for Academic Tutors?

A. Yes, a role description which outlines the role and responsibilities of Academic Tutors has been published in the Guide to Policies and Procedures for Teaching and Learning [here](#).

Q. Are SDATs the same as Senior Tutors?

A. The role of School Director of Academic Tutoring (SDAT) replaces the former ‘Senior Tutor’ role. They retain some of the responsibilities of Senior Tutors and, additionally, they work pro-actively to provide School-level leadership through a range of initiatives to support Academic Tutors and build students’ resilience through co-curricular and in-curricular support. Their role description can be found [here](#).

Q. Is there a formal selection process for SDATs?

A. Yes, a formal selection and appointment process for SDATs has been approved and is published in the Guide to Policies and Procedures for Teaching and Learning [here](#).

Q. Is there a role description for SDATs?

A. Yes, [a role description for SDATs](#) has been published in the Guide to Policies and Procedures for Teaching and Learning along with details of the [formal selection and appointment process](#).

Q. Will there be more than one SDAT per School?

A. Normally, there will be only one SDAT per School but in large or federal Schools there may be Directors of Academic Tutoring (DATs) assigned at Department-level, programme-level and/or stage-level (e.g. UG or PGT). Where this is required, it will be for the School to manage the appointment process and to ensure appropriate time allocation is assigned locally. In all Schools, an SDAT should be assigned to provide School-level leadership and direction to the Academic Tutor System.

Q. Will SDATs continue to support staff?

A. Yes, SDATs are responsible for supporting Academic Tutors within the School, and they will be provided with support to do that. This includes identifying and sharing good practice, disseminating relevant information and delivering training as appropriate. Academic Tutors will also be supported by CQSD and the ATS Steering Group through the provision of training, resources and materials.

Q. In Schools which have Clinical Tutors, how will they align with Academic Tutors? Will the Clinical Tutor have to liaise with the Student Welfare Officer?

A. The Clinical Tutor will liaise primarily with the Academic Tutor. In some situations they might also need to liaise with the Student Welfare Officer. Schools which have Clinical Tutors will need to develop local protocols for communications.

Q. Most tutors only get a maximum of 10 minutes per student... could Academic Tutors have fewer students?

A. Tutors can meet with tutees on an individual and/or group basis and a tutee can request an individual meeting. The new system focuses the Academic Tutor/Tutee relationship on students' academic, personal and professional development and this focus lends itself well to group meetings that may also help to maximise time.

Schools allocate Academic Tutors their tutees. Reducing the number of tutees per Academic Tutor would have knock-on implications for the numbers of staff required in each School. Student/staff ratios are the responsibility of Heads of School and outside of the scope of the ATS Project.

Q. If ATs are required to keep records on RISIS, what about concerns in regard to confidentiality and access to the records?

A. The Tutor Card on RISIS is visible only to the individual student, the Academic Tutor and the SDAT. Students are informed of who can see the contents of the record when they access the records. Advice on confidentiality has been shared with the DAT Community of Practice.

Q. Who is making the decisions on ECFs? Who will decide if a student is to be granted an ECF and how will this be communicated to relevant staff, such as module convenors, programme directors, etc.?

A. The ATS Steering Group have not made any amendments to the process for ECFs. SDATs and DDATs (where relevant) will retain responsibility for academic leadership and decision-making in relation to student success and retention, including policy and procedures concerning extenuating circumstances, academic engagement and fitness to study.

Q. Whose responsibility is it to follow up on a student who is not engaged/missing lectures?

A. The monitoring of engagement has not been changed by the introduction of the ATS, nor has the SCAEFS process and it is still managed in liaison with the SC/SSCs. The Student Welfare Team provides an additional layer of support and, where an Academic Tutor has significant concerns about a tutee's engagement that perhaps intersect with other concerns, the Academic Tutor can ask the Student Welfare Officer to reach out to the student to find out whether the student needs support or guidance to resolve any issues that might be impacting engagement.

Q. What materials and resources are available to support Academic Tutors?

A. A printed [Guide for Academic Tutors](#) has been developed which includes guidance on how to structure tutee meetings and examples of topics for discussion and questions. This is mirrored in the materials provided for students.

Q. In University Policies, is the default that students will be to be directed to see their Academic Tutor?

A. Yes, in most cases where policies relate to academic matters, the Academic Tutor is the key contact for students.

Q. What training is available for SDATs and Academic Tutors?

A. Training courses are being developed as part of the CQSD T&L Programme. Some existing courses in the T&L Programme will also be useful for SDATs and Academic Tutors.

Section 2 – The Student Welfare Team

Q. What is the Student Welfare Team?

A. The Student Welfare Team comprises 6 Student Welfare Officers and a Student Welfare Team Manager and they are located in the Carrington Building behind the main reception desk. The Student Welfare Officers can advise students on a wide range of personal and welfare issues that may impact their studies and day to day life. Examples of the kinds of issues that the Student Welfare Team are able to help with can be found at www.reading.ac.uk/welfare-team

Q. Why is the Student Welfare Team based centrally?

A. Locating the Student Welfare Officers centrally will enable them to become an established team with strong processes and procedures, within clear boundaries and with close leadership. Student Welfare Officers are dedicated to working with students in particular Schools, and will spend some time seeing students within the School environment.

Q. How do students access the Student Welfare Team?

A. Students can directly access help from the Student Welfare team through a drop-in service in the Carrington building, available Monday to Friday, 10:00am to 4.00pm, where they can come along and speak to a duty Student Welfare Officer. Students can also access support directly and request an appointment by phone or via email using the duty number 4777 or studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk.

Details of how students can access the Student Welfare Team can also be found at www.reading.ac.uk/welfare-team

Q. How do staff access the Student Welfare Team?

Professional services staff, SDATs and Academic Tutors (ATs) are able to refer students for welfare support using the Notification of Concern form. Staff are also able to access the Student Welfare Team to inform or discuss any issues of concern in relation to a student by phone or via email using the duty number 4777 or studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk .

Q. How will the SDAT oversee referrals of students over to the Student Welfare Officers? How can they be kept in the loop of this process?

Risk-based referral systems are being developed and the Student Welfare Officer liaises with the SDAT as and when appropriate for a particular case.

Q. How will communications work between Schools, Support Services and the Welfare Team? Students may still share issues with their ATs / SSCs.

Different circumstances will require appropriate action and this might include the Student Welfare Officer (SWO)/Academic Tutor (AT)/Student Support Coordinator (SSC) making contact with each other by phone. However, not every issue raised by a student with the SWO will need to be shared with the AT/SSC as some of these issues will be very minor.

Q. Will there be a walk-in service for students to access the Student Welfare Team?

A. Yes, there is a walk-in service for students to access the Student Welfare Team, Monday to Friday between 10.00am and 4.00pm in the Carrington Building.

Q. How can students access the Student Welfare Team if they are unable to attend face to face appointments or use the walk-in service?

A. For students who are not able to attend face to face appointments, it will be possible to arrange telephone or Skype appointments with the Student Welfare Team.

Q. Can students following non-traditional programmes who are not able to come to campus or access phone/Skype appointments during the working day have appointments with the Student Welfare Team out of hours?

A. At the moment, the Student Welfare Team is available for students between 10.00am and 4.00pm Monday to Friday only. There are currently no plans to extend this service beyond these hours but we will monitor demand.

Q. Does each School have a named Student Welfare Officer?

A. Each Student Welfare Officer has been allocated to a cluster of Schools. Cover during periods of absence such as sickness or annual leave will be provided by members of the Student Welfare Team.

Q. How were the Student Welfare Officers allocated to Schools? Were different needs of Schools taken into account?

A. The different patterns of welfare needs amongst students in particular Schools were taken account of when allocating Student Welfare Officers to clusters of Schools. The volume and nature of take-up of the Student Welfare Team's services will be monitored and evaluated.

Q. Will the Student Welfare Team have a waiting list for appointments?

A. As they work full-time, the Student Welfare Team are able to see many students by appointment and there is also a walk-in service so we do not expect there to be waiting lists. Student Services will monitor and review the resource levels for the Student Welfare Team over the next two academic sessions.

Q. What will happen if the Student Welfare Team is not able to help with a student's issue?

A. If the Student Welfare Team is not able to help with a particular issue, they will signpost the student to more appropriate services either within the University or externally.

Q. Will the Student Welfare Team support doctoral students?

A. Yes, where necessary, the Student Welfare Team will be available to doctoral students.

Q. If staff receive a call from parents with a concern about a student, e.g. stress/anxiety, should the parents be referred to the Student Welfare Team?

A. Staff should submit parental concerns to the Student Welfare Team using the 'notification of concern' process. The Student Welfare Team will pro-actively liaise with other services to collate available info and decide what action if any to take.

Q. Counselling and Wellbeing Services currently follow up with students who they see but if the Student Welfare Team see the same student, how will they avoid confusion and duplication of effort?

A. The Student Welfare Team and Counselling and Wellbeing Services work together closely and will agree protocols and processes for liaising / sharing information with each other on specific student cases as appropriate.

Q. Is there a guide / limit on the number of sessions students can have with a Student Welfare Officer?

A. Addressing student concerns will require different levels of involvement, ranging from a one off meeting, to a number of meetings with the student until things are resolved and /or the student feels the right supports are in place and they are able to manage more effectively.

Section 3 - International and mobility

Q. Is the ATS to be implemented by UoR international campuses and partners?

A. The ATS was approved for implementation at UK campuses in 2018-19. Plans will be developed for roll-out of the ATS at the Iskandar campus in Malaysia for the academic year 2019-20.

International partners have their own systems for tutoring and will be aware of the introduction of the ATS in the UK. Students incoming to the UK from partner institutions will receive tailored communications to explain the approach taken at UoR as part of normal briefings and dissemination of information.

Q. How will students who are incoming to the UK campuses from other campuses/partners or from placements/Study Abroad know about the ATS?

A. These students will receive tailored communications to introduce them to the Academic Tutor System at Reading as part of normal briefings and dissemination of information.

Q. How will students studying abroad interact with the ATS?

A. The Erasmus & Study Abroad Office (ESAO) are the immediate point of contact for all Study Abroad students. If a problem arises which cannot be resolved by the host institution it will normally be referred to ESAO (either by the host or by the student) who will then refer it to the School Study Abroad Co-ordinator (SSAC) who would involve the Academic Tutor if appropriate. A Reading-based Student Welfare Officer might be asked to offer advice remotely.

Section 4 Evaluation of the ATS

Q. How will Schools report on the progress of the ATS?

A. Schools should regularly review the quality of academic tutoring and SDATs should report to SBTLEs on the progress made towards delivering the commitment to academic tutoring across the School.

Q. How will the impact of the ATS be reviewed and evaluated in Schools?

A. Schools and Functions should work in partnership to actively monitor the availability of and student engagement with support systems and development opportunities, and to regularly review the quality of academic tutoring and report on progress.

Q. How will the impact of the ATS be reviewed at institutional level?

A. In 2018-19 and 2019-20, CQSD will work with the SDAT Community of Practice, Student Services and RUSU to develop ways to review the ATS on an ongoing basis so that this can be incorporated into the institutional level monitoring and evaluation overseen by the ATS Steering Group.

Cindy Isherwood

14 January 2019