

The Academic Tutor System

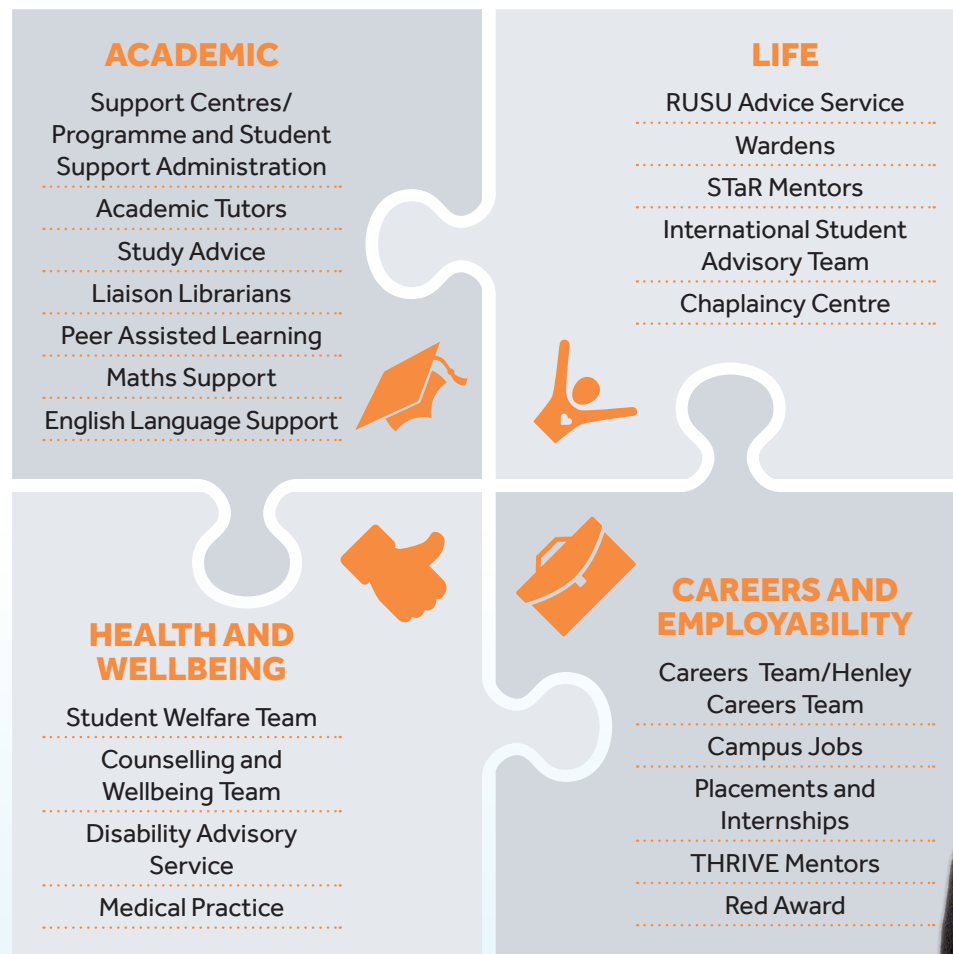
A guide for tutors 2019/20



Background

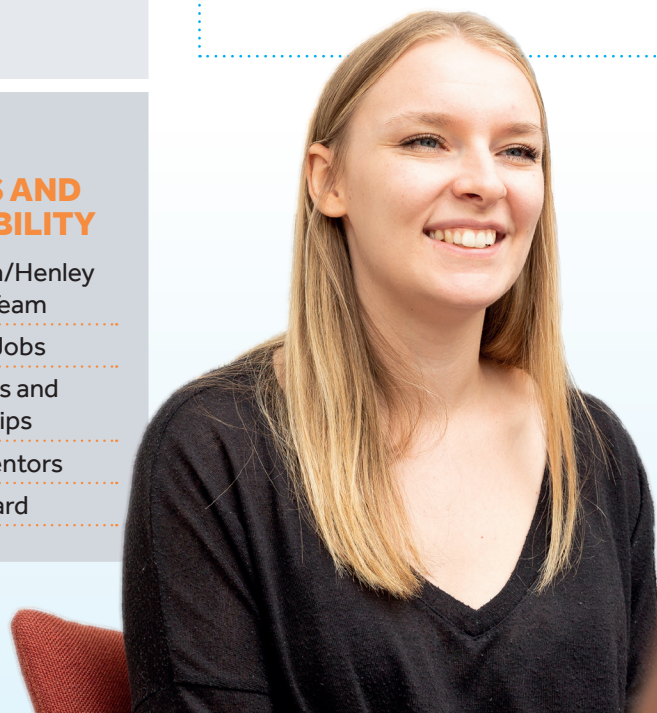
The Academic Tutor System enables students, academic and professional services staff to work together in partnership to enhance students' academic, personal and professional development.

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.
- 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 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 and 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 toolkit for more suggestions.
sites.reading.ac.uk/academictutors

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 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 Student Welfare Team

The Student Welfare Team are responsible for providing advice, guidance 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.

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 between 10am & 4pm, Mon-Fri. Students can also request guidance and appointments by email using 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) to discuss any concerns and consider appropriate next steps
- Speak to your SSC (or Director of Academic Tutoring in HBS) 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, 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. Students should be referred to the Service when issues are previously diagnosed or appear long term, complex and require looking into personal history to assess and develop different behaviours.

Counsellors aid students in better understanding themselves and their negative behaviours in order to be able to focus on their studies. Issues they can support include:

- Depression or Anxiety longer than six months
- Attachment disorders
- Sexual Assaults
- Identity/ Gender Identity
- Relationships/Family conflicts
- Existential Crisis
- Trauma

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
- Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder – and other Personality disorders
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorders
- Eating Disorders
- Trauma

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

Opening times are 9-5, 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 Big White Wall (www.bigwhitewall.com): a safe and anonymous online space which students can go to if they are feeling down, struggling to cope, or just want to talk to people who understand what they are going through.

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.

The Role of the Support Centres

Support Centres are open from 8:30-17:00 during term time and 09:00-16:00 outside of term time. During this time, trained staff members will be available to answer queries, provide advice and direct students to specialist support services where needed.

Support Centre teams support and provide advice on a wide range of activities including:

- Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study; Fitness to Practise
- Academic misconduct
- Disability: support for implementing reasonable adjustment
- Extenuating circumstances
- Module selection and registration
- Transfers, suspensions and withdrawals
- Timetable queries
- Welfare and wellbeing (initial conversation and possible direction to a specialist team)

There are five Support Centres located across the Whiteknights and London Road campuses:

- Edith Morley, building foyer - supports School of the Built Environment (Construction Management and Engineering) (SBE), School of Humanities (HUMS), School of Politics (SPEIR), Economics and International Relations (SPEIR), and School of Literature and Languages (SLL)
- JJ Thomson, building foyer – supports 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 – supports School of Agriculture, Policy and Development (SAPD), School of Art and Communication Design (SACD), and School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences (SPCLS)
- London Road, building 16 – supports Institute of Education (IoE) and School of Built Environment (Architecture) (SBE)
- Foxhill House, building foyer – supports School of Law

Pre-sessional English or International Foundation Programme students should visit the ISLI Admin Office (Edith Morley room 224) for any support or queries.

Support in Henley Business School

Henley Business School students should visit the Admin Decks in the HBS or ICMA buildings for all support.

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

- Modules & programmes
- Timetables
- Coursework & exams

Henley School Support Administrators can assist with:

- Extenuating circumstances
- Transfers, suspensions and withdrawals
- Appeals and complaints

Support for Academic Tutors

The online **Academic Tutor Toolkit** (www.sites.reading.ac.uk/academictutors) 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:

- 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 or www.sites.reading.ac.uk/academictutors/events/

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.

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 & Wellbeing
Carrington Building,
0118 378 4216
counselling@reading.ac.uk
Big White Wall
www.bigwhitewall.com

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

Private sector

Financial issues

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

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

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

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

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

Radicalisation and exploitation

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 – x4243
JJ Thompson – x4101
Agriculture – x8020
London Road – x2608/2611
Foxhill House – x5671
see details on previous page
x4007

In HBS: please contact the helpdesk in the HBS or ICMA buildings for all support
x4007

Timetabling

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

RUSU Advice Service*
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

Henley Careers
HBS Room 107
0118 378 4412
henleycareers@henley.ac.uk

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

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

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, using and referencing information and Library resources for assignments

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

Blackboard/IT

IT helpdesk
Library first floor
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/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.

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.

