

The Academic Tutor System

A guide for tutors 2020/21



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



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 submodular mark screens on RISIS and 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.
- Explain the value of Study Smart and encourage students to complete it.
- Remind students about 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

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).
- Record tutee attendance on RISIS – this is a useful indicator of student engagement
- 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

Supporting students studying remotely

If you and your tutees aren't both physically on campus or cannot meet in person, for whatever reasons, then you will need to think about how Academic Tutoring at a distance could work. It is important to build and maintain effective relationships with tutees, and to consider how best to support them.

The following tips may help:

- You can offer one-one or group tutorials using Teams or BB Collaborate. Don't forget about simple phonecalls or Teams voice calls too. There are some guidelines [here](#) about setting up a virtual office.
- Make sure your tutees know the best way(s) of contacting you, and set boundaries around when you are and aren't available. MS Bookings can be used to show your availability and allow students to book appointments.
- Group tutorials can be a good way for you to facilitate your students to connect with and support each other. Plan an ice-breaker and share topics for discussion in advance.
- Think about how you can support your tutees between meetings. Keep in touch by email and think about other possibilities such as using Teams or Blackboard to share information with tutees and allow discussion. Are there any reflective tasks or questions your tutees can engage with?
- Keep informed about how to signpost students to other university services. Use the flowchart at the back of this guide, and the [Essentials pages](#) for up to date information.

For more tips see this document created by the [UK Advising & Tutoring association](#) (UKAT).



The Role of the Counselling and Wellbeing Service

Counselling & Wellbeing provide specialist short term support for specific areas of emotional or mental health difficulties. They 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.

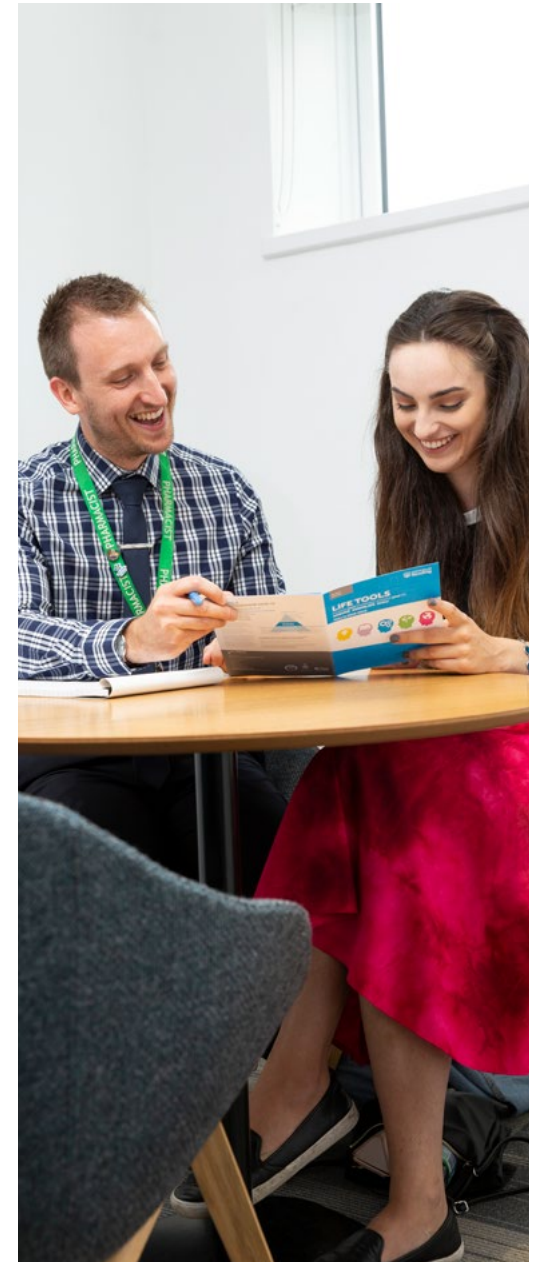
Reception opening times are 09:00–17:00, Monday to Friday, but times may vary outside of term time. To make an appointment to assess their needs students will need to register online.

Other types of support offered by Counselling and Wellbeing are:

The Big White Wall: 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.

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 between 10:00 & 16:00, Monday to Friday. 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 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. See the **Essentials pages** for details.

Support in Henley Business School

Henley Business School students should visit the Admin Decks 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.

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 (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

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 0800 029 1984 or x7777 Hall Wardens	
Private sector	→		RUSU Advice Service* Students' Union Building, 0118 378 4100 advice@rusu.co.uk
Financial issues	→	Student Financial Support team Carrington Building, studentfunding@reading.ac.uk blackbullion.com 24 hour access to financial education for students	
Effects of bullying/harassment, victim of crime, abuse, sexual violence, drugs/alcohol	→	Student Welfare Team Carrington Building, 0118 378 4777 studentwelfare@reading.ac.uk	Life Tools Programme Developing tools for academic and personal development
Radicalisation and exploitation	→		
Difficult issues e.g. homesickness, loneliness, conflict with friends	→	Chaplaincy Park House Lodge 0118 378 8797	
Faith/religion	→		

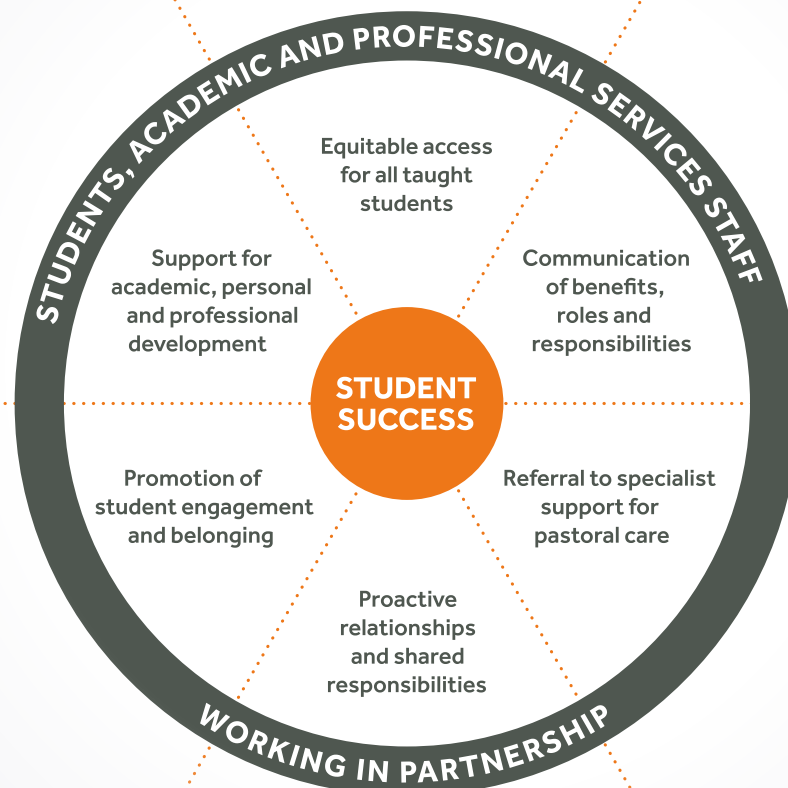
Academic/Professional

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	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)	→	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) studyadvice@reading.ac.uk reading.ac.uk/studyadvice	
Maths or statistics	→	Maths Support Within the Library (drop in) mathssupport@reading.ac.uk reading.ac.uk/mathssupport	
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.



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.

Proactive relationships and shared responsibilities

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

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.