

Welcome Week 2020 – Guidelines/Tips for Academic Tutor meetings

This year students might be more anxious than normal, due to the pandemic, and also may be less confident academically, following time away from school, the lack of formal exams and the A-level results fiasco. Opportunities for face to face contact with staff and other students will be fewer than usual. This first Academic Tutor meeting is a chance to try and put them at ease a bit, as well as an opportunity for them to get to know each other and you in a relaxed setting.

Organisation of Welcome Week tutor meetings

It is likely that you will set up your WW group tutor meetings using Teams, but your School/Department will tell you if there are different arrangements. Be aware that when sending a Teams calendar invitation it isn't possible to use bcc. Therefore if you are sending the invitation to students' personal email addresses you will need to paste the meeting link into a separate email and bcc it to them, to avoid sharing their addresses. You may also want to share the phone log-in number, in case students can't do a video call.

Making an introductory video

It might be quite daunting for some new students to join an online meeting with a group of people they've never met, so we are suggesting that Academic Tutors make a short video clip to introduce themselves and send that to tutees in advance by way of a welcome, to help them to relax. The video can be very short (1 minute or less) and informal, and be made on your phone, laptop, or whatever is easiest. You could include things like:

- information about yourself (professionally and/or personally)
- what your role as an Academic Tutor involves
- what might happen at the first tutor meeting

[Here is an example of a video.](#)

If students aren't yet enrolled then it will be difficult to share an MS Stream video with them. A clip that is short enough to email would probably be best.

Ice-breaker activities

Starting the meeting with an activity that helps everyone relax and get to know each other would be a good idea (for example a quick quiz, or asking everyone to share something about themselves). Be conscious of the fact that students might not want to share their pictures, camera-feed or personal information immediately, although they might feel more comfortable doing so if it is part of an activity and they understand the rationale for sharing. You can also do activities using the chat (for example asking students to use emojis to indicate feelings, or answer questions with thumbs up or down), which will reduce anxiety.

As part of the introduction to the meeting it will be a good idea to set some rules for how the meeting will be conducted (e.g. cameras/mics off unless talking, hands up or post in chat to ask a question) – the actual rules will need to depend on the size of the group and how they are accessing the meeting.

Suggested areas for discussion in the meeting

It is likely that the main focus of the meeting will be getting to know each other and setting students' minds at ease about anything they might be concerned about. These are a few other things you may want to touch on during the meeting:

- Explain your role as an Academic Tutor, e.g.
 - Help students reflect on their academic progress
 - Help them make decisions in relation to their course
 - Support them to review, reflect and act on feedback received
 - Write references, when necessary
 - Help students identify appropriate extra-curricular opportunities
 - Refer them to specialist support services as and when necessary
- Expectations for future meetings, e.g.
 - Group or one-one
 - When are you available, and how can students contact you?
 - Who will arrange the meetings?
 - What students should prepare/bring
 - How you/they should keep records
- Choice of modules/options.
- Role of Support Centres
- Remind students about [Study Smart](#) and their [STaR mentors](#).
- Have they been able to access RISIS/Blackboard?

Things to show the students/provide links to

- [Student Charter](#)
- [Student signposting document](#)
- [Meeting guidelines and downloadable guides for students](#)
- [Template for students to record meetings](#)
- [Information about Study Smart](#)
- [Video introducing the Academic Tutor System](#)

Materials to support you

- [Guide for Academic Tutors](#) (see this Guide for an expanded explanation of the role of the Academic Tutor)
- [Signposting flowchart](#)
- [Academic Tutor Toolkit](#)