Marino Institute of Education

Policy on the Personal Tutor System
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Purpose of the Personal Tutor System

- The personal tutor system for fulltime students is a central component of life in Marino Institute of Education. Tutors provide support for students’ general welfare and development insofar as it impinges on students’ progression through their course.
- All tutors are lecturers in the institute. The role of tutor complements, but is distinct from, the lecturer’s teaching role.
- A wide range of supports is available to students in Marino Institute of Education. These include the chaplaincy and pastoral care team, the counselling service, the medical service, the student assistance fund, the disability service and the students’ union. Often a student’s first point of support may be their personal tutor, who may either help resolve a concern or who may direct the student towards another source of help.

Principles of the Personal Tutor System

- Tutors will provide supports to tutees on matters relating to their studies and where appropriate will direct students towards other available supports.
- Apart from the initial introductory contact, responsibility for initiating contact in relation to seeking a tutor’s support lies with the tutee. Such contact may be made by e-mail, by phone or in person by calling to the tutor’s office.
- Students will differ in the level of support they require from their tutor at any particular time.
- Training will be made available to tutors through the Counselling service or other services, as appropriate.
- Where a tutor is unable or unwilling to act as tutor for a particular student, either temporarily or on a longer-term basis, alternative arrangements will be put in place.
- If a student wishes to be assigned to a new tutor, the student may request a reassignment of tutor.

Operation of the Personal Tutor System

- Each student is allocated a personal tutor at the start of their course.
- Tutees are allocated to tutors by the Registrar’s Office.
A lecturer may opt into acting as tutor on specific courses with which the lecturer is familiar.

Where possible, students from Gaelscoileanna and Gaeltacht areas are assigned a tutor who is comfortable communicating through the medium of Irish.

Students will be told who their tutor is during induction and the tutor’s name will be posted in the student’s area on Maestro.

Staff will be able to view their current assignment of tutees through Maestro, typically in the Reports section under the “My Tutees” tab. If they are not listed there or a discrepancy occurs, a staff member can contact the registrar’s office.

The tutor will establish initial contact with their tutees by meeting them ideally during induction or at another mutually convenient time, typically within the first three weeks of the course.

The tutor will meet with a tutee, at a tutee’s request, without unreasonable delay in relation to matters affecting the tutee’s progress through the course.

Insofar as is practicable, interactions between tutors and tutees will take place between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday to Friday, during term time.

Tutors may e-mail their group of tutees using the relevant group e-mail that is available through Maestro.

Tutees will be assigned to all fulltime lecturers and on a pro-rata basis to part-time contract staff.

Where a tutor is on long-term leave (e.g. maternity leave), the tutor will notify the registrar’s office who will make alternative arrangements for the tutor’s tutees and will advise the tutees of the alternative arrangements.

If a tutor is unavailable to meet with a student at a potentially critical time (e.g. when exam results are published), the tutor will make alternative arrangements in advance with the student.

If a student wishes to be assigned to a new tutor, the student may make the request for a reassignment through the registrar’s office. The student is not required to give a reason for making the request.

If a tutor wishes a tutee to be reassigned to another tutor, the tutor may make that request through the registrar’s office.
Role of Tutor

Personal tutors are well placed to listen to a range of matters that may impact on a student’s academic progress and to provide support for students in such circumstances. Students can encounter several obstacles that affect their smooth progression through their course. Such obstacles may include, but are not limited to, depression, loneliness, relationship break-ups, parental separation or divorce, ill health or death of family members, financial worries, bullying, unplanned pregnancy, emotional insecurities arising from the transition from second level to third level education, and failing exams. Tutors may offer support and/or may direct tutees to other sources of support.

Students may also be offered opportunities during their time in college, which necessitate them taking time out from their studies and where a tutor may be able to offer advice.

Listening/Pastoral Care

- A central role of the tutor is to actively listen to students, providing encouragement and support as appropriate. Tutors can offer guidance and advice on the availability of supports concerning study, finance, health and other matters where such matters are affecting the tutee’s ability to complete their studies.

Advocate for the Student

- The personal tutor may act, as appropriate, as advocate for the student should a student wish to recheck an exam result or to appeal the consequence of a result. The tutor will advise the student on the relevant policies and help the student prepare a case for the court of appeal.

- Students may request the presence and support of their tutor in any disciplinary proceedings within Marino. Tutors should not be involved in the administration of any disciplinary sanctions imposed by the institute on a tutee because this could constitute a conflict of interest and may damage the relationship between tutor and tutee.

- The tutor will advise the tutee about how to access or interpret the content of institute policies, as requested.
Attendance
- Students are advised to keep their personal tutor informed of any mitigating circumstances that may affect their attendance during the year. Where a student’s attendance is unsatisfactory in a module or in a semester, the student is required to meet with their personal tutor, who must complete a form in relation to the tutee’s attendance. At this meeting, the tutor will ask the tutee if mitigating circumstances apply in relation to the tutee’s attendance and will encourage the tutee to improve their subsequent attendance.

Record Keeping
- After a meeting dealing with matters of substance in relation to a tutee’s progress through college, it is helpful for a tutor to write to the tutee confirming the tutor’s understanding of the outcome of the meeting.

Tutor-Tutee Relationship
Confidentiality
- Matters arising from the personal tutoring role should be treated with confidence. Generally a tutor will seek the consent of the tutee to discuss matters relevant to examinations, school/work placement etc. with the relevant institute personnel.
- However, tutees should be advised that there are limits to the confidentiality that applies. Should a tutor believe that the tutee constitutes a danger to themselves or to another person, a tutor may need to seek advice from a colleague or from the counselling service. Similarly, should a tutee disclose abuse, the tutor may be required by the Child Protection Policy to pass on the disclosure to the appropriate authorities.

Off Books and Repeating
- If a student is repeating one or more modules “off books,” they still retain access to the support of a tutor.

Marino Supports for Students
- TCD Counselling Service

Website: https://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/

E-mail: student-counselling@tcd.ie and
Tel: 01 – 896 1407.

- **Fairview Medical Centre:**
  
  Website: [http://dublinfamilydoctor.com/](http://dublinfamilydoctor.com/)
  
  E-mail: info@fairviewmedical.ie
  
  Tel: 01 - 833 9856.

- **Student Assistance Fund**
  Contact Dr. Gerry O’Connell

- **Disability Service**
  Contact Eimear Breathnach

**Other Supports for Students**

- In addition to the tutor system itself, students may find support from other institute agencies such as: the chaplaincy and pastoral care team, the counselling service, the medical service, the student assistance fund, the disability service and the students’ union.

- Other supports that may be relevant at different times are:
  
  - Niteline (Student support from 9pm. to 2:30 a.m.): [https://niteline.ie/](https://niteline.ie/)
  
  - The Samaritans (24-hour per day service for people who need someone to talk to): [http://www.samaritans.org/](http://www.samaritans.org/)
  
  - AWARE (Support for people who have depression): [http://www.aware.ie/](http://www.aware.ie/).

**Support for Tutors**

- Tutors may seek support for their role as tutors from their head of department, from the registrar or from the president. As far as possible, such support can be sought without revealing identifying details of the student. Tutors may also contact the counselling service for advice on how to respond to a particular incident or request.

- Training will be provided for tutors by the Counselling Service.
This Policy on the Personal Tutor System was formally adopted by the Governing Body of Marino Institute of Education at its meeting on 26 January 2017.

Prof. Anne O’Gara  
President

Dr. Seán Delaney  
Registrar