Peer Guide Terms of Reference

This Terms of Reference sheet contains information for both new undergraduate students and Peer Guides. Although this sheet contains a wide variety of information related to Peer Guide interaction, should you have any specific queries please email the Peer Guidance team at PeerGuide@royalholloway.ac.uk.

Information for New Undergraduate Students

As a new undergraduate student, you will have been placed in a private channel on Microsoft Teams. This channel contains a Peer Guide from your department (or school) and a number of other new students, usually studying the same degree programme. This channel has several key purposes:

- To utilise your Peer Guide’s knowledge and expertise to have any questions or queries answered directly.
- To meet with your Peer Guide in either group or one-to-one audio or video calls.
- To socialise with other students from your department in a virtual environment.
- To receive signposting to other support and information on services throughout the university.
- To receive resources from your Peer Guide related to studying on-campus or remotely, to getting the most out of your university experience and top tips for studying well.

The number of times you meet and the way that you do so is up to both you and your Peer Guide. Your Peer Guide may select a set time each week to hold a group call or answer questions within the channel text chat. Calls with your Peer Guide are optional. There is no requirement to talk to your Peer Guide or utilise the video function on Teams, though you are welcome to do so. If you would prefer not to communicate with your Peer Guide through calls, utilise the chat function to post any questions you may have. Please note that the chat is only visible to other students within your assigned peer group and the Peer Guidance team.

If you have a question or concern you would like to share with your Peer Guide privately, please use email to do so. This ensures that your query remains separate from the rest of your channel and allows for Peer Guides to consult the Peer Guidance team if necessary.

There is also no obligation to remain in your assigned MS Teams channel. You are able to leave the team, and subsequently the channel, at any time. Please note that if you choose to do so, you will be removing a valuable source of support and information. As an alternative, you may wish to mute the channel to reduce the number of notifications you receive.
If, for any reason, you would prefer to change the MS Teams channel that you have been assigned, please email the Peer Guidance team at PeerGuide@royalholloway.ac.uk. Please note that this change may take several days to come into place.

Peer Guides are able to help you with a variety of queries. Here are some examples:

- As students from your department (or school), they may be able to share useful information on specific study resources or modules.
- They are able to direct you to a number of services across the university, ensuring that you receive the correct information from the appropriate service.
- They can offer useful advice on the best way to structure your week and make the most of your time as a new student.

However, there are some things that Peer Guides are not able to help directly with. Though Mental Health First Aid is covered when Peer Guides are trained, they are not qualified Mental Health First Aiders. They are there to aid your transition to university life and offer informal advice and, as such, they are not in a position to offer counselling. In any situation where a Peer Guide is unable to help you with your query directly, they will provide you with the means to contact other support services across the university.

**Information for Peer Guides**

As Peer Guides, your job is to aid new students in the transition to university life. You are the main volunteer force that offers direct advice and guidance to new undergraduates. Within your school, there is a School Peer Guide Coordinator, a student that can offer you further support as and when necessary. The School Peer Guide Coordinators will report in to the Peer Guidance team, who oversee the scheme as a whole. They can be contacted by emailing PeerGuide@royalholloway.ac.uk.

Towards the start of the academic year, you will be placed into a private Microsoft Teams channel with a number of new undergraduate students from your department or school. Where possible, they will be studying the same degree programme as you. This will help to ensure that you are able to give students the most accurate and relevant advice possible.

How and when you decided to meet with the new students within your channel is up to you. We expect, as a minimum, that you try to meet with students at least once a week for the first four weeks of term one. You may wish to set aside a set time each week (e.g. 1-2 hours per week) to host a Teams call with students, or to answer questions posted in that channel chat. If this is the case, please make sure to let the students in your channel know when you will be available. There is no expectation that you respond to students’ queries outside of this allocated time.
If hosting a call with students within your channel, you are able to decide your own preferences. You may wish to utilise the video feature when speaking with students, although this is not required. You should decide on the approach you would like to take with the students within your channel and inform them via the chat function towards the start of the academic year.

On the Peer Guide student intranet pages you will find a copy of this document, some top tips on effective Peer Guidance, information about your School Peer Guide Coordinators, and a number of resources that you may wish to share with your assigned students over the first four weeks of term. These resources place an emphasis on the flexible learning environment that students will be entering in the new academic year. As the resources will be available on the Peer Guidance intranet pages, you may also wish to direct students to these pages and other sources of online information.

The majority of locations and online support services that you will directing new students to are listed on the key contacts sheet (coming soon) included in your MS Teams channel and on the Peer Guidance intranet pages. Examples include the Student Services Centre, who are able to assist students with a wide variety of queries, and the Student Wellbeing team. In addition, there are more specific services that students may be unaware of in their first few weeks, such as the Students’ Union Advice Centre (academic support and housing advice) and the Disability & Dyslexia Services team.

There are several other services that you should share with new students:

- The Students’ Union Academic Rep scheme.
  - Academics Reps are elected in the first term of the academic year. They help to represent students’ needs at a programme, departmental and school level. Academic Reps will be a key source of information for new students after the first four weeks of term.

- Students’ Union sports clubs and societies.
  - The SU offer a multitude of ways for students to get involved. Clubs and societies offer students a great social opportunity and they will be able to meet individuals with similar interests whether studying on campus or remotely.

- Students’ Union Collectives.
  - Eight SU Collectives were formed in order to represent traditionally underrepresented groups. Of the eight, you may wish to direct students to the following: BAME; Commuting; Disabled; International; LGBT+; Women.

- Royal Holloway Sport.
  - The Active Lifestyle and Sport team are operating services both on campus and virtually, including exercise classes and wellness activities. These are an opportunity to socialise while remaining active.