RH100 Panel 1 Report

Date: Thursday 03 March
Panellist Attendance – 71%
Departments in Attendance – Student Academic Services, Student Engagement and Sport, Students' Union

Discussion Topic – Personal Tutoring and Student Futures

The RH100 panel discussed how personal tutoring currently operates at Royal Holloway across different departments and what changes could be made to the scheme to enhance student experience.

Panellists informed the college that…

- It was not always clear who students' personal tutors were.
- Personal tutors are not always able to signpost to other College services.
- Personal tutoring meetings are not always accessible.
- There are discrepancies across departments.
- Personal tutors did not always know their tutees very well.
- Personal tutors did not always communicate regularly and effectively with their tutees.
- It is sometimes difficult for personal tutors to balance both academics and wellbeing.

Panellists therefore suggested…

- A leaflet of all the services the College provides could be created and given to personal tutors.
- Panellists could be given a choice as to whether their personal tutoring meetings are online or face-to-face.
- Personal tutoring meetings could be made mandatory and attendance taken.
- Personal tutors could be offered training to ensure consistent support across departments.
- Meetings could be timetabled to prevent clashes with lectures and seminars.
- Students are given the same personal tutor for each year of their degree to help build a strong relationship.
- Personal tutors could perhaps cover more skills-based content and help with information about careers and life after university.
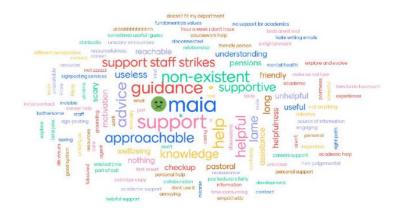- Have more 1:1 personal tutoring sessions rather than group meetings.

What next?

Outcomes to Student Experience Committee, then to Executive and Academic Boards for sign off, with changes implemented for 2022/23

1) What does personal tutoring at university mean to you? 3 words.

2) Think about examples of great personal tutoring at university that you and your peers have received. What made it great?

- Responsive and consistent personal tutors who provided academic guidance as well as looking out for students' mental health and wellbeing.
- Regular meetings that were accessible and easy for students to attend.
- Personal tutors who were able to signpost students to other services e.g. accommodation services.
- Examples of best practice:
  - Psychology's booking system
  - Geography's regular correspondence through email
  - Chemistry's rapport between students and their personal tutors
  - Management's proactivity

3) Think about examples of poor personal tutoring at university you have received. What made the experience so poor?

- Little or no contact from personal tutors
- Negative relationships with personal tutors who were disinterested, unfriendly or unapproachable – in Geology, students get a different personal tutor annually which prevents meaningful relationships from being built
- Vastly different standards and lack of consistency across departments/schools which is especially difficult for joint honours students
- Personal tutors need to be separate from dissertation supervisors, sometimes this can lead to a conflict of interest
- Lack of support from personal tutors

4) What are your minimum expectations of personal tutoring at Royal Holloway? And how do you expect to engage with your personal tutor?

Minimum Expectations:

- Personal tutors need to build a good relationship with their tutees and to be present and easy to communicate with
- Personal tutors need to have access to resources (especially for international students) and be knowledgeable about their academic department as well as being able to signpost to other College services
- It is important for personal tutors to be dedicated to their tutees and to also
- Helpful with degree (effort on content)
- Let us know what we can come to them with

How students expect to engage:

- Different forms of engagement - Face to face and Teams, availability and regular communication (1 – 5 emails per term from PT)
- Confidentiality about having a problem with other lecturers
- Meeting once a month - regular check-ups/follow ups
- Feedback forms
- Students could select their personal tutor
- Minimum three meetings that are timetable
- Have a booking system that allows you to select what the meeting is about - better structure

5) What content would you like your personal tutorials to cover and why have you chosen these options?

- Give an option for reference
- Careers, CV, Cover letters, a clear pathway towards graduate outcomes
- Support for mental health and wellbeing
- Activities inside and outside the curricular that build skills, networks and communities
- What do students need to do to get to where they want to be, advice on certain industries
- Signposting and updates on major College events e.g. strike action
- Extenuating circumstances and help with extensions
- Academic feedback/plagiarism support
- Academic feedback – exam feedback/end of year feedback
- A document (booklet that shows you who all the departments and 'help points' are)
- Information for international students

6) What would stop you from accessing or attending personal tutoring sessions at Royal Holloway?

- Personal setbacks
- Relationship with the personal tutor - Personal tutor – clash of personality and negative relationship with tutor
- Too big of a group of students
- Lack of contact with personal tutor, they don't reach out, lack of tutees being prioritised
- Time conflict/schedule conflict
- Needs to be easy to access
- Continuity – have the same tutor every year

7) Thinking about question 6; how could the College encourage you to engage with personal tutoring?

- Personal Tutor assigns tasks before meeting (time efficient), reliable references, having a relationship with personal tutor (knowing you can rely on them)
- Better communication with Personal Tutor and open communication between tutors and department
- Make it clear that the meetings are important – if it was part of attendance/compulsory
- Train tutor to engage with their tutees
- Choice of tutor/ same personal tutor throughout the duration of a student's degree
- Hybrid engagement
- Timeline; introduction; more engaging initial experience
- Leaflet with information
- Confidentiality (up to a certain point) needs to be stressed in sessions for students