ORIENTATION GUIDE FOR PERSONAL TUTORS

CATS CAMBRIDGE
2018-19

1   Introduction

Personal Tutor or PT groups are at the heart of the pastoral support network the College provides to our students. These groups provide a space where students can access information and guidance and be held accountable for their learning, progress and behaviour. PT group activities are also designed to meet the personal, social and academic needs of students while fostering a sense of belonging and community. Research suggests adolescents who have a strong sense of belonging feels valued and respected, which contributes to their motivation, may reduce anxiety and may mitigate against achievement gaps.

2   Role of the Personal Tutor

- As the Personal Tutor you play a pivotal role in establishing a positive tutor group experience by knowing and caring about your students and creating a sense of community in the group. Your role is also fundamental in monitoring individual students' academic progress and wellbeing from a holistic point of view.

- This role puts you in the unique position to be able to identify and communicate emerging boarding, academic or welfare concerns early, this will help to ensure that all your tutees receive the necessary support in a timely fashion.

- You can find a comprehensive list of Personal Tutor duties in the **Personal Tutor job description**. However, the objective of this document is to provide some guidance about the day to day practicalities of being a Personal Tutor (PT).

3   Safeguarding

All staff have safeguarding responsibilities and must know and comply with the College's **Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.**

4   Shackleton

- You can find all the data about your individual students on Shackleton, the College's management information system. During your staff Induction you will receive basic training in using this system, and your Programme Director will check that you can use the notes, attendance data and search functions. Just ask, if you get stuck.

- Notes on Shackleton will give you an overview of a student's progress, both in lessons and in boarding.   All staff are required to make brief notes on Shackleton about significant conversations and incidents with students that they have had.

- Note that Shackleton is a data management system and not an alternative to conversations. All staff are encouraged to have initial face-to-face conversations with students and each other before making brief notes of the outcome on Shackleton.

- As parents or students can request to see all the notes written about students on Shackleton, ensure that your notes are
  - in line with the **Confidentiality Policy**
  - respectful and measured in tone;
  - factual – not opinions or substitutes for email or discussions with colleagues;
  - refer to student as 'the student'
  - refer to other students by their student number only

5   Attendance – UKVI Compliance

- Personal tutors monitor the weekly attendance of students.   Students are expected to attend a 100% of their lessons, and an 80% attendance rate is stipulated by UKVI for visa purposes. Therefore, all absences need to be thoroughly investigated and remedial action taken as required by the **Student Behaviour and Conduct** and the **Attendance Policies.**

- Attendance issues may well be an early indication that the student is dealing with other pastoral and academic issues. Lack of attendance therefore warrants a supportive one to one supportive conversation with a student at an early stage, with concurrent notes made on Shackleton.

- Personal tutors therefore monitor weekly attendance to spot emerging patterns and verify this with the students. Students are encouraged to address late and disputed absent marks with the relevant subject teachers themselves.

- The Curriculum Office also deals with attendance queries.

6   Communication with Parents

- Effective communication with parents is crucial to perform your role as Personal Tutor. In many cases, early communication with parents/agents serves to mitigate behavioural and pastoral issues. Students receive more support and experience more accountability when collaboration exists between the College and their parents/agents.

- You establish first contact with parents/agents through a template welcome email sent within in the first two weeks of the student starting a programme of study. You can communicate more frequently with the parents/agents as the need arise, and typically an update email is sent home once every half term which will include a copy of the student's self-reflection on their report and progress..

- Student Communications need to be copied into all letters to parents/agents. You must also keep your Programme Director up to date about pertinent communication and developments.

- Personal Tutors should also feel free to have a telephone conversation with a student's parents/agent – facilitated by the Programme Director.

- You need to verify the addresses of all parental/agent/guardian on Shackleton, as only email addresses verified by Student Communication may be accepted. Verified email addresses can be found on the CONTACT tab on Shackleton.

- If you receive an unverified email or suspect that the student may have access to this e-mail address, referred this issue to Student Communications immediately they will then address the issue. Disciplinary sanctions may follow, should a student assume the identity of a parent to send permission and email to the College.

7   Exeats

- Exeats, or permission to be away from College, are granted by the Head of House/Deputy Head of House. However, as you have an overview of the student's behaviour in College and in Boarding, you may be in the best position to know whether there is any reason why a student should not be granted an exeat.

- Reasons for declining an exeat may include, pending assessments or exams; discipline or attendance issues; illness in the week before the exeat; other pastoral or welfare concerns

- Liaise with your Programme Director or Head/Deputy Head of House to make the final decision about whether an exeat is granted or not.   As always, students are treated as individuals and decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

8   Student Disciplinary Process

- The College operates a five-stage disciplinary procedure, as specified in the **Student Behaviour and Conduct policy** available in Shackleton. You are usually the person who initiates the disciplinary process for one of your tutees due to your holistic view of your students' behaviour in lessons and in Boarding.

- All disciplinary actions must be preceded by a thoughtful conversation with the student. This conversation ensures that both the student and the PT have a better insight into the causes of the student's challenging behaviour, and how the student can improve on this behaviour.

- After this conversation, you record the disciplinary stage and corresponding consequences on Shackleton and a letter is sent home through Student Communications.

- As the Personal Tutor, you are responsible for Stage 1 and Stage 2 discipline issues and for monitoring the student's progress and improvement whilst they are on these stages.   In case of serious misbehaviour or continuous breach of College or boarding rules, disciplinary

staging escalates to the Programme Director or Head of House, and subsequently onto the appropriate member of the SLT.

9   Induction

During their first week at College, you accompany your tutees through the process of Induction while they familiarise themselves College procedures and surroundings, make friends, take placement tests and complete various administrative tasks. You will receive a bespoke timetable, instructions and materials for this induction programme. You should take this time to get to know your students well and to establish as strong, cohesive PT group.

10   PSHE, Student Voice and UWS

You will teach PSHE or facilitate the PSHE activities for your PT group during the College's PSHE Collapsed days. The materials and instructions will be provided to you by your Programme Director in liaison with the PSHE Coordinators.

By request of the students, the Student Council is made up of PT group representatives and a number of PSHE lessons will be designated as student voice meetings. Initially, you will facilitate the election of a PT group representative and a scribe. However, once students are comfortable with the format, these meetings can be run by the students themselves, with their decisions communicated to the Senior Leadership Team.

All PT groups are encouraged to take initiative and initiate whole school initiatives such as recycling projects or fundraisers for the College's charity of choice United World Schools (UWS).

11   Tutorials

Tutor group meetings are used to convey administrative information and conduct discussions in support of your tutees' person development, In addition, you will also schedule tutorial conversations with individual students throughout the year.   This is done on a rotation basis during PT time and constitutes a longer discussion with individual students about their academic targets as well as their wellbeing and participation in extra-curricular activities at College.   Targets and feedback arising from these conversations are noted on the TUTORIAL note in notes on Shackleton.

12 Personal Tutor reports

PT group activities and tutorials should provide you with ample information to write the termly PT report. The objective of this report is to provide the parents/agents an insight in the students' overall academic progress and wellbeing during each term. Your Programme Director will give you guidance as to the expected format and content of PT reports every term.

Although the PT report is the official communication with parents but should not be regarded as the only way to communicate with student's parents/agents.

Mass produced copy and paste of comments in PT reports are unacceptable. You should ensure that your comments are meaningful. Your Programme Director will give you more guidance in this regard as well.

All reports and communication with parents/agents should be proofread, be of high quality writing, with attention to detail. Make use of a spellchecker and Grammarly if needed.   PT reports are authorised by your Programme Director, and they may ask you to rewrite reports if necessary.

13 Fire Procedure

You are responsible for looking after your PT group in case of fire between 09:00 to 17:00 as per the **Elizabeth House Fire Drill Procedure, you can find this procedure on Shackleton.** Your Programme Director therefore needs to be aware of your whereabouts, should you be off campus or absent during this time.

14 Conclusion

No document can give you all the *'how to's'* for each case you will encounter, and the role is often equally meaningful and challenging.   However, your Programme Director is keen to support you, so ask for help as soon as you need it.

Make an effort to engage with your students and get to know them well – you are the one person who they see every day, who knows the bigger picture of their life at College.

Ultimately, you have done a good job when your PT group becomes 'a port in the storm', and your students know they can trust you enough to have a conversation when things get tough.

Turn up

Try Hard

Be Kind

Smile