QMU: PERSONAL ACADEMIC TUTOR (PAT) POLICY

The University recognises that a Personal Academic Tutoring System (PAT system), for all students on taught programmes, should operate across the University for the following aims and purposes:

- The Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) will act as a facilitator and 'mentor' to the student whilst at the University, encouraging the student to optimise their learning opportunities.
- The PAT is expected to refer students to other appropriate agencies and fully trained staff either within the University or elsewhere for support and resolution of issues of concern to both tutor and student.
- The PAT may expect to act as advocate on behalf of the student and in this role can be expected to make statements, either written or oral, to the Programme Committee (reserved business), Board of Examiners or others as requested to do so.

Policy

Each Programme is expected to:

- provide each student with a PAT throughout their studies at QMU;
- provide details about the PAT system at QMU in Student and Programme Handbooks and especially to detail the expectations which the student may have of the system and the expectations the academic and other staff have of the student;
- establish a system for recording the nature and outcome of the interaction between student and PAT;
- report through the Annual Programme Monitoring exercise on the operation of the System;
- establish regular opportunities for staff development and training for academic and other staff in order to support the System.

The overall responsibility for an effective PAT system lies with the Programme Leader.

It is expected that:

- the PAT will meet with both their new and continuing tutees during the first 4 to 6 weeks, and ideally earlier, of the year, and
- at least once per semester thereafter.

Implementation of the Policy on the PAT system at QMU

It is expected that the Programme Leader will make explicit to both staff and students the nature of the PAT system, and monitor the effectiveness of the PAT process in their programme. Through Performance Enhancement Review, the Workload Allocation Model and staff development provision, the Head of Division will acknowledge the role which staff play in the PAT system.

Meetings with part-time and distance learning students may not always be easily arranged. However, it is vital and perhaps more so, for part-time students, that an effective PAT system is maintained. The PAT guidelines should be followed with part-time and distance learning students, with any necessary adjustments for logistical issues. Virtual meetings and email contact may be appropriate.

Expectations of the PAT

- The PAT will be the direct link between the student and the University, and plays a key role (see below) in the support network for the student offered by the Programme and the University.
- The PAT will make clear to the student the boundaries of their supporting role and encourage the student to make use of other facilities, especially for academic counselling by module co-ordinators, to their tutees.
- A PAT can expect to remain with the same student for the duration of their time at the University.   In some cases the student or the tutor may request that a different tutor is assigned. The School Office will allocate a new PAT if a student's existing PAT is no longer available.
- The PAT must initiate a meeting with their academic tutee at least once a semester.
- The PAT will keep an agreed record of each meeting with the student. Ideally it will indicate areas for action. Following the PAT meeting, this record should be filed centrally in the School Office with the confidential records of the student
- The PAT may meet with their tutees as a group once a year, but should also invite each tutee to meet individually once per semester.

Expectations of the Student

- The student must expect to meet with their PAT at least once a semester. Tutees may request further meetings but it is the responsibility of both student and staff that at least one meeting takes place.
- The student can expect to meet with other members of an Academic Tutor Group on at least one occasion during the academic year, to foster group support.
- During their studies at QMU, the student is expected to accept the responsibilities of autonomy and independence, and this includes acknowledging and using the PAT system in a responsible manner.
- The student should take responsibility for any agreed course of action which may result as an outcome from the meetings.
- Students who consistently fail to attend meetings initiated by the PAT can have this non-attendance notified to their Programme Leader and, then, Head of Division.

Confidentiality

Meeting and discussions with PATs may raise confidential issues. PATs and students must be aware of the tutor's duty of confidence to the student and also of the need to carry through the consequences of this discussion, particularly if it raises serious academic issues. The student must also be aware that in some cases the law requires that issues concerning criminal behaviour may need to be revealed.

Expectations of the Programme Leader

- The Programme Leader must establish a system for effective Personal Academic Tutoring based on the Policy and is responsible for communicating the System to all who work and study on the Programme, including Visiting Lecturers.

- The PAT has a role significantly different from that of the Programme Leader and this must be made clear to both staff and students[12].
- The Head of Division must acknowledge the vital role of the PAT during reviews of resource deployment in the Division.
- PATs will have the opportunity to attend appropriate training sessions and discussions concerning their PAT role.
- The School Office will circulate a list indicating the allocation of PATs to academic staff, students and other staff in the School within one week of the start of the Semester and preferably before. A copy of PAT Policy must be available to all students.
- Each Division may wish to add additional responsibilities to the role of the PAT. This is a matter for internal discussion and resource allocation. The roles and responsibilities of the Academic Tutor and Academic Tutee must be clearly articulated to students, for example through their handbooks.

The following are notes of guidance for the responsibilities of the PAT

- The PAT will discuss with the student any issues of concern, which may be of a resource nature e.g. accommodation or grants/loans; of an educational nature such as study skills, work patterns, time management, preparation for assessment, general attitude to academic work; or of a professional nature such as employment opportunities, membership of professional bodies.
- The PAT is expected to make a full and an agreed (with the student) record of the interview so that it is of benefit to the student.
- The PAT is not expected to resolve specific academic problems related to individual modules, although they may be used to counsel students on mechanisms by which these academic problems may be resolved.
- The PAT is expected to *initiate* one meeting with all new tutees at some point during the first 4 to 6 weeks of the first Semester and thereafter at least once per Semester. The interview will review progress and explore any issues and problems which the student has. These interviews are recorded, an action plan initiated if appropriate and the records placed in the individual student file.
- The PAT may initiate more tutorials with their tutee specifically to address issues such as attendance and other issues which have been drawn to the attention of the PAT.
- The PAT is expected to notify the Programme Leader of any tutee who persistently fails to present themselves for a personal tutorial.

---

[1] The PAT's role is fully described in the PAT guidelines and students are informed via a guidance leaflet
[2] The Programme Leader's role is outlined in the Programme Leaders' Handbook