UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Archived Legislation

This is an archived version of the legislation current for the Session 2007-08. It is no longer current. Current legislation can be found at www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation.

Please use documents found there rather than archived documents.

CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT IN SCHOOLS

Contents

Preamble
1 **Introduction**
2 **Responsibilities within the Student Development and Support Partnership**

2.1 The University
2.2 The School
2.2.1 A student support policy
2.2.2 Student support guidance
2.2.3 Training opportunities, induction and briefing meetings
2.2.4 Contact with students
2.3 The Student
2.3.1 School support
2.3.2 University support
2.3.3 Tutorials
2.3.4 Information
3 **Minimum Requirements for Student Development and Support**

3.1 Tutorial Arrangements
3.2 Academic Feedback
3.3 Careers and Skills Developments
4 **Quality Assurance and Enhancement**
5 **Reference material, guidance and support for schools**

Preamble

This Code of Practice provides a framework for student development and support in Schools at the University of Birmingham. It applies to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, including students on full time, part time, distance learning programmes and on programmes taught off-campus. Schools should implement the Code for those students and should articulate in the School Policy for Student Development and Support the arrangements for students studying through different modes of delivery.

(Note: The terms used in the Code relate to students who attend the University full time. It will therefore be necessary for Schools to articulate the arrangements for other modes of delivery in the School Policy. For example, for distance learning students 'meeting' may need to be replaced by 'email' or 'telephone conversation'.)

The Code has been put in place to strengthen the systems that Schools already have in place, without imposing unnecessary additional requirements, and to act as a catalyst for the continuing development and sharing of good practice between Schools. It is written for staff and students to promote partnerships that facilitate the development of and support for students during their study at the University.

The Code of Practice defines the development and support mechanisms that should be provided for students within Schools both during a student's transition to higher

education (for undergraduates students), and throughout their programme of study at the University. The Code informs students of the agreed minimum level of support, which should help to manage their expectations. Students should be supported through their studies, but should also be encouraged (through personal development) to increasingly take responsibility for their own learning and career development.

All members of University staff, both academic and non-academic should work collaboratively to provide a positive experience for the student. The student should be seen as both a participant and a partner in the learning experience. The partnership should be based on inquiry-led learning and should aim to provide the student with the ability to:

- Craft a coherent educational plan based on assessment of abilities, aspirations, interests and values, including the setting of goals and targets and strategies to achieve these;
- Assume responsibility for meeting academic programme requirements;
- Cultivate the intellectual habits that lead to a lifetime of learning;
- Behave as a citizen who actively engages in the wider world around them.

Adherence to this Code will ensure that Schools have robust systems in place, which will bear scrutiny, where necessary.

1. Introduction

This Code of Practice relates to the minimum standards required to support students on taught programmes at the University of Birmingham. It sets out a framework, which should be followed by Schools providing support and development in the following areas:

- Individual student support within the School or Department, including welfare issues;
- Progress review tutorials;
- Review of academic feedback;
- Skills support and advice; and
- Review of student's personal development planning.

The Code of Practice is written as a framework, so that Schools can implement the standards according to local arrangements and so that students have a clear indication of the level of support and guidance they can reasonably expect from their School. The Code identifies the roles of Head of Student Development and Support and that of individual Student Tutors. Each School should have a Head of Student Development and Support with defined responsibilities for student development and support. How those functions are delegated or arranged within the School, however, is an internal matter. The role of individual Student Tutor (Tutor) is indicative only and is used to demonstrate the responsibilities that must be assigned to School staff. How a School chooses to divide these duties is an internal issue, but the arrangements established must meet the framework described. Schools will need to define the role of Tutor (and identify the nomenclature specific to their School, Departments or disciplines) and the functions that it encompasses through the School Support Policy.

This Code of Practice is underpinned by University support services, details of which should be communicated to students through School support discussions, documentation and general contact with students.

The student experience is intensely formative, requiring relatively frequent monitoring through the tutor-student partnership. The prime responsibility for these processes, however, lies with the student. Tutorial and other support provision is designed to help students learn how to manage these processes. Whilst academic results provide measurable data, it is important not to lose sight of the overall skills and capabilities that are being developed by students in all fields of life. Thus, it is important to ensure that the student can, from the beginning, set and work towards long-term objectives and not, for instance, leave career planning to the last stages of their university programme.

Consistent with this view, Schools are now provided with a »Progress» WebCT Section, which each School may customise to suit its own special character, so as to provide support in the follow areas:

- feedback of assessment results, and, where working methods permit, of comment on assessed work;
- skills analysis, and download of a resulting document for inspection or discussion;
- generation of a basic CV;
- Careers Service information, FAQs, tools and support; and
- Personal Skills Award information.

»Progress» is also available to students in the weeks *before* they arrive at the University and could aid the induction process.

2. Responsibilities within the Student Development and Support Partnership

2.1 Responsibilities of the University Corporate Services

Corporate Services will:

- Provide documentation, staff induction, staff training and development programme(s) for tutors;
- Provide a system of support that augments school-based and individual student needs;
- Support and enhance the Head of Student Development and Support network, by providing information and opportunities for sharing common issues and good practice ideas.

2.2 Responsibilities of the School or the Department

The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that appropriate development and support mechanisms are provided for all students on taught programmes. The co-ordination of this function will be delegated to the Head of Student Development and Support in the School. This member of staff should provide guidance and leadership to staff who are supporting students and be the first point of contact for the University's support services.

The School should ensure the student is supported through their programme of study and should direct the student to appropriate services in the University for specialist and detailed advice and guidance. Schools should provide advice and support for staff about when it is appropriate to support the student and when the students should be directed to other University services. For example, School staff should not provide counselling or detailed careers advice.

Support for students should be perceived as a partnership between the School or Department and Corporate Services. Staff should liaise with the appropriate Corporate Services Unit for advice, guidance and support when working with students. Staff should also be aware of when it is appropriate to refer students directly to the required Corporate Services Unit, for instance, when a case becomes more complex or specialist. (Complex welfare issues, for example, may be referred to Student Support and Counselling Service.)

The Head of Student Development and Support should ensure that the mechanisms and arrangements listed below are in place:

2.2.1 A School Development and Support Policy should be published identifying the arrangements for tutoring and academic feedback for students in relation to the specific requirements of the School, Department and programme. In multi-departmental schools the policy should clearly state responsibilities at School level and those undertaken by the component departments. The policy should explicitly include information about tutorial arrangements for students where programmes are delivered jointly with other Schools or Departments. The policy should be reviewed and approved annually at the appropriate School Committee.

Specific consideration should be given, within the School Policy for Student Development and Support to joint honours (including major/minor) students and to students taking programmes with different modes of delivery, for example, distance-learning, part-time, those delivered off campus.

2.2.2 Student Support Guidance should be made available for all staff that undertake a student support role, including visiting and part time teaching staff. The Guidance should clarify their responsibilities and provide information about:

- University Corporate Services, for example, the Careers Centre, the Student Support and Counselling Service, Student Funding Office;
- School arrangements and training for student support, including programme requirements, exam and assessment information; and
- Tools available to support the process, in particular, »Progress» (on WebCT).

2.2.3 Training opportunities, induction and briefing meetings should also be arranged to ensure a consistent and confident approach to the Tutor role. Within the guidance information provided by Schools/Departments, templates should be available, with model-agendas for tutorial meetings. This could be provided through WebCT or >>Progress>>. The School should liaise with the appropriate Corporate Services Units, including the SDU, the Careers Centre, the Student Support and Counselling Service, and Legal Services, to arrange training and briefing opportunities.

2.2.4 Contact with Students – the Student's Tutor(s) should ensure that the student has contact details for them, including office telephone number and email address (but see 2.3.5 below). There are a number of ways that tutor-student contact can take place, but there should be at least two meetings during the academic year. Tutors must ensure that an appropriate length of time is available for meetings with students. Tutors should contact students initially to arrange the first meeting of the academic year. They should also follow-up students who do not attend these meetings, although it is the

responsibility of the student to act with reasonable diligence in communicating about and attending support opportunities.

Students should know how to contact their tutors, although arrangements will vary between Schools and Departments. This could be done through published office hours, bookable appointments or a regular tutorial slot, but it is important that students feel that they can contact their tutors, if necessary.

2.3. Responsibilities of Students

2.3.1 School Support - Students are primarily responsible for their own development and learning. They should access support, advice and guidance to improve and develop their academic work and personal skills, to enhance their University experience and to improve subsequent career opportunities.

2.3.2 University Support - Students should ensure that they obtain information about University systems and communicate effectively with School/Department staff and University Corporate Services to ensure that support opportunities are maximised, as appropriate for the individual.

2.3.3 Tutorials - Students should ensure that they attend all tutorial meetings, including induction lectures or meetings, group tutorial sessions or individual tutorial meetings. It is the student's responsibility to attend the meetings that are booked with their Tutor in the School/Department and students should respond to opportunities for meetings with diligence. It is expected that students will communicate with their Tutors if they are unable to attend the scheduled meeting or need to re-arrange the meeting, and should respond if their Tutor contacts them.

2.3.4 Information - Students should read communications from the School and/or the University to ensure they are aware of processes and arrangements for all aspects of their programme, particularly in terms of assessment, exams, mitigations and appeals. It is expected that they will access their emails and read and respond to communications from the Department, School or University in a timely fashion. Students should be aware of, and access frequently, the Student Portal.

2.3.5 Communciations with Staff - When communicating with staff by email students should be aware that staff may only access email at set times and therefore an immediate response may not be possible. Further, students should not expect communication during University holiday and closed periods.

3. Minimum Requirements for Student Development and Support

3.1 Tutorial Arrangements:

All students should:

1. Be informed of a designated member of staff who will act as their Student Tutor within the School for matters relating to their progress, development and welfare. The student should be given clear contact details for this member of staff;

2. Be informed of the person who co-ordinates Student Development and Support within the School or Department (and be informed of the member of staff responsible for mitigation, if this is a different person, and any other key staff responsible for elements of student support);

3. Have an induction, at the beginning of their programme of study, which includes:
   - A student handbook or resource that clearly states the requirements of the student in relation to issues such as mitigation, regulations, reasonable diligence, attendance requirements and plagiarism;
   - A talk which covers the major areas identified in the documentation;
   - An initial session (opportunity), individually or in a group, with their Tutor, where the School Student Support Scheme will be clearly explained to the student(s). The timing and nature of this initial session (opportunity) should be identified in the School Support Policy, particularly identifying arrangements for students who are entering higher education for the first time;
   - An explanation of the student's responsibility towards managing their progress and the function of the tutorial system in that context.

4. Have the opportunity to attend (have access to), at least, two scheduled, individual meetings (consultations) during the academic year with their Tutor. (Where the student is on a distance-learning programme, these tutorials may be e-tutorials). It is suggested that, after the initial meeting, these should take place in subsequent terms and should include discussions on:

   - Progress - review of achievements and setting of targets: the student should bring the materials necessary for meaningful discussion of their progress, both academically and more generally:

     Materials may include:
     - *a form supplied by the School for completion by the student*
     - *information about marks achieved, feedback and identification of any issues causing concern*
     - *samples of work*
     - *a CV*
     - *a skills analysis from »Progress»*

     The role of the Student Tutor is to encourage the student to engage with the necessary issues, to offer support where it is needed, and to ensure targets are set. It is not to conduct a lengthy review of all aspects of the material provided;

   - Welfare and similar issues: The student should raise any matters, which may be affecting their progress. The role of the Student Tutor is, so far as possible, to direct the student to appropriate resources and sources of support. Their Tutor should also remind the student of the importance of recording and submitting mitigating circumstances in the appropriate manner, and of the need to obtain appropriate evidence to support the mitigation submitted.

     [**Note**: Discussion held with a Student Tutor cannot constitute or substitute for the submission of a formal mitigation for consideration by Boards of Examiners or Mitigation Panels.]

3.2. Academic Feedback:

Feedback to students should focus on their performance against the module learning outcomes. The assessment criteria should relate directly to the learning outcomes identified in the module description, and the relationship between the learning outcomes and their performance (as measured through the assessment criteria for the individual assessment) should be explicit.

All students should:

1. Be given appropriate feedback on their academic performance in order to facilitate improvement and promote learning;

2. Be aware of both quantitative (marks and grades) and qualitative (content and skills) feedback arrangements for all assignments and coursework prior to the submission deadlines;

3. Be informed of the timescale for feedback arrangements. This should be timely (normally within four weeks of the submission date of the assessment/piece of work) so that they can adjust their patterns of work before subsequent assessment opportunities;

4. Be aware of who will issue feedback to them and how this will be communicated to them, e.g. through »Progress». This should normally be stated in the Student Handbook and at the time the assignment is set. The nature of feedback will vary between modules, but students should be aware of the mechanisms in place, which provide them with information to aid their improved performance.

[**Note:** Arrangements for academic feedback will vary across the University, however, it would be expected that students receive specific feedback from module experts on assessed work. These arrangements may include the Student Tutor, but the Student Tutor should also provide a reflective opportunity for students to consider their overall performance. Different models will exist according to programme-specific requirements, but the principle underlying this is that the student has both specific feedback (in-course assessment) and discussion about overall performance.]

The link between academic and tutorial staff is very important and all staff should ensure that there is effective communication. Programme, module and assessment requirements will be School, Department or discipline specific, but effective communication between the module staff and the Student Tutors is a central component for effective student support.

3.3. Careers and Skills Development:

All students should:

1. Be given advice from the beginning of their studies about support services available within the School and the University to help them to make career decisions, produce a CV and understand the career opportunities available to them, as appropriate;

2. Be given the opportunity, and be encouraged from the beginning to undertake skills evaluation exercises through »Progress» facilities, profession-based exercises or other appropriate material for the specific programme of study;

3. Be given the opportunity, and be encouraged, to sustain their personal development and career planning throughout their studies. Additionally, students need to be made aware of how skills development is embedded within academic programmes, and how this will be supported/enhanced through face-to-face sessions/workshops, online facilities and via other resources.

4. Be supported in developing appropriate insights, skills and experience whilst they study.

Support may be provided through referral and liaison with Corporate Services, including the Careers Centre, the Student Support and Counselling Service and Student Funding Office for additional support in any of the areas listed.

4. Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The Head of Student Development and Support within the School must take responsibility for reviewing the arrangements in place annually. The policy and arrangements operated by the School should be reviewed and improved appropriately. The BIQAES system requires review of the arrangements and confirmation that appropriate support mechanisms are in place.

Students and staff should be given an opportunity to feed into the policy and process for tutoring and academic feedback. Schools should demonstrate that this input has been considered and processes have been reviewed appropriately. This may be through normal School mechanisms for student and staff feedback, i.e. questionnaires, student/staff fora, student representation systems, staff-student committees etc.

5. Reference material, guidance and support for schools

There is extensive reference material, guidance and support for schools in establishing and reviewing the support mechanisms that are in place for students. For ease of reference a number of websites are listed below:

Details of University services can be found at http://www.studentlife.bham.ac.uk/.

QAA Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/default.asp

Higher Education Academy http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/44.htm