



# Academic Mentoring

Addressing our key challenges through  
whole of institution approaches

*Ben Walker*

*Senior Lecturer in Educational Development  
Oxford Brookes University*

Academic Mentoring Learning Exchange Day  
LSE, 25 April 2024

OXFORD  
**BROOKES**  
UNIVERSITY



THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

# My practice and research journey

Destination (currently...)

The key challenges for Academic Mentoring\* which need addressing:

- standardisation
- professionalisation
- recognition (both 'institutional' and 'professional' through accreditation)
- status and value

\*also known as Personal Tutoring, Academic Advising or variants thereof



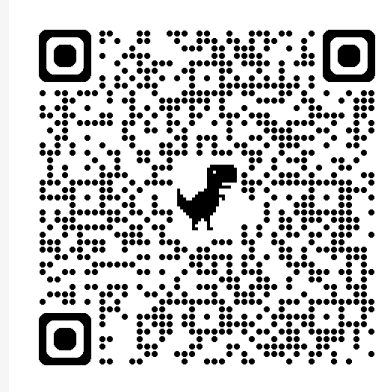
# Objectives of the session

This session aims to help you to:

- identify the key elements of a 'whole of institution' approach to Academic Advising;
- consider the key challenges for such an approach and strategies for overcoming them;
- apply key themes to your institutional context;
- recognise shared issues and common solutions.

*Please use this Padlet (link & QR code below) to post responses to Reflection questions & any questions you have*

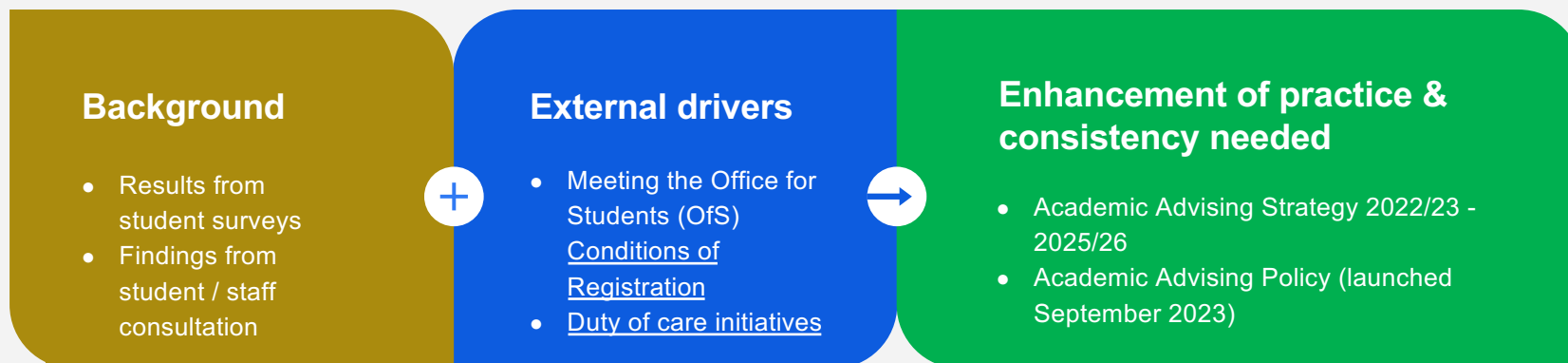
<https://ocslid.padlet.org/p0092606/LSE>



*Look out for this logo at various points in the presentation*



# Whole institution approach at Oxford Brookes - background, rationale, overview of work



# Challenges / starting point

“Institutional committees, managers, staff and students have different interpretations of the role, and unless these **dissonant discourses** are exposed and examined, the contribution of personal tutoring to student experience within the **institutional framework** is unclear, and there will never be a **Whole Institution Approach** or a **consistent student experience**.”

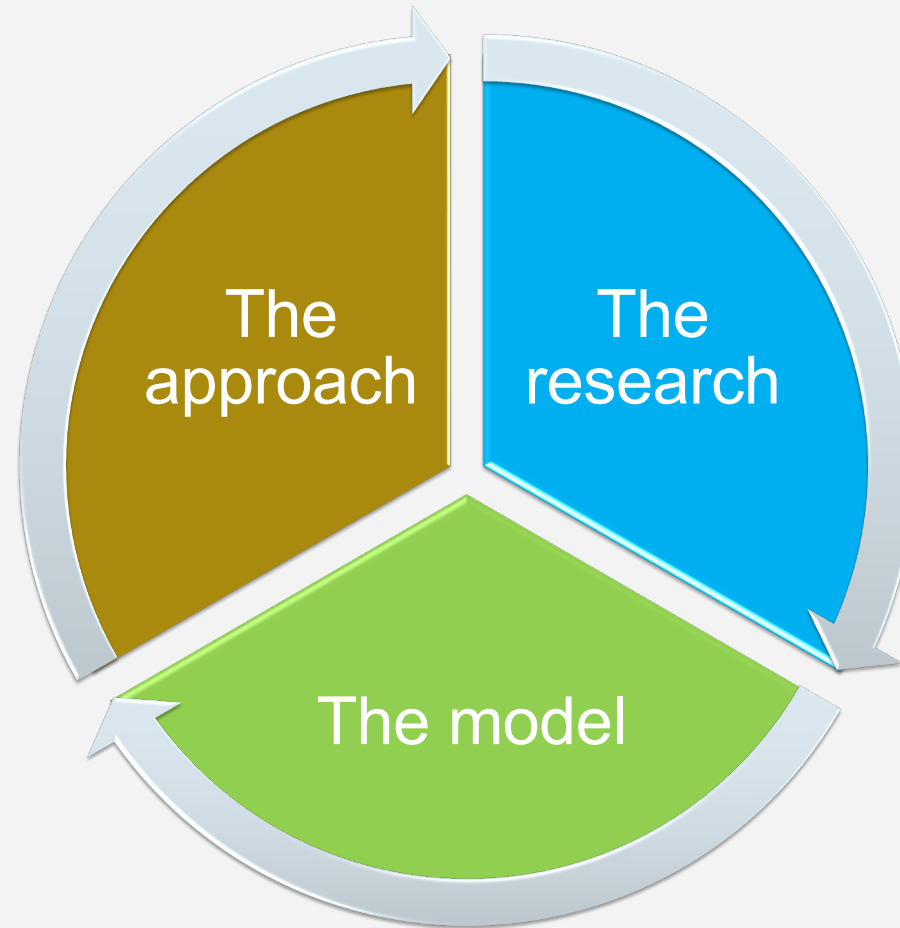
Brown & Thomas in Lochtie et al., 2022

*Reflection 1 – Is this familiar to you at LSE?*

*Tell us more...*



# The Strategy – what informed us





## The approach

'Top down - bottom up' (Kift, 2009 in Brown & Thomas in Lochtie et al., 2022)

'Affiliative, dialogic approaches to Advising' (McIntosh, Gallacher and Chapman in Lochtie et al., 2022)

- a consistent feature of effective whole of institutional approaches in other universities (Lochtie, Stork and Walker, 2022)
- supported by systems thinking where the principle of self- organisation by those tasked with the implementation is better for addressing the challenge at hand rather than a top- down, 'distant from the activity' direction (Seddon, 2008, p.82 cited in Powell and Prowse, 2022).

*What Works* (Thomas, 2012) emphasised **belonging** and the importance of **relationships** (staff-student, peer-peer, learning communities) in the academic sphere

*What Works 2* (Thomas, 2017) stresses need for **proactive interventions** that are **mainstream, ongoing, monitored & followed up** coupled with an **holistic approach**.

**Academic Mentoring (Personal Tutoring) is a key part of this**

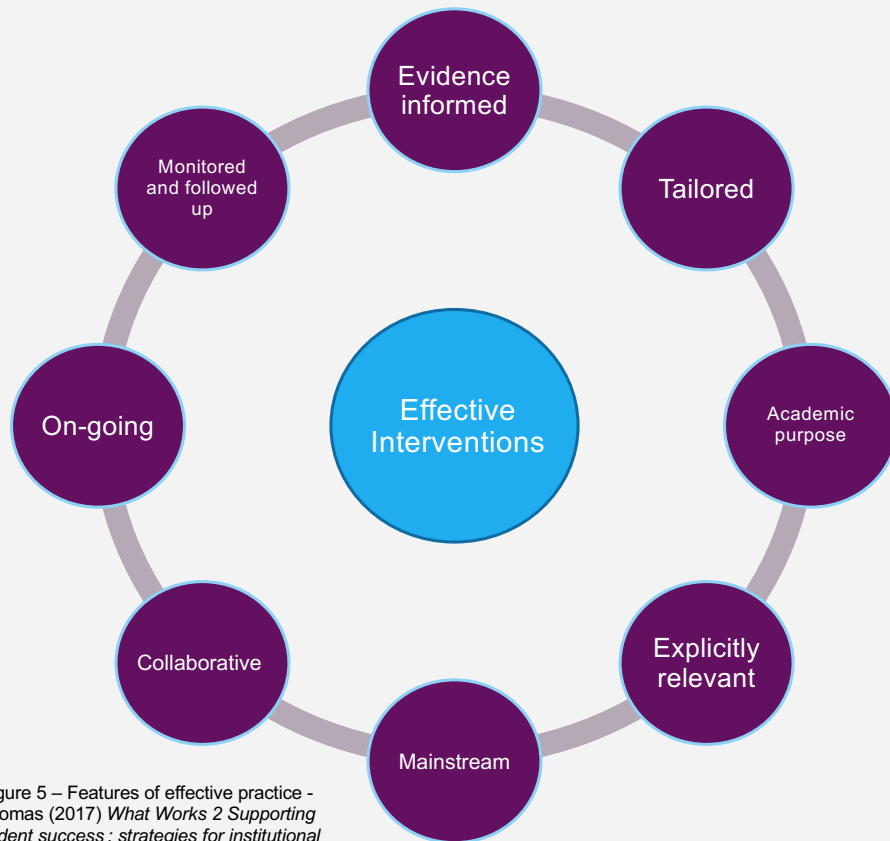


Figure 5 – Features of effective practice - Thomas (2017) *What Works 2 Supporting student success: strategies for institutional change - Final Report* (p.13)

**Its benefits....**

- Improves engagement
- Improves learning
- Supports progression
- Increases motivation and enjoyment
- Boosts confidence
- Improves attendance

(Buskist and Saville, 2004; Benson et al., 2005; Starcher, 2011; Braine and Parnell 2011; Small, 2013; Stork and Walker, 2015; Lochtie et al, 2018; Lochtie et al, 2022)

**What do Academic Advisors want?**

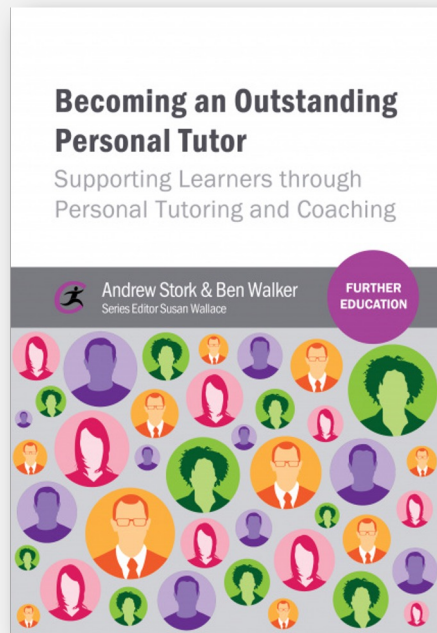
- Role clarity & overcoming the idea it will ‘come naturally’ (Owen, 2002) and ‘tacit understanding’ (Stephen, 2008, p.449)
- Increased confidence & competence (McFarlane, 2016; Race, 2010; Watts, 2011; Ridley, 2006)
- More consistency (Grant, 2006)
- Guidance on boundary issues (McFarlane, 2016; Walker, 2020)
- Overall...developmental not just informational support (Walker, 2020)

**Definitions**

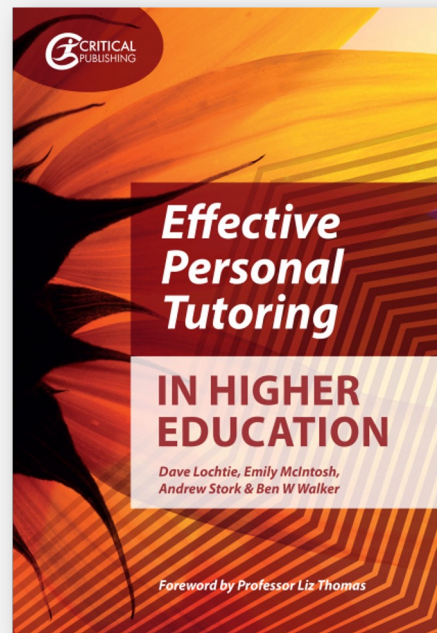
- ‘One who improves the intellectual and academic ability, and nurtures the emotional well-being of learners through individualised, holistic support’ (Stork and Walker, 2015, p.3)
- A single, succinct, one-sentence definition may be too ‘reductionary’ (Wootton, 2007, p.157)
- The lack of an agreed definition or shared understanding of the role and responsibilities of the personal tutor creates some indistinguishable boundaries which must be acknowledged and examined (Wootton, 2006; Mynott, 2016; Yale, 2017)





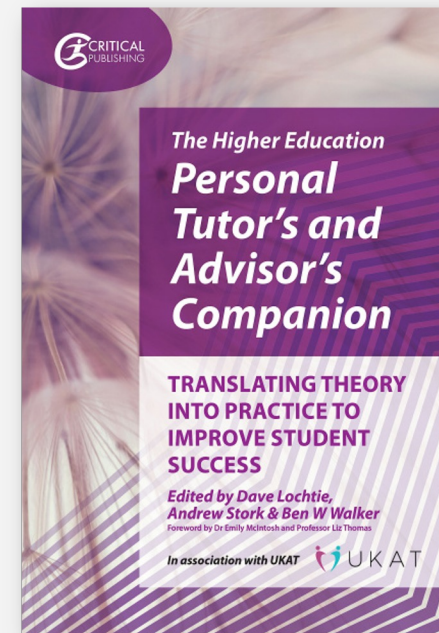


2015



2018

(new edition in 2024 or 2025)



2022



The model

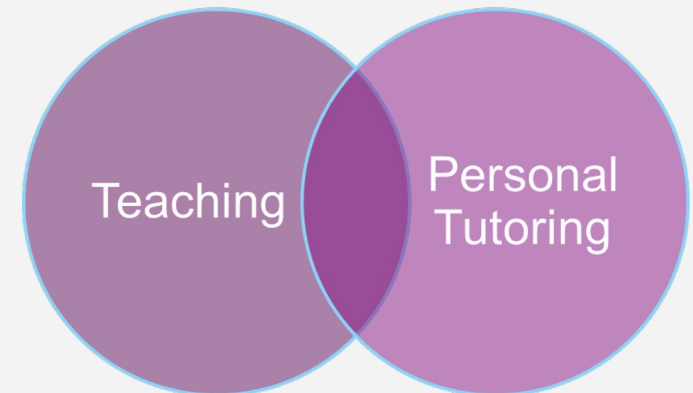
## Leading to a conceptualisation / ethos of Academic Advising

- Advising will vary across disciplines & Faculties
- Not 'one size fits all', rather 'freedom within a framework'
- Therefore, not the *same*, but *equitable* across areas
- A three pronged approach between the University/Educational Development, Faculty and Professional Services

As a form of teaching (relational pedagogy)

*'To re-frame personal tutoring as teaching, rather than looking at it as a separate support system provided by the university [...] we can apply a pedagogic lens to personal tutoring, viewing it as an embedded academic practice [...] important to merge both the pastoral and academic approach for all personal tutors so that, as universities, we reconceptualise personal tutoring as an academic approach to give all students well-rounded support.'*

(AlHakim, 2018, [www.raratutor.ac.uk/personal-tutoring-teaching-student-review](http://www.raratutor.ac.uk/personal-tutoring-teaching-student-review))

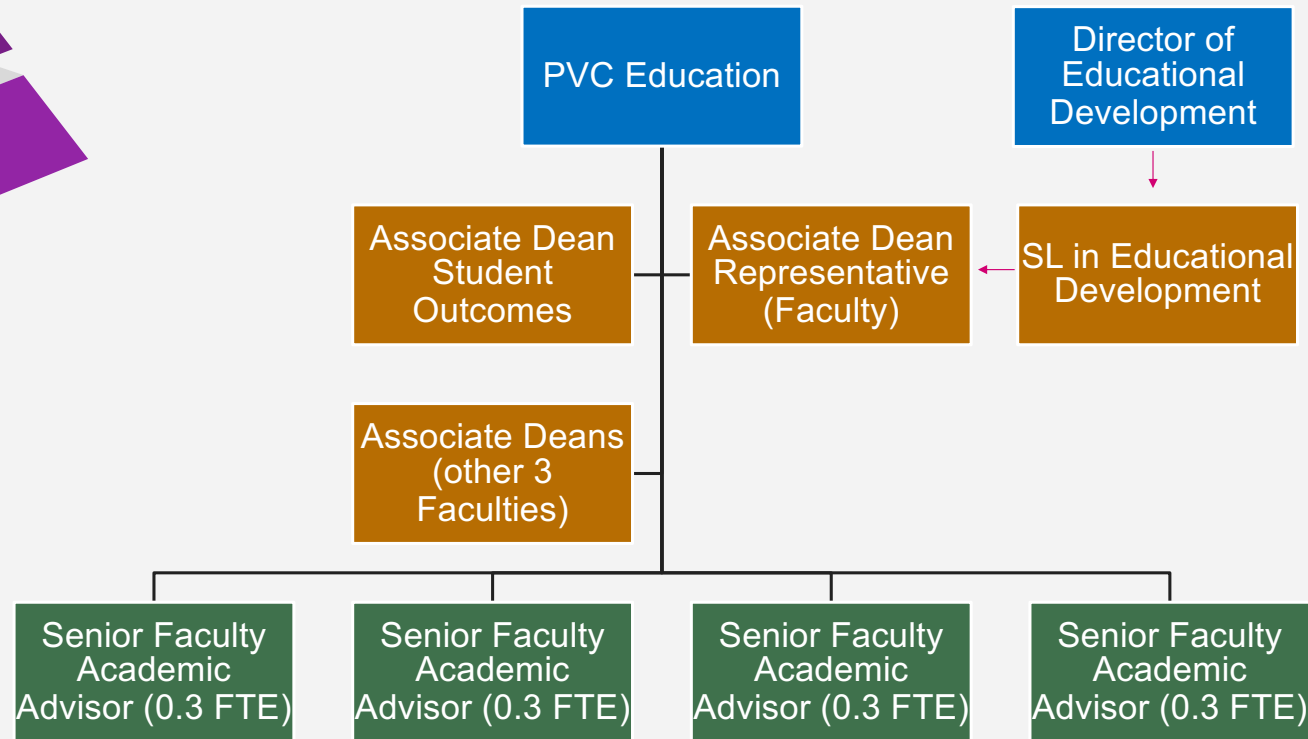


# The strategy - what we did and are doing



# Clear governance

1



*Reporting to Teaching & Learning Enhancement Committees (at Faculty & University level)*



## 2 Effective organisational model, operations and systems

### **Tutorials**

- Timetabled
- Four per academic year
- 4 x 30 mins = 120 mins per annum per student
- In-person or online; group or 1 to 1 (at discretion of programme)

### **Timetabling**

- Through completion of tutorial request form (completion monitored)
- Calendar scanning exercise (sample)

### **Attendance monitoring**

- Common system being used by majority of Faculties

### **Allocation of Advisees to Advisors**

- Aim – equitable (max of 30 per 1 FTE) and early
- Ongoing

### **Referral procedures**

- Improved system using electronic forms & reporting
- Differentiated between immediate risk of harm & other referrals

### **Evaluation**

- Progress reports (standard template) completed by each Senior Faculty Academic Advisor
- Formal reporting to Teaching and Learning Enhancement Committees



## Professional development (CPD), guidance & support for Academic Advisors

**Guidance and support** through [Academic Advising webpages](#) and regular cross institutional communication

### **Professional development (CPD) offer**

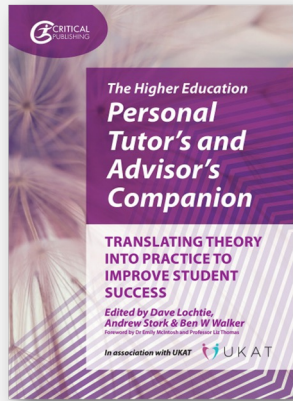
- Mandatory training – ‘Introduction to Academic Advising’ (online asynchronous or taught session for those on PGCert HE equivalent)
- ‘Effective Academic Advising’ (taught)
- ‘Academic Advising - how to respond to students in distress’ (taught)
- ‘Academic Advising Q & A Forum’ (live session with panel of colleagues from Faculty & Professional Services)

### **Topics covered:**

- What is the role of an Academic Adviser and why is it important?
- Academic Advising at Oxford Brookes - approach, commitment and principles
- Tracking and monitoring the engagement of your Advisees
- Effective one to one tutorials and using coaching
- Setting boundaries and referring students to other services
- Content for tutorials - a suggested Academic Advising curriculum
- Sector guidance, resources and professional recognition (UKAT) for Academic Advising



# 'Whole institution' approaches at other universities



Contemporary stories of impact and influence

Published in 2022, comprising 25 case studies written by 50 authors from HE institutions across the UK

Thematic analysis (contained in the book):

1. Models of personal tutoring and advising (*including 'whole institution' approaches*)
2. Personal tutoring and advising practice
3. Supporting students and student populations
4. Development of personal tutoring and advising

Case study	Institution	Whole institution approach
5 - <i>Dissonant discourses: constructing a consistent personal tutoring experience across the whole university</i>	Anonymous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exposing and reconciling wide perceptions of the role between Institutional committees, managers, staff and students</li> </ul>
7 – <i>Developing an effective institutional personal tutoring and development framework to support student success</i>	University of Portsmouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principles of personal tutoring</li> <li>• Ensuring personal tutoring is part of the curriculum</li> </ul>
14 - <i>A 'whole of institution' approach: what does a culture of advising and tutoring really involve?</i>	Middlesex University London	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model of Advising as Pedagogy; flipped approach</li> <li>• Tutorial curriculum</li> <li>• Timetabled</li> </ul>
15 - <i>Levelling up: from reactive to proactive – shifting the narrative of academic tutoring from problems to solutions</i>	University of Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesign of the personal tutoring system through six core principles</li> </ul>
21 - <i>Moving from distributed to centralised academic advising: making the case for change</i>	University of Sussex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributed to a centralised personal tutoring model</li> <li>• Separation of personal tutoring and Faculty responsibilities</li> </ul>

# Findings from evaluation....so far

- Some positive feedback so far from staff and students
- Initial evaluation has taken place through the Senior Faculty Academic Advisors

To date, this has mainly been about reporting on levels of 'compliance' on....

- Timetabling tutorials in staff & student calendars and students been invited
  - A Tutorial Request completed by Advisors, requesting their preferences in terms of group and/or 121 tutorials, online or face to face and preferred days/times
  - Calendar scanning of sample (40 AA calendars per Faculty) to ascertain the above
- Attendance monitoring – use of the common system across Faculties
- Mandatory training

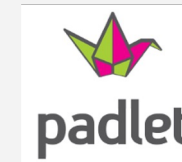
Next steps...

- Quality and sharing of good practice & resources
- Development and use of a tutorial curriculum
- Student experience of Academic Advising tutorials
- NSS responses to questions specifically relevant to academic advising

The key to evaluation and impact?...

- Embedding Academic Advising into Programme evaluation – ongoing

*Reflection 2 - Do you integrate Academic Mentoring activity into programme evaluation? If so, how?*





# Returning to the key challenges

...which we must address and overcome as a community:

- standardisation
- professionalisation
- recognition (both 'institutional' and 'professional' through accreditation)
- status and value

We have looked at ways to progress all of these...

*Reflection 3 – Are there other key challenges? How do we further address the above?*



Thank you  
Any questions?

Ben Walker

Email: [bwalker@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:bwalker@brookes.ac.uk)

LinkedIn: /benwwalker1

X: @benwwalker1

OXFORD  
BROOKES  
UNIVERSITY



THE LONDON SCHOOL  
OF ECONOMICS AND  
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



# References (1 of 2)

- AlHakim, R (2018) Personal tutoring is teaching: A student review. [online] Available at: [www.raratutor.ac.uk/personal-tutoring-teaching-student-review](http://www.raratutor.ac.uk/personal-tutoring-teaching-student-review)
- Benson , A T , Cohen , L A and Buskist , W ( 2005 ) cited in Wilson, J H and Ryan, R G (2013) Professor-Student Rapport Scale: Six Items Predict Student Outcomes . *Teaching of Psychology* , 40 ( 4 ) : 133 – 5
- Braine , M E and Parnell , J ( 2011 ) Exploring Students' Perceptions and Experience of Personal Tutors . *Nurse Education Today* , 31 : 904 – 10 .
- Buskist , W and Saville , B K ( 2004 ) Rapport- Building: Creative Positive Emotional Contexts for Enhancing Teaching and Learning , in Perlman , B , McCann , L I and McFadden , S H (eds) *Lessons Learned: Practical Advice for the Teaching of Psychology* (vol 2 ; pp 149 – 55 ). Washington, DC : American Psychological Society .
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills ( 2011 ) *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* . London : Department of Business, Innovation and Skills .
- Calcagno , L , Walker , D and Grey , D J ( 2017 ) Building Relationships: A Personal Tutoring Framework to Enhance Student Transition and Attainment . *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal* , 1 ( 2 ) : 88 – 99 .
- Ghenghesh , P ( 2017 ) Personal Tutoring from the Perspective of Tutors and Tutees . *Journal of Further and Higher Education* , 42 ( 4 ) , 570 – 84 .
- Grant, A. (2006) *Personal Tutoring: A System in Crisis?* In: L. Thomas and P. Hixenbaugh (eds.) *Personal Tutoring in Higher Education*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 11-20.
- Gubby , L and McNab , L ( 2013 ) Personal Tutoring from the Perspective of the Tutor. *Capture* , 4 ( 1 ) : 7 – 18 .
- Gurbutt , D J and Gurbutt , R ( 2015 ) Empowering Students to Promote Independent Learning: A Project Utilising Coaching Approaches to Support Learning and Personal Development . *Journal of Learning Development in Higher Education* , 8 : 1 – 17 .
- Hodges et al (2020) *The Difference Between Emergency Remote Teaching and Online Learning*. <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2020/3/the-difference-between-emergency-remote-teaching-and-online-learning>
- House of Commons (2008) *Staying the Course: The Retention of Students on Higher Education Courses*. London: HMSO.
- Joordens (2020) *The Great COVID-Forced Migration to Online Learning: Using Learning Theory to Inform Optimal Enculturation*. <https://highereducationconnects.com/covid-online-learning/>
- Kuhn , T ( 2008 ) Historical Foundations of Academic Advising in Gordon, V N , Habley , W R and Grites , T J (eds) *Academic Advising: A Comprehensive Handbook* (2nd ed). San Francisco : Jossey- Bass.
- Lochtie, D., McIntosh, E., Stork, A. and Walker, B.W. (2018) *Effective Personal Tutoring in Higher Education*. Northwich: Critical Publishing. <https://www.criticalpublishing.com/effective-personal-tutoring-in-higher-education>
- Lochtie, D., Stork, A. and Walker B.W. (2022) *The Higher Education Personal Tutor's and Advisor's Companion: Translating theory into practice to improve student success*. St Albans: Critical Publishing. <https://www.ukat.uk/community/professional-development/he-tutors-companion/>
- Lindsay, S ( 2011 ) Do Students in UK Higher Education Institutions Need Personal Tutors? *Learning at City Journal* , 1 ( 1 ) : 40 – 5 .
- McFarlane, K.J. (2016) *Tutoring the Tutors: Supporting Effective Personal Tutoring*. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 17(1), 77-89.
- McIntosh, Steel and Grey (2020) *Academic Tutors/Advisors and Students Working in Partnership: Negotiating and Co-creating in "The Third Space"*. *Frontiers In Education*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.528683>
- Moore, M.G. (1989) *Three types of interaction*. *American Journal of Distance Education*. 3(12). <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/08923648909526659>
- Mynot , G ( 2016 ) Personal Tutoring: Positioning Practice in Relation to Policy . *Innovations in Practice*, 10 ( 2 ) : 103 – 12 .
- Myers, J ( 2008 ) Is Personal Tutoring Sustainable? Comparing the Trajectory of the Personal Tutor with that of the Residential Warden . *Teaching in Higher Education* , 13 ( 5 ) : 607 – 11 .
- Newman, J H ( 2014 ) *The Idea of a University* . London : Assumption Press.
- Neville, L ( 2007 ) *The Personal Tutor's Handbook* . Basingstoke : Palgrave Macmillan .
- O'Hara, M and Curzon, R Mark O'Hara "It's not about what it is. It's about what it can become!" UK Advising and Tutoring Conference, Online, 4 April 2022.
- Owen, M (2002). 'Sometimes You Feel You're in Niche Time': The Personal Tutor System, A Case Study. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 3(1), 7-23.
- Palmer , S and Szymanska , K ( 2008 ) *Cognitive Behavioural Coaching: An Integrative Approach Handbook of Coaching Psychology: A Guide for Practitioners* . New York : Routledge/ Taylor and Francis Group .

## References (2 of 2)

- Race, P. (2010) Making Personal Tutoring Work. Leeds: Leeds Met Press.
- Ralston , N C and Hoffshire , M ( 2017 ) An Individualized Approach to Student Transition: Developing a Success Coaching Model in Cintron , R , Samuel , J and Hinson , J (eds) Accelerated Opportunity Education Models and Practices (pp 34 – 50 ). Hershey, PA : IGI Global .
- Ridley, P. (2006) 'Who's Looking After Me?' – Supporting New Personal Tutors. In: L. Thomas and P. Hixenbaugh (eds.) Personal Tutoring in Higher Education. Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 127-136.
- Robinson , P ( 2012 ) Leeds for Life, Preparing our Students for their Future . Academic Advising Today, 35 ( 2 ) [online] Available at: <https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Leeds-for-Life-Preparing-Our-Students->
- Ross , J , Head , K , King , L , Perry , P M and Smith , S ( 2014 ) The Personal Development Tutor Role: An Exploration of Student and Lecturer Experiences and Perceptions of That Relationship . Nurse Education Today , 34 ( 9 ): 1207 – 13 .
- Ravis, V. 1996. Personal Tutoring and Academic Advice in Focus. London: Higher Education Quality Council.
- Small , F ( 2013 ) Enhancing the Role of Personal Tutor in Professional Undergraduate Education .Inspiring Academic Practice , 1 ( 1 ): 1 – 11 .
- Smith , E ( 2008 ) Personal Tutoring: An Engineering Subject Centre Guide . Leicester : Higher Education Academy .
- Starcher , K ( 2011 ) Intentionally Building Rapport with Students . College Teaching , 59 ( 4 ): 162.
- Stephen , D E , O'Connell , P and Hall , M ( 2008 ) 'Going the Extra Mile', 'Fire- fi ghting', or Laissez- faire? Re- evaluating Personal Tutoring Relationships within Mass Higher Education . Teaching in Higher Education , 13 ( 4 ): 449 – 60 .
- Swain , H ( 2008 ) The Personal Tutor . [online] Available at: <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/the-personal-tutor/210049.article>
- Thomas , L , Hockings , C , Ottaway , J and Jones , R ( 2015 ) Independent Learning: Student Perceptions and Experiences . York : Higher Education Academy .
- Thomas , L , Hill , M , O' Mahony , J and Yorke , M ( 2017 ) Supporting Student Success: Strategies for Institutional Change. What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme . London : Paul Hamlyn Foundation .
- UK Advising and Tutoring (UKAT) (2019) Professional Development Framework for Advising and Tutoring. Available at: <https://www.ukat.uk/professional-development/professional-framework-for-advising-and-tutoring/>
- Walker, B.W. (2018) A defining moment for personal tutoring: Reflections on personal tutor definitions and their implications. IMPact The University of Lincoln Journal of Higher Education Research 1(1): 104-118. <http://eprints.lincoln.ac.uk/31913/>
- Walker, B.W. (2020a) Professional standards and recognition for UK personal tutoring and advising. Frontiers in Education, <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2020.531451>
- Walker, B.W. (2020b) Tackling the personal tutoring conundrum. Active Learning in Higher Education. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787420926007>
- Whitmore , J ( 2002 ) Coaching for Performance: GROWing People, Performance and Purpose (3rd ed). London : Nicholas Brealey Publishing .
- Wootton, S. (2006). Changing practice in tutorial provision within post-compulsory education. In L. Thomas & P. Hixenbaugh (Eds.), Personal tutoring in higher education (pp. 115–125). Stoke on Trent, UK: Trentham
- Wootton , S ( 2007 ) An Inductive Enquiry into Managing Tutorial provision in Post- Compulsory Education. PhD. Sheffi eld Hallam University. [online] Available at: <https://shura.shu.ac.uk/20569/1/10701216.pdf>
- Yale , A ( 2017 ) The Personal Tutor– Student Relationship: Student Expectations and Experiences of Personal Tutoring in Higher Education . Journal of Further and Higher Education , 1 – 12 .doi:10.1080/0309877X.2017.1377164
- Zepke , N and Leach , L ( 2010 ) Beyond Hard Outcomes: 'Soft' Outcomes and Engagement as Student Success . Teaching in Higher Education , 15 ( 6 ): 661 – 73 .