

## SAPL Tutoring Handbook – Planning Degrees

This guide sets out the requirements for tutorials and some suggestions on how to run tutorial sessions. It applies to the following degree programmes:

- Masters of Planning
- BA Urban Planning
- Geography and Planning
- Architecture and Urban Planning

Tutorial systems in Architecture are managed separately and not covered here.

The guide contains:

- i) Tutorial requirements, suggestions for agendas and activities, and sabbaticals
- ii) PEC procedures
- iii) Guide to module selection
- iv) Guide to changing courses
- v) Attendance requirements and procedures

### i. Tutorial requirements, suggestions for agendas and activities, and sabbaticals

This guide is intended as a helpful, school-level interpretation of the university-wide regulations on tutorials. For detailed queries about the role of tutors/rights to change tutors, etc. you should refer to the University's [Framework for Personal Tutoring](#). It is important to remember that these are minimum requirements and that tutees should be encouraged to attend tutorial meetings as they provide an important record of their academic and pastoral issues which can be used to enhance references and evidence any issues required student support recommendations of PEC adjustments. The onus is largely on tutees to be proactive in attending these meetings and accessing the support available to them.

The minimum requirements on tutors and tutees can be summarised as:

- Stage one, semester one (UG and PGT) - students should meet their tutor twice. The first meeting is in induction week, the tutor must timetable the second meeting. Tutors must remember to record both meetings in e-portfolio.
- Semester two of stage one and onwards - at least one tutorial per semester to be arranged by the tutor.
- Students to be pro-active in arranging further meetings as needed. A tutor may also initiate an additional meeting where there are reports of unsatisfactory attendance or progress from module leaders or in the event of any other cause for concern.

Tutors are free to arrange group meetings or individual meetings.

The requirements above translate into a programme of tutorials as set out in the table below:

	Semester one	Semester two
Stage one	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One meeting in induction week (compulsory)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One meeting offered by tutor (attendance recommended)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Once more (arranged by tutor; attendance recommended)</li> </ul>	
Stage two	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One meeting offered by tutor (attendance recommended)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One meeting offered by tutor (attendance recommended)</li> </ul>
Stage three	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One meeting offered by tutor (attendance recommended)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One meeting offered by tutor (attendance recommended)</li> </ul>

In short, tutors must initiate at least one meeting per semester with students in all year groups. All Stage one students will have an additional, compulsory meeting in induction week. If any student does not attend this compulsory meeting and does not respond to the offer for the following meeting, tutors should chase this in the first instance and, if this does not work, contact the Senior Tutor.

Additionally, it is now a requirement that, for undergraduate students, tutors record both the meetings that are offered and those that have taken place in ePortfolio. For taught postgraduates, the University only requires that the offer of meetings is recorded in ePortfolio. If a meeting does not take place, the reasons for this should also be recorded. However, if the meeting was offered within ePortfolio using meeting slots and the student chooses not to pick a time to meet, this is regarded as a sufficient reason why the meeting has not taken place. Only if a meeting slot is not created within ePortfolio should a reason be recorded elsewhere why a meeting has not taken place.

### *Suggested activities for the tutoring meetings*

<p><b>Meeting one</b></p>
<p>The purpose of the first meeting of stage one is for students and staff to get to know one another as a means of encouraging openness and approachability; it is an opportunity for tutors to try and learn the names of their new tutees and find out some basic things about them. One option is to provide a form in advance to help students let you know of any issues, to help you get to know them and to flag anything confidential that may not be suitable for a group meeting. This form also serves as an agenda. A suggested form is provided in appendix one but this can be drawn on very loosely and informally.</p> <p>This is also a chance for tutors to find out in more detail why students chose Newcastle to study and how the city and university has compared with their expectations. There is usually lots to talk about. Tutors can check that students have suitable accommodation, a GP and know their way around. On the academic side it might be useful to ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do they understand blackboard, the role of module outlines, timetables, etc...</li> <li>- Have they found the library, taken a book out?</li> <li>- Do they know what a PEC form is?</li> <li>- Intro to RTPi and benefits</li> </ul> <p>There is also the potential to recommend something to read from the library with the chance of reflecting on it at the next meeting.</p>
<p><b>Meeting two</b></p>
<p>This meeting can be used to gain further reflections on the course as a whole and to address any areas of misunderstanding or uncertainty that students may have about their life in the university. How has the semester gone so far and how does the course/ university life compare with expectations? Are they managing their time effectively? Are they aware of opportunities to socialise and make friends both on the course and more widely? Do they understand their assignments and the spread of marks across them? Are they clear on grading levels and implications of a fail mark? Do they need help approaching a module leader?</p> <p>There may be less to talk about in this meeting than in meeting one and the meetings are close together. One suggestion is to circulate a couple of news articles to tutees in advance and ask them to read up on the subjects (e.g. Brexit, Planning Reform). This can be useful to encourage the habit of reading and keeping up with current affairs and for probing and supporting the development of analytical skills, making links with the approach students will need to take towards coursework. It also gives you something to talk about if students feel they have no major issues to discuss.</p> <p>Architecture and Urban Planning students currently have to choose one from four module options in semester two of stage one.</p>

### Semester two meetings

One way of using semester two meetings is to time them to coincide with the return of marks from semester one. This is a way of giving students the opportunity to work through any unexpected marks, unclear feedback or to raise skills and learning issues where they feel their performance could have been better. Tutors could ask students to bring all their feedback to the meeting. Grammar or referencing could be discussed here or as a separate agenda item.

In stages one and two, it will be necessary to explain module options and help students to choose, including discussing possible future specialisms. Please see the separate section on module options within this guide.

In stage one, accommodation and location choices could be discussed. Reflections on first year of university, how have they settled, has it been an enjoyable experience? What do they have planned for summer? What do they hope to see from the course in stage two? Are they looking forward to it, do they feel engaged?

In stage two, accommodation choices and summer work experience or summer plans could be discussed, reflections on field trip- was it fun? How could it have been improved? Dissertation issues such as data collection over the summer/ pilot studies. Progress on assignments.

In stage three, it may be useful to talk through options for employment or further study and to discuss students' views on the planning profession. Do they feel ready for the working world? Is there anything further that could be done to help them prepare? Possibly work out the percentage they need from their last assignments to achieve their desired grade.

If it is felt necessary, there is the potential to supplement these discussions with a short exercise on grammar or study skills. For example,

- Use of apostrophes and hyphens
- Sentence and paragraph structure
- Topical events relating to core modules

### Meetings at the start of stage two and three

In stage two:

Discussion of summer break, did they do anything planning related or keep abreast of planning in the news? It may be useful to ask how the previous year went and if it was an enjoyable experience. What do they hope to see from the course in the coming year, which modules did they choose and what do they hope to get out of these modules? Are they looking forward to the course and do they feel engaged? Review of feedback (perhaps ask them to bring previous year's work again) and whether it was expected or surprising. Possible use of personal action plans to resolve stand-out points. Dissertation topics.

In stage three:

As above, review of any work experience undertaken during the summer. Discuss applications for fourth year placements if applicable or preparing for postgraduate applications.

### *Sabbaticals*

Sabbatical cover for tutoring will at times be necessary, and this will mean that students get a different tutor for a certain period of time. Tutors must inform their tutees of the period they will be on sabbatical and the person who will replace them during that time. They must also liaise with the relevant programme secretary to transfer the ePortfolio link across to the staff member covering, and back to themselves when they are back.

## ii. PEC procedures

Information about PEC and the various forms can be found here

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/student-resources/help/>

Under PEC regulations introduced for 2016/17 students are encouraged to discuss significant personal circumstances (illness, bereavement, significant personal difficulties, etc.) with either their personal tutors or the Student Wellbeing Manager in the first instance. Tutors can advise about the various sources of help available (wellbeing, writing development centre, etc.) and if PEC is relevant. Increased onus is, for example, being placed on student support recommendations over PEC adjustments. If the student believes a PEC may be relevant the tutor should advise and **make a short note of the discussion on e-portfolio**. The note can be used as evidence in the future in the event that a minor issue develops into something more significant and provides a record of unfolding events in the case of any later dispute. If PEC is considered appropriate tutors may wish to provide a statement of support, which will be taken in to account when the case is considered. There is now a strong presumption that PEC forms received after assessment dates, and certainly after exam boards, will not be accepted therefore early action is required and to be encouraged. Tutors should reinforce the importance for students of logging attendance through student notification of absence forms as this now provides an important evidence base for PECs.

PEC forms should be submitted via S3P and will be considered by the PEC committee, which is a small group appointed by the board of examiners. The PEC Committee can agree applications for extensions, etc. via email but meets in person to consider recommendations for the board's discretion, which can lead to the award of a higher degree classification than would otherwise have been the case. The PEC Committee is made up of two Senior Tutors, the Director of Planning and Urban Design, the Student Wellbeing Manager, and a Senior Tutor from another School (external member).

The PEC Committee is authorised to approve a number of adjustments in accordance with University procedures. These are:

- a. Extensions within and beyond those permitted as part of the Submission of Work policy;
- b. Exemptions from minor elements of assessed work (normally a maximum of 20% of the module in question);
- c. Deferral of a formal examination or assessment attempt to the next normal occasion;
- d. Extraordinary examinations outside of the regular assessment periods
- e. Permission to repeat tuition in residence
- f. Setting aside previous attempt(s) at a module, Stage or Semester and allowing repeat tuition if required.

And

- g. to provide boards of examiners with an assessment of the scope and severity of mitigating circumstances affecting a student, which have not been addressed by a-e above (i.e. to recommend the use of discretion)

## iii. Guide to module selection

Details of module choices are provided in the course handbooks, which are available here

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/apl/students/handbooks/>. Tutors will need to become familiar with the general scope of the options within these. Students make their module choices on the S3P system. Currently there are no caps on the modules which students can choose from. There is a window during which

modules can be chosen, usually opening after the Easter vacation, although modules can still be changed after this time. Students must be informed that, after the first week of teaching, modules can only be changed at module leader and DPD discretion and it is the student's responsibility to catch up on any missed work if the module change is confirmed.

For Masters in Planning, Urban Planning and Geography and Planning courses, tutors are asked to flag up module options with tutees during the relevant semester two tutorial meeting (currently stage two for MPlan/UP and stages two and three for GAP). Degree Programme Directors will then hold discrete meetings to advise students in more detail on options and address any detailed questions.

For Architecture and Urban Planning there are a lot of options and pre-requisites. The Degree Programme Director will therefore deal with all AUP options in a discrete session and queries about options should just be directed to him.

A guide, containing brief summaries of each optional module option available to those on planning and geography and planning courses is available from the DPD.

#### **iv. Guide to changing courses**

Requests to change courses normally happen during stage one.

- Planning students who have completed stage one and are looking to move onto Geography and Planning will need to have passed all modules. They will also need Geography at A-Level as this is an entry requirement for Geography and Planning.
- Planning students who have completed stage one and are looking to move onto Architecture and Urban Planning stage two can do so provided that they have passed all the modules and obtained a mark of 60% or higher in TCP1018 Design Awareness & Communication. If not, there is the possibility of transfer back into stage one of AUP.
- Geography and Planning students who have completed stage one and are looking to move directly into planning stage two can do so provided that they have passed all modules.
- Moves from Geography and Planning to Architecture and Urban Planning, and vice versa, are unusual and should be referred to the DPD of the destination course.

Changing courses after stage two, i.e. to complete stage three on a different course, is not normally allowed and students who have a keen desire to do this and are persistent should be referred to the destination DPD for detailed advice on the difficulties posed.

#### **v. Attendance requirements and procedures**

University regulations on attendance are available here

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/students/progress/Regulations/SPS/Attendance/>

Students are required to attend all elements of their programme of study (i.e. lectures, seminars, tutorials, etc.) during term dates. Where students are absent due to illness or extenuating circumstances they must submit a Student Notification of Absence form through S3P. In cases where students are absent for good reason and do not do this they may still be subject to disciplinary action so it is important that tutors reinforce the need to use these forms. Going on holiday does not constitute a legitimate reason for absence, but in more extraordinary cases such as trips away for weddings or funerals, the absence may be deemed legitimate.

Attendance is monitored and low attendance is a disciplinary matter. Responsibility for addressing poor attendance lies with the Degree Programme Director who may ask tutors to meet with affected students initially and to attempt to contact them via university email.

Any further questions about tutoring can be addressed to the Senior Tutor, currently Diego García Mejuto ([diego.garcia-mejuto@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:diego.garcia-mejuto@ncl.ac.uk)).

**Appendix one: form to use prior to meeting one (induction)**

**Welcome, and well done for being accepted to study at Newcastle University! Now that your course has begun, you will have been assigned a personal tutor, who will be your first point of contact with the university and the person to go to discuss any problems you're facing, or to talk through your personal and academic development while at university.**

**We would like you to fill in the following form, and hand it in to your school reception at least a week before your meeting with your personal tutor. This form is designed to help you think about what you want from university, and to let your tutor know a bit about you before your first meeting.**

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Student Number</b>	
<b>Tutor's Name</b>	

*Please tell us a bit about yourself. This could be your hobbies, interests, reasons for choosing your course/Newcastle University, etc.*

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*Are there any issues/problems you have that you feel your personal tutor should know about? These could be academic or personal issues that may affect your studies.*

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*What skills are you hoping to gain from your time at university? Please also include here any career aims/ambitions you may have here (don't worry if you don't have any right now!).*

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*Do you feel that you have any specific weaknesses or areas in your studies that you think need improving upon during your time here?*

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*What do you feel are your strengths, either personally or academically?*

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*Is there anything in particular you would like to discuss with your personal tutor in your first meeting? This can be anything from help understanding your timetable to talking about your expectations of university.*

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**Thank you very much for taking the time to fill out this form, and please return it to your school's reception as soon as possible.**