



School of English
Tutoring Statement
for Undergraduate and Masters students

Summary

1. The School of English recognises all students as individuals. It aims to ensure that all students reach their full potential, both academic and personal, during their time in the School of English.
2. Students are individual learners, and the School prioritises small-group teaching, regular meetings with personal tutors, and office hours to ensure a sense of community and contact at all points of the degree.
3. The School aims to enhance student learning through a range of innovative and tailored teaching and assessment patterns geared to developing student skills and experience, and to supporting individual learners through tutorial time, online support and regular detailed feedback, both formal and informal.
4. Students who are experiencing difficulties are identified and assisted in receiving appropriate support in several ways, including through the Personal Tutor/Programme Director system, the peer mentoring programmes (both undergraduate and postgraduate) and through disclosure to the Senior Tutor, Disability Liaison Officer or administrative staff. The School works closely with central support services to help students through individual circumstances.
5. The School supports the personal development of individual students outside scheduled teaching sessions through opportunities for internal and external work placements, study abroad, Nottingham Advantage Award modules, volunteering projects and personal careers advice offered by the Arts Faculty careers team.

School of English

Tutoring Statement (UG, PGT onsite and PGT distance learning)

The School recognises that each of its students is an individual with their own distinct academic needs and learning styles, even as part of a larger academic community. Our mission is to foster the personal development of every one of our students through regular contact with academic staff both individually and in groups, and to furnish opportunities for students to build academic relations with particular members of staff that are sustained over their period of study.

The following statement demonstrates how these aims are met, and how each of the seventeen specific outcomes of the University's principles of tutoring is being delivered within the School. In many cases there is overlap between the categories, which the School believes is both desirable and necessary for the full integration of tutoring within the organisation of the School.

1. The student should feel acknowledged, recognised and accepted within their school/department as an *individual* with distinct academic needs and preferences.

The Personal Tutor is the single most important factor in facilitating the School's relationship with each student as an individual. All undergraduate Single and Joint Honours students, including those away on a semester or year abroad, students from UNNC on 2+2 programmes and international exchange students taking Level 3 modules in English are assigned an academic member of staff who acts as their Personal Tutor.

The Tutor is the student's academic guide and main point of contact with the School. The Tutor sees their tutee formally at the beginning and end of each semester, and, for undergraduates, during Directed Studies Week, in order to review academic progress, and is also available for informal meetings throughout the academic year. The Tutor will offer advice in cases where personal issues may be adversely affecting studies, and will support the student through the process of applying for extenuating circumstances when assessment deadlines cannot be met. They will always take the most sympathetic view possible, maintain confidentiality and where appropriate put the student in touch with the University's extensive system of personal and academic support.

The School makes every effort to ensure that students remain with the same Personal Tutor throughout their programme, in order to build the kind of personal and professional relationship that comes from an extended period of working together. In cases where leave patterns make this impossible, there is a process of formal transition during which incoming tutors are briefed regarding any ongoing health issues or any issues that the students would like to be passed on to their new tutor.

The Personal Tutor for PGT students is their Programme Director (Pastoral). For PGR students, the first point of contact for welfare support is their supervisory team and then the PG Student Advisor. The PG Student Advisor (Pastoral) sets aside a regular, designated weekly office hour specifically for PGT students. For the PG Student Advisor's own PGR students, the Senior Tutor is the first point of contact for welfare support. Another tie between PGT students and School is the Dissertation supervisor, with whom the student works closely in formulating, researching and writing the project. For all PG students, the Senior Tutor is also available as a further source of support.

The School also has a large number of PGT students enrolled on Distance Learning courses. All distance learning students are now allocated a personal tutor from the pool of teaching staff available to these programmes. The system of studying through intensive one-to-one e-mail dialogue with a full-time member of staff recognises and acknowledges the student's individuality, whose needs and interests shape the staff-student relationship in a very positive way. As a result, the convenor of each module also has oversight of enrolled students during their period of study in liaison with the Director of Distance Learning. Again, the Senior Tutor is also available as a further source of support.

- 2. The student should feel part of the school/department *community*, experiencing frequent contact with academic staff on an individual or small group basis and building relations with particular members of staff over an extended period.**

The School recognises the importance of welcoming new students even before arrival by sending them information about the academic content of their modules, together with reading lists where appropriate. Students are therefore encouraged to begin to explore their subject before teaching begins, which the School then builds upon in Week One with a detailed induction programme of course-specific teaching and learning support sessions, and, for undergraduate students, taster lectures.

All Single Honours first-year undergraduate students are enrolled in Academic Community: a 20-credit module which is a keystone of the School's tutoring provision. They follow this module with their Personal Tutor, meeting throughout the year on a fortnightly basis with fellow tutees in groups of approximately 8. The module aims to engage new English students with the role and purpose of the university, utilising the entire School teaching team in team-taught lectures to engage students with the social and cultural questions that inform the academic community as well as with practical academic skills. This foundation-stage introduction to both School and discipline provides a sound basis for proceeding to Years Two and Three.

Joint Honours students at present do not study Academic Community, primarily because the timetabling and credit allocation of the JH programmes cannot accommodate an extra 20-credit module. However, JH students have access to the Academic Community module resources on Moodle, and are strongly encouraged to attend lectures and workshops, undertake the exercises that accompany each unit and discuss progress with their tutor. We have a dedicated JH Tutor, who liaises with other Schools where we have JH students, who JH tutees may also go to for help.

One-to-one academic contact with all students is also achieved through regular weekly office hours offered by the entire teaching staff, full and part-time, as well as by teaching affiliates. These hours are used both for discussion of academic work and for meetings with personal tutees as the students require. They are well used by undergraduates and postgraduates alike, particularly around times of submission and return of coursework.

We also run a Peer Mentoring scheme for all new first year undergraduate, and incoming UNNC 2+2 students. Students opting into the scheme will be given a mentor from the current Year 2/3 who is responsible for

acting as a regular point of contact throughout the first semester, with the oversight of a dedicated member of academic staff. Postgraduate Taught students peer mentors are allocated from the PGR Community. Conscious of the need to maintain contact with our students who study abroad for either a semester or a full year, each of these students is assigned a personal tutor who keeps in touch with them during the year. They also receive regular contact from Student Services concerning aspects of their course and are sent the School e-newsletter on a regular basis.

PGT students are introduced to the School through general and course-specific induction meetings and social events arranged during the first week. They are encouraged to attend the weekly Postgraduate Seminar organised and run by research students. PGT students develop close academic relationships through small teaching classes and with their chosen dissertation supervisor.

Community amongst the School's Distance Learning students is fostered by sending the School's regular PG e-newsletter to all students; by holding a Postgraduate Learning Community Forum specifically for Distance Learning students; and by running an annual Summer School in June where distance learners can spend a week attending seminars and lectures, and socialising with fellow students and staff. All DL students also have access to the DL discussion forum (The Distance Learner Community).

More general contact between all students and the School is maintained through the School's e-newsletters, sent on a regular basis throughout term-time to all students by e-mail. This keeps all students up-to-date with upcoming social and academic events. The School also has a Facebook page, DL Facebook group and Twitter account which alert students to events, staff publications and research, and important information. Students have a designated common-room in the School, and there is also a flourishing undergraduate English Society, run by students for students, which encourages cohesion and a sense of group identity by organising regular social and course-related events.


3. The *personal development* of the student should be promoted; leading to improved communication skills and greater confidence in presentation and dealing with the unfamiliar.

All School of English modules, except subsidiary modules, are either partly or fully taught in seminar or workshop format, offering students in all years the chance to express and explore ideas that they have formulated from lectures and their own reading, and to engage in intellectual dialogue. The School believes passionately in the value of learning in this way, as English is a discipline that by its very nature encourages and thrives on informal dialogue and intellectual exchange. Office hours are another way in which the School promotes such exchange, which culminates more formally in regular one-to-one supervision for final-year students undertaking a dissertation. Materials generated as part of Academic Community provide a grounding in study skills and are available to all new undergraduate students.

The School also runs an annual Symposium which is open to all UG and PGT students, giving them the opportunity to present an aspect of their research/learning from one of their modules or their dissertation. PGT students are members of a student-organised weekly Postgraduate Seminar, designed to give every PG student the opportunity to present their work to their peers, and to facilitate informal discussion in a supportive and friendly environment. The Seminar is also intended as a means of maintaining a postgraduate community and providing a regular point of social contact. Its format varies widely through the year, offering a mixture of Discussion Fora; PG Presentations (both formal and informal, including practice conference papers, posters, and presentation of work-in-progress); Skills Training; Question and Answer sessions; Career and Networking Surgeries; and straightforward Socials.

4. Students should receive prompt, helpful and detailed *feedback* on their assessments, in a manner that enhances learning and improves future assessment performance.

The School recognises that feedback is most effective when it is tailored to each individual student. To that end, we are committed to providing students with prompt, helpful and detailed feedback on all assessed coursework in the form of a substantial summary sheet tailored to the Arts Faculty marking criteria, as well as comments and corrections written directly into the text itself. Feedback on marked essays and assignments is always given by that module's teaching team and often by the student's own seminar tutor. Students are encouraged to obtain face to face, verbal feedback in individually-scheduled meetings to supplement their written feedback, in order to clarify certain issues and offer further help and advice. Students are also offered feedback from convenors for their exams.

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The School is committed to turning around coursework within 15 working days, in adherence to the University Quality Manual:

<http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/academic-services/qualitymanual/assessmentandawards/feedback-to-students.aspx>.

Students also have extensive module-specific opportunities for formative feedback ahead of submitting their work, either through peer-peer discussion, formal drafts or preparatory unassessed submissions. Working closely with students in ways that are both formative and progressive is a key part of the School's mission to produce confident and articulate individuals who are capable of presenting a rational and logical argument that is at once critical and creative.

As well as module-specific feedback, students' personal tutors at both UG and PGT level will discuss a student's overall performance on formal end-of semester Feedback Days, alerting the students to recurring comments that might be addressed more holistically. This has the added benefit of tying the pastoral and tutorial elements of the personal tutor role together to ensure students get individually tailored attention. The Undergraduate Student Handbook which is on-line on Moodle provides detailed explanations of marking criteria for exams, essays and oral presentations. Marking criteria are specifically addressed from Year One in Academic Community and through individual consultations.

5. Students struggling with aspects of individual modules, or more generally with their programme of studies, should have clearly signposted and ready access to a reasonable level of *academic advice and support* designed to remedy their difficulties.

Students struggling with a module will first contact their seminar tutor. If this is inappropriate or the issue is not resolved, the student may contact (depending on the issue): the Module Convenor, the Personal Tutor, the Programme Director, the Senior Tutor, the Director of Teaching, the Disability Liaison Officer or the Head of School.

The School publishes a list of appropriate contacts and office hours on the School of English UG Community Hub or the PGT Community Page, as well as details of central support services, and Peer Mentors are also briefed with this information. In all cases the student is welcome to contact the staff member they feel most comfortable communicating with; this is stated in the UG Student Handbook for School of English Personal Tutees, which all students receive on arrival in September. Where students have ongoing problems or long-term health conditions affecting their studies, the Personal Tutor/Welfare Officer/Senior Tutor and/or Disability Liaison Officer will hold scheduled interim meetings to ensure that the issues are kept under control.

Issues with modules or programmes can be discussed at either the [Undergraduate or Postgraduate Learning Community Forum](#), as appropriate. All have a membership of student-elected representatives who consult with and report back to the group they represent. The Fora meet three times a year and related focus groups looking at specific issues are also frequently deployed as a mechanism for the exchange of ideas between staff and students. Recommendations from these meetings must be raised at the School's Teaching Committee and will be addressed appropriately in the light of School and University policy. If a change of policy is required, it will go to the School's Management Committee for ratification.

6. Students should receive the level of support in developing their *study skills* necessary to perform satisfactorily on their programme of studies.

Personal Tutors provide study-skills advice in Academic Community meetings, as discussed under Section 3 above. Module booklets and the Assessments Handbook are other sources of subject-specific academic guidance, particularly in relation to coursework. The School also offers input for all final-year students who are doing an undergraduate Dissertation.

All PGT and doctoral students are actively encouraged to take advantage of the wide range of skills and training courses offered by the Graduate School.

The School operates intensive forms of feedback designed to encourage students to flag up areas where they would like more support. Feedback from SEMs is published on Moodle publicly with responses from tutors, raising student awareness of how the programme is adjusted with their input.

Students are also given details of study skills advice available to them via Academic Services in the Handbook for School of English Personal Tutees, which all students receive on arrival in September.

7. Students with *personal circumstances* adversely affecting their studies should feel able to make these known to the school/department without difficulty and to be directed to the appropriate support service.

Students who are struggling for non-academic reasons are encouraged to discuss their difficulties, whether personal, medical, or otherwise with a number of possible individuals: the Personal Tutor, the PG Student Advisor (Pastoral), the Disability Liaison Officer, the Senior Tutor, or indeed any member of staff whom they feel they know best. It is desirable to have many possible sources of support, in cases where, for e.g., a female student may not be comfortable speaking confidentially to a male Personal Tutor. There are both male and female members of staff in key pastoral roles for this purpose. All members of staff are familiar with what support mechanisms are available through the University and, in the awareness that they are themselves not trained counsellors, will direct the student to the dedicated support services as appropriate and necessary. All these services are also sign-posted on the School Moodle Community pages for students to access. Advice is also given in the Handbook for School of English Personal Tutees, which all students receive on arrival in September. Peer Mentors are also briefed to advise students of appropriate forms of support and encourage proactive contact with Personal Tutors.

8. Students should receive the necessary *careers information, advice and guidance* to equip them to make informed choices about their future, to understand the options open to them, and to take advantage of available opportunities.

The School has a member of staff designated as Careers Officer, with whom students are welcome to discuss their future plans. They may also be directed to the Faculty of Arts careers team, based at the University Careers and Employability Service but available through regular drop-in sessions in the Trent Building throughout each semester, for an extensive range of careers-oriented services including CV writing sessions, interview advice, presentations by major employers and general career advice. In Week One, the School organises two careers talks for returning students and the Careers Service run the Arts Faculty Futures Festival day for all Arts students. Later in the academic year two drop-in sessions are held for students who are looking for help and support with their career choices, and/or writing of CVs and job/funding applications. The School also offers a Nottingham Advantage Award module focusing on Careers Skills.

9. Students should be made aware of the importance of developing and articulating their *employability skills*, including possible participation in the *Nottingham Advantage Award*.

The School offers a wide range of activities for developing students' employability skills. It invites students to take advantage of any of the following opportunities:

- The School of English Literacy Support Project

This scheme has run for many years and gives undergraduates the opportunity to volunteer in one of several Nottingham schools to improve the literacy levels of local children who are not achieving minimum national standards. Students receive training to work as academic mentors, assessment coaches, classroom assistants, and organisers of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Volunteers in the Literacy Support Project also have the opportunity to complete a Nottingham Advantage Award module related to their volunteering experience. This module allows students to get official accreditation for their volunteering practice in a way that will appeal to employers.

- Career Skills for English Students

This module is available as part of the Nottingham Advantage Award scheme, and is aimed primarily at second-year undergraduates, allowing time for them to begin career-related applications. The module helps

students to think clearly and dynamically about personal development, employability, career paths, and job seeking skills. A range of activities are undertaken on the module, although most sessions take the form of interactive workshops. Advice and guidance is provided throughout the module by employers, staff from the Careers and Employability Service, alumni, and the module convenor, who is the Careers Liaison Officer in the School of English.

- Literacy Support Project Student Ambassador

The School appoints an undergraduate Student Ambassador each year in association with the Literacy Support Project. This is a position of heavier involvement and responsibility than volunteering, and is hourly paid in recognition of the student’s contribution to the organisation and running of the project. While it is open to all undergraduate English students, students need to be current or previous volunteers through the Schools Literacy Support Project. It is also possible for two students to share this role.

- Project-based dissertations

There are number of practice-based dissertations available each year through which final-year undergraduates are invited to engage with a wide range of external and internal partners in the creative and commercial industries as well as within the education and public sectors. Students spend the Autumn semester completing the practical and observational work for the dissertation and the Spring evaluating and writing up this research with their nominated supervisor. These projects aim to encourage students to develop skills of applied research which are not only attractive to employers but also offer the kinds of direct “hands-on” experience not always perceived to be part of the broad arts base of the traditional literature degree.

- Placement schemes

The School has dedicated members of staff, both academic and administrative, for creating opportunities for English students to develop vocational skills and experience work-related learning relevant to their study of English through placements with local creative industry and other employers. Students have been able to take up placements with a wide range of internal and external partners from theatres to heritage organisations, community groups to marketing agencies.

- Peer Mentoring for incoming students

The opportunity to volunteer as mentors to first year undergraduate students and visiting students from UNNC is a valuable way for home students to broaden their interpersonal communicative skills. This opportunity is complemented by an NAA module designed to help students reflect on their volunteering experience.

- D. H. Lawrence

The School contributes heavily to the annual month-long Lawrence Festival that takes place in Eastwood each September, running reading groups, delivering academic papers and directing sessions on Lawrence at Eastwood Comprehensive School. There are plenty of opportunities for students to get involved with helping to run this festival which would enhance their employability for similar events after graduation. The School also works throughout the year with Durban House and the D. H. Lawrence Heritage trust to promote understanding and appreciation of Lawrence's place within the culture of the region.

- Student ambassadors

Throughout the year the School draws steadily upon its undergraduate and postgraduate student body for volunteers to act as student ambassadors for the School and the University, most often during Open Days and Induction Weeks. Students are able to develop this ambassadorial role in ways which can be attractively presented on their CVs.

- Upendo Junior School, Kenya

Undergraduate and postgraduate students have the opportunity to get involved with a school in Kiminini, a remote village in Kenya, run by an ex-PhD student who graduated from the School of English in 2007. The School makes every effort to continue its support of Upendo, organising events to raise money each year to cover a teacher's salary, and encouraging students in their own fundraising activities. Although at the moment there is no more financial help available for student trips, the School will give practical support and advice to any student who wishes to help with this remarkable project and can fund themselves. This is a fantastic opportunity which benefits the student aid-worker and Upendo school children alike.

10. Students should receive appropriate advice and support when considering *changing their programme of study* or contemplating *leaving the University*.

The School's tutoring provision ensures that students who are struggling academically can be readily identified. Most often, a seminar teacher will notice repeated absences from class, and this information is passed on to the Programme Director who will work with the student and their Personal Tutor to identify and assist with problems. Other staff members who might become involved as necessary are the Senior Tutor, the Programme Director, the Director of Teaching, the PG Student Advisor, or the DLO. If the issue is financial, the student will be directed to the University's Financial Support team.

11. Students should be prepared for *periods of study away from their home campus* and appropriately supported during those periods.

The School has in place a Programme Director 2+2s and Exchange Students who liaises with the universities in Europe and North America with whom it has exchange agreements under the Erasmus and U21 schemes. This individual works closely with the student, from the application process and choosing of modules, to the period of the exchange itself. They remain the student's point of contact, in addition to the Personal Tutor, typically via email correspondence.

12. The procedures for submitting *extenuating circumstances* regarding assessments should be straightforward and well publicised.

Students are informed of procedures for extenuating circumstances by their Personal Tutors at their first meeting. These are also set out in the online Student Handbooks on Moodle, in the Assessments Handbook, in the Handbook for School of English Personal Tutees, and signposted from Moodle. They are also explained in Freshers' Week information; and flagged at appropriate times (e.g. assessment periods) in the fortnightly School e-newsletter, which each student receives via e-mail.

13. Disabled Students and those with Specific Learning Difficulties or a long term medical condition should be clear as to the support they will receive and where it is available, and the support should be in line with University policies.

The School has a Director of Student Support (Disability Liaison Officer), who provides a point of reference, advice and guidance for students and staff in the School about support for students with disabilities, learning difficulties and long term physical and mental health conditions. The DLO is part of a network that meets regularly to share information and good practice, and also liaises with both the University's Academic Support and the Disability Support teams, as necessary, in relation to individual students and general policies and procedures. Disability and Academic Referrals are sent to personal tutors and relevant teaching staff including seminar tutors, with regard to any recommended adjustments and support that needs to be in place. Advice is also given in the Handbook for School of English Personal Tutees, which all students receive on arrival in September.

14. The procedures for submitting *academic appeals and complaints* should be well publicised and staff should be aware of their responsibilities within these procedures.

The School hopes that students do not find themselves in a position where they are dissatisfied with provision at the University. However, if they do have cause to complain, they are directed to the University's Code of Practice for Student Complaints, as set out in the University Quality Manual. There is a hyperlink to the manual in the online information in the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Handbooks on the School's intranet website.

Complaints associated with module delivery and teaching can be expressed in the Student Evaluation of Modules (SEMs) that each undergraduate and postgraduate student is invited to complete for every module in which they are enrolled. Convenors give feedback to the SEMs via written comments on matters raised, which are both posted on the Moodle module pages. All members of staff take student comments into consideration when delivering the module again. Student Evaluation of Teaching (SETs) occurs bi-annually for each module. These are not publicly responded to but are seen by the Head of School and Director of Teaching and any matters of serious concern are taken up with the relevant member of staff.

Students can also pass on complaints to their year-group representative, who will put the item on the agenda of the next Undergraduate or Postgraduate Learning Community Forum. Major recommendations for changes

responding to student complaints must be discussed at Teaching Committee, and if a change of policy is required, it will go to the School's Management Committee for ratification.

In cases where a student may feel uncomfortable making a formal complaint verbally or in writing, s/he can discuss the problem either with the Personal Tutor, the MA Degree Convenor, the Senior Tutor, or the Head of School. In every case the relevant member of staff will take the matter forward in confidence, and if appropriate, inform the student of the outcome.

15. Students being subjected to the *academic offences* procedure should receive clear information and advice.

The School of English flags the importance of avoiding plagiarised or derivative work from the start of the student's degree, both undergraduate and postgraduate. The seriousness of this matter is discussed at first year induction meetings and a specific Academic Integrity session is held during the first few weeks of the academic year; it is carefully explained in the Assessments Handbook which is issued to every student each year and made available on the student intranet, and which gives advice on how to research, write and present assessed coursework for the School of English. Another source of help is through Moodle which offers a TurnItInUK test your text facility for avoiding plagiarism.

The School requires that all coursework at both undergraduate and MA level be submitted through the Turnitin system via Moodle. Any student whose work is suspected of plagiarism or other academic misconduct will be contacted by the relevant Exams Officer and asked to attend a formal School Academic Misconduct meeting with the relevant Exams Officer, Senior Tutor, and Director of Teaching. The student is invited to seek advice and support in all such instances from the Students' Union Education Advisor and is provided with a link to the Academic Misconduct Policy in the Quality Manual. Procedures for hearings are reviewed annually in light of consultations with the Students' Union and Academic Services. The outcome of the hearing will be decided at the end of the meeting and communicated informally to the student at the meeting, before being put formally in writing to the student.

16. Students should receive relevant *health and safety* guidance, especially in laboratory or workshop-based subjects.

Safety information is given to new students during inductions. It is available on the School intranet and is also displayed on the Health and Safety noticeboard in the School corridor. Students are directed to read the School's safety policy in conjunction with the University Safety Handbook.

The Head of School is ultimately responsible for the adequacy and effectiveness of the School's arrangements for health and safety. S/he is assisted in performing the duties associated with these responsibilities by the School's Safety Officer.

17. Students should be directed in a timely and appropriate manner to *University support services* for assistance with all of the above matters as necessary.

The electronic Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks on Moodle give a comprehensive list of University support services available to all students, together with explanations of the support offered and hyperlinks to the University website for each service. Specifically, students' attention is drawn to: services for students who have a disability, dyslexia and/or a long-term medical condition; Academic Support; Financial Support; the University Counselling Service; the International Office; the Centre for English Language Education (CELE); the Language Centre; the Students' Union; the Careers and Employability Service; the Graduate School; and the University Chaplaincy.

Often it is either the student's Personal Tutor or seminar tutors who will be alerted to any difficulties first, either when the student proactively approaches a tutor for help; when they request extenuating circumstances for coursework; or, when module tutors report absences from seminars and tutorials (as explained under no. 1). The DLO and Welfare Officer provide advice to students and tutors about the types of support available across the University which students can access. All academic and welfare staff, in the understanding that they are not trained counsellors, will always direct students who need help to the University's support services as necessary. Advice is also given in the UG Student Handbook of Personal Tutoring, which all students receive on arrival in September.