

Academic Tutoring Policy

1 Introduction

York St John University (YSJU) is committed to supporting all our students to succeed whatever their educational background and personal circumstances. Our academic tutoring system is designed both to support our students to achieve their academic and personal aspirations, and also to facilitate the vital learning support role of our academic staff.¹ A personalised, purposeful and professional relationship, academic tutoring supports students as they develop their [graduate attributes](#). The ongoing and collaborative partnership between academic tutor and tutee / tutor group is designed to connect students and staff securely to the YSJU community, foster an enduring sense of belonging and support students through their course and beyond.

2 Purpose and aims

2.1 What is the aim of this policy?

This policy aims to ensure that there is a mutual understanding between our students and staff about the purpose and aims of our academic tutoring system, the principles on which it is based, and the complementary responsibilities staff and students share. The policy applies to all undergraduate and postgraduate taught students (afterwards 'students') and all academic staff who serve as academic tutors.

2.2 What is academic tutoring and why do we provide it to students?

Academic tutoring is a partnership-based academic support system which facilitates a personalised, purposeful and ongoing relationship between students and members of academic staff. YSJU is committed to supporting our students' learning journey, developing – through dialogue – appropriate strategies for achieving and surpassing their goals whilst at YSJU and beyond. Academic tutoring is one of the most impactful ways the University has of helping students achieve these aims and of adding value to their educational experience. As such, academic tutoring is recognised within Category 1 on YSJU's [Academic Work Allocation Model](#) (AWAM) as part of the formal scheduled teaching (total c.450 hours per year). Two decades of scholarly research supports us when we say that students are more likely to feel connected to their university community, succeed in their studies, achieve their personal and professional aspirations, or meet career goals, by accessing an academic tutor's support.²

2.3 Who is an academic tutor and what is their role?

When they accept a place to study at YSJU, students will be allocated a named member of academic staff with knowledge of their course and/or discipline as their academic tutor. Information about this allocation can be found on our [e:Vision system](#). Academic tutors will guide their students through their course and support their academic and professional development in relation to their studies. Therefore, tutors should be students' first point of contact if they have concerns or experience difficulties which directly affect their studies and their ability to engage with their academic work.

It is the role of the academic tutor to provide an ongoing link between students and the University, providing practical information about how the University works and what students need to study successfully. At YSJU, academic tutors work collaboratively with our specialist student support services and require up-to-date, working knowledge of these so they can provide students with information on how to access such specialist support (signposting). Tutors are also well placed to provide students with general support as they prepare to transition into employment or move on to further study by writing references and signposting to relevant specialist careers services (e.g., [LaunchPad](#)).

Academic tutors are there to support their students through each stage of their educational journey at YSJU. Although their principal role is to provide academic support, they can provide a listening ear and a support system for any struggles students have at university within certain boundaries (see below), whether they are personal or academic.

¹ At YSJU we use the terms 'academic tutor' and 'academic tutoring'. You will also see the terms 'personal tutor/ing' and 'academic advising/adviser' used across the HE sector in the UK and globally.

² For example, Thomas, L. (2006) Widening participation and the increased need for personal tutoring. In Thomas, L. and Hixenbaugh, P. (eds) Personal tutoring in higher education. Stoke-on-Trent: Trentham Books Ltd; Lochtie, D. et al (2018) Effective Personal Tutoring in Higher Education. St Albans: Critical Publishing.

3 Principles

3.1 What principles underpin academic tutoring at YSJU?

At YSJU we recognise that high-quality, timely and effective academic tutoring:

- Enables both tutees and tutors to participate proactively in a purposeful, collaborative, and supportive relationship which involves mentoring and / or coaching (as appropriate) and promotes student growth and development.
- Entails mutual responsibility for both tutors and tutees, with significant responsibility resting on students to be self-directed, proactive and independent.
- Requires mutual respect and understanding to work effectively (for example, recognition of the range of responsibilities and demands facing both students and staff).³
- Is clear as to its aims, purposes, and ways of operating, and provides timely and accurate guidance on university regulations, processes and allied support services.
- Monitors student progress and features proactive interventions to promote students' continuation on their courses and success in gaining qualifications and awards.
- Works most effectively when it features both one-to-one and group tutorials, set within the context of a collaborative, whole-university approach to student support.
- Supports students to engage positively with their assessed work and with the feedback they receive, helps them to understand general areas for improvement, and provides opportunities for dialogue about improving academic performance.
- Helps students to review their learning and formulate practical plans for future academic, personal, and professional development.
- Develops students' confidence and supports them to find their place in the YSJU community and beyond.
- Uses data, evidence and professional development activity to enhance student learning, tutors' mentoring and / or coaching skills, and improve the academic tutoring process.

4 Responsibilities

4.1 What are the responsibilities of the academic tutor?

At YSJU we are committed to supporting each other to succeed ([YSJ 2026 Strategy Refresh](#)). Our model of academic tutoring is one of partnership, based on mutual respect and dialogue with complementary responsibilities for both students and staff.

Academic Tutors will:

1. Act as tutees' primary point of contact, providing general, scheduled support for their academic studies and development during their time at YSJU ([The Student Charter, While you are studying](#)).
2. Be available to meet with their tutees regularly throughout their course through one-to-one and/or group tutorial sessions as appropriate to level and programme (see Appendix 1 for a suggested undergraduate model).
3. Inform students about and advise them (when required) on how to access specialist support services such as [Wellbeing Support](#) (York link), [London-campus student guidance and Wellbeing Support](#) (wellbeing.london@yorks.ac.uk) (London links); [Disability Support](#), [Funding advice](#) (finance@yorks.ac.uk), [fee payments](#) (EU / international) and [Visa Advice](#) (visa@yorks.ac.uk); [Library, Study and Digital Skills](#), [international Student Support](#), [Insessional Support and Language Development \(ISLD\)](#), [Accommodation](#), [Careers and Placements](#) (York link), [Careers and Placements](#) (London link), etc. (signposting).
4. Be proactive in contacting their tutees regularly, including (where possible and appropriate) before and on arrival, at the start of their course, at key transitions in their studies and if they cease attending timetabled teaching sessions without explanation (to listen carefully, to understand why and to signpost students to other forms of support where needed).
5. Initiate and foster discussions about students' personal and professional development planning, and encourage them to complete their Employability Profile as the basis of future references.
6. Write references of a professional standard to support applications for further study or employment, as agreed with their tutees and within the timeframe requested by employers, Higher Education Providers, etc.

³ Academic Tutors and tutees should read and understand the terms of the following policies as appropriate to them and follow the principles outlined: [Student Dignity and Respect Policy](#) and [Staff Dignity at Work Policy](#).

7. Respond⁴ within two working days to email communications or meeting requests.
8. Keep accurate records of meetings using the Engage system⁵ in terms approved by tutees wherever this is practical.
9. Be clear with tutees that disclosures made to and recorded by them are regarded to have been made to the University and that there are defined limits as to the extent to which information can be regarded as confidential.⁶
10. Undertake Continuous Professional Development and maintain familiarity with the provision of University services, in order to provide students with information on how to access such specialist support (signposting). In turn, it is the University's responsibility to provide appropriate training and regular updates to ensure such levels of knowledge and develop tutors' skills.

Academic tutors are not expected to:

1. Provide their tutees with specialised or specific medical / health advice or counselling (i.e., academic tutors are not expected to go beyond the boundaries of their roles or expertise in relation to non-academic matters or needs).
2. Dispense highly detailed specialist academic advice (e.g., on particular assignments that tutees are preparing) or mark work set as part of a module assessment. Students should seek input from module tutors for such guidance.
3. Be available to support tutees outside of normal business hours and / or their typical working patterns.
4. Be formally allocated or be informally undertaking levels of academic tutoring which risk unbalancing individual workloads and / or degrading the student experience and overall quality of the tutoring system. Normally, an individual tutor would expect an allocation of between 30 and 35 tutees. This number will differ according to cohort size and programme, etc. and should be reflected in wider consideration of category 1 hours in AWAM.

4.2 What are the responsibilities of the academic tutee?

To ensure the success of the academic tutoring relationship, **tutees should:**

1. Take responsibility for resolving problems considerately and ethically, and seek support when they need it,⁷ including meeting with their Academic Tutor ([The Student Charter, While you are studying](#)).
2. Respond to requests from their tutor to discuss any unexpected absence from timetabled classes / overall course so that their situation may be recognised, understood, and relevant support can be put in place.
3. Engage fully in any preparatory activities, come to tutor meetings ready and willing to contribute actively.
4. Support their peers in tutorial groups, engage fully and behave in a professional manner in group tutorial meetings and activities, remaining mindful at all times of the importance of maintaining appropriate boundaries and confidentiality.
5. Keep academic tutor appointments (whether one-to-one or group sessions), inform tutors in good time if unable to attend, and keep in touch with tutors using an agreed method (face-to-face, Microsoft bookings, email, Microsoft Teams, phone, etc.).
6. Be prepared to discuss academic-related difficulties with, and provide all relevant information to, their academic tutor when asking for help so the tutor can signpost the tutee to the most appropriate support.
7. Update their Employability Profile regularly and share reflections on their personal, academic and professional development, strengths and weaknesses, with their tutor to enable them to write future references.
8. Agree with their academic tutor how the outcomes of tutorial discussions will be taken forward, follow through on the actions for which they have taken responsibility (including setting goals within Engage or their Employability Profile, as appropriate), and be ready to report back on progress at their next tutorial meeting.

⁴ This may be a holding response to let you know that your request has been received and is receiving attention. The YSJU website tells students staff will "[r]espond to you within two working days, normally between the hours of 9:00pm and 5:00pm. This may be a holding email if, for example, a reply requires discussions to take place with others. However, the holding email will indicate a time-frame within which you can expect a full reply." (<https://www.yorks.ac.uk/schools/school-admin/information-for-students/#email-communication-with-academic-schools>).

⁵ NB. That these records will be available to all university staff with approved access.

⁶ There are exceptional circumstances when confidentiality in the academic tutoring relationship needs to be extended; in other words, when tutors need to share information tutees give them with others, within and/or outside the University. This is to comply with the law or with other university policies such as our safeguarding policy. These exceptions might include situations in which a person's life is in danger (the tutee's, tutor's or someone else's), a situation in which there is an active or historic serious crime, potential terrorism or radicalisation, or issues affecting the safe practice of those on professional training courses. This list is not exhaustive. See also Section 9 of this policy on safeguarding and confidentiality.

⁷ Further detail about the University's position on student responsibilities may be found in the following: [The Student Charter, Introduction](#); [Student Dignity and Respect Policy](#); [Graduate Attributes](#).

5 Process

5.1 What should tutees expect of the academic tutoring process at YSJU?

The YSJU Academic Tutoring process:

- Students will be provisionally allocated an academic tutor prior to beginning their studies at YSJU (i.e., between confirmation and clearing and the start of the academic year).
- Tutors should meet with their new tutees at the start of their courses (Welcome week/ Week 0 of semester unless arriving late) and with their existing tutees on their resumption of their studies at the University.
- Tutees will typically be invited to five or six individual academic tutorials per academic year together with three group tutorials, all scheduled at points known to be important for student (re)engagement (e.g., start of academic year, before / after vacations and / or assessment periods). It is recognised here that there will be variations (e.g., in frequency and timing), to accommodate students' needs and the structure and requirements of individual programmes (including cohort size). Such diversity is acceptable as long as exact arrangements are communicated clearly to students and there is no risk of disadvantage. Tutorials may be undertaken face-to-face or remotely (e.g., using Microsoft Teams). (The table in Appendix 1 outlines how a schedule of individual and group tutorials might be planned across an undergraduate programme to cover key points of transition and re-engagement.) ()

5.2 What topics will academic tutorials cover?

Tutees should expect a range of topics to be discussed, appropriate to the stage they have reached in their learning journey, and for their tutor to refer to a range of attendance, engagement and achievement data about them to help both parties evaluate how the tutee is progressing.

- Topics an Academic Tutor might cover in discussion include:
 - o When and how they can be best contacted by tutees
 - o Educational background and subjects studied (what tutees particularly enjoyed)
 - o Employments (termtime, placements, internships, etc.)
 - o Activities and achievements outside academic work that might contribute to Employability Profile (e.g., volunteering, office holding in student clubs and societies, etc.)
 - o Tutee's degree course and pathways through this, including optional modules, study abroad and end-of-course dissertations / projects
 - o The academic curriculum (and the hidden curriculum)
 - o Study skills / educational guidance including strategies for success at key points of transition (between semesters, years, etc.)
 - o Other university resources and teams that support student success such as [Wellbeing Support](#) (York link), [London-campus student guidance and Wellbeing Support \(wellbeing.london@yorks.ac.uk\)](#) (London links); [Disability Support](#), [Funding advice \(finance@yorks.ac.uk\)](#), [fee payments](#) (EU / international) and [Visa Advice \(visa@yorks.ac.uk\)](#); [Library, Study and Digital Skills](#), [international Student Support](#), [Insessional Support and Language Development \(ISLD\)](#), [Accommodation](#), [Careers and Placements](#) (York link), [Careers and Placements](#) (London link), etc.
 - o Performance in assessment and discussion of feedback received on modules
 - o A tutee's personal, educational and professional aspirations and levels of confidence about future employment, further study, etc.
 - o Building up the Employability Profile
 - o Awareness of relevant student surveys – e.g., the YSJU Experience Survey (YES), National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), etc. – and other appropriate ways of feeding back on the academic tutoring system
- Other areas that might be covered:
 - o Legal regulations and duties relating to academic tutoring such as privacy, confidentiality and disclosure and safeguarding and how these might affect tutees / tutors
 - o University policies, procedures, rules and regulations
 - o The University's mission, vision, values and culture
- An electronic record will be made on YSJU's student support system, Engage, after each tutorial interaction between tutor and tutee. Tutees can expect their tutor to discuss what they record with them and make an effort to ensure that they are happy with it.
- If students have queries about arrangements for academic tutoring, they should talk to their tutor in the first instance and then either their Course Lead or Associate Head of School. In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to change academic tutor allocations (e.g., if an academic member of staff is going to be away for a sustained period or leaves the University). In these circumstances, students should be reassured and kept informed of changes in a timely manner.

Further guidance on tutorial timing, topics, questioning techniques can be found in the Teaching and Learning Enhancement team’s resources to support academic tutoring (e.g., [‘Tutoring Talking Points’](#)).

6 Record keeping

- 6.1 All records will be kept in line with the University's Data Protection Policy: <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/data-protection>.
- 6.2 All records will be kept securely and kept only as long as necessary in accordance with the University’s retention schedule: <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/records-management/>.

7 Monitoring and review

- 7.1 This policy is overseen by the Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Head of Teaching and Learning Enhancement on behalf of the University. Monitoring and review will be managed by the Head of Teaching and Learning Enhancement and the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Team.

8 Recognition

- 8.1 Academic tutoring is recognised at YSJU as a valuable part of an academic’s role. There are opportunities for students to provide feedback directly to their academic tutor as part of their ongoing dialogue, and general feedback on student support at the University can be given via relevant student surveys. All members of the University – staff and students – can nominate individual academic tutors for a YSJU Award every year.

9 Safeguarding and disclosures /confidentiality and information sharing

- 9.1 Academic tutors who are involved in supporting students who are under 18 years of age on the first day of the month in which their course commences need to ensure they work in cooperation with local and institutional safeguarding officers and follow specific, appropriate measures to safeguard those students which may include undertaking Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) at the appropriate level.
- 9.2 Academic tutors should ensure they understand what factors lead to a student aged over 18 being classified as ‘an adult at risk’ (see [Safeguarding Policy](#), section 6) and act according to the University’s Safeguarding Policy.
- 9.3 If any person with whom an academic tutor is working is in immediate danger or at risk of harm to themselves or others, the academic tutor should contact emergency services and, if the person/persons at risk is on campus, inform Security staff.
- 9.4 Academic tutors with concerns about any children or adults under their pastoral care should promptly consult the local safeguarding officer or deputy safeguarding office, and report to the appropriate person / body (see [Safeguarding Policy](#), section 27).
- 9.5 The University has, in the exercise of its functions, a duty placed upon it by Section 26 of the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 to have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism. The University regards its Prevent duty as part of its community safeguarding responsibilities to protect the welfare and safety of its students. Academic tutoring is one way in which this wellbeing support for students is offered. If Academic Tutors have concerns under the Prevent duty, they should follow the guidance on raising these in the [Safeguarding Policy](#), section 38 – 42 and Appendix C.

Associated links: <https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/university-secretary-office/documents/uso-site/Safeguarding-Policy-2022.pdf>;
<https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/policies-and-documents/>;
<https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/schools/programme-admin/information-for-students/#email-communication-with-academic-schools>

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Appendix 1

Suggested schedule for a typical UG programme:

Individual tutorials: 5/6 per year	Group tutorials: 3 per year <i>Two of these to include time for tutees to populate their Employability Profile</i>
Tutorial 1: Week 0 / 'Welcome Week' (new starters) or Week 1 (returning students)	Group Tutorial 1: start of each year <u>Year 1:</u> Introductions, explanation of role and relevant areas of support
Tutorial 2: Prior to Christmas vacation	Discussion of best ways of keeping in touch <u>Year 2:</u> recap on progress and look forward to what is expected in year two <u>Year 3:</u> reflect on progress during year two and look forward to what is expected in year 3, sharing and supporting any anxieties or concerns
Tutorial 3: Re-engagement meeting in January / February (discussion of Semester 1 assessment / Semester 2 modules)	Group Tutorial 2: after first assessment results <u>Year 1:</u> Academic progress and support Time management Module choices
Tutorial 4: Prior to Easter vacation	Summer internship plans <u>Year 2:</u> Timed to support a discussion of options <u>Year 3:</u> Feedback, time management, aspirations after graduation
Tutorial 5: Re-engagement meeting after Easter vacation	Group Tutorial 3: summer <u>Year 1:</u> reflect on the first year including experiences, progress, and plans for year two
Tutorial 6: End of year review	<u>Year 2:</u> progress towards year three / end-of-year project plans <u>Year 3:</u> reflections on university experience, references, options for further study

Suggested schedule for a PGT programme (London/International):

Individual tutorials: 5/6 per year	Group Tutorials: 3 per year	
<i>To include time for tutees to complete their Employability Profile</i>		
Tutorial Number	September Intake Year 1	January Intake Year 1
1: Week 0 / 'Welcome Week' (new starters) or Week 1 (returning students)	Group Tutorial 1: start of the 1st semester <u>Semester 1:</u> Introductions, explanation of role and relevant areas of support; discussion on best ways of keeping in touch; Student Charter – their roles & responsibilities; who to contact if they have serious problems.	Group Tutorial 3: start of the 1st semester <u>Semester 1:</u> Welcome back to teaching, Academic progress to date & support/signposting to relevant areas; work placement plans for Year 2 if on two-year programme
2: Prior to Christmas vacation OR weeks 3, 5, 9, 11 based on Visa attendance data	Ask for reasons for low/non-attendance; log interaction on Engage AND Attendance Data spreadsheet for UKVI compliance	Ask for reasons for low/non-attendance; log interaction on Engage AND Attendance Data spreadsheet for UKVI compliance
3: Engagement/Re-engagement meeting in January / February (discussion of Semester 1 assessment / Semester 2 modules)	Group Tutorial 2: after first assessment results <u>Semester 2:</u> Academic progress and support/signposting to relevant areas: wellbeing, academic skills training/1-2-1 writing tutorial, resubmission support, careers & employability, etc.	Group Tutorial 1: start of the 2 nd semester <u>Semester 2:</u> Introductions, explanation of role and relevant areas of support; discussion on best ways of keeping in touch; Student Charter – their roles & responsibilities; who to contact if they have serious problems.
4: Prior to Easter vacation OR weeks 3, 5, 9, 11 based on Visa attendance data	Ask for reasons for low/non-attendance; log interaction on Engage AND Attendance Data spreadsheet for UKVI compliance	Ask for reasons for low/non-attendance; log interaction on Engage AND Attendance Data spreadsheet for UKVI compliance
5: Re-engagement meeting in May / June (discussion of Semester 2 assessment / dissertation/Capstone progress)	Group Tutorial 3: after second assessment results <u>Semester 3:</u> reflect on the first two semesters including experiences, progress with dissertation/ Capstone module; work placement plans for Year 2 if on two-year programme.	Group Tutorial 2: after first assessment results <u>Semester 3:</u> reflect on the first semester including experiences, progress with dissertation/ Capstone module Academic progress and support/signposting to relevant areas: wellbeing, academic skills training/1-2-1 writing tutorial, resubmission support, careers & employability, etc.
6: End of year review		
Year 2		
1: During Q1 of Placement	Check on attendance & progress made in role; think about reflection in role	Check on attendance & progress made in role; think about reflection in role
2: During Q2 of Placement	Check on attendance & progress made in role; work on BCP	Check on attendance & progress made in role; work on BCP
3: During Q3 of Placement	Check on attendance & progress made in role; BCP submission	Check on attendance & progress made in role; BCP submission