School of GeoSciences: Student Support Implementation Update

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Staff Planning

- Senior Tutor appointed (Professor Simon Harley)
- Deputy Senior Tutor appointment under consideration by HoS and relevant Head of Institute
- identifying staff who will be Personal Tutors in progress; intended to have this decided by early May with each PT having a normal maximum of 30 students
- ‘Personal Tutor’ will be regarded as a more specialist position than a current DoS with a more select group of academic staff taking on the role at any one time; a smaller number of PTs will facilitate training, sharing of experience and exchange of best practice, and integration with the Student Support Coordinators
- job description for Student Support Coordinators (SSCs) (2 posts) have been graded (level 6); posts submitted to PRAF procedure; anticipated internal advertising in early May with post holders being appointed for a July start
- reconfigured job descriptions have been approved for existing Course Secretaries (remaining at grade 5) to ensure that their roles are coordinated with those of the SSCs in supporting students and teaching

Proposals on Personal Tutor – Tutee meetings

- development of detailed plans for ‘activities’ in PT/T meetings and their pattern throughout the academic year is scheduled for May once PTs have been appointed as it is intended that PTs will be closely involved in the process; it is envisaged that each of the three degree streams in the School (Ecological and Environmental Sciences, Earth Sciences and Geography) will develop discipline-specific plans based on a broad across-School template

Tutoring Statement

- a tutoring statement will be developed with the close involvement of Personal Tutors once they are appointed (see above)
- the statement will acknowledge the disciplinary diversity in the School by developing activities and schedules that are appropriate to each of the School’s three degree streams
- where appropriate and feasible the tutoring statement will also be informed by the findings of a current Higher Education Academy funded project awarded to Dr Sue Rigby (‘Improving Employability of Students in a Practical, Field Based Discipline, Through the Introduction of a Personal Tutor System’)
Division of Responsibilities Across Roles

- Personal Tutors will focus on providing academic guidance to students, but will provide pastoral support where appropriate, and normally in discussion with the relevant SSC.
- Student Support Coordinators (SSCs) will oversee administrative procedures and will be responsible for the carrying out of the great majority of them.
- SSCs will be the normal point of contact for pastoral care and will liaise closely, as appropriate, with PTs on pastoral care issues with respect to individual students.
- SSCs will be responsible for coordinating student support and for ensuring coherence between academic guidance and pastoral support.
- SSCs will assist in providing a consistent level of student support through the monitoring of PT/T meetings and the following up of non-attendance.
- SSCs will advise students and staff on regulatory issues and requirements, including advice to the Senior Tutor and Deputy Senior Tutor on curriculum and progression cases.
- the Senior Tutor will oversee PTs at one of the School sites (initially KB) and will deal with curriculum approval and progression issues for students on programmes based at one of the School sites (initially Ecological and Environmental Sciences and Earth Sciences programmes).
- the Deputy Senior Tutor will oversee PTs at one of the School sites (initially the central area) and will deal with curriculum approval and progression issues for students on programmes based at one of the School sites (initially Geography programmes).

Communication Plan

- the School’s Staff Information Booklet and Undergraduate Degree Programme booklets will be appropriately revised once the details of the new student support system are agreed.
- the Teaching Organisation website will provide clear guidance on roles and appropriate contacts.
- the Teaching Organisation will write to all existing students (years 2-4) to advise them of the student support changes in conjunction with University level correspondence; students will be notified of the name and contact details for their PT and SSC, and where possible students will be allocated to the same academic staff member as under the DoS system.
- the Teaching Organisation will write to all new students in July to advise them of their PT and SSC contact details as part of their Freshers’ Week details.
- the Teaching Organisation will have new welcome boards outside the three teaching office with pictures, contact details and responsibilities of all local teaching organisation staff, SSCs and PTs.
- the Teaching Organisation Manager in conjunction with SSCs will ensure clear mechanisms for students to raise concerns or feedback on the student support system and conduct an annual survey to audit the system.
Risks and Issues

- significant risks arise from the unrealistically short time scale given to the School to develop and introduce the new student support system and the confused process that has emanated from the University; by contrast a new student support system at the University of Leeds involved several years of consultation and discussion before implementation

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