

## **MSc in Digital Education, Personal Tutor system – Part-time Students**

In the 2013/14 academic year, the “Personal Tutor” system was introduced for postgraduate students at the University of Edinburgh. The Personal Tutor system provides each student with a named person who can offer support or guidance to help you navigate your programme of study, including discussing any personal issues that are affecting your study, and answering any questions you may have. In addition, your Personal Tutor will invite you to meet with them individually, and as part of a group, at various points during the programme. These meetings are an important part of the support that the university offers to postgraduate students, so you are strongly encouraged to attend them.

### **Who is my personal tutor?**

Your personal tutor will be a member of the MSc in Digital Education team. You can look on the Personal Tutor channel of your [MyEd Portal](#) to find the name and contact details for your Personal Tutor. Alternatively, ask the Programme Secretary or Director.

### **When will meetings take place?**

Our intention is that meetings will take place for part-time students on the following schedule.

**Year 1:** You will be working closely in your first semester of study with your Introduction to Digital Environments for Learning (IDEL) blog tutor. You should make your blog tutor your first point of contact during IDEL, but you will also have a named Personal Tutor (in some cases, this will be the same person) who you will meet with in groups, and individually, during the rest of your time on programme. For all part-time students, in addition to intensive one-to-one discussion in the IDEL blogs, towards the end of Semester 2 of your first year on programme your Personal Tutor will invite you to a group meeting.

**Year 2 and onwards:** For each year that you are enrolled on the programme, your Personal Tutor will arrange to meet with you once in Semester 1, and invite you to one group meeting (towards the end of Semester 2).

**Dissertation year:** Once you begin on the dissertation, you will meet with your Personal Tutor one final time.

### **Can I contact my Personal Tutor at other times?**

Yes, absolutely. You can contact your Personal Tutor at any time during the year if you have concerns or questions about the progress of your studies, have personal or professional issues that may be affecting your progress, or need to discuss any aspect of your experience on the programme. Please don't hesitate to get in touch with your Personal Tutor – it is often the case that the sooner you raise concerns or issues, the better.

### **What will the individual meetings be about?**

The focus of individual meetings will be on your academic progress and your future directions. However, if there are other areas where you would like advice, your personal tutor can help you to identify relevant sources of information or support.

If there are any circumstances that you feel are affecting your progress or wellbeing at university, you should not hesitate to raise them. If you think things could be going better, you are struggling or feel unmotivated, talk to your personal tutor about it.

Before each meeting, you are asked to reflect on the following areas, and come to the meeting with any questions or issues you want to raise in relation to:

- Main achievements from the previous year
- Main areas of concern / challenges
- Current interests and possible future directions
- Goals for forthcoming year
- Other questions, matters for discussion, information to pass on.

### **What will the group meetings be about?**

Group meetings will be an opportunity to talk with a group of other students at different stages on the programme – to compare notes about your experiences, share ideas and strategies, and identify and discuss shared issues or concerns. Your Personal Tutor will attend and facilitate these meetings, and take forward any matters raised with the Programme Director and the programme team as needed (with your permission).

### **What will the format of the meetings be?**

You and your personal tutor can discuss what platform will be most suitable for your individual meetings. This could be real-time discussion in Skype (text or voice), Second Life, Collaborate, by phone, or in another environment that suits you both. If a synchronous meeting isn't feasible due to time zones or other considerations, you can arrange to exchange emails over a planned period of two or three days.

Group meetings will most likely be held in a synchronous text or voice chat format – this will be confirmed by your Personal Tutor when they invite you to the meeting.

### **What if I am taking a semester off?**

If you are taking an informal break, we recommend that you still attend the annual individual meeting with your Personal Tutor. This will give you a chance to touch base with the programme, let your Personal Tutor know how things are going, and discuss any matters that have arisen for you during the time since you last studied. You will also be invited to attend group meetings even when you are not currently studying – it is up to you whether you would find it helpful to attend. Please let your Personal Tutor know whether you will be attending or not, when you receive an invitation.

If you have been granted a formal Interruption of Studies, you will not be required to attend meetings with your Personal Tutor, but you are free to contact them if there is anything you need to discuss.

### **Is what I talk about with my Personal Tutor confidential?**

In order to support you effectively, general information about your progress and your plans is recorded and stored after each meeting. This happens through the recording of meetings in the Personal Tutor channel in MyEd (see below). Where relevant, and with your permission, your Personal Tutor might take issues or questions you have raised directly to the appropriate member of the Digital Education programme team or the University. This can, in some cases, be done without disclosing your identity.

Your Personal Tutor will not normally discuss sensitive information with anyone else without your permission, or include it in your Personal Tutor notes. However, in some cases, for example if they think that there is a danger of harm to you or others, they are required to break confidentiality.

## **How are meetings recorded?**

The MyEd portal provides you with a Personal Tutor channel for tracking the content of meetings you have with your Personal Tutor, and helping you and your Personal Tutor reflect on the progress and direction of your studies. This channel enables you, your Personal Tutor and other University staff to record a sequence of notes, each note either starting a fresh subject or commenting on a previous note. A [guide to using the Personal Tutor channel](#) is available.

After each meeting, your Personal Tutor will add some brief notes to your MyEd meeting record concerning topics discussed, matters agreed upon, and recommendations made. They will not enter details of what you talk about. When matters are of a sensitive nature, your Personal Tutor will be very brief, for example perhaps recording just that "A personal issue was discussed".

You are welcome to reflect on the meeting and add further details to your MyEd record as you think appropriate (not including any personal or sensitive details). Add this further information in a Comment note: open this up by clicking on the Comment link within the post created by your Personal Tutor.

You always have full visibility of all the information on your Personal Tutor channel, and you have a degree of control over who else can see this information. By default, all authorised University staff can view your notes. However, if a particular note is marked as confidential, its visibility will be restricted to you, your Personal Tutor, the School's Senior Tutor, the School's Student Support Team and the Dean of Students.

The University's [Records Management web pages](#) give further information on how the University manages information about you.