Personal Tutor Support

Assembly Silver Priority

Foreword

Yavuz Kafadar, City Students' Union Deputy President

Dear University Community,

As the Deputy President of the Students' Union, I am honoured to present the Personal Tutoring Report, a crucial milestone in our ongoing pursuit of academic excellence and employability. Over the years, the priorities of City students have remained steadfast: quality education and meaningful career opportunities. However, in our rapidly changing world, where information is readily available at our fingertips, we find ourselves expecting more from our university.

Today's City students seek a more tailored, individualized approach from personal tutors, as well as guidance from university to help them achieve their goals. It is with this understanding that personal tutoring has emerged as one of the key priorities for the Student Assembly this year. We believe that by refining and expanding this initiative, we can significantly improve the educational experience provided by our university.

Students have been working diligently in collaboration with the university to reshape and enhance the personal tutoring support offered at City. It is with great pride that I share this report with you, which serves as a cornerstone for the future of personal tutoring at our institution. Our hope is that this document not only informs the university's efforts to improve personal tutoring, but also serves as an indicator of the evolving needs and expectations of our students in the dynamic landscape of higher education.

As we embark on this journey to refine our educational services and better support our students, we look forward to continued collaboration with the university community. Together, we can create an environment that fosters academic success, personal growth, and lasting achievements.

Sincerely,

Yavuz Emin Kafadar

Deputy President, Students' Union

Executive Summary

Assembly Members ranked the Personal Tutor Support as the Union's Silver priority, and the key call to action was:

> *"The Union believes that the personal tutoring system at City lacks accessibility and engagement. Moving forward, the Union will lobby for increased contact hours for students. Personal Tutors should be trained, supported, and adequately resourced."*

This priority should result in positive changes to how Personal Tutor support is provided to students, which will be meaningful and have a greater impact on their academic experience.

It has been acknowledged that Personal Tutoring is inconsistent across City. This inconsistency has a negative impact on student and staff experience. Student feedback has shown that the involvement of Personal Tutors can be extremely beneficial in helping students adjust to university and succeed in their studies. However, without clear guidance and expectations, staff can feel overwhelmed with the responsibility of being a personal tutor. This can lead to reduced morale and affect the staff's ability to support students effectively.

Recommendations

The Union has developed corresponding recommendations to maximize the academic and overall student experience on the Personal Tutor support that was discerned among the students from all six Schools. These proposals are intended to enhance the academic and overall student experience for everyone in each School.

- To improve the Personal Tutor support, it is important to make the system more effective, it should be better advertised, and its advantages should be more explicitly described. Additionally, providing more instructions on how to use the Personal Tutor and what kind of help they are able to provide could be beneficial.

- Increase awareness about the support services available and the role of personal tutors. The personal tutor system at City University is often perceived as ineffective by students, possibly due to insufficient communication from the university.

- Personal Tutor details should be easily accessible to students, as they have expressed concern about locating this information. One suggestion is to add this information to Moodle, as it is a platform frequently utilized by students throughout the academic year.

Methodology

Initial research looked at the National Student Survey (NSS) and the feedback provided about the students' experiences with the Personal Tutor system at City. An initial survey was launched in January 2023, providing valuable insights into the quality of services provided by personal tutors in the six schools and helped identify areas where tutoring services could be improved. Finally, an Assembly Meeting held in February 2023 gave students the opportunity to share and contribute with their suggestions on how the university could best support them during the academic year.

NSS

During the early research, the Union looked at the feedback from the NSS conducted last academic year (2021/22).

Where Personal Tutoring worked well students speak highly of the difference that Tutors made to their student experience:

- '*My Personal Tutor pushed me to reach my potential'*
- *'My Tutor helped me to find solutions to my queries'*
- *I like having a named Personal Tutor, someone who you've grown to know and can go to about anything'*
- *'I have had some quite difficult personal struggles and have felt really supported'*
- *'My Tutor cared about me and my wellbeing'*

Where it did not work well, students shared the impact this had on their experience:

- 'I *am not sure who my Personal Tutor is'*
- *'Personal Tutor groups are far too big, meaning tutor does not have enough time for all tutees'*
- '*My personal tutor experience has been awful. First year it was one person, second year they changed and he/she didn't even turn up for our meeting. Third year it changed again. How am I meant to get a good reference from a personal tutor who has known me for only a few months?'*
- *'Personal Tutors should be more accessible to students, available to speak to their students and better people chosen for the role that actually care about the students.'*
- *'Personal Tutors feel distant and unwilling to discuss issues.*

These themes are mirrored in feedback received via Your Voice 1 and 2 and PTES in the same period.

Initial Survey 2023

The initial survey, launched in January 2023, aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of personal tutors in the six different schools. The survey received over 160 responses from students across all schools, including both those who had accessed the services and those who had not. The survey was advertised through various channels, including the Students' Union's all-student newsletter, student channels, and Students' Union Officers. This consisted of questions related to students' experiences with their personal tutors, such as their academic performance, personal development, and overall satisfaction with the tutoring services. The survey results were highly significant, with many students reporting that their personal tutors had helped them to excel academically, as well as providing guidance and support with personal and social issues.

Analysis

The analysis of the gathered data from the survey showed that the majority of students who completed the survey were first and second-year undergraduate students, as well as full-time postgraduate students.

The full list of questions and demographic breakdown for Initial Survey 2023 set can be found in Appendix 1.

We started by asking students if they were aware of where to find their personal tutor details – the following graph shows the % of students who responded yes, they knew where to find this information, maybe (as in not sure) and no.

*Figure 1: Do you know where to find your personal tutor details?*
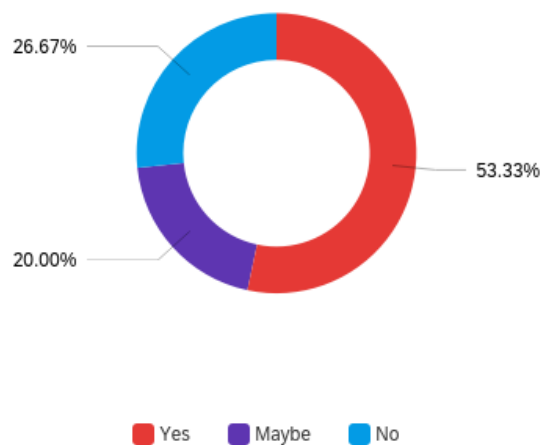
This finding shows that the majority of students, 53.33%, are aware of where to find personal tutor details from Moodle or email, whereas the remaining students are not. This suggests that the school should be doing a better job of informing students about how to contact their personal tutors. It may be beneficial for the school to provide more information about where to find personal tutor details, such as through email, Moodle, or other forms of communication.

Additionally, the school may want to consider providing additional training or resources to help students better understand how to contact their personal tutors. This could help ensure that all students are better informed and able to access the resources they need to succeed.

We proceeded to ask if students felt the personal tutor support provided was useful and relevant – the following graph shows the % of students who responded to this question. Students were also asked to provide context to their answer.

Figure 2: Do you find personal tutor services useful and relevant?
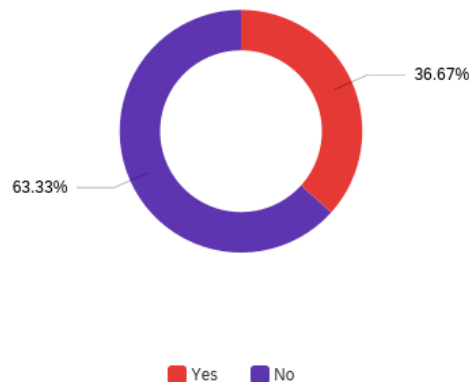
This finding suggests that students who completed the survey do not believe that a personal tutor service is useful. This is demonstrated by the fact that 63.33% of those surveyed agreed that the service is not relevant. This could be due to a variety of factors, such as lack of knowledge about how the service works, the types of challenges that personal tutors can help with or the existence of persona tutor support at City. For example, if the service could not be tailored to a student's specific academic needs or if the tutor is not experienced enough to provide the guidance and support that the student needs.

Finally, we asked students if they felt supported by their personal tutor when they needed support – following graph shows the % of students who responded to this question.

Figure 3: My Personal Tutor helped me when I needed support.
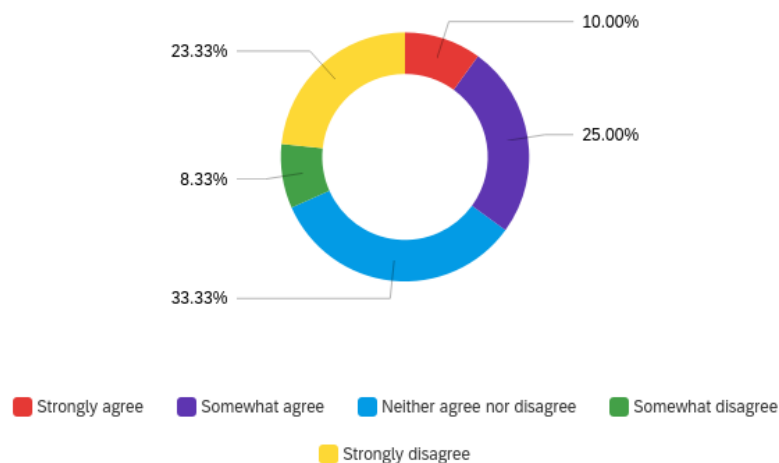
This chart indicates that students are divided in their opinion about the support and service of personal tutors. About one-third of students agree with the statement, one-third disagree and one-third neither agree nor disagree.

This suggests that there is a lack of consensus among students when it comes to the support and service of personal tutors. It is possible that some students are satisfied with the support and service they receive, while others are not. Additionally, it could be that some students are unsure of the quality of the support and service they receive, as evidenced by the 33.33% of students who neither agree nor disagree.

Moreover, there is a significant concern about the insufficient communication between the university and students regarding personal tutor support. While City students acknowledge the usefulness of this support system throughout each academic year, they have expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of engagement, which diminishes the effectiveness of the support.

Likewise, the frequency of the meeting between student and personal tutor became a huge issue as students mentioned:

- "I never met with my personal tutor."
- "I met only once per academic year."
- "I have never had a meeting with them but will do tomorrow. I do not think it is sufficient."
- "Once at the beginning of the term"

Overall, the data collected from the Initial Survey 2023 was helpful in identifying the basic areas of concern. However, the Students' Union recognised the need to gather more data on students' opinions about the support and services provided by personal tutors to gain further insight into the issue and devise strategies to improve the quality of tutoring services. As a result, focus groups were conducted to gain a better understanding of students' experiences and opinions and to assess the effectiveness of any changes implemented.

Focus Group

The focus group was held during the Assembly meeting, with 15 assembly members from all schools participating as part of this research. The focus group included students who had accessed personal tutor support and those who had not. The aim was to gather valuable feedback from the students regarding their experiences with the personal tutor system. During the focus group, students were asked to provide honest opinions about the system and its features. Questions were asked about the ease of use, the level of support offered, the responsiveness of the tutors, and the value of the system. Additionally, the students were asked to suggest improvements that could be made to the system to make it more effective and efficient.

Analysis

Activity 1: Human Bingo

Negative feedback:

- The majority mentioned that the Personal Tutor system should be improved.
- 4 participants out of 14 know what support Personal Tutor can provide.

- Almost everyone shows where to find Personal Tutor details.
- Only a few students interact with their Personal Tutor.

This analysis of the negative feedback on the Personal Tutor system shows that there is a lack of awareness of what the system can offer. Despite most participants knowing how to find details about it, only a few actually interact with their Personal Tutor. This suggests that students are either not interested in the service, or it is not being properly advertised as a useful resource. To improve the system, it should be more widely promoted, and the benefits should be more clearly outlined. Additionally, it could be beneficial to offer more guidance on how to interact with a Personal Tutor and what type of support they can offer.

<u>Positive feedback:</u>

- Only 2 participants out of 14 never met their Personal Tutor
- All participants believe that the Personal Tutor system is a very useful approach, but it should be clearer.

This analysis suggests that the Personal Tutor system is generally seen as a very useful approach by participants. This indicates that the Personal Tutor system is working relatively well in providing support and guidance to students. However, it is also evident that the system could be made clearer in order for all students to be able to access their Personal Tutor and benefit from their guidance. This could be achieved by providing more information to students about how to access their Personal Tutor and what the role of the Personal Tutor is.

Activity 2: Group work

What do you understand the role of a Personal Tutor is at City?

Based on feedback from students, the role of a Personal Tutor at City is to provide support and guidance to students. This includes signposting them to the right support services, offering career help and advice, providing wellbeing updates and advice on services available at City, offering general support, and answering any queries students may have. Personal Tutors at City serve as a channel for students to access the help and advice they need to maximize their academic and personal development.

What support do you want and expect from your Personal Tutor in your school?

Students from the School of Policy & Global Affairs, School of Health & Psychological Science, and School of Science & Technology have expressed the support they want and expect from their Personal Tutor in their school. The most common requests were for help with networking, industry connections, career advice, and (external and internal) career events. Overall, the students from the three schools seem to be looking for support from their Personal Tutor in terms of networking, industry connection, career advice, and career events. This is indicative of their desire for guidance and assistance in achieving their career goals.

Would students benefit from the same Personal Tutor for the whole period of study and reference support?

The feedback from students regarding the provision of a Personal Tutor for the entire period of study and reference support across the six schools of the University was overwhelmingly positive. Most students noted that having a consistent Personal Tutor for their entire period of study was incredibly beneficial in terms of receiving guidance and support from someone who was familiar with their academic progress and able to provide tailored advice and encouragement. The reference support provided was also highly praised, with many students noting that the ability to access resources and advice from experienced professionals was invaluable in helping them to achieve their academic goals.

How Personal Tutor system could be improved at City?

The students at City University have provided valuable feedback on how the Personal Tutor system could be improved. The most common themes are to have more frequent contact with Personal Tutors, more accessible Personal Tutor details, and more comprehensive introductory meetings. To ensure that students have regular contact with their Personal Tutors, it is suggested that they have check-in meetings every semester, and that undergraduates have at least two meetings per term, with more meetings for postgraduates. Furthermore, having a compulsory introductory meeting for first-year students could help to create a sense of community, as well as giving them an opportunity to get to know their Personal Tutors. Additionally, having Personal Tutor details more accessible on Moodle would make it easier for students to contact them. Finally, encouraging Personal Tutors to respond to emails from their tutees could help to foster better communication and understanding. Overall, these suggestions should help to improve the Personal Tutor system, ensuring that students feel supported and heard.

Conclusion

The conducted research showed that students found the Personal Tutor system to be beneficial to their academic journey. However, often students felt that more academic-focused support was needed, such as helping with networking, industry connections, career advice, and external and internal career events. It's clear that Personal Tutors need to be tailored to each student's individual needs, making it difficult to standardize the system across Schools. According to the research, students from all six schools recommended that Personal Tutors should have at least one 1-1 meeting with each student per term via the Microsoft Booking platform, as well as an introductory meeting at the start of each academic year. This would provide a good foundation for the Personal Tutor system and ensure that students have the support they need.

Appendix 1

Question Set (used for the Initial Survey 2023)

This only includes the questions that were used in online survey and does not include the bulk of the script or support services students were signposted towards dependent on the responses given by students.

Question 3: Do you know where to find your personal tutor details?

Question 4: Do you find personal tutor services useful and relevant?

Question 5: My Personal Tutor helped me when I needed support (agreement statement)

Question 6: How often do you have meetings with your tutor, and do you find it sufficient?

Demographic Breakdown for Initial Survey 2023

Initial Survey 2022-2023 has been completed by 160 City students from all 6 schools, with major participation of School of Science & Technology (51.55%) followed by School of Health & Psychological Sciences (18.56%), Bayes Business School (17.53%), School of Policy and Global Affairs (5.15%), City Law School (4.12%) and School of Communication & Creativity (3.09%).