successful tutoring

good practice for managers and tutors

Muriel Green

Successful tutoring
Good practice for managers and tutors

Perhaps the most important key to success remains the relationship between the course tutors and the individual student. Seeking to respond to individual learning needs and personal, social and psychological needs and situations, remains at the heart of what we perceive to be 'best practice'.

Farnborough College; from RQA website (www.rqa.org.uk)

Muriel Green

Note
The Learning and Skills Development Agency
was formerly known as FEDA.

Raising Quality and Achievement Programme
Run by the Learning and Skills Development Agency
in partnership with the Association of Colleges (AoC).

- We aim to reach all colleges and all levels of staff.

- We offer extra support to colleges that are receiving
  Standards Fund money to improve their practice.

- All our activity themes are backed by a
  programme of research and evaluation.

- The Raising Quality and Achievement Programme
  is sponsored by the DfEE and all activities
  are subsidised.

Contents

Foreword

If you are involved with the provision of tutoring in a college, as a senior manager, a tutor manager or a tutor, this book is for you. By writing it, I hope to stimulate new thinking about the ways in which tutorial provision might be more effective in supporting learners and learning. I hope that you will take information, ideas and good practice case studies from this book and use them in your tutorial provision.

Colleges have employed different strategies to improve tutorial work to make it more effective for learners. This document attempts to give a flavour of what is happening across the sector in general terms, both in supported learning and in managing for quality and consistency. It sets out some key messages, and provides specific examples of effective practice in the form of case studies.

The book draws on the findings of a small-scale research project managed through the Raising Quality and Achievement (RQA) Programme's Tutoring Network, led by Bernadette Joslin of Richmond upon Thames College. I am grateful to Jill Cable of Sutton Coldfield College, who managed the project, Alan Williams of New College, Swindon, who assisted her, and the many colleges listed in Appendix B, who responded to the survey.

Some examples of effective practice are provided within the main body of the document and others are presented as case studies. These examples come from several sources: Tutoring Network members, colleges that have developed their practice through the RQA Programme, and last but not least colleges that have gained grade 1 for support for students in their most recent FEFC inspection or have been awarded Accredited or Beacon status. They are acknowledged in Appendix A and I am grateful to them for their willingness to share their practice. I hope you find it interesting and learn from it.

Muriel Green
Development Adviser
Raising Quality and Achievement Programme

Introduction

In a post-16 educational world, where student retention and achievement are given a high priority, the role of the tutor is central to successful learning. We have seen the tutor move from a largely autonomous role, sometimes with a vague brief, to an extended and more clearly defined role with a clear link to learning. The quality of the learner/tutor interaction is key and increasingly colleges have moved to use tutorial time to support one-to-one review sessions as well as group tutorials.

Managing for quality and consistency in tutoring is *the* priority issue for colleges nationally. Implementing a system for all the staff in a college is a real challenge, particularly where staff are not necessarily unanimous in their wish to fulfil a tutorial role. Responding to this challenge many colleges have moved to greater centralisation in a bid to standardise systems and secure an equitable service for learners across different sites and curriculum areas.

Whole-college policies, quality standards, student handbooks and central resource banks are all features of a tutorial offer that aims to standardise the services it provides to learners. Increasingly, a senior manager with a cross-college brief works through senior or lead tutors to manage these services.

Progress has undoubtedly been made, but there remain issues to resolve in our move to be even-handed in our support for all learners. The commitment and skills of the individual tutor are critical in terms of the learner/tutor interaction, so perhaps this should be seen as the most important issue in our search for a consistently positive learner experience.

Because many tutors have been recruited through a process that matches their experience and skills against their prospective teaching role, the new and wide-ranging demands made on the 'millennium' tutor may not be embraced with enthusiasm.

Tutors need to feel comfortable and confident in a different kind of role. Building the learner's self-esteem and helping them confront the challenges of conflicting priorities through personal review and target setting must be core processes. So it could be argued that for tutoring to be successful, regardless of the systems and structures in place, we must either recruit tutors with the commitment, experience and skills to be effective in the role or we must train and support people to evolve into dual teacher/tutor roles.

Supporting learning 2

Support for the individual learner and their learning is at the heart of tutorial work. The learner needs to be in an environment that supports their learning, needs to be motivated to learn and needs to have the skills, resources and support necessary to help him or her achieve.

Put simply, this can translate into a need for learners to be:

- in the right place at the right time and with the necessary equipment and materials
- confident in their ability to succeed
- able to review progress, prioritise conflicting demands, set realistic personal targets and seek help to address weaknesses
- able to develop learning skills and a positive work ethic.

Although short, that can be a demanding list of needs. Tutors can play an important role in meeting these needs. Let us look briefly at the general picture and some emerging trends, and try to identify some of the critical success factors associated with good tutoring.

Tackling absenteeism

Absence from classes and learning support sessions or surgeries is seen as the first indicator of potential drop-out. A missed deadline for handing in work can be one of many reasons that trigger absence, which then has a knock-on effect on progress.

Some colleges are attempting to halt the possible cycle of decline by building strategies for intervention by tutors. In these colleges monitoring of student attendance and poor performance may be a priority for senior tutors, who will have an allocation of time to follow up and help to resolve problems.

However, other routes may be used to bring absent learners back 'in to the fold'. For example, Havering College (Case study 1) created the 'support' post of Tutorial Support Coordinator to monitor the attendance of GCSE and year 1 A-level students and follow up any problems. At Blackburn College, administrative staff provide a rapid response to absence and contact learners or their parents at home in the evenings. At Norwich City College, a student liaison officer follows up absence and identifies learners at risk before liaising appropriately with learning support staff to see that needs are met.

So we see that following up absence and early identification of 'at risk' learners is an important first step and that this can be done by either teachers/tutors or by staff in administrative roles. Where administrative staff are effective in this role, tutors can give more of their time to other key tutorial activities. Sometimes learners will be more prepared to talk honestly about problems with attendance and work where they perceive the enquirer to be independent of their programme or course.

Strategies for following up absence and identifying learners at risk are needed and can take different forms.

Some colleges have given administrative or support staff responsibility for monitoring and responding to absenteeism and have shown that this can be effective.

Developing learner confidence

Learners often come into colleges having had unsatisfactory experiences of learning. Their formal achievements may be modest and their self-esteem low. In these, and indeed in all cases, it is important to build a positive self-image and to help students believe they can succeed.

All teachers have a responsibility to contribute to this process through oral and written feedback and by building a positive learning climate and strong relationships. The tutor can play a particularly valuable role, by encouraging individual learners to reflect on their learning and recognise achievements. Most readers will have witnessed the powerful influence that even minor achievements can have on learner motivation and can no doubt see some truth in the old adage 'success breeds success'.

An increasing number of colleges are using value-added data and systems to help build self-belief and motivate learners to achieve. Carmel College (Case study 2), is a sixth form college with Beacon status, and serves the needs of learners from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. Achievement is the focus of one-to-one consultations, where suggested grades drawn from the A-level Information Service (ALIS) provide a backdrop for processes aimed at encouraging self-awareness and self-improvement. At this college, the principal gives verbal praise and sends letters of congratulations home to recognise and celebrate achievements. An example of positive feedback from a typical record of review is quoted below:

> *You demonstrated a good level of analytical ability by breaking down the problem presented in the case study and applying your theory to each part.*

Extract from Carmel College record of review, 1999

Greenhead College (Case study 7), another Beacon sixth form college, uses its own value-added system with demonstrable success. Again tutors play a pivotal role and one of the stated aims of the tutor is 'to build, continuously, self-esteem and self-confidence of each individual student'. Here 'star forms' are issued as a formal recognition of achievement.

Contrary to the 'cool' image portrayed in the press, the youth of today can be responsive to positive feedback and praise. Where review processes recognise and celebrate achievement in real terms, learners have demonstrated self-belief and been motivated to achieve.

Review processes are needed to support reflection *and* provide for the development of self-belief.

Some colleges have shown that the celebration of achievements can play an important part in building self-esteem and motivating learners to succeed.

Reviewing progress

In many colleges today, a high priority is given to one-to-one review sessions that review progress, prioritise conflicting demands, set targets, and more. In the Tutoring Network survey, most tutor managers thought that if one-to-one sessions were optional 70% of learners would choose to attend.

This emerging emphasis on one-to-one reviews is further supported by allocation of time to the process. Many colleges responding to the survey reported that out of a two-hour per group per week time allocation, at least half was given to individual support, and in a few cases tutorial time was devoted exclusively to one-to-one reviews.

So, if one-to-one sessions are the way forward, how can we ensure that we derive maximum benefit from the resource? Perhaps we should consider some of the enabling factors:

- **tutors who are comfortable and confident in their ability to encourage reflection and review**
- **clarity of purpose, with commitment and time given by learners and tutors to both preparation and the review process**
- **relevant and up-to-date information to inform discussion and decisions about progress made and targets to be set.**

These factors are worth looking at in some detail, as together they are fundamental to the success of the individual review.

Comfortable, confident and competent tutors

College responses to the Tutoring Network survey indicate that a lot more could be done to develop and support staff in the role of tutor. At one end of the scale are colleges that offer two weeks of training for tutors and at the other are colleges where new tutors learn the complexities of systems from more experienced staff as they go along.

Because tutor training is limited across the sector, the quality of service largely depends on the commitment, enthusiasm, and people and communication skills of individuals who take up the mantle of tutor. Where training does happen, it tends to focus on systems and paperwork – explicit skills training is quite exceptional.

At North Warwickshire and Hinckley College (Case study 3), congratulated by FEFC inspectors for demonstrating consistency across a complex model of support, great emphasis is placed on training, mentoring and support of colleagues who take up the role of tutor. Sixty tutors across the college have taken on the role of 'learning coach', with lead tutors supporting a 'family' of tutors through coaching, mentoring, drop-in clinics and the like. An independent consultant provided skills training sessions for staff, which were perceived to be highly effective.

Training will help tutors feel comfortable and confident in their ability to manage one-to-one progress reviews.

Skills training is the exception, but, where it is offered and backed up by coaching/mentoring, tutorial support is seen to be of a more consistent standard.

Clarity of purpose

Learners and tutors are most positive about the experiences and outcomes of one-to-one review sessions where the purpose of the review is clear and both learners and tutors have prepared for it. Usually the shared understanding of purpose would be to review progress, prioritise conflicting demands and set realistic, personal targets to build on strengths and address weaknesses.

At Loughborough College (Case study 4), progress tutors meet learners every six weeks. Both tutors and learners are well aware of the purpose of the meetings and both come prepared. The tutor brings a written progress review from the teaching staff and the learner brings a self-assessment report. Student satisfaction surveys and focus groups have shown that learners are very positive about this development.

Learners may request one-to-one sessions when they are experiencing personal difficulties. It is important that tutors are competent in dealing with pastoral matters and know how far they are expected to go in dealing with such issues. They should also know when to refer on to specialist support services. Most colleges have a range of specialist services available for learners and tutors, including:

- learning support
- careers information and advice
- counselling
- financial advice.

The survey findings indicate that these services are generally well organised and well received by learners.

Learners and tutors need to be clear about the purpose of a tutorial.

Colleges have shown that one-to-one reviews work well where the purpose is clear and both tutor and learners prepare for the sessions.

Relevant and up-to-date information

Some colleges expect learners to attend a review session armed with attendance records, self-assessments, records of assignment marks, outcomes of activity targeted in previous action plans and suggestions for issues to discuss. Tutors might also be expected to collect evidence of attendance patterns and current progress to inform discussion. Where preparation precedes the review session the dialogue can be more meaningful and give the learner a greater sense of control in setting challenging but realistic targets based on up-to-date information on progress made.

At Sutton Coldfield College (Case study 5), learners and tutors use the student tracking and achievement records (STAR) system to discuss performance and plan for improvement. Prior to a STAR interview each learner needs to assess their performance in each of their subjects against a number of criteria, including attendance, grades to date, homework deadlines, additional support, time management, private study, part-time employment and social life!

At the People's College (Case study 6), the course tutor uses the college intranet to flag up an individual learner before the review session and gather current information on progress.

The process of analysis and the essential dialogue help the learner to confront any conflicting priorities and to consider their position with respect to effective learning. They have helped learners to understand that the factors influencing their potential achievement are within their control and that their choices can make a difference.

Walsall College of Arts and Technology has developed tutorial support for disaffected learners, which involves one-to-one review sessions. Guidance notes for learners encourage the gathering of evidence before the sessions:

> *Progress reviews will take place at regular intervals. As part of the process it is important to gather some evidence beforehand. This can include:*
>
> - *subject reviews*
> - *career action plans*
> - *previous plans contained in your Tutorial 2000 file.*

Tutorial 2000 File, Walsall College of Arts and Technology

The same message is mirrored in the staff guidance.

Blackburn College sets out evaluation criteria for observation of one-to-one sessions as a part of college quality systems. This contains the clear expectation that the review is supported by relevant paperwork, which includes the same sort of documentation as the examples above.

On another level both Blackburn and Walsall collect and record information about individual learners, through an 'individual progress record' at Blackburn and a 'tutorial tracker' at Walsall. The latter acts as a register of tutoring activity. It provides a dated record of induction, initial assessments, student self-review, initial action plan, one-to-one progress review, career progression planning review and other key tutorial activities. The tracker provides a useful overview which, supported by detail, can inform tutorial support and advice.

Relevant and up-to-date information should be drawn on to support a dialogue in one-to-one reviews.

Colleges have shown that when teaching staff provide evidence of performance and indications of where and how improvements can be made, reviews are effective in helping learners to achieve. Such evidence informs discussion and target setting.

Developing learning skills

Support for the development of learning skills can be offered on an individual or group basis. Where group tutorials have a direct link to learning they are rated more highly by learners than sessions that focus on personal development. Priority issues for group tutorials include:

- study skills
- time management skills
- revision techniques
- examination techniques
- careers guidance.

Tutor managers responding to the Tutoring Network survey suggested that their learners place less value on group tutorials than they do on one-to-one sessions. Most managers felt that if group sessions were optional only 30% of learners would attend.

Centrally managed resourcing of group tutorials, together with guidance and support, are seen as critical enabling factors for individual tutors. Most colleges responding to the survey support tutors with central resource banks. Easy access, simple structures and utility are important considerations. Coleg Llandrillo provides tutors with a four-sheet A4 leaflet, giving details of the college intranet and websites that cover all essential topics in the tutorial programme.

Balance is important. Although colleges should aim to provide a high-quality resource system, it is equally important to offer flexibility and to support the use of a range of materials in response to individual need.

> *Too often tutorial resources can develop the qualities of an EEC butter mountain, remaining unused and yellowing in unopened filing cabinets ... Tutors can be very unconvincing if they are required to deliver materials over which they have no control.*
>
> Tutoring Network, 2000

Centrally managed resources can be helpful to tutors.

Colleges that offer individual tutors flexibility in the supported use of materials have more effective group tutorial sessions.

Managing for quality and consistency

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Although there is no doubt that management models and line management structures differ across colleges, expertise is increasingly seen to rest with tutor managers who have time to feed down systems and strategies to individual tutors. However, the time allocated to tutor managers and the way in which they are integrated into the college structures vary.

Time dedicated to tutorial activity is also likely to vary across the sector. Most full-time learners have access to one hour per week tutorial support as a minimum time allocation. Many colleges offer two hours or more per tutor group, with average group size assumed to be 20. In most of these cases time is split equally between group and individual sessions.

In a minority of colleges a nominal time allocation is made for each learner with staff time allocated in response to caseload. Most colleges when preparing for Curriculum 2000 have refocused the work of their tutors to give a closer link with learning and are funding additional time through enrichment. For example, at Loughborough College the entitlement is for two hours of tutorial support per group per week, but three hours are available for A-level groups moving into Curriculum 2000. The extra time is focused on key skills.

The attitudes, aptitudes and skills of individual tutors are key to a successful tutorial system, whether tutors are working with a central, departmental or 'other' structure, with or without clearly articulated standards. Where all tutors are committed, comfortable and confident in their role it is likely that students across the college will benefit from a quality experience regardless of the structure or model.

Managing for quality and consistency in tutoring is a real challenge. Where tutors are also teachers or lecturers and have been appointed to their main role through a process that matched their experience and skills against a subject or vocational specialist job description, they may not see themselves as ideally suited to a tutoring role.

Colleges are increasingly keen to address this issue and there is an emerging trend towards developing central policy and standards as a possible route to solving the problem. However, policy does not on its own make things happen. In institutions where large numbers of teachers carry tutorial responsibility, within a departmental structure for example, the need for information, training and support is clear. Tutors need to understand the systems and structures they work with and to have the information and skills needed to fulfil their role.

Tutor handbooks are well developed across colleges and, although they vary in scope and attention to detail, most outline systems to monitor and review student progress and offer examples of college documentation designed to give structure and focus to key activities. Some colleges have emphasised a need to provide clear, concise summaries of essential procedures, while others offer very detailed materials to cope with all eventualities. All can be used as part of a planned induction process for new tutors but, on their own, cannot ensure quality and consistency across large and varying institutions.

In recognition of these difficulties some colleges have moved towards a dedicated tutor model; dedicated in that a major 'chunk' of the tutor's time is given to tutorial activity and in terms of their attitude to key tutorial activities. In colleges that have promoted dedicated tutor status, staff have been able to apply for new posts where the balance of time given to teaching and tutoring activities may differ from that of their previous post. For example, at Greenhead College (Case study 7) a personal tutor is a 'top class classroom teacher' with 0.5 tutoring and 0.5 subject-teaching responsibilities. The post attracts two incentive points above the standard pay scale.

At Isle College (Case study 8) personal advisers provide a dedicated full-time tutorial support service. Individual advisers carry a caseload of approximately 150–175 learners and are paid on the Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical (APTC) salary scale at point 21. In each case there is an effective training and support system for tutors, and both colleges were awarded grade 1 by FEFC inspectors.

Southgate College (Case study 9) set up a new progression centre offering part-time learners access to computers, the internet, and a variety of workshops and group tutorials focusing on study skills, ICT, personal development and jobseeking skills.

Diversity across the variety of systems and structures need not be an issue as long as core educational activity is underpinned by strong enabling processes such as:

- human resource management to provide the right people who, with training and support, engage in effective learner/tutor interaction.
- data management to provide relevant and up-to-date information on learner attendance and progress to feed into and back up the learner/tutor interaction.

It is the learner/tutor interaction that is critical. Both core and enabling processes must serve it well.

Colleges keen to review their effectiveness could do well to evaluate the ways in which systems and structures nurture or constrain the critical processes of one-to-one review and group support for effective learning. The following key messages and case studies may provide a backdrop for the review process.

Key messages for improvement

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We all want every learner to enjoy and benefit from the tutorial support offered in our colleges. For us to achieve a high level of learner satisfaction for our tutorial services, we need to work hard to improve consistency.

We need a clear vision of the effective learner experience to deal with such a potentially challenging agenda. There seems to be an emerging consensus that the effective learner experience comes from individual one-to-one support that feeds back hard-edged information about what has been learnt and recognises and celebrates achievements before identifying what still needs to be learnt. Critically, it must, through a meaningful dialogue, help the learner understand what they must do, and how they need to work, to progress with that learning.

There must also be help and support with study/learning skills/specific aspects of learning in response to need.

This might sound incredibly simple. However, if all tutors are to be equally effective in this process, they need to work within a framework of common standards and have:

- a positive and enabling approach to learners
- relevant and up-to-date information about each learner's attendance and progress
- well-developed people and communication skills to manage one-to-one and group sessions
- good quality resources to enable them to respond flexibly to support needs identified.

Enabling processes that can make this happen are:

- recruitment and training of staff who have a clear role and job description along with the experience, skills and support needed to feel comfortable and confident in their ability to fulfil the role
- good quality information management systems which provide accurate and timely information on attendance and progress across subjects/units/modules to support meaningful individual reviews
- centrally produced and managed resources which tutors can use flexibly to respond to individual/group learning needs.

Where all these things come together, colleges have demonstrated that tutoring can instil feelings of self-belief, be a strong motivational force and empower learners to achieve.

We need to do more to share and transfer our good practice in all the above in a move to ensure greater consistency. Sharing can happen both within and across colleges. The following case studies provide a useful starting point.

Good practice case studies

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CASE STUDY 1

In the right place at the right time: responding to absence and 'at risk' learners

Havering College

Havering College of Further and Higher Education has a student body of 2600 full-time and 5822 part-time learners. Almost 10% of the college's resources are devoted to higher education and it is anticipated that this will be maintained. Around 33% of full-time students are over 19 years old. The college attracts 'out of borough' students and recruits from Essex, Kent, the London boroughs and beyond. Of full-time learners, 27% are recruited from minority ethnic groups and 55% are women.

Achievement figures for A-levels have been in decline, and in a bid to improve point scores the college set out to:

- strengthen the tutorial system
- employ a Tutorial Support Coordinator
- introduce ALIS (A-level Information Service) to support a target-setting process with learners
- strengthen partnerships with parents/guardians
- develop a more rigorous system for monitoring attendance and absence.

Specific measures introduced included:

- meetings with all learners experiencing difficulties (and their parents/guardians where appropriate) to set targets for improvement
- a letter to learners and parents in the October of year 1, telling them that if they were not reaching the required grades in coursework, they would either not progress to year 2 or not be entered for their subject examinations
- an invitation to a parents' evening in December of year 1 to discuss progress (or an earlier meeting where there were concerns about the learner's progress).

Where learners were aged 16–18, parents or guardians were involved wherever possible, but for learners over 18 these discussions took place without parents.

In November 1999 a new post of Tutorial Support Coordinator was established as a pilot scheme. The postholder works with GCSE and year 1 A-level students to monitor lateness and attendance and follows up these problems by telephone or letter.

This is a 'support staff' post and has been college funded, initially for a two-year period. Although there is no teaching attached to the post, there is a tutorial workload of 12 hours. Initially, other staff had some negative views and had concerns about the de-skilling of the lecturer role and the undermining of their professionalism.

These feelings seem to have disappeared as staff have found that the Tutorial Support Coordinator does not take their place but supports them in their role. However, a strategy like this does depend on sensitivity and interpersonal skills both in dealing with learners and in liaising with staff and parents.

The job description for the Tutorial Support Coordinator post is included in this case study; the tasks undertaken are set out below:

i. Monitor attendance through a system of register slips and ensure there is a call to learners on the first day of absence. All absences from college or lessons to be logged on the student records. This information is passed on to tutors to deal with in the weekly tutorial system. Where a learner registers three absences from any lesson, they have to attend a review meeting with the departmental director or deputy director, the Tutorial Support Coordinator and the area head for AS or A/2 or the pastoral tutor. These review meetings are designed to support the learner by encouraging attendance or by dealing with any other problems with work and setting agreed targets for attendance or production of work.

ii. At any holiday period, send cards reminding all students of the first day of the new term.

iii. Liaise with tutors.

iv. Liaise with parents/guardians as appropriate. Parents or guardians may be invited to the college where the situation demands, or they may ask to see the tutor.

v. Act as a personal tutor to groups of AS-level students.

vi. Maintain contact with potential students from the time of application to enrolment. This has been done in a variety of ways:

- 'Good luck in your exams' cards
- 'Hope you did well in your exams' cards
- arranging a 'new student and parent/carer evening' in the June before the courses started.

A key learning point is that clear, swift communications to students regarding absence, lateness and assessment can make a difference, especially when managed alongside a system of support to address problems. Finding out why learners were not attending or achieving was a critical first stage. It demonstrated an essential level of care of the individual and a will to help them succeed.

Job description

**Job title: Tutorial Support Coordinator
(39 weeks per year; 36 hours per week)**

Department: The Academy of Arts and Science

Equality of opportunity

The Tutorial Coordinator will provide tutorial and pastoral support to students in an assertive and proactive way to ensure high levels of student attendance and punctuality. This will involve close working with students, parents, teaching and other support staff to ensure that students can flourish in the college environment and thereby achieve their personal learning goals. The postholder will be comfortable working with both staff and students and be able to operate independently and as a cooperative group member.

Specialist pastoral qualifications are less important than an interest in young people and the education process, and a desire to support students in an active and firm way. Havering College is a dynamic and demanding environment so that ability to work under pressure and to manage a varied and constantly developing workload is essential.

A high standard of general education is required for the post. Teaching staff will welcome the additional support of a colleague able to support students so they can gain the maximum benefit from their studies.

There will be ongoing training and development given to the successful candidate to help in the development of their skills.

Introduction

This is a new post for someone to work across programme areas, within the academy to contribute to and support the tutorial system within the department.

Duties of the Tutorial Support Coordinator

The Tutorial Support Coordinator will be responsible to the Director and will have the following duties:

    a. To provide proactive, assertive support to students within their tutorial caseload, particularly with regard to attendance, retention and performance.

    b. To devise and undertake a range of strategies to improve student attendance, retention and achievement. These will include:

- discussing progress with individuals and groups of students
- contacting parents/guardians
- using college student records systems to identify and act on problems
- liaising with other departmental tutors.

    c. To carry a tutorial caseload for tutoring students and carry out procedures detailed in the Tutor handbook.

Pre-entry

- To provide support to prospective students by ensuring that they receive:
  - ○ full and accurate details of programmes, syllabuses, teaching/learning methods, qualifications, demands on students, costs, entry requirements, progression routes, academic services, social facilities, etc
  - ○ personal support to ensure that they are prepared for the level of work and commitment required to complete the course, and identification of student-centred reasons which might make sustained study difficult (eg work, domestic, study-related), details of which must be communicated to course teams and plans drawn up to cater for these needs
  - ○ learning support assessment and that the results are planned for from the first day of their studies.

This clearly involves a number of different staff groups and the Tutorial Support Coordinator's role would involve coordinating this work and monitoring its effectiveness.

On-course

- Identify 'at risk' students and closely monitor their attendance, provide one-to-one tutorial support, target small steps of achievement.
- Identify 'at risk' groups and target further support such as basic skills, welfare advice, careers guidance and a larger tutorial resource to provide more individual support.
- Oversee induction programmes and ensure that they are not lengthy and over concerned with administration.
- Ensure that late arrivals also get properly inducted and receive a thorough assessment of their needs.
- Assess preferred learning styles of all students in their caseload and communicate results to all lecturers teaching the course.
- Provide effective leadership to students by setting clear boundaries of behaviour, express high expectations and support students in achieving their goals.

Exit
The Tutorial Support Coordinator will ensure that:

- Exit guidance starts early, to help students focus on the real point of the programme.
- Careers advice and support are available and delivered early for students who want to proceed to further or higher education.
- Where appropriate, and under the guidance of the Programme Area Manager, UCAS forms are completed before November to ensure that FE students have the same opportunities as sixth form students, and personal statements and reference are well written.
- Careers advice for students wishing to enter employment is offered early and meets students' needs. References should be prepared by the Tutorial Support Coordinator prior to students leaving.
- Good destination information is collected and recorded for all students.
- Partial accreditation information is collected and students are offered guidance on how to achieve the full award.

d. To ensure that student records are maintained in accordance with college requirements.

Person specification
The person appointed will:

Essential
- have an interest in young people and in ensuring they achieve their learning goals
- be able to work effectively with staff, students, parents and support staff
- be able to work independently and in a team
- be able to work under pressure
- be able to manage change
- be able to be assertive when required.

Desirable
- have specialist pastoral qualifications
- have experience of a similar role.

Confident in their ability to succeed: using value-added data

Carmel College

Carmel College is a designated Roman Catholic sixth form college in Merseyside with Beacon and Accredited college status. It has about 1100 full-time learners as well as 400 full-time-equivalent (FTE) learners attending evening classes.

The college has a history of one-to-one subject reviews between learners and staff to produce records, which have been used to inform discussion between the learner, tutor and parents or guardians. Although there was merit in the system it suffered from poor administrative systems and lack of standardisation and focus. Strategies were put in place to improve it.

The college decided to make positive use of data from the A-level Information Service (ALIS) in individual learner/tutor review sessions. Despite some early concerns about the possibility of demotivating those learners for whom ALIS could promise only an E, or promoting complacency in potential high achievers, teaching staff made a start with a new system.

ALIS data was used by tutors, along with 'real grades' from the continuous assessment of course work, as a means of building confidence and motivating learners to plan for improvement. The subject teacher's role was critical in interpreting the demands of the subject specifications for each individual and expressing them in language the learner could understand.

Staff development offered opportunities for teachers and tutors to recognise the review system as an important element of support for teaching and learning. Good practice was shared as teams discussed and interpreted key learning objectives in relation to sharply focused learner feedback and the setting of 'specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound' (SMART) targets for individual learners.

SMART targets might be:

- I will read one article from *The Economist* and make notes so as to give the group a brief summary in the first lesson of the week beginning 5 February.
- I will include at least five sources (which I will have made use of) in the bibliography of my history essay to be handed in on 12 February.

Clearly, where targets are achieved, success is recognised and recorded. All subject areas have adopted a common system of recording the outcomes of individual reviews with copies made available to learners to discuss with parents/guardians. Copies go to tutors to inform individual progress reviews across the learning programme.

Reviews are timed to take account of key assessment and reporting events like examinations, but the first takes place early in October so that any learners who feel a need to reroute are able to do so. Emphasis is placed on assessment for achievement and aims to develop a culture of self-awareness, self-belief and self-improvement.

The progress review document, which grows out of the review sessions, must reflect a dialogue, rather than being a report prepared in isolation by a teacher about a learner. The learner is actively engaged in the process and contributes to the record.

Attendance, punctuality, attitude, motivation and work effort are all subject to discussion, as is detailed feedback on strengths and weaknesses provided by subject teachers. The latter will relate to learning objectives outlined in the subject specification.

For example:

> *During your course your knowledge of the subject has improved. You obviously understood information from your background reading as you used it to explain concepts introduced in your recent course work. Your case studies demonstrate a high level of analytical ability … You obviously have the ability required for advanced level and you continually demonstrate this in your forthright responses in class where I appreciate your contributions and the help you offer to others. However, you were restricted in your exam by your lack of detailed knowledge of some theories. The exam grade is lower than your typical grade during the course, suggesting that you need to improve your revision and exam technique. You are performing below the grade we suggested you could aim for but with improved attendance and hard work applied to help you achieve your personal targets, I am confident you can achieve the higher grade we agreed.*

The intended outcome of the discussion is a learner who recognises personal success and is prepared to address weaknesses, confident in his or her ability to achieve the actions noted on their action plan.

An analysis of levels of achievement indicates that the performance of the top 150 learners has remained constant but the achievement of all other learners has improved by, on average, one A-level grade per subject taken. For Carmel College, a system which promotes learners' confidence in their ability to succeed, bears fruit in terms of achievement.

Reviewing progress: tutors who are comfortable, confident and competent

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College serves the needs of 27,772 learners, 2965 of whom are full-time. Learners choose from a wide range of programmes and may study in either of two main campuses, an extensive network of other centres or on employers' premises. The college has 4073 students who are between 16 and 19 years old, and of these 1687 held at least one GCSE at grade C or better on entry.

Tutorial support has for many years been a high priority in the college. Until 1998 some £145,000 a year was spent on a departmentally based, primarily pastoral support system. Large numbers of staff were given an hour per group per week for tutoring but there were no common systems nor ways of measuring effectiveness.

In 1998 the impact of a wider cultural change promoted a shift towards provision more geared to individual needs. The college saw a need for a radical overhaul of tutorial provision to provide a more consistent approach to supporting individual learners with the management of their learning.

After the overhaul, 160 staff retained tutorial responsibilities, supported by six lead tutors, appointed through a whole-college recruitment drive. The lead tutors, led and supported by the Student Services Manager, took on a substantial caseload of tutoring as well as teaching. The Student Services Manager was given flexibility in the use of 720 hours per year to release lead tutors from some of their individually contracted 850 hours. This enabled lead tutors to take on activities designed to move the college towards a more consistent and coherent model of learner support. Lead tutors were appointed at senior lecturer 1–4 grade.

The lead tutor team and the Student Services Manager held weekly planning and review meetings and consulted widely across college to develop standards to underpin practice. Details of these standards are given in Table 1.

The individuals brought different experience and skills to their new role but shared a common interest in development and change. Each lead tutor took responsibility for working with different curriculum areas and teams of tutors, looking at existing approaches and their effectiveness, before working with the tutors to devise and implement improvement strategies. Implementation strategies emerged from a strong evidence base that drew on national and college-based research.

Activities undertaken by the lead tutors included:

- drop-in clinics for staff tutors, including twilight sessions for part-time staff
- consultancy support for individual tutors
- showcasing tutoring work with individual students and groups
- development of resources and a resource base
- mentoring activity
- college and divisional staff development
- work within curriculum areas as a 'critical friend'.

Success was assured where personalities gelled and tutor teams saw lead tutors as responsive to their needs and ideas. College standards provided the starting point.

TABLE 1
North Warwickshire and Hinckley College, academic tutoring quality standards

Standards	Amplification	Quality measure
'Appropriate induction' Tutors are expected to ensure that every learner participates in an appropriate induction to the college and to their programme	College induction: for learners on 200+ hour programmes – for details refer to checklist. Guidance notes available from Student Services. For learners on –200 hour programmes, see a Brief guide to studying at college For all learners – programme induction: to include information relating to: role of staff, assessment procedures, year planner, initial assessment, individual learning programme and other specific issues relating to the programme area	For learners on 450+ hour programmes – Completed and signed induction checklist, held in learner's file For all learners – a record of learner feedback on the induction programme should be kept in the Quality Portfolio eg minutes of Board of Study meeting, learner questionnaires etc For all learners – copies of information relating to programme and initial assessment, to be held in either learner files or QP
'Early opportunity' Tutors are expected to assure that every tutee has an early opportunity to discuss their learning needs and agree a clear individual learning plan	For learners on 200+ hour programmes – within four weeks the tutor should check that the learner has been guided onto an appropriate programme For learners on –200 hour programmes the above should have taken place by the 3rd meeting of the programme	For all learners – additional support checklist where appropriate and signed learning agreement For all learners on 200+ hour programmes – copy of individual timetable held in the learner's file
'Learning needs'	For learners on 200+ hour programmes – the tutor should identify with the learner: the learning required to achieve their learning goals, key skills, any additional support and enrichment activities For programmes of –200 hours some or all of the above procedures may apply at the discretion of the tutor	For learners on 200+ hour programmes – copies of external references from schools, employers, parents, and tutors from college and results of initial assessments. For all FEFC learners information available on the learning agreement and additional support checklist For learners on 200+ hour programmes – records of tutorial notes in learner files

TABLE 1 continued

Standards		Amplification	Quality measure
	'Individual learning plan'	For learners on 200+ hour programmes – a plan that is negotiated and agreed between the tutor and learner for an agreed period of time. The plan should show what the learner expects to learn and how, and should indicate a realistic completion date For programmes of –200 hours some or all of the above processes may apply – at the discretion of the tutor	For learners on 200+ hour programmes – a record, signed and dated by the tutor and the learner confirming the individual learning plan to be held in the learner's file, and a copy to the learner. For all learners – additional support checklist where applicable. For all learners – a signed copy of the teaching agreement
Tutors are expected to ensure that every tutee has at least three individual tutor meetings during the course of the programme to action plan, set targets and review progress	'During the course of the programme'	For learners on 200+ hour programmes, the learner should have at least three opportunities in a year to meet their tutor individually. The meetings should include target setting, review and progression. Wherever possible, the learner should have 2 weeks' notice of a planned tutorial to allow the learner to prepare. The venue should be free from distraction. This is not a formal requirement of programmes of –200 hours	For learners on 200+ hour programme – a record signed and dated by the tutor and learner held in the learner's file and a copy to the learner
Tutors are expected to ensure that every tutee has timely advice and guidance to prepare them for progression to employment or further study	'Timely advice'	At appropriate times within the learner's programme to enable the learner to plan and prepare effectively for their own progression	For learners on 200+ hour programmes – Records of tutorial notes within learner's files showing evidence of careers support given by the tutor. For all learners, where appropriate, the log kept by professional careers advisers working through student services

The college was inspected by the FEFC in February 1999 and feedback from the inspectorate recognised a high level of consistency across a relatively complex model of tutorial support. The college was awarded a grade 1 for Support for Students. Keen to build on its strengths, the college decided to work to improve the consistency of tutorial provision further.

From spring 2000 the college decided to:

- use the experience and strengths of individual lead tutors to support targeted areas of whole-college development: research, resources, communication, training, part-time learners
- appoint each lead tutor to support a 'family' of tutors, where possible matching the needs, skills and working styles of groups of 10–15 tutors to the individual strengths of lead tutors
- reduce the number of tutors from 160 to 70
- increase the number of tutees to up to 60 per tutor
- allow eight hours of tutorial time per week per tutor for a caseload of 60 students. This was to cover support for students in group activity and one-to-one review sessions, and to help the students achieve the wider key skill 'improving own learning and performance' (IOLP).

All tutors were invited to set personal targets for the retention and achievement of their tutees. Retention and achievement data collected centrally was fed back to tutors and used in discussion with lead tutors when reviewing strategy and planning for improvement. A commitment was made to provide all personal tutors with access to a computer and they were supported by an internal tutor e-mail group.

Review and evaluation have shown that one-to-one tutoring has been more effective than group work in improving retention rates. However, tutors now recognise that specific skill sets are needed if individual interviews are to ensure a high level of return for the time invested. Skills training is regarded as a priority, and external training providers have been commissioned to train both lead tutors and tutors in coaching skills to improve the effectiveness of their one-to-one review meetings with students.

Reviewing progress: clarity of purpose

Loughborough College

Loughborough College is a general FE college that draws a diverse range of learners from a wide catchment area. There are 8000 learners at the college, 2000 of them studying through full-time programmes.

The purpose of tutorial support across the college is to review and support progress. Most teaching staff have a tutorial responsibility, and in the tutoring role they are described as 'progress' tutors.

Loughborough College took part in the DfEE-funded trialling of the new Progress File in 1998. The Progress File was planned to replace the National Record of Achievement, and trial colleges evaluated the use of materials designed to support a development process. Different materials were provided for different users and FE colleges worked with both Widening Horizons, for 16–18 year olds, and Broadening Horizons, for adults. Loughborough College maintained its interest in the Progress File beyond the trials and is currently involved in the DfEE-managed demonstration projects through which the wider use of revised materials is being evaluated.

Loughborough has been successful in integrating Progress File materials into the tutorial and guidance system across the whole college. Materials have been customised and organised into four different tutor handbooks:

- Guidance pack 1: Induction
- Guidance pack 2: Making plans
- Guidance pack 3: Making progress
- Guidance pack 4: Moving on

Guidance materials can be used appropriately by progress tutors across the college to support learners in reviewing and target setting – the key purposes of tutorial activity.

The core entitlement for the majority of full-time learners is two hours of tutorial time per week, but this allocation has been increased to three hours for A-level learners in Curriculum 2000 and may be increased to 5–6 hours for some Advanced Vocational Certificate in Education (AVCE) and GNVQ learners.

Regardless of the overall time allocation, about a third of the time will be given to group activity and two-thirds to individual support. In the case of A-level learners who may be working to achieve key skills through Curriculum 2000, progress tutors will offer individual guidance and support as well as tracking and recording progress and achievement of key skills. Some AVCE and GNVQ learners have additional time with progress tutors when they receive direct and structured support with course work on a small group or individual basis.

AVCE tutors aim to strike a balance between being proactive and reactive to needs. This may translate into planned sessions on study skills alongside individual support for time management as a way of resolving difficulties in coping with different assignment demands from across the programme. The emphasis is always on supporting progress.

Progress tutors meet individual learners at six-weekly intervals. The purpose of the review is clearly understood by both tutors and learners and preparation is done in advance to support a dialogue that informs the setting of individual targets.

Progress tutors collect a written progress review from the teaching staff who work with their tutor group and at the same time learners prepare a self-assessment report which recognises achievement against the previous targets set. Use of carbonless copy paper helps the efficiency of record-keeping by all parties.

The learner experience is perceived to be very positive. Student satisfaction surveys and focus groups demonstrate that learners value the process and benefit from it. In 1998/9, the introduction of progress tutors across the college contributed to a 6% increase in the retention rates of 16–18 year olds with a 6% increase in overall achievement of all starters.

Student satisfaction surveys conducted in November 2000 produced a positive view of tutorial support. The response of full-time learners to the statement: 'The support I receive from my progress tutor is helpful, regular and available when I need it' was, on average, 3.94 (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 = very satisfied).

Reviewing progress: relevant and up-to-date information

Sutton Coldfield College

Sutton Coldfield College is an FE college located in the West Midlands. It provides a wide range of programmes for 7500 learners, of whom 3200 are full-time. Good rail and bus links result in a wide catchment area, from Lichfield in the north to the city of Birmingham in the south.

The tutorial system at Sutton Coldfield College has a central focus on the role of the tutor as a learning coach. It places considerable emphasis on one-to-one interviews and the importance of the tutor as a 'witness to work'. The learner and tutor together use the Student Tracking and Achievement Records system (STAR) to discuss present performance and produce an action plan for improvement. The availability of up-to-date information is critical to the success of the system.

The STAR system is built round the identification of key criteria for success. Too often learners' perceptions of how to succeed are hazy. They know good teachers are important but many believe that learning happens by a process of osmosis. The vital period between 16 and 18 years of age is also a time when learners are subject to a whole raft of conflicting demands. For example, paid work at evenings and weekends is useful for providing the essential trappings of the young socialite but is not always conducive to meeting homework deadlines and attending 9am classes. In the STAR review the criteria for achievement are clearly laid down.

Learners are encouraged to prepare for their STAR interview by assessing their performance in each subject against each of the criteria. This is then summarised on the overall profile sheet (see Figure 1). The individual subject assessments are completed in agreement with the subject teachers. The final profile is discussed with the tutor. The resulting profile will give the learner a bar chart. Where and why their performance falls below the line is then central to discussion and action planning. Key criteria are:

- attendance/punctuality
- notes
- homework deadlines
- private study
- grades achieved to date
- additional support
- part-time employment
- social life
- time spent in the student amenities block
- effective time management.

The analysis and related discussion enable learners to confront their own role in the learning process, making them aware of the possible consequences of some of their choices. The structured review also enables the one-to-one interviews to be more objective and consistent. Faced with an under-performing learner it is very easy for a tutor to vary in response between the attitudes of Mother Teresa and Vlad the Impaler. The system brings home to learners that the factors influencing their eventual achievement are under their control and that their choices make a difference; this reinforces the attitudes of the active learner.

The first STAR day of the learner's programme is particularly important. In preparation for this first interview learners can be provided with a brief questionnaire which enables them to think critically about where they are and to identify any concerns about their chosen course of study.

One full day each term is allocated to the reviews, although tutors also undertake individual follow-up reviews in tutorial sessions on the basis of the action plans, as necessary throughout the year.

Another tool of the tutorial process is a centrally resourced *Learning to learn* booklet. This is a resource produced for learners to use on their own but can also be used by tutors in the group tutorial sessions.

- Part 1 covers coping with change and the demands of study, and explains the STAR system and why it is important to monitor progress.

- Part 2 deals with understanding the process of learning, motivation, attitudes of the active and passive learner, learning styles, assessing skills and coping with anxiety.

- Part 3 outlines the study skills of an active learner in 13 topics. These include: using resources, making notes, essay writing, using feedback, revision techniques and examinations. Learners can use this as a personal resource and the materials are in the process of being added to the college intranet.

The STAR system and the Learning to Learn programme combine to help the learner move from passive, surface learning towards greater autonomy and depth. The college has now included the A-level Information Service (ALIS) in its tools for learner target setting, which will add the hard edge of minimum target grades to foster motivation.

The sixth form support team underpins the management of the tutorial process. The manager of the support team coordinates cross-college tutorial functions, for example the organisation of STAR days, reports and parents' evenings. There are three senior tutors in the support team, whose central role it is to underpin the tutors in the task of supporting failing learners. The senior tutors can also use the additional support of an attendance officer.

An effective management information system is vital. Tutors receive print-outs of attendance for their tutor group, which helps them to identify patterns or emerging trends (eg missing specific subjects, regularly missing 9am classes, or leaving college early to go to work). The identity card system in the college also enables learners to be tracked, since they need to swipe their card when using the learning resource centres, the amenities block and the college car park.

In addition to the cross-college coordination of the tutorial system, specialist services are provided which the tutor can use, by referring learners on where expert advice is appropriate.

This is a form that will be used with your tutor to record your progress.

Successful student profile

Managing your time and making the best use of your learning resources

Student name   Date

Tutor name   GCSE points on entry

	Weekly attendance for all classes	Punctuality for all classes	Work submitted to deadlines	Private study hours per week	Maths – additional support (if applicable)	English – additional support (if applicable)	Part-time employment hours per week	Social life (evenings out) per week	Hours spent in amenity block per week	Effective time management plan in place
ACHIEVE	100%	100%		12	100%	100%	3	1	0.50	
	95%	95%		10	95%	95%	6	2	1.00	Yes
	90%	90%	100%	8	90%	90%	9	3	1.25	
NON-ACHIEVE			75%	6			12	4	1.50	
			50%	5			18	5	2	
				4			24	6	3	No
				3			26	7	4	

Minimum target: 8 categories of achievement (compulsory) +2 categories of achievement (if applicable)

Student's result: ☐ categories of achievement

Delete as appropriate: ON TARGET CLOSE TO TARGET OFF TARGET

Predicted total A-level points: ☐

Tutor's signature:

Reviewing progress: relevant and up-to-date information

People's College

The People's College is a multi-site general college of further education serving inner-city Nottingham. Educational achievement in the city is significantly below the national average. The college has about 2000 full-time learners and 9000 part-time.

The college sees tutoring support as a critical element of its Curriculum 2000 provision and all learners who come under the Curriculum 2000 umbrella have an entitlement to 2 hours of tutorial support per week. An hour of this is used for a delivered programme and an hour is given over to individual learner review sessions.

The college has a strong history of progress reviews through records of achievement. Through evaluation of internal systems and processes the college has identified some difficulties in making subject-based feedback available to tutors at the right time. In a bid to make the most effective use of the resources given to one-to-one reviews, consideration has been given to ways in which the 'paper chase' can be transformed into a better communication system that will feed a meaningful dialogue between the learner and the tutor.

The course tutor for the GCSE retake programme had particular problems. Learners enrolled on this course followed a broad but balanced range of subjects including English, maths, chemistry, physics and psychology. Reviews were recognised as a potentially powerful aid to motivating learners, who in most cases come to the college with very modest achievements and low self-esteem. The tutor needed information from all subject staff to feed into discussion in regular progress review sessions. The information needed to be accurate and timely.

Fortunately, the course tutor is an innovative thinker and had a vision of a system that provided a solution to the problems. The solution is IT based and was developed jointly by the college's intranet manager and the course tutor; a good example of effective liaison between curriculum and IT staff.

It is simple and quick and it works. The course tutor is able to use the intranet to flag an individual learner on the system before a progress review session so that subject teachers can respond with up-to-date information on attendance, punctuality and progress. The tutor can then access a complete set of progress reports in time to incorporate them into a planned and resourced discussion with each learner, which draws on real evidence of attitude and performance.

Teachers, tutors, learners and parents have been quick to see the benefits of this new and innovative use of the intranet. Advantages include:

- efficient communication of valid and up-to-date information as needed without a 'paper chase'
- a permanent and cumulative record of progress
- time-efficient review of progress across a programme
- positive involvement of learners, who respond well to the regular monitoring process and thrive on the positive feedback
- comprehensive reports to parents produced with 'less pain'.

Of course, access to IT facilities across subject areas is an issue, but teachers have seen the system work, in that it saves time and improves the way they support learning. Improvements to be built into the system include opportunities to incorporate learner self-assessments and a bulletin board for staff as a front screen to allow for timely updates. These updates might be early flagging of attendance problems, difficulties with work, personal problems, big success stories, etc.

Sharing good practice across the college is taken seriously and already other staff are interested in this new approach to information management.

Managing for consistency

Greenhead College

Greenhead College is a sixth form college in Huddersfield, with Beacon and Accredited status and is recognised by many managers and teachers across the sector for its successful use of value-added data to improve the achievement of individual learners.

The college operates with a very positive ethos in which each learner is 'treated as an individual, an exception and a person to be valued'. The key aims of a personal tutor are to work with individual learners to:

- promote personal and social development
- promote academic achievement
- build continuously, self-esteem and self-confidence.

The job description included in this case study notes that the college is a 'happy place to work in, with all staff strongly committed to its students and their development'.

Personal tutors are appointed as 'top class classroom teachers' and have a 0.5 teaching commitment alongside a 0.5 tutorial role. A salary enhancement demonstrates the value given to the role. Tutors are members of a team of 14 led by an assistant principal with senior management responsibility for guidance and support. The team meets weekly to discuss learners' needs and to review and develop systems and processes to meet them.

Each personal tutor has responsibility for about 115 learners, organised into five tutor groups. Tutors give one hour a week to each group for a group tutorial and have five hours a week to respond to the needs of individual tutees.

There are clear links between tutoring and learning at a strategic level. Group tutorial time is given to work on study skills, revision techniques and exercises designed to build the learner's self-esteem and confidence in their ability to manage their own learning. Quality and consistency are ensured through a collaborative team approach to the development, review and maintenance of a central tutorial programme. There are four team training days each year as well as opportunities for individual tutors to benefit from specific training or updating in response to need (eg counselling skills or careers work).

Individual reviews focus on monitoring progress, and a whole-college system of providing subject-based feedback to learners is scheduled and linked in to one-to-one interviews. All subject staff work to a common set of criteria in their monitoring of progress and grading performance. Grades are awarded on the basis of interaction and work outputs in class, standard of set work and interim test results.

There is a shared understanding that a grade awarded to a learner by a subject teacher indicates the level of achievement the teacher believes will ultimately be possible at A-level. For example, in awarding a B/C grade a teacher would be saying: 'The impression I have at the moment of this student's work, attitude, ability, skills and knowledge from all the evidence produced in class and out of class, leads me to state that I would expect them to gain a grade B/C in their A-levels'.

Each learner will have the opportunity to discuss progress and achievement with individual subject teachers and will be offered encouragement and focused help and support in response to need. A progress report is completed and, with other reports, forms a basis for discussion in an individual tutor review session. Where there is a discrepancy between the learner's potential and performance the tutor will work with the learner to set individual targets and look at strategies to ensure achievement.

For example, a learner may opt to attend supervised study sessions in the library outside normal teaching hours.

The identification of potential is critical to the system and is done through the use of value-added data collected across the college over a number of years. A high profile is given to the use of value-added data both at whole-college and tutor group level. Potential A-level grading is done in a spirit of positive encouragement and motivation for individual learners and their learning. There is no hesitation or shyness about recognising and rewarding achievement and learners feel proud when they are awarded 'star forms' in recognition of their success.

The system benefits from specialist staff who are recruited to a tutoring role within a centralised system. The tutor team meetings offer mutual support and opportunities to inform and develop a standardised approach, with the bonus of some individual flexibility in response to circumstances. Team and individual training are important features of the model.

Job description

Job title: Post of Personal Tutor (0.5) with a teaching subject (0.5)

Job description
The college is always looking to appoint top class classroom teachers. This post attracts two incentive points above the standard scale. The person appointed will be responsible to the assistant principal in charge of the team for pastoral matters and to the relevant head of department for academic teaching.

The job consists of:

   a. teaching two groups towards advanced/intermediate level examinations

   b. responsibility for the personal, academic, social and emotional needs and progress of around 115 students

   c. taking five group tutorials per week through programmes of work devised by the personal tutor team

   d. taking responsibility for the college's administrative needs regarding students' records, references etc for students in your care

   e. attendance at staff and departmental meetings

   f. being in sympathy with a college ethos which finds its roots in a staff strongly committed to the college in all its aspects and activities. It is based on a philosophy that valuing students and helping them to experience success and sometimes working through failure helps them to grow in confidence and to succeed.

The college is looking to appoint:

   a. an outstanding teacher with experience in A-level teaching with a proven track record with 16–19-year-old students

   b. a person with relevant experience in personal tutoring

   c. a person who is lively, committed, enthusiastic and flexible in her/his approach to work. A sense of humour and the ability to work in a team would be very helpful.

The college is a very happy place to work in, with all staff strongly committed to its students and their development. The successful applicant will be joining talented and supportive staff and will find full backing from the senior staff in the college.

Managing for consistency

Isle College

The Isle College is a small, general FE college located in Wisbech in Cambridgeshire. There are 750 full-time learners and 7000 part-timers. Full-time learners progress from local schools. Most of these schools are situated in the only 'deprived area' of Cambridgeshire. The grade profile of learners at entry is evidence of only modest achievement, which is measured at 12% below the national average.

An FEFC inspection in 1994 pointed to a need to ensure greater consistency and a greater level of commitment and engagement by tutors. Strategies for improvement included:

- recruitment of new staff in line with new job descriptions and clear accountabilities
- training and development of new tutors
- clear central systems and procedures
- a standardised tutorial programme for all full-time learners
- part-time learner entitlement
- continuous review and evaluation.

Five personal advisers were appointed on Administrative, Professional, Technical and Clerical (APTC) contracts at point 21 on the salary scale, with each adviser carrying responsibility for approximately 150–175 full-time learners. The advisers form a strong team and bring significant relevant experience to their roles. Each adviser works across a given span of curriculum areas, and any practical and/or theory knowledge in these areas is seen to be useful but not essential. For example, the adviser working with learners in the faculty of business and community studies is a linguist and has a strong business administration background.

Personal advisers support learners and learning through timetabled sessions of one hour per week, either as a group or through planned one-to-one sessions. They also offer a drop-in service to support individuals as needed. Their main accountabilities are listed as follows:

- learner welfare and pastoral support
- learner induction and identification of support needs
  which do not come out of the initial assessment process
- target setting
- study skills, time management, planning
- personal statements for National Records of Achievement (NRAs)
  and applications to higher education, preparation of CVs
- collation of end-of-term reports
- career action planning
- financial guidance including grants and loans
- liaison with external agencies
- participation in 'advice days', 'open days' and 'parents' evenings'.

Follow-up of non-attendance is the responsibility of attendance advisers who liaise closely with personal advisers and academic staff.

In the 1999 FEFC inspection the college received very positive feedback for an innovative and well-managed approach to a strong and effective system of pastoral care which was greatly valued by learners.

The key to success is seen to be the recruitment of individuals who were keen to take on the role, have the aptitude and personal qualities needed and have been offered the training necessary to be effective in discharging their main accountabilities.

Cover for absence can be a problem where individual tutors are responsible for large numbers of learners. Possible solutions include a pool of part-time casual staff with similar experience to the personal advisers, flexibility in the use of youth workers or even making use of ex-students.

New advisers are inducted into the role through work-shadowing, planned sessions, induction notes and a teacher handbook. The job descriptions of both the Personal Adviser and the Student Attendance Adviser are included in this case study, along with a grid (Table 2) that highlights critical differences between the role of the Pastoral/ Personal Adviser and that of academic staff.

CASE STUDY 8
An example of job description – Isle College

Job description

Job title: Personal Adviser

Reports to: Head of Student Services

Job purpose: To support students during their programme

Each Personal Adviser may specialise in vocational areas.
There may also be specialism with adults, under-16s and training scheme students.

Main accountabilities

1. To be the student's representative, adviser and mentor.
2. On entry, to help the student with general college induction and with basic programme induction.
3. To monitor and support the student during the duration of their programme.
4. To encourage and motivate the student and help them develop study skills.
5. To advise and guide the student with any required changes to the learning agreement and notify administration of any such changes.
6. To devise and deliver IOLP key skill and update as required.
7. In conjunction with information from lecturers, to target set performance with student.
8. To encourage and assist the students with CVs, HE applications, personal statements, Records of Achievement, etc.
9. To liaise with subject and course coordinators about the student with the student's interest at heart.
10. To notify the Learning Support Coordinator and academic staff of any additional support the student might need should this become apparent through tutorials.
11. To communicate with students, parents and/or employers as appropriate.

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12. To help students with progression advice in conjunction with CCG and other outside agencies, for example HE institutions.

13. To keep own skills current and self-assess any training requirements for further development.

14. Should it become apparent there is a requirement, to refer students to outside counselling agencies.

15. To maintain current student records.

16. To comply with the requirements of data protection regulations.

17. To comply with college health and safety policy.

Job description

Job title: Student Attendance Adviser

Reports to: Head of Student Services

Job purpose: To monitor, progress and report on student attendance

Main accountabilities

1. Daily, to collect records of students absent from college.

2. To determine reason for student absences and take appropriate action as necessary.

3. To report reason for individual absence to the Personal Adviser/tutor and subject teacher.

4. To issue and maintain registers and answer queries about registers and attendance as appropriate.

5. To record enrolments and withdrawals as necessary.

6. To contribute to student administration and/or advice team as necessary.

7. To cover switchboard when necessary.

8. To comply with the requirements of data protection regulations.

9. To ensure safe working practices and, in so far as is reasonably practical, a hazard-free environment in all areas.

10. To obtain and maintain currency of first aid certificate.

11. To undertake training as necessary to maintain and update skills and knowledge appropriate to the role.

At least annually, you will participate in a formal review with your line manager. In this review, you will jointly determine your training and development needs and consider the currency and appropriateness of this job description. This process will result in the agreement of a training and development plan.

TABLE 2
The role of personal advisers compared with the academic role (Isle College)

The following guidelines differentiate academic and personal tutors/advice sessions.

Tutorial function	Academic staff	Pastoral/Personal adviser	Other
Specific query on the interpretation of an essay or task	●		
Specific review of academic progress in a module (module teacher)	●		
Specific review of academic progress on a programme (programme coordinator)	●		
Monitoring of academic progress on a programme	●	●	
Specific query on type of jobs in the vocational area	●	●	Resource base/Careers
Specific query on HE institutions and a particular area	●	●	Resource base/Careers
General query on jobs available in vocational area		●	Careers Service
HE applications general		●	
Specific HE reference information	●		Resource base
Coordination and writing of references		●	
General induction to college		●	
Specific induction to academic programme	●		
APL portfolio, GNVQ portfolio building	●		
APL assessment	●		
Support and monitoring of portfolio building	●		
Information on grants and finance	●	General	Student Services
Information on social welfare		●	
Information on support groups		●	
General career planning		●	
General time management and planning		●	
Specific assignment planning		●	
Study skills	●	●	
Study support	●	●	
Assessing academic achievement – formative and summative	●		

TABLE 2 continued

Tutorial function	Academic staff	Pastoral/ Personal adviser	Other
Recording academic achievement – formative and summative to meet awarding body requirements	●		
Monitoring and recording of all achievement – formative and summative for ROA		●	
Completion of awarding body paperwork to claim awards	●		
Notification of subject/course examination entry requirements to student	●		
Compact registration, monitoring and claiming			
ROA monitoring and completion			Resource base
Self-awareness raising		●	
Drugs, sex information		●	Outside agencies
Report writing for module	●		
Report writing for programme	●		
General student well-being report writing		●	
Collation of report comments		●	
Work references coordination		●	Student Services
Work reference specific academic comment	●		
Monitoring attendance/punctuality	●	●	Attendance Adviser
Work experience coordination	●		
Work experience monitoring	●		
Work experience assessment	●		
Personal problem counselling		●	Outside agencies
Organising career interview		●	
Assessment of academic support needed	●		
Assessment of individual support needed		●	Learning support

Managing for consistency: tutoring for part-time learners

Southgate College

Southgate College is a general FE college situated in the north London borough of Enfield. The college has 2300 full-time students and 12,000 part-timers. Only about 20% of students are under 19, and over 50% are 25 and over. The majority of the college's work is at foundation and intermediate level, with only a small amount of higher education. The college recruits 40% of its students from areas of disadvantage, for although the college is sited in a leafy, affluent area of north London, most day-time students travel by bus and underground train from other boroughs, mainly Haringey and Hackney. Only evening classes have an appreciable number of local participants. It has been estimated that over 50 languages other than English are regarded as mother tongue by Southgate students; 40% of students come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Among full-time students there are almost equal numbers of men and women.

In a bid to improve retention and achievement rates of part-time learners, the college set up and evaluated a pilot tutorial provision through a new Progression Centre. Located within the Library and Learning Resources Centre, the new facility offered part-time learners access to a suite of 19 computers with careers and other software and internet access. Other facilities include a printer, photocopier, careers library, separate classroom, private room and office, and staffing to aid the use of all the above.

It was staffed by a Progression Centre Coordinator who had been appointed to spend half their working time in this role, as described in the attached job description. In addition, other key staff including specialist careers, tutorial and key skills staff, as well as a learning resources assistant, had dedicated hours to give to part-time learners through the new centre. Innovative use was made of student teachers and part-time staff, but of course staff development was needed to prepare people for new responsibilities.

Through the Progression Centre part-time learners have been able to opt into workshops or group tutorials, which focus on study skills and use of information and communications technology (ICT), personal development, job-seeking skills or HE applications. One-to-one tutorials have also been available to monitor progress and set targets and help with UCAS applications and referrals to other support services and agencies. The college tutorial log and action plans have been modified for use in this different context.

The new centre was marketed internally and externally to raise awareness. Posters, leaflets, the staff bulletin and staff development sessions were all used to spread the word about the centre to teachers and managers of part-time groups. At the same time the message went out to people outside the college via the part-time and full-time prospectuses.

A database was set up to monitor the use of the centre. Learners' details, type of support activity and dates and times were collected and recorded so that information could be viewed in different report forms, for example by individual learner, by course, by support type, by amount of support accessed, etc. A record of one individual's use of the centre can be seen in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
Use of Progression Centre record, Southgate College

Student X
Total (hrs:mins): 09:21 Course: Btec NC Computing Part-time

Details

Monday	24 Jan 2000	1:1 Tutorial	14:00	14:30	00:30
Friday	04 Feb 2000	Job search	13:00	14:45	01:45
Friday	11 Feb 2000	1:1 Tutorial	13:00	14:36	01:36
Friday	17 March 2000	Using computer software	13:00	14:00	01:00
Friday	17 March 2000	Study skills	14:00	15:00	01:00
Friday	24 March 2000	Study skills	13:00	15:00	02:00
Friday	31 March 2000	Study skills	13:00	14:30	01:30

This data collection made possible a full analysis of the take-up of support by particular learners and groups and provided information which was useful for future planning.

Surveys were carried out to collect learner feedback on the use of the centre. A sample was taken of three learners per hour each day for a week over different periods of time. Questionnaires were sent out and oral feedback gathered from the course managers of all groups using the centre. Feedback was provided by Progression Centre staff.

Almost 50% of learners using the centre did so four to five times a week. Therefore it formed a major part of the learner's experience at the college. Almost all learners felt it was a good place to study. Most claimed that the Progression Centre had improved performance in coursework and would help them complete their course.

The college identified the following needs:

- a database of part-time teaching staff and part-time students to aid communication processes

- to offer an academic tutorial and support for key skills as well as pastoral tutorial service to part-time students to optimise use of the centre and support students' achievement

- to develop a rationale for providing accreditation opportunities for the workshop sessions offered to part-time students

- to develop resources to improve the learning experiences of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and students with low literacy levels

- a potential business plan for the Progression Centre

- to identify ways in which the Progression Centre can support 'at risk' students

- to make most effective use of limited resources, through targeting part-time students most 'at risk' of dropping out

- to identify staff development requirements for Progression Centre, Learning Resources staff and staff across the college

- administrative support for the centre's work

- an evaluation strategy to enable full differentiation between students using the Progression Centre as an extension of the Learning Resources Service and those accessing support from tutors

- a Learning Resources Assistant dedicated and trained to support the work of the centre.

Job description

Job title: Progression Centre Coordinator (Management spine 0–3)

The role
The post will be based in Support for Students reporting to the Dean of Students. The Progression Centre Coordinator will be a Management Spine post with a 0.5 teaching load in one of the teaching faculties in addition to the coordination role and contact load within the centre.

The Progression Centre will complement support already available from advisers in the Careers Centre, Inclusive Learning Centre and Learning Resources Centre. Its main purpose is to facilitate the progression of a range of students to further education, higher education and employment through the following activities:

- guidance, feedback and referrals
- careers education and guidance
- job-search/jobseeking skills
- study skills
- basic/key skills assessment
- curriculum vitae
- HE advice/applications
- revision techniques
- National Records of Achievement/Progress Files support, etc.

It is envisaged that the centre will become an important facility for many groups, in particular for students following New Deal, Prince's Trust and women returners programmes.

The centre will offer one-to-one guidance and feedback, small group support and access to independent assessments and learning through computerised programmes and resources.

At a later stage, the centre might support key skills development, independent/flexible learning, APL/AEL etc.

The Progression Centre Coordinator will be responsible for ensuring that the centre is able to deliver the service outlined above, drawing upon support from colleagues with expertise in careers education, tutoring, learning resources, key skills etc.

The duties

Establish a Progression Centre within the Learning Resources Centre.

Market the purpose and successes of the centre.

Liaise with key staff both within and outside the college to ensure the centre
is meeting staff, student and local needs in harmony with existing services.

Work closely with the Inclusive Learning Centre manager, the manager of Tutor Support,
the Careers Coordinator and the Library and Learning Resources Service manager
to ensure team approaches to issues of support.

Coordinate the staffing and resources necessary to run the centre effectively
and efficiently.

Attend Support for Students and faculty meetings as required.

The person

The appointed person will be a current member of the college's teaching staff.

S/he will have proven commitment to the purposes of the Progression Centre.

S/he will need energy and drive to ensure the centre develops and prospers.

S/he will have proven experience of working productively with people of all ages,
from a variety of ethnic backgrounds.

S/he will possess ideally (or be prepared to gain) an appropriate guidance qualification
and be able to demonstrate experience of working with students on progression issues.

S/he will possess knowledge of national and college developments relating to student
progression (Widening Participation, National Record of Achievement/Progress File,
Moser Report, Learning to Succeed, Curriculum 2000, etc).

S/he will possess strong interpersonal, organising and ICT skills.

S/he will possess a clear understanding of the college's tutorial and other
supportive systems in addition to demonstrable tutoring/counselling skills.

Colleges contributing to this study

The Learning and Skills Development Agency wishes to acknowledge the good practice of the following colleges; their experiences contributed to the writing of this publication.

Blackburn College

Carmel College, Merseyside

Coleg Llandrillo, Conwy

Greenhead College, Huddersfield

Havering College of Further and Higher Education

Isle College, Wisbech

Loughborough College

North Warwickshire and Hinckley College

Norwich City College

People's College, Nottingham

Southgate College, London

Sutton Coldfield College

Walsall College of Arts and Technology

Colleges responding to the Tutoring Network survey managed by Jill Cable of Sutton Coldfield College

Blackburn College

Cirencester College

Coleg Llandrillo, Conwy

College of North East London

Dewsbury College

Ealing Tertiary College, London

East Surrey College

Epping Forest College

Exeter College

Fareham College

GLOSCAT, Cheltenham

Henley College, Coventry

Kingsway College, London

Middlesbrough College

New College, Swindon

New College, Telford

North Oxfordshire College
and School of Art

North Warwickshire
and Hinckley College

Norwich City College

Palmer's College, Kent

Pendleton College, Salford

People's College, Nottingham

Plymouth College

Richard Huish College, Taunton

Richmond upon Thames College

Runshaw College

Salisbury College

Saltash College, Cornwall

Shrewsbury College of Arts
and Technology

Southampton City College

Stoke-on-Trent College

Stratford-upon-Avon College

Strode College, Street

Sutton Coldfield College

Tamworth and Lichfield College

Thurrock College

Trowbridge College

Truro College

Wakefield College

Wilberforce Sixth Form College, Hull

Worcester College of Technology

York College

If you are a senior manager who wants to improve student achievement, or you are involved in tutoring in your college, this book is for you. It looks at how the tutor has moved from a largely autonomous position to an extended and more clearly defined role with a clear link to learning. Drawing on research managed through the Raising Quality and Achievement Programme's Tutoring Network, it identifies key messages for improving tutoring illustrated by detailed case studies from colleges that have been successful in tutoring for achievement.