

FIRST YEAR GROUP MEETING WITH PERSONAL TUTORS AND PEER MENTORS

These resources have been written to be used with new undergraduate or postgraduate taught students. The content has been informed by feedback from 19 undergraduate students (from across all year groups) representing 12 departments.

It might also be useful to have the guide to personal tutoring and support services to hand during the meeting. The current Colchester and Southend versions are held [here](#). (The students will have received their own paper copy via their department. How it is distributed will vary by department.)

Discussion topics / Activity	Resources / Referral
<p>Personal Tutor Introduction A typical introduction by a Personal Tutor will contain the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name, where tutor is from, hobbies, academic area/specialty • Contact details of tutor 	
<p>Peer Mentors Introduction A typical introduction by a peer mentor will contain the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name, course, residence, interesting fact • Extracurricular interests and hobbies (clubs, societies and jobs) 	
<p>Icebreaker activity 1 (choose one) The following icebreakers have been designed to help new students get to know one another and to make the first meetings/sessions less awkward. They also allow the Peer Mentor/Personal Tutor to join in so they can learn more about their students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Bingo • Memory Circle <p>The aim of both of these icebreakers is to learn names and brief facts about other students.</p>	<p>See the appendix for detailed information about how to run each icebreaker activity.</p> <p>Peer Mentors and Personal Tutors should read the instructions prior to the session in order to prepare effectively.</p>
<p>The Role of the Personal Tutor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain that Personal Tutors can provide advice on academic and non-academic issues (e.g. study skills, referencing, adjusting to uni) • Explain that if you can't help then you will recommend other University support services that can help. • Make it clear that Personal Tutors are members of staff • Explain that Personal Tutors are there to help guide their tutees throughout their studies – not just their first year • State that the aim of the Personal Tutor is to help students achieve their potential. <p>The Role of the Peer Mentor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is a peer mentor? • How do they help students? • They help mentees settle into university • A point of contact for questions about university life, including social opportunities • Can refer mentees to other sources of help or information (when needed) • Discuss any issues or problems. 	
<p>Icebreaker activity 2 (choose one)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line up Race – this activity aims to get students talking to each other • Fact or Fiction – this activity aims to find out interesting things about each other and to discover things in common with other students. 	<p>See the appendix for detailed information about how to run each icebreaker activity.</p> <p>Peer Mentors and Personal Tutors should read the instructions prior to the session in order to prepare effectively.</p>

Discussion topics / Activity	Resources / Referral
<p>Questions</p> <p>Hand out two paper/sticky notes and pens to students. Using the 'question in a hat' method, the Personal Tutor or Peer Mentor will invite the mentees to write two questions on two separate sticky notes/ pieces of paper.</p> <p>Example questions will include "Where can I find my coursework deadlines?" Or "Where is the library?"</p> <p>The Peer Mentor will collect the questions using the box, and read them out. Students will be invited to contribute to answer the question, if possible. Otherwise, the Personal Tutor or Peer Mentor will answer the question.</p>	<p>Box/hat Pens and paper/sticky notes</p>
<p>Close and what next?</p> <p>Personal Tutor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify availability and contact details • Clarify how regular meetings should be and that meeting lengths may vary, depending on the topic • Explain the process of making appointments if the tutee wishes to schedule a meeting • Explain the process of rescheduling appointments <p>Peer Mentor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let mentees know that they can be reached by email (Essex email) • Inform mentees about the next peer mentor event • Remind mentees that they are available for casual 1-to-1 meetings if their mentees wish to ask any questions that they would prefer to ask when alone. • Assure mentees of support available • Explain that Peer Mentors will be staying behind after the meeting if there are any extra questions or matters mentees would like to discuss. • Discuss the Welcome Week programme. Ask the new students what other events they are planning to attend in Welcome Week. Highlight some of the events they would recommend and offer to attend them in small groups. • Arrange another time to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. meet as a group later in the week or in Week 2. b. show the new students where their classes and lectures for Week 2 are so that they don't get lost. c. show the new students how they can find their readings for Week 2, and how to use the relevant online resources (e.g. Moodle and FASER). 	

Additional topics that might be relevant for PGT students

- What are the arrangements for project supervision within the department? What will the relationship be between the personal tutor and each student's supervisor? How might personal tutors help students with their dissertation?
- Are there any key dates or events for PGT students during the year, such as conferences or training opportunities? How can PGT students prepare and get involved?
- Are there any bursaries or scholarship deadlines that PGT students need to be aware of for PGR applications?

- What is the availability of personal tutors and supervisors over the summer?

Appendix

First Meeting Icebreaker Activities

Human Bingo

Aim	To learn names and brief facts about each other
Equipment required	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the Human Bingo grid for each person (see below) • Pens • A small prize (eg. chocolate or a notebook etc.)
Group size	Up to 25
Explanation	Give everyone a copy of the Human Bingo grid (see below). Personal Tutors and Peer Mentors can join in too. There are 16 boxes on the grid with a different heading in each box.
	<p>As soon as everyone has a grid, participants must speak to other people in the room to find someone who matches the heading for each box. For instance, one of the headings is “Plays an instrument” – participants must find someone in the room who plays an instrument and write that person’s name in the box.</p> <p>There must be a different person for every box.</p> <p>The winner is whoever fills in all the boxes first. They should shout “bingo” or let the Personal Tutor/Peer Mentors know they have completed their grid. The winner, Personal Tutor or Peer Mentor can read out the answers to check with the group that they are all correct and provide extra information – such as “Sophie plays an instrument. What do you play Sophie?”</p>
Variations	<p>The grid headings can be changed to cover other subjects – including ones relevant to your department. Make sure the questions are inclusive and don’t reinforce stereotypes.</p> <p>The grid can be made smaller if there are fewer people in the group.</p> <p>The game will last longer if there are runner up prizes for second and third place.</p>

Human Bingo

This is a great way to get to know one another and you will probably speak to everyone in the room by the time you have finished. The idea is to find a different person for each box and to put their name under the heading they match. You must put a different person's name in each box! When you are finished, let your Personal Tutor or Peer Mentor know – you can shout “bingo” if you like!

Plays an instrument	Has a brother	Can speak 2 or more languages	Travelled to more than 5 countries
Enjoys reading	Has a birthday this month	Has met someone famous	Drinks coffee
Was born in a different country	Plays a sport	Lives off campus	Performed in a play
Has a cat	Has been to Italy	Has volunteered	Likes cooking

Memory Circle

Aim	To learn names and brief facts about each other
Equipment required	Whiteboard or paper to write the categories on
Group size	Up to 10 maximum (a large group can be divided into smaller groups)
Explanation	Students should form a circle. One student is chosen by the peer mentor to start the game by stating their name, origin country, course of study and one interesting fact about themselves . (These categories should be written on a whiteboard or piece of paper that is visible in case anyone forgets). The next student needs to repeat everything that was said by the previous student(s) and add their information. For instance, the 4th student in the group will repeat what the 1st, 2nd and 3rd students said and add their personal information after. The game ends when everybody has been repeated by others

Line Up Race

Aim	To get students talking to each other
Equipment required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Space to line-up• Small prizes (e.g. sweets) for the winning team
Group size	10 – 20
Explanation	Ask everyone to stand up. The Peer Mentor reads out a category such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First name in alphabetical order• Birthdays (date and month)• Distance travelled to uni that day• Favourite hobby, in alphabetical order <p>Each team must quickly arrange themselves in proper ascending (or descending) order, lining up accordingly. For each category, the Peer Mentor must define each end of the line e.g. 'January near the door, December over there.' When a team is in the proper order, they must let the Peer Mentor know (shout!). The first group to successfully complete each task wins the round. The Peer Mentor will check to make sure that the team is in fact in the correct order by asking each person to state their answer. The Peer Mentor should also do this for the losing team too so that students get to know more about the other team too. The team to finish first and in the correct order wins.</p>
Variations	To make this more challenging, (perhaps after the first or second round) this game can be completed in silence so participants must use body language to communicate.

Fact or Fiction

Aim	To find out interesting things about each other and to discover things in common with other students
Equipment required	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paper or sticky notes.• Pens
Group size	Ideal for smaller groups (up to 10)
Explanation	Ask members to introduce themselves by first name only, and then ask everyone to write on a piece of paper two things about themselves which may not be known to others in the group. One is true and one false. They must then take it in turns to state the two facts, and then the rest of the group will decide which is true and which is false. The leader will repeat the facts to the other members to remind people before voting.