

Suggested topics for discussion

This is a proposal for the content to be discussed in meetings with tutees. This is **by no means meant to be exclusive or prescriptive**, but is a suggestion of topics which it may be relevant to discuss at particular stages of the standard undergraduate and taught postgraduate degrees. Deadlines which apply to students should also be discussed where relevant within disciplines and Schools e.g. Internships, ERASMUS programme applications etc.

1st year students

- Welcome
 - A mutual introduction and setting the scene: ask them about themselves and tell them a little about you. Congratulate them on the achievement of getting into Stirling to study their chosen subject. “Break the ice” and ensure they know you are there to help them
 - Make sure they know how to contact you – what your office hours are, how to contact you, and what the response time will be.
 - Set expectations around the personal tutor scheme – what you can and cannot do and what is expected of the tutees as detailed in the Code of Practice for Personal Tutors.
- Set expectations/parameters of what it means to be a student at the University of Stirling:
 - Studies at university are much more student-led than they might be used to – there will be less people telling them what to do than they may have experienced to date, so they will have to manage workloads, deadlines, social life and finances themselves.
 - There are support services available to them across the University if they need help with any matters and the Personal Tutor is there to signpost this help.
 - Much of a university career is about self-reflection and self-motivation.
 - Their work ethic needs to remain high, and not be allowed to slip with new-found freedom
- General ‘housekeeping’ – check that students are happy and that they have considered:
 - The University week – when and where are their lectures, how they sign up for tutorials, using modules outlines to find information. Wednesday afternoons are free for co-curricular activity
 - Free time should be used constructively
 - Consider co-curricular activities, Students’ Union
 - GP registration
 - Bank accounts
 - Accommodation - Check the address and phone details held on the portal
 - Attended academic fairs
 - Any other salient points you might think of
- Introduce the Graduate Attributes
(http://www.stir.ac.uk/employability/staff/components-of-employability/graduate_attributes/)
- The student can be asked to have a look at these themselves and you can help by briefly describing what they are and why we have them.
- Employability – encourage the students to get involved in University life and extra-curricular activities to get the most out of the experience
- Any relevant deadlines to discuss?
- For next time

- Check back to make sure they have understood. It is important not to overload them at this meeting; keep information brief.
- Encourage them to keep and reflect on feedback and share with you at later meetings if relevant.
- Encourage them to take notes of what you have discussed and make an action plan to carry out agreed objectives. Action plans should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timeframe).

Meetings later in the year

- Exam preparation and understanding exam format and formalities. It may be helpful for 1st year students to have an opportunity to discuss revising and preparing for exams, including what is involved in the exam process. Some students worry more about the logistics of the exam process than the actual exams themselves.
 - Revision – you can discuss: What does revision involve? What works? What might you try? What resources are there to help? What form will their assessments take and how it will be assessed. The weighting of various elements of assessment.
 - The exam process – the exam timetable is issued through the Portal; are they likely to require any adjustments or special provision?
- What to do in the event of illness or other extenuating circumstances during the assessment period. Discuss deferred exams (only granted if the student was affected during the exam diet), if their exam preparation had been affected by ill health prior to the exam diet, the student is expected to take the exam and provide a statement and supporting evidence to the Chief Examiner so that it can be taken into account by the Exam Board.
- Using feedback and reflecting on feedback
- Reflecting on lessons learnt to take forward for next year e.g.
 - work ethic
 - study skills
 - co-curricular
- Discuss what the student has achieved towards the graduate attributes and plan for future development. Perhaps ask them to have a look at them before they come along to see you
 - Now the tutee should be more familiar with them you can discuss why we have them
 - Do they have any questions about them?
 - Which skills do they think they might have developed during their 1st year at university?
 - How can they reflect upon and develop them during their time at university?
 - What is the difference between the curriculum and the co-curriculum?
 - Where can students find resources to support them in recognising and developing these attributes?
- Discuss activities over the summer break – placement opportunities, work experience, travel
- Any items from previous suggested discussions that are still relevant

2nd Year Students

- Welcome back
- Reflect on last year and look forward to this year on developing the graduate attributes and study skills
- Discuss development of study skills looking towards honours

- Employability: In second year the focus should be on encouraging students to start gaining relevant work experience, to consciously identify and articulate their skills and to be proactive in their career planning. Discuss accessing help through the Career Development Centre.
- Any items from previous suggested discussions that are still relevant

Meetings later in the year

- Discussing honours options and the way ahead
- Exam preparation and understanding exam format and formalities as with 1st years where the tutee indicates they still have concerns.
- Discuss ERASMUS opportunities – timing dependent on programme
- Any items from previous suggested discussions that are still relevant

3rd Year Students

- Reflect on the previous year.
- This will be the start of Honours – highlight that the 1st year of Honours can be reasonably unstructured with autonomous work, before finals in the subsequent year. Discuss the different approach in honours study.
- Ask them to think about learning strategies to cope with the changes, and signpost Student Learning Support courses to support them. Discuss particular circumstances – ask the students to reflect on their experience/failure/disappointment and then it should become more obvious where they can be referred to for additional support.
- Discuss the feedback they have received so far and how they are using and reflecting on that.
- Talk about co-curricular activities – what are they involved with; what else could they consider?
- Employability: encourage the student to be forward thinking in their career planning. Highlight internships, placements and work experience – what they are, how they apply, when deadlines come up. Refer them to the Career Development Centre.
- Check they are familiar with the services the Career Development Centre can provide and they are starting to think about options for when they graduate. Topics of discussion can be:
 - How have you made use of the Careers Service this year?
 - What careers or postgraduate options interest you? What do you know about the careers or postgraduate options that interest you? What ways can the Careers Service help with your career planning?
 - How can you complete your CV to enhance your employment or further study prospects? Who can help you with this?
 - What are your plans for the upcoming summer vacation? Have you managed to secure a work placement, internship or some other form of work experience?
- Any items from previous suggested discussions that are still relevant

4th Year Students

- Reflect on the previous year, academically and extra-curricular activities – congratulate on successes.
- The final year – discuss the dissertation or extended study – how are they preparing for that and any anxieties they have around this.
- Discuss the feedback and grades they have received so far and how they are using and reflecting on that. How will they achieve the best possible degree?

- Deadlines for applications for jobs and further study can be early so they need to plan ahead.
- Any items from previous suggested discussions that are still relevant

Taught Postgraduate Students

- Welcome
 - A mutual introduction and setting the scene: ask them about themselves and tell them a little about you. Congratulate them on the achievement of getting into Stirling to study their chosen subject. “Break the ice” and ensure they know you are there to help them
 - Make sure they know how to contact you – what your office hours are, how to contact you, and what the response time will be.
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 - GP registration
 - Bank accounts
 - Accommodation
 - Attended academic fairs
 - Any other salient points you might think of
- Introduce the Graduate Attributes (http://www.stir.ac.uk/employability/staff/components-of-employability/graduate_attributes/) The student can be asked to have a look at these themselves and you can help by briefly describing what they are and why we have them. Ask the student to review where they are in acquiring these attributes and what areas should be developed over their time with us.
- Any relevant deadlines to discuss?
- For next time
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 - Encourage them to keep and reflect on feedback and share with you at later meetings if relevant.
 - Encourage them to take notes of what you have discussed and make an action plan to carry out agreed objectives. Action plans should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timeframe).
- Taught postgraduate students have a very short time with us – review what additional discussions seem relevant to their personal situation from the suggestions set out for undergraduate students above.