

How effective is personal tutoring at delivering personal development planning in a Computer Games Technology department at Staffordshire University

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Abstract

Within the Games Technology program area, student engagement with the optional pastoral personal tutoring system has been long standing problem. Previous study into the system had highlighted that following the initial meeting in their first year, students did not attend subsequent meetings. This paper reviews some of the systems that have been implemented to address these problems. It asks whether incorporating Personal Development Planning (PDP) can breathe new life into a system, which currently students feel disengaged with? Through a review of the current literature, and questionnaires to both staff and students, the appeal of the new PDP provision within the current personal tutoring system can be ascertained; The results show that the current provision is an improvement over the previous system, but that both staff and students would welcome further integration of PDP into personal tutoring. The evidence shows that whilst students at lower levels may not totally appreciate PDP at that time, as they continue in academia the need to be an employable graduate motivates the student to engage with PDP. This study recommends that when a structured PDP programme has been compiled it should be incorporated into personal tutoring as a matter of course.

Introduction

Reflection is a key part of the learning process and helps develop understanding (Moon, 2001) (Kolb, 1984) (Schon, 1983). More specifically Mayes, citing Entwistle & Walker (2002), argues that it helps to promote deep learning (Mayes, 2005). The HE education sector uses a variety of methods to encourage reflection by students. Academic reflection may come in the forms of critical evaluations, peer reviews, self-assessment documents, or development diaries (Cottrell, 2003). However, this reflection is not always academic, and the personal tutoring process provides a familiar environment where students can reflect on external factors, which may affect their studies (Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006) (Wheeler & Birtle, 1993). However, if students are not engaging in a personal tutoring or a Personal Development system, is there an opportunity being missed to further help students reflect

on their performance? This paper attempts to determine if more can be done to help students engage with an optional personal tutoring system. Further, it seeks to determine whether the integration of PDP into personal tutoring is appealing to games technology students.

Literature Review

Personal tutoring has been part of the student higher education experience for many years, with many institutions utilising the traditional Oxbridge model of personal tutoring (Wheeler & Birtle, 1993). This model is a pastoral system whereby the academics are assigned personal tutees, for whom they are responsible for. Owen gives examples of 2 other Personal Tutoring systems; The first of these is the *Curriculum Model*, whereby personal tutoring is embedded into academic modules, or as a standalone module. Successful completion of the personal tutoring module is rewarded with marks towards a summative grade. The second is the *Professional Model*, which is the referral of almost all personal tutees to the relevant professional service depending on the problem at hand, i.e. finance, counsellors, disability services etc (Owen, 2002).

The term PDP is a relatively new, finding its way to prominence around 2001 (Jackson, 2001) with QAA requiring all universities to offer some PDP provision by 2005/06 (Clegg & Bufton, 2008). It is therefore unsurprising to find that around this time there was a concerted effort by HE institutions to have a policy in place to support such provision. The Staffordshire University policy for example "was written in 2000/2001 and audited in 2004" (Staffordshire University, 2006). Given the swift pace of technological change, the regular updating of academic course materials in the program area to meet current employability requirements, and the implementation of blended learning strategies for academic awards, one might question as whether the improvement of the personal tutoring system, or the PDP provision has been equally well considered?

Rationale

The Games Technology program area operates a personal tutoring system underpinned by the personal tutoring policy of the institution. The policy itself promotes a system based on a combination of the pastoral model and professional model of personal tutoring as stated by Thomas, citing Earwalker (1992) (Earwalker, 1992) (Thomas, 2006).

Previous Experience in this area had highlighted there were problems with the current personal tutoring provision in the program area. Student uptake on scheduled meetings was generally poor, and staff and student attitudes towards the system were disappointing. Therefore an initial piece of research was undertaken to identify problem areas.

The pastoral system used many of the generic documents provided by the university (Staffordshire University, 2004). For this reason many of the questions and discussions within the initial meetings were very generic and seemingly detached from the student's own subject area (Staffordshire University, 2004).

The previous research in this area was carried out between January and May 2012. The study used questionnaires to critically review current practices and a review of current literature to give context to the views of the students.

The results suggested that a high percentage of students in their first year knew who their personal tutor was, and attended their first initial meeting. However, in the second semester only 1 of 16 first year students surveyed stated that they attended their personal tutor meeting. In contrast, less than 50% of Students in levels 5 (2nd year) and level 6 (3rd year) knew who their personal tutor was, with the same percentage attending their first meeting¹. Furthermore, all level 5 students surveyed stated they did not attend their second semester meeting. The evidence showed some students suggested a breakdown in communication as a reason for this lack of attendance. It was recommended that more robust communication logging be implemented in the future.

One of the most startling results from the research was that only 26% of students questioned found the personal tutor meetings helpful, with 41% of students finding the support documents (suggested by the university) equally helpful. Additionally, only 50% of students stated they would seek pastoral support from their personal tutor, preferring to speak to either the module, or award leaders, in the case of academic problems. Given, that the personal tutor should be a stable point of contact for a student, (Wheeler & Birtle, 1993), and they should be there to guide the students attitudes towards learning, and overcoming to difficulties (Thomas, 2002), the current provision clearly wasn't meeting these requirements.

The study concluded that the overall apathy with personal tutoring came down to the lack of relevance of the personal tutoring sessions, and communications between staff and students being poor. It was determined that the personal tutoring provision of the program area had to change, in order to be seen as more relevant and desirable to the student population. Three areas were recommended for improvement

1. Student Engagement and Communication
2. Meeting Content and Relevance
3. Staff and University commitment to Personal Tutoring

Subsequently a new provision, was designed to be more engaging for students, and attempted to address more than just general a student's pastoral concerns.

One of the improvements implemented involved the integration of Personal Development Planning (PDP) into the current pastoral provision. This was done through several strategies.

At the initial group meeting, the personal tutor would present a new PowerPoint presentation. This presentation asked the students to think about more than just 'if they'd settled into their accommodation?', or knew 'how to get their timetable?'. It asked them to

¹ This also highlighted that some level 6 students didn't realise that their project supervisor was their personal tutor

consider their intended career paths, what they might need to do to get there, and how the personal tutor could help them.

The second strategy involved the personal tutor reviewing attendance registers and contacting any students who seemed to be struggling with attendance. This meets with Owen's recommendations that personal tutoring should track students through their time at university (Owen, 2002). It was hoped that this would pick up struggling students.

Finally support documents were provided to students for their second semester meeting. This would involve a student review document, which asked the student to reflect on areas they did well, and areas which needed improvement. It also asked them to consider how they could improve on these areas. When completed this document would be emailed to the tutor by the student before the meeting. At the meeting the tutor would work with the student to develop an action plan to go help the student move forward. It was intended that this structured approach to the meeting would be considered useful by the students.

Methodology

The hypothesis of this study is that students would show a greater motivation to engage with the personal tutoring provision if there was an even greater emphasis on personal development and progress planning.

This paper will attempt to address two main research questions:

1. Does the current personal tutoring provision address the Personal Development Planning (PDP) needs of the students?
2. What strategies can be put in place to strengthen the link?

This research will form the second stage of ongoing action research cycle following McNiff's cyclical method:

- identify an area of practice to be investigated;
- imagine a solution;
- implement the solution;
- evaluate the solution;
- change practice in light of the evaluation (McNiff, 2002)

McNiff's cyclical method aligns with Elliott's argument that action research should improve practice (Elliott, 1991). At this point in the ongoing research, the study will try to gauge the views of the staff and students on whether the changes that have been implemented, on the back of the previous research, have been well received. Further, it will try to establish if further integration of PDP into the provision would be welcomed. Ultimately the goal of this stage of the program of research is to improve the personal tutoring and PDP provision currently in place in the department.

This stage of research will take the form of a small scale case study of student and staff perceptions and experiences in the Games Technology program area. This particular case

study falls into Stenhouse's definition of an *evaluative case study*, whereby a single case, or collection cases, studied in depth can have an effect on decision makers, who determine policy (Bassey, 1999), citing Stenhouse (1985). It is hoped that the ongoing action research will help managers to consider how PDP and personal tutoring could be important factors in the student experience.

It is not in the nature of this paper to debate the value of both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Quantitative quantifiable data, trends, patterns and demographics, needs to be balanced against the need for an understanding over what the results actually mean. The students are individuals and their experiences, judgements, and answers may not always be able to be defined by a set of definitive values or statistics.

Therefore the primary research will take the form of questionnaires consisting of both quantitative and qualitative questions.

As the Qualitative data, by its very nature, is open to interpretation and subjective opinion (Cohen, et al., 2007). The open answers need to be analysed, the Grounded Theory method will be used as Cohen et al argue that it is more inductive, and that theories emerge from the data, rather than before the data is analysed (Cohen, et al., 2007). This means that rather than trying to categorize the qualitative answers, the answers will be categorized by their themes.

It is important to consider who the respondents of the questionnaire should be. Personal tutoring and personal development planning clearly affects the student population. However it also affects the academics, and professionals, who deliver the service. For this reason there will be 2 questionnaires; one that is answered by students, and one by staff members in the program area.

The first questionnaire was distributed to the 496 students on Games Technology awards², and the second questionnaire was distributed to the 11 staff members in the program area. The method of distribution for these questionnaires were differed for each group of recipients: The staff questionnaire was attached to an email to sent to all staff members. The student questionnaire was distributed via a link posted on the social media site Facebook, and in an email to all students in the program area. A reminder email, and a notification post, was sent out 2 weeks after the initial contact time, ensuring the highest number of replies.

The questionnaires were designed to answer the two main research questions. "What effect does Personal Tutoring have on PDP", and "What strategies can be put in place to strengthen the link". Each questionnaire would fundamentally answer these same questions, but from the two different points of view. It was anticipated that a correlation could be found between the 2 sets of data and conclusions drawn on the results

There were 103 responses to the student questionnaire recorded by Qualtrics, which is a return rate of approximately 20.8%. However, the construction of the questionnaire was

² This figure was taken from the *Core Skills for Games Awards* Blackboard module. All students on Games Technology awards are registered on this module.

such that some questions could be skipped and the survey completed without all questions being answered. Unfortunately, this means that some questions do not have a total responses value equal to the 103 population value. The distribution of responses by study level is shown in fig1.

#	Answer	Response	%
1	Level 3 - Extended Award	4	4%
2	Level 4 - Traditiona lly the 1st year	3	37%
3	Level 5 - Traditiona lly the 2ndyear	3	35%
4	Level 6 - Traditiona lly the 3rd year	1	18%
5	Placement Year	0	0%
6	Level 7 - Masters/ MEng	5	5%
	Total	9	100 %

Figure 1: Distribution of the population by study level

The response rate for the staff questionnaire was higher at 82.6% or 9 out of 11 staff members. This was to be expected due to the nature of the enquiry, the professionalism of the respondents and low distribution population.

The responses for the quantitative questions were analysed through Qualtrics. Initially, cross tabulation was used to organise the data. "Cross Tabulation is presentational device whereby one variable can be presented in relation to another" pg508, (Cohen, et al., 2007). Thus it was possible to correlate whether students had different thoughts on Personal tutoring and PDP depending on their level of study.

Results and Discussion

The quantitative data shows that of all the level 4 & 5 students surveyed, only 50% attended their personal tutor meeting. Cross Tabulation of the data shows that approximately 61% of the level 4 students attended whilst only 40% of the level 5 students attended. This is shown in figure 2. In line with personal tutoring policy of the university, the

Level 6 students personal tutor is their final year project supervisor, as such these students were directed to a different set of questions.

		Did you attend your personal tutor meeting?		
		Yes	No	Total
At what level are you currently studying?	Level 3 - Extended Award	1 25.00%	3 75.00%	4 100.00%
	Level 4 - Traditionally the 1st year	20 60.61%	13 39.39%	33 100.00%
	Level 5 - Traditionally the 2nd year	12 41.38%	17 58.62%	29 100.00%
	Level 6 - Traditionally the 3rd year	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 100.00%
	Placement Year	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 100.00%
	Level 7 - Masters/MEng	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 100.00%
	Total	33 50.00%	33 50.00%	66 100.00%

Figure 2: Level of Study vs Attendance of Personal Tutor meeting

Those who failed to attend the meeting were asked to give a reason for not attending. Three main themes were identified: The largest response, 72%, responded that they either were unaware of the meeting, or were not contacted by staff members. The second main theme identified, at 17%, was apathy; these students made a conscious decision to not to attend the meeting as they felt it would not benefit them to do so. The final theme, with only two of 29 students, was student culpability. These students forgot to attend a pre-arranged meeting.

The first, and largest category, clearly states that communication between staff and students is still a problem, and needs to be addressed; despite being part of the previous action plan. However, it is also possible that students may have forgotten, or deleted any previous correspondents from staff. In either case, action is needed to ensure that communication between staff and students is clear, direct and recorded. These results do not necessarily impact on any analysis carried out on data obtained regarding the content of the personal tutor meetings. However, what they do tell us, is that communication is a significant problem, and should be integral part of the ongoing recommendations for the future.

Those students who did attend their personal tutoring meeting had mixed feelings of how useful it was. Only 37% of students felt it to be useful, or very useful. Whilst, 42% had no opinion, with 13% feeling the meeting was useless to them. This was a significant improvement over the previous research, which suggested that only 26% of students found the meetings useful, with another 26% finding them useless. It could be argued that the inclusion of the additional PDP information into the initial meeting was beneficial to the student experience. At the very least it was not detrimental.

The next question discussed the attendance of the 'Feedback Week' (a one-to-one feedback session with the personal tutor at the start of the following semester, which follows the release of summative results; one of the PDP elements implemented as part of the improvements), 74% of students felt they would be likely, or very likely to attend. Carless, citing Hounsell (2003), argues that feedback is an important part of the learning and development process. Knowing their current level of competency and where there are opportunities for development helps individuals to be more effective learners (Carless, 2006). In this regard it clearly is in the best interests of the students to attend, and nearly three out of four students agree. However, it begs the question, why might students not want to attend to gain further feedback? It could be argued that due to their previous poor experience with the personal tutoring system in their last meeting, they feel that it would not benefit them, and they would rather talk directly to the academic responsible for the assessment.

Attitudes towards the current personal tutoring provision can be seen from further cross tabulations. 43% of level 4 students agreed that personal tutor meetings should be compulsory. Conversely only 15% of level 5 students felt the same way. This is shown in fig 3.

		Students attendance at Personal Tutor meetings should be compulsory? Whereby failure to attend regul...					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
At what level are you currently studying?	Level 3 - Extended Award	0 0.00%	1 25.00%	2 50.00%	0 0.00%	1 25.00%	4 100.00%
	Level 4 - Traditionally the 1st year	1 3.57%	12 42.86%	3 10.71%	12 42.86%	0 0.00%	28 100.00%
	Level 5 - Traditionally the 2nd year	6 23.08%	9 34.62%	7 26.92%	4 15.38%	0 0.00%	26 100.00%
	Level 6 - Traditionally the 3rd year	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 100.00%
	Placement Year	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 100.00%
	Level 7 - Masters/MEng	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 100.00%
Total		7 12.07%	22 37.93%	12 20.69%	16 27.59%	1 1.72%	58 100.00%

Figure 3: A breakdown of thoughts on compulsory personal tutoring attendance

Is it possible that the level 5 students feel this way, because of a previous poor experience from their first year. It should be considered that it was this group students of whom only 26% found the meetings useful last year. Therefore it is unsurprising that they do not feel it should be compulsory.

When this is compared to the results of the staff questionnaire there seems to be a mixed response. 3 out of 7 staff disagreed, or strongly disagreed, that personal tutoring should have compulsory attendance. Equally, another 3 agreed they should have compulsory

attendance. Wootton states that individual's interpretation of the necessary personal tutoring provision differs so widely between staff members that consistency is sometimes compromised (Wootton, 2006). It could be argued the reason for this contentious issue is the content of the classes. If both staff and students feel they are wasting their time because the content of the sessions are poor, they may feel that making it compulsory is unnecessary.

One aspect of the research that did herald an improvement was the students views on approaching their personal tutor with a problem. 74% of level 4 and 5 students responded that they would approach their personal tutor if they had problems. This is actually an improvement over results from the previous study, where only 50% of students would follow the same course of action.

When the data from the level 6 students is reviewed, there is a evidence of a change in attitudes towards feedback and personal tutoring. 14 out of 15 students said they met their project supervisor at least 2-3 times a month, with 64% meeting their supervisor once a week. All of the students said they met their project supervisor in individual meetings, with 95% of students stating that these meetings were effective, or very effective, at meeting their concerns, questions, and progress of their project. This observation concurs with findings by Clegg and Bufton which state that students are much more engaged with their own personal development as they reach the end of the course (Clegg & Bufton, 2008).

The students were asked what they understand about Personal development planning (PDP); the intention that this would expose any prior knowledge, or experience, of PDP from their previous educational institutions. 25 from the 61 respondents had no idea of what is meant by PDP. Many of the other students suggested an answer around the theme of "planning some form of development". However, it should be noted that these replies lacked detail or were written such that they seemed to represent the student making a guess. There were few replies which were more informed. These students considered PDP to consist of a dialog between staff and students, a reflection of work, reviewing past targets and setting new goals. Bullock and Jamieson assert that PDPs, and action plans have evolved from a variety of activities introduced to schools and colleges since the late 1980s (Bullock & Jamieson, 1998), with Christopher Day noting that this forms part of the student's Record of Achievement (Day, 1994). it is quite surprising that some students seem unaware of PDP in any context, given that Day, Bullock and Jamieson assert that students will have had some prior experience at school or college.

Despite some questions regarding their understanding of the term PDP, 92% of students agreed, or strongly agreed, that personal tutoring should help their personal development. Furthermore, 59% of students agreed, or strongly agreed, that they would be willing to engage in managed PDP programme. This drop sharp drop in percentage agreement could be due to this lack of understanding of what a managed PDP program

However, if the results are broken down by level, as shown in figure 4, it can be seen that there is higher proportion of the level 4 and level 5 students seem to disagree with this, when compared to the level 6 students.

		I would be willing to engage with a managed PDP Programme? In this instance managed would refer to sc...					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	
At what level are you currently study?	Level 3 - Extended Award	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 50.00%	1 50.00%	0 0.00%	2 100.00%
	Level 4 - Traditionally the 1st year	0 0.00%	3 15.00%	6 30.00%	10 50.00%	1 5.00%	20 100.00%
	Level 5 - Traditionally the 2nd year	1 5.00%	2 10.00%	7 35.00%	10 50.00%	0 0.00%	20 100.00%
	Level 6 - Traditionally the 3rd year	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 14.29%	4 57.14%	2 28.57%	7 100.00%
	Placement Year	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 100.00%
	Level 7 - Masters/MEng	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	0 0.00%	1 50.00%	1 50.00%	2 100.00%
Total		1 1.96%	5 9.80%	15 29.41%	26 50.98%	4 7.84%	51 100.00%

Figure 4: Breakdown of students willing to engage with a PDP program by level

15% of each level, equivalent to approximately 12% of the respondents, seem to be unwilling to engage with a managed programme. Conversely, no level 6 students disagreed, and 86% at least agreeing that they would be willing to take part.

There appears to be a trend for personal development enthusiasm at level 6 is also evident in several other responses.

Question 17 asks whether students to consider that "completing a PDP portfolio should be part of the course?" 71%, or 5 out of 7, level 6 students, agreed or strongly agreed. whereas only 45% of level 5 students, and 32% of level 4 students agreed or strongly agreed. Cottrell claims that successful employees are expected to be able to manage their own performance and show a commitment to continuing their professional development (Cottrell, 2003). This appears to be understood by the higher level students, who are more academically experienced.

It appears that level 6 students would again be considering employability when answering question 20. 100% of level 6 students agreed, or strongly agreed, that engaging with a PDP programme would make them more employable. whereas the at level 5, and level 4, students only 50% felt this way. This correlation is reinforced when the timeliness of meetings is questioned. 6 out of 7 level 6 students would prefer a meeting at least once a month, whereas this falls to only 35% of level 4 and level 5 students.

Parallels can be drawn with the students quoted by Clegg and Bufon. Here, students state that they were aware of how they have had to manage their learning, and feel that a PDP Portfolio would have benefited them. This also correlates with the staff questionnaire where

5 out of 7 staff felt that students should complete a PDP portfolio. The disinterest towards personal tutoring and PDP at early levels seems to further correlate with accounts given Clegg and Bufton's paper, whereby students recounted similar experiences. "I didn't really personally apply everything that I said I was going to apply" (Clegg & Bufton, 2008). It could be argued that at the lower levels there is a need to convey the importance of why a PDP strategy is appropriate; as well the completion of PDP tasks themselves.

It seems clear that as students progress through their time at university they not only build an understanding of their subject area, through lectures, tutorials, assessments and feedback, they also gain an understanding of what it takes to be employed in that area. Evidence for this understanding can be seen when the students were questioned on their views of whether they should be required to develop a website portfolio. Whilst all students were in favour of this, the higher level students seemed the most convinced, as the number of students who answered neither agree or disagree drops from 20% (level 4), to 10% (level 5) to 0% at level 6. This also correlates with staff questionnaire where 6 out of 7 staff felt that students should have a website portfolio by the time they finish the course. There is a plenty of evidence that a website portfolio is almost certainly necessary for individuals applying for games industry jobs (Crowe, 2006) (Skillset, 2012) (GameCore3d, 2011).

Evaluation and Conclusions

The results of the primary and secondary research have identified several aspects of the personal tutoring, and PDP provision, which need addressing.

The changes to the personal tutoring system since the initial study have resulted in students' perception of the provision being slightly more agreeable. Clearly there are still some problems. However, it would be unjustified to describe the current system as unfit for purpose. Whilst students and staff clearly have some issues with the current system, it does offer the students somewhere where they feel they can discuss any problems they're having. However, it is also evident following the first year, and to some extent the first meeting, students still feel the meetings are unnecessary and irrelevant to their academic lives. It is only when the students are undertaking their final year does the student seem to value the contact with their personal tutor or project supervisor.

Both staff and students felt that integrating PDP into the personal tutoring sessions would benefit the students. The results show that most students feel that meetings should take place at least once per semester, possibly increasing in regularity as they progresses through their academic career. This would prepare them for the regularity of the meetings with their project supervisor in level 6, which they evidently already approve of. It would also help solve some of the concerns that staff had. Whereby 5 out of 6 staff members felt that students should engage with a PDP program (Q.11), have a completed PDP portfolio by the end of their course (Q.19). yet the current system doesn't address PDP (Q.12).

The concerns from staff also seem to be the implementation of a new system. Strivens, remarks how this transition has been generally positively received at Liverpool University (Strivens, 2006). However, Strivens also describes out that this was not without its

problems, and clear explanation and encouragement was needed for both staff and students to adopt these changes. This is also echoed by Stevenson, who contends that taking a proactive approach and managing workload. e.g. delivering information in groups where necessary, helps gain the support of the tutors (Stevenson, 2006).

Monks et al assert that PDP will likely serve most successful when it is underpinned by a model of learning and integration (Monks, et al., 2006). There is considerable evidence to support the integration of PDP elements into subject teaching. Jackson, Clegg & Bufton, and Monks et al, and Noble all advocate the advantages of embedding content (Jackson, 2001) (Clegg & Bufton, 2008) (Monks, et al., 2006). Noble states 3 advantages.

- It gives employability skills the same status as subject knowledge
- It identifies the importance of skills to develop academic success
- It obliges all lecturers to develop a subject context for employability skills (Noble, 2001)

This gives strong evidence to the argument that PDP is important enough to be included into subject content. However, Jackson also defends the separation of PDP from curriculum claiming that students often find the work a chore, time consuming and undervalued (Jackson, 2001).

It also can put pressure on the curriculum time, and even give the impression that the content is just 'bolted-on' to the end of the module (Noble, 2001). Logically the solution to this seems to be a combined approach of both embedding some PDP content into modules where appropriate, whilst supporting the main bulk of PDP independent of modules in the optional personal tutoring sessions.

The responses from the questionnaires can help guide any propose changes. Staff have themselves identified student self-reflection documents, a regularly updated online portfolio, and agreed action plans as useful methods of PDP delivery (Q. #15),. The tutors also seemed to favour a one-to-one appraisal system (Q.#16 & Q.#17), with direct face-to-face feedback and direct email contact as preferred feedback mechanisms (Q.#18).

What is clear is that both students and staff understand the importance of PDP and how integral it is to the development of students. In an industry, which by its very nature is ever changing and evolving students need to be able to continually develop their own skills, reflect on their work, and plan to develop their skills throughout their career. The PDP provision provided by the program area should help them do this.

Recommendations

This study is part of a larger reflection-on-action (Moon, 1999), and the continuation of an action research cycle (Bassegy, 1990) which will look to continually improve the personal tutoring and PDP provision in the program area. Therefore recommendations have been drawn up as part of an action plan to be presented to the program area manager, and the rest of the lecturing team.

1. Communication

Despite being a recommendation of the initial study this recommendation is still in need of work. The overwhelming percentage of students who did not attend their personal tutoring sessions cited communication between staff and students as the problem. This recommendation is that a greater emphasis be placed on the importance of attending your personal tutor meetings at the induction talks (for the first year students), as well as welcome back talks (for returning students). It is also recommended that there be a process in place to ensure students cannot miss any communication from staff members.

2. PDP integration into Personal Tutoring. Including: PDP documents Integration action plan, implementation documents, and team briefing documents. Given the results and conclusions from the primary research, the Personal tutoring provision needs to be improved. The integration of PDP into personal tutoring should ensure that it is in their best interest to engage with the programme. The staff have shown they feel the current system isn't working, the integration of PDP should motivate the staff to associate with the programme in a proactive manner. This could be achieved through online collaboration between staff and student.

The majority of staff respondents highlighted that having guidelines and supporting material would help them better deliver and PDP integration (Q. #21 & Q.#22). Two respondents even highlighted supporting mechanisms they felt beneficial. The recommendation is for a structured PDP framework to be distributed to the students and staff. This system is not intended to not add extra work or hours to the tutors workload, but to ensure that the hours which are already put into the system are used more appropriately.

To help achieve this, the following is recommended

1st year students are given a traditional lecture regarding personal tutoring and PDP. This would avoid some of the confusion, miscommunication, or differentiation in information that may come from different staff members. They would be introduced to the PDP portfolio and their responsibility to take an active role in the program. The tutoring staff would have a briefing session prior to system being implemented to ensure every member of staff understands their roles and responsibilities of the new provision. Students are emailed reminders to complete sections of the portfolio for a deadline set sometime before their meetings with their personal tutor. This could be set at 1 meeting per semester in the first year, and 2 meetings per semester in the 2nd year/level 5.

3. An online PDP Portfolio template is set up distributed to students through the virtual learning environment Blackboard. This could be achieved through a blog type system working with a reflective model for example Gibbs' reflective cycle (Gibbs, 1988). This might be useful as the students are already used to working in a blended learning environment as so they would readily have access to their own PDP portfolio.
The students would log into the system and complete the relevant sections for each semesters meeting. At the meeting the tutor would discuss the progress for the student, as well as setting targets for the next meeting. Gidman argues that proactive methods are successful in the health sector, and promotes an reflective learner (Gidman, et al., 2000).
4. The communication between staff and student needs to be regularly reviewed and checks and balances should be set up to ensure the communication standards are being met. There should not be any doubt as to whether communication between tutor and student has been missed. This should avoid a repeat of the students comments such as "I didn't get an email", or "I didn't realise there was a meeting".

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