Personal Tutorials

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(See http://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/intranet/teaching/public/tutorials/level1/firstyeartutorials.pdf for an online version of this document.)
1. What do personal tutors do?

Welcome to Sheffield, and welcome to the Department of Computer Science. We hope that you’ll enjoy your time here, and that everything will work out well for you.

When you register as a new First Year student in the Department, we automatically assign you a personal tutor (one of the lecturers in the Department), whose job it is to help you understand what’s expected of you, monitor your progress, and help sort out any problems you might have, essentially acting like a ‘mentor’. Each tutor has several tutees, and together you form a tutor group.

The aim is that you will keep the same personal tutor from year 1 through to the completion of your studies. Thus you will get to know your personal tutor and he or she will get to know you. As with any relationship in life, it is a two-way process. You should prepare for meetings with your tutor so that tutorials are more productive. If you ask your tutor to write a reference for you at some point in your career, e.g. for a job application, your tutor will probably draw on experiences from your meetings.

Make sure you contact your tutor as soon as possible if you are having any problems. For example, you may be ill one week and miss a crucial assignment deadline, or maybe something happens that means you need to take time off. If you have a problem that your personal tutor cannot solve, then, depending on the problem, contact one of the following: the First Year Tutor, the Director of Teaching, the Department’s Staff-Student Liaison Committee, the Students’ Union, or the Student Counselling Service.

Usually, you will keep the same personal tutor from year 1 through to the completion of your studies. However, because of staff sabbaticals, staff leaving and new appointments, it may be necessary to give you a different personal tutor at some stage. Also, in the unlikely event that you have a ‘clash of personalities’, it is possible to change to a different tutor. If this is the case, you need to speak to the First Year Tutor or, if s/he is the problem, the Director of Teaching.

2. Tutorials with your personal tutor

Note: Attendance at these tutorials will be recorded.

The students allocated to a tutor sometimes work as individuals and sometimes as a tutor group, so it’s important to meet and get to know your fellow group members. Table 1 gives the schedule for these meetings with your personal tutor for your first academic year.
An exact timeslot in the week is not given for these meetings because we don’t know in advance what modules everyone allocated to a given personal tutor is going to choose. Instead you need to see your tutor to arrange a timetable slot. This year there will be a Meet Your Tutor event in the department on Tuesday 27th September 16.00-18.30. As well as giving you and us a chance to introduce ourselves, it gives the member of staff a chance to find out what everyone’s doing, and to timetable a slot when you’re all free.

As the academic year progresses, it is your responsibility to contact your personal tutor and make sure these meetings take place. There is some flexibility in the schedule given in Table 1, but meetings should occur within the timeframe indicated. If there is a problem in arranging meetings, please inform the First Year Tutor.

The three individual meetings are there to help you find out how well you’re fitting in with the student lifestyle, and involve meeting your tutor on a one-to-one basis. In addition, as needs arise, you may timetable an individual meeting with your tutor at any time in the academic year.

The remaining tutorials are group meetings and the tutorial sheets for these are included at the end of this document.

- The Unfair means meeting is a Group meeting, and addresses one of the reasons why some students get low marks – plagiarism and/or collusion. It’s surprisingly easy to break the rules on what counts as plagiarising (copying other people’s material) or colluding (working together on a project that’s supposed to be done individually), so you need to make absolutely certain you know what the rules are and do everything possible to avoid breaking them. Work that’s deemed to be plagiarised material is automatically assigned a mark of zero – and letting your work be copied is penalised just as severely as copying itself.

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| **Table 1:** Schedule of activities for the academic year |
Finally, the Exam Skills meeting in week 9/10/11 of semester 2 will help you to understand how we assess exam answers. That way, you’ll understand better what it is we look for when we mark exams, and this in turn should help you write better answers in the exams you’ll be taking at the end of semester 2.

**It is important that you complete the tutorial sheets before the respective meetings.** It is frustrating (and possibly embarrassing) for all involved if a group tutorial starts with some people not having done the relevant preparatory work. It can also be a sign that a student is not engaging with their degree, and that further action needs to be taken.

3. **The Sheffield Graduate Development Programme (SGDP)**

“The University of Sheffield is committed to encouraging and supporting its students to gain the skills and attributes of the Sheffield Graduate throughout their time at University. These skills and attributes can be achieved through a combination of academic study and extra-curricular activities, including work experience.” (http://www.shef.ac.uk/sgdp/index).

We have decided to take a tutor-led approach to help support this University programme. We encourage you to maintain "a portfolio of work, including evidence of participation in various activities, review meetings with tutors, evidence of skills developed.”( http://www.shef.ac.uk/sgdp/dept/tla)

and to discuss this portfolio with your tutor in individual review meetings throughout your years at Sheffield. We recommend that you take advantage of the materials available on the SGDP web site, and discuss your progress with your personal tutor during individual tutorial meetings. There is real benefit in being proactive about your education and building a skill base that will make you more attractive to potential employers at the end of your degree. As a minimum, we expect you to maintain an up-to-date CV and to bring this with you to every individual meeting with your personal tutor.

You may also be interested in the Sheffield Graduate Award scheme which is designed to recognise and record the valuable skills and experience you can gain at university outside of your degree course. Further information can be found here: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/thesheffieldgraduateaward/index

4. **And don’t forget…**

If you have any problems, your personal tutor is there to help you. Alternatively, you can make an appointment (via e-mail) to see the First Year Tutor.
Semester 1, Week 3-5: Part 1 Unfair means, plagiarism and collusion

During your time at Sheffield we expect you to develop and evaluate your own ideas, and to acknowledge the contribution of other people’s sources appropriately. We also require you to declare that each piece of coursework you submit is your own work.

It is not acceptable to submit work that is plagiarised from other sources, bought or commissioned from internet sites or former students, or written by another student. It is also not acceptable to allow other students to submit your work as their own, or to do their assignments for them.

This tutorial has two aims:

- To help you think through issues of academic integrity;
- To make sure you understand what is and what is not unfair means
- To introduce you to the COMPULSORY online unfair means tutorial https://unfairmeans.shef.ac.uk This must be completed by Week 5

Before the tutorial:

- Read through the Departmental guidance on unfair means: http://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/intranet/teaching/public/assessment/plagiarism.html
- Do the following tutorial: https://librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/shef-only/info_skills/plagiarism.html
- Complete the compulsory online tutorial on unfair means. This must be completed by Week 5. https://unfairmeans.shef.ac.uk
- Write down any questions or concerns you have about plagiarism, collusion or the use of unfair means. Ask your tutor about these during the tutorial.
- **Programming**: Citing your sources applies to code also. If you reuse some code, you should add a comment to explain where you found it (including the url) and explaining whether you simply reused it, or how you adapted it. This information should also go in any accompanying written report. Plagiarism of code is treated equivalently and as seriously as other forms of plagiarism.

During the tutorial:

**A. Use of unfair means**: Discuss the reasons for not using unfair means when you are a student, with regard to (a) the university’s rules and penalties (b) moral issues and your own integrity (c) fairness to other students

Talk about the fairness of the following scenarios and their likely consequences. Bear in mind that both programs, and written work are likely to be run through automatic plagiarism detectors. There are plagiarism checkers that have been specifically developed for code, and which regularly detect plagiarism. In addition, plagiarised work, especially ‘bad paraphrasing’, is regularly spotted by human markers: for an explanation of ‘bad paraphrasing’ follow this link:

https://librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/shef-only/info_skills/plagiarism.html
1) You understand the programming assignment you have been set, and complete it in plenty of time. The morning that the assignment is due, your friend Tom tells you that he is completely stuck on the assignment, and is not going to be able to hand it in on time. He asks you if he can have a look at your solution. He promises not to copy it, but says he just wants to understand what to do. You give him a copy of the assignment. Tom runs out of time, and submits your assignment as his own, just changing a few variable names.

2) You are having trouble with one piece of a programming assignment. You notice that someone has left a printout of their solution near the printer, and read through it. You copy the function they used and include it in your program which now works. You submit it.

3) You are stuck on one part of a programming assignment, and post your program on an internet site so that you can get feedback on it. Another student on your course notices it there, downloads it and submits it as their own.

4) You are writing an essay for an assignment, and find a relevant article in Wikipedia. You know you should not copy and paste it, so you slightly reword some of it as you type it up, but you do not include a reference to the article.

Note: all of these examples are based on previous plagiarism cases in the department.

B. Citations

The flip side of plagiarism is the proper citing of references. Here are some examples of how to cite different kinds of references in your written work. The reasons for citing references appropriately include the following:

(i) You have acknowledged the source of the material, avoiding plagiarism, and have also strengthened the case for what you are saying by showing that you have researched the question, and found relevant material that is related to it.

(ii) If someone reads your work, and is interested to find out more about the reference you have cited, they will be able to find it.

(iii) It is good academic training – for instance, when you come to do your 3rd year dissertation, you will need to cite references correctly.

Different forms of citation are appropriate depending on the source of the reference (e.g. whether it is a book, or a journal article), and also depending on the reference scheme you are using (e.g. the Harvard name and date scheme, or a numeric scheme). You should use one scheme consistently for a piece of written work. The examples that follow show the Harvard version.

a) For an article in a journal

In the written text: Searle (1980) and Walrus et al (2009) suggest that only living beings, not machines, are capable of thought

In a final section, labelled References:


b) For a book...

In the written text: Pfeifer and Scheier (2001) argue that embodiment is crucial for real intelligence

In the reference section:


You can find a tutorial on the Harvard system of referencing here – you are encouraged to work through this; a well referenced piece of work creates a good impression.

http://www.librarydevelopment.group.shef.ac.uk/shef-only/referencing/engineering_harvard.html

After (or during) the tutorial (you can try some of this as a group exercise in the tutorial):

In written work, it can be difficult to be sure what does and what does not count as plagiarism. See how well you do on the following test: http://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/item1.html

Semester 1, week 3-5 Part 2: Dealing with module assignments, feedback and communication

Aims

- To give you insight into the mechanisms of the assessment process;
- To review any experiences with coursework assignments so far.
- To discuss receiving and giving feedback
- To discuss different ways of communicating within the department

The assessment process: Each module that you take will be assessed by assignment (continuously-assessed coursework), by examination at the end of a semester or academic year, or by a combination of both, with assessments set by the relevant module lecturer(s). Assessment may involve individual work or group work, or a combination. Larger group projects and dissertations may also require a viva voce oral examination, in which the mark awarded for the submitted report(s) is moderated by the examiners. Module marks are entered onto the official university transcript records and are released to personal tutors after the examination boards have been held, whereupon a student can obtain his/her marks.
**Preparation:** Read the section on ‘Coursework Assignments’ in the student handbook:
http://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/intranet/teaching/public/handbooks/assignments.html

Choose one or more items of assessed coursework that you have been set this semester. Then, before the tutorial you should write some comments on the questions below. This should take you about one hour.

- What were your first thoughts and plans when the assignment handout was given to you?
- Does the assignment make it clear what is expected from you?
- Is the marking process made clear?
- How much of the assignment asks you to reproduce information from your lecture notes, and how much requires problem solving?
- What time, if any, have you spent on the assignment so far, and how have you managed your time?
- What do you think is the right study process for dealing with assignments?
- **Comments** (include any questions or concerns you have about the assessment process. Ask your tutor about these during the tutorial.)

**Feedback:** For discussion in the tutorial

**Handing work in:** There may be times when you reach the deadline for an assignment, but have not been able to complete it to your own satisfaction. You can submit your assignment up to 5 days late (your mark will be reduced by 5% for each working day that it is late). Even if you are not happy with your assignment, you should still submit it – preferably by the deadline, alternatively up to 5 days late. Submitting the assignment will give the lecturer the chance to see how much you have understood, and where further help may be needed. It will also mean that you get some feedback on what you have done, and on how to improve. If you do not submit any work, your mark will be recorded as NC (not completed) and it will look as though you are failing to engage with the course.

*Sometimes students feel too embarrassed to submit an assignment that they know is incomplete and that shows their limited understanding. In the tutorial, discuss whether this could apply to you, and what you should do.*

**Different forms of feedback:** There are two main types, (i) formative and (ii) summative. Formative assessment can tell you whether your answer is right, and/or how it could be improved. It doesn’t result in a mark that will contribute to your degree, but it should help you to learn. Summative assessment consists of marks that count towards your course mark. These marks can also help you to learn since they show you how well you are doing, and whether you are working at the right level or not.

*How and where will you get feedback about your work?*

The main ways of giving feedback are
a) The mark you get for your assessed work and the comments on your work

b) Going through the assignment and common errors in class

c) Problem exercises and answering questions in class.

**How can you give feedback to your lecturers, or raise problems about the lectures?**

i) You can raise issues with your tutor who may be able to advise you, and/or alert the lecturer to the problem.

ii) You can tell one of the student representatives for the year, and they can bring the matter up at the Staff Student Liaison Committee (SSLCOM) meetings.

iii) You can also ask the lecturer: it’s probably best to do this at the end of the class, or the lecturer may provide an office hour when you can go and ask for help and advice.

iv) At the end of a module, there will be module evaluation forms to fill in. These can be used to highlight both good and bad aspects of the course, and can provide valuable feedback for the lecturer to help them improve the course for the next time they teach it. Try to be constructive – lecturers are human like you, and it’s a good idea to try to phrase your points in a positive manner where possible. You can discuss what this might mean with your tutor.

**Communication within the department: For discussion in the tutorial**

**How should you address your lecturers, or your tutor?** You could discuss this in your tutorial – most people are happy to be addressed on first name terms.

**Emails: how should you write emails in the department?**

Have a look at the following examples of emails, and discuss their relative appropriateness as ways of writing to your tutor to ask for a meeting:

a) Hi! Can I c u about problem today?

b) Dear Amanda, could I meet with you soon to discuss some problems with my work?

   Best wishes, Alf Potter

c) Mrs Amanda, I need to see you about a problem.

d) Sharkey – need to c u about problem

e) Dear Dr Sharkey,
I request a meeting with you to discuss my current situation.

Yours sincerely, Alf Potter

f) Dear Amanda, can I meet with you soon to discuss my current situation and concerns about missing next week because I have to go to hospital for an operation on my foot. I’m your first year tutee. I am free on Wednesday afternoon after 2pm, and Thursday morning between 10 and 12.30.

Best wishes, Alf

Semester 1, week 9-11; Review of progress

Aims

The aims of this tutorial are:

- To review your progress
- To explain what is involved in applying for a placement
- Introduction to GEC

Before the tutorial

1. Have a look at the following links which explain what is involved in applying for an industrial placement for a year. A placement year may not suit everyone, and it is not always possible to find one, but they are recommended as a valuable experience and can often provide a foot-in-the-door with a future employer.

http://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/intranet/teaching/public/handbooks/ug/placements.html
The Careers Service web page (http://www.shef.ac.uk/placements/students) explains the whole process in detail, and Helen Thorpe (from Careers) operates a weekly drop-in session in Mappin in order to advise potential placement students.

In the tutorial

Discuss your progress. Are you interested in applying for a placement? Your tutor will also tell you about the GEC (Global Engineering Challenge)

Introduction to GEC: Global Engineering Challenge (GEC) http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/dcs/undergraduate/gec

Semester 2, week 9-11: Preparing for exams

Aims

The aims of this tutorial are:

- To help you understand the exams process;
- To reflect on exam preparation and technique;
- To encourage you to look at past exam papers.

The assessment process

Each module that you take is assessed by assignment (continuously-assessed coursework), by an exam at the end of semester or academic year, or by a combination of both. Assessment may involve individual work or group work, or a combination thereof.
Before the tutorial

1. **Read the section on Examinations in the student handbook:**

2. Read the guidance on exam revision and technique, which you will find at
   [http://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/~richard/campus_only/Tutorials/Exam.html](http://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/~richard/campus_only/Tutorials/Exam.html)

3. Look at past examination papers on the DCS website
   [https://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/intranet/teaching/campus/pastpapers.html](https://www.dcs.shef.ac.uk/intranet/teaching/campus/pastpapers.html)

4. Choose a previous exam paper, for one of the modules you are taking this year. Read the paper carefully, and consider the following points:

   - What do you think the examiner is trying to test in each question?
   - How much of each question asks you to reproduce information from your lecture notes, and how much of each question requires problem solving?
   - What form do the questions take? Are they essay questions, short answer questions, scenario questions or a mixture of different forms?
   - How are the marks distributed between each part of a question, and how do you rate the difficulty of each part? If there are easier or harder parts, do they tend to come at the start or end of the question?
   - Looking at the exam paper overall, does it cover all of the topics listed as content on the module description page? Why do you think particular topics were chosen?

**Comments** (note down any questions/concerns you have about the assessment process, for discussion in the tutorial):