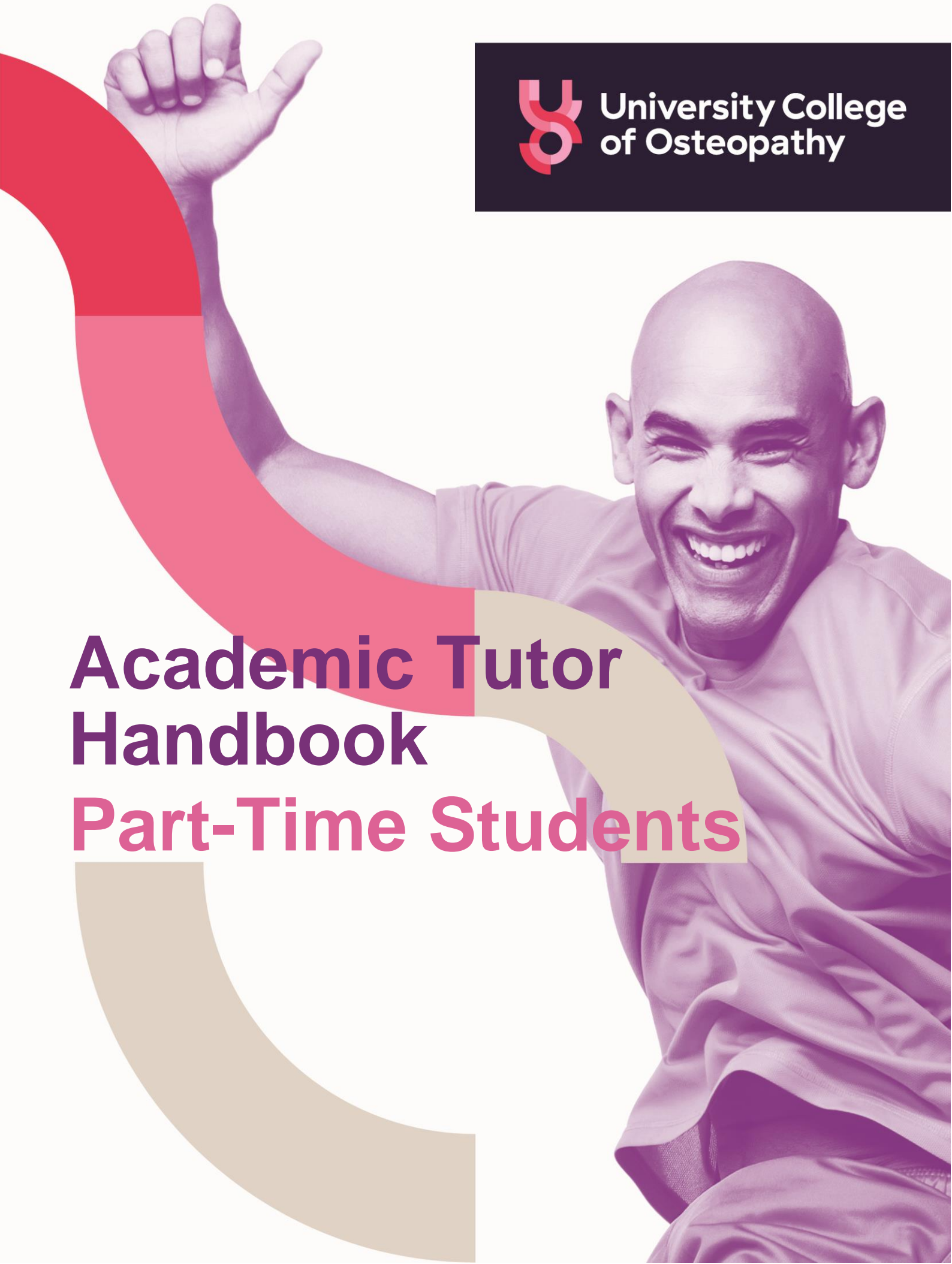




University College
of Osteopathy

Academic Tutor Handbook Part-Time Students



Core Documentation Cover Page

Academic Tutor Handbook (Part-Time Students)

| Version number | Dates produced and approved (include committee) | Reason for production/ revision | Author | Location(s) | Proposed next review date and approval required |
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Equality Impact

Positive equality impact (i.e. the policy/procedure/guideline significantly reduces inequalities)

X

Neutral equality impact (i.e. no significant effect)

Negative equality impact (i.e. increasing inequalities)

If you have any feedback or suggestions for enhancing this document, please email your comments to: quality@uco.ac.uk

Scope of Handbook

This handbook is designed to give Academic Tutors formal guidelines as to what their role is and how they should structure their meetings. It also gives them guidance as to when to refer a student to another member of staff and how to go about doing this.

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1. SECTION 1 – WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF ACADEMIC TUTORS?

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As an Academic Tutor it is your role to support and assist students throughout their studies and to help them make the most of their time at the University College of Osteopathy (UCO). You will be responsible for helping students to evaluate their own learning and make action plans or learning goals with the use of the Personal Development Plan (PDP) as a framework. From these discussions you may well need to refer the student on to another member of staff, such as a Unit Leader, the Counsellor or the Student Support Manager.

This handbook is designed to make your role as Academic Tutor as straightforward as possible and to give you sufficient guidance for you to successfully support your tutees. If you have any questions about the role, please contact the Student Support Manager.

It is essential that you arrange Academic Tutor meetings and you will be expected to contact your year group once every term encouraging them to meet with you to discuss their progress. You should give the student enough guidance for them to create a plan of action so that they can improve on their grades or meet their learning goals and help to resolve any academic concerns they may have.

As an Academic Tutor it is highly advisable that you make a note of the meetings you have with students using their PDP which sits within their Clinic Workbook. Both parties must sign the form after every meeting to show that they are happy with what has been discussed and to agree any actions that have been planned. This is good practice and it will ensure that both tutor and student remember what has been discussed and what needs to be done for the next meeting. If used correctly the PDP is an invaluable resource in aiding students to improve their learning by evaluating the way in which they learn and the feedback they have received (see section 2 for PDP details).

As with any supportive role, it is recognised that the student may confide in you problems of a more personal nature. It is not expected that as an Academic Tutor that you should deal with these problems yourself but that you should advise the student of the appropriate member of staff to speak to and advise them of the Special Circumstances procedure such as the Academic Registrar or a member of the Student Support Department. You must ask permission to refer them to another member of staff reassuring the student that you will not disclose the nature of the issue if the student does not wish you to. However, in some cases they may prefer that you disclose the information. If the student does not give permission then you should make a file note of your advice to the student, but not the nature of the issue. The only exception to sharing information without consent would be if it was decided there was a threat to the student's safety or the safety of others, an issue of academic quality or standards being under threat, serious misconduct of students or staff or under legal requirements (See Section 4.2 for more detail).

Further guidance is available in the Identifying and Responding to Students in Difficulty - A Guide for Staff published on the intranet

1.2 ROLE REQUIREMENTS

Send an email to your year group once per term to notify them of the service and availability (see Appendix 1 for email text template).

Use both the group and individual meetings to assist students in using their Personal Development Plan (PDP) by:

- a) Discussing progress to date and the challenges of the year ahead

- b) Discussing student's grades and feedback with them.
- c) Helping students to interpret feedback independently so as to improve certain skills or learning in general.
- d) Encouraging students to reflect on not only their academic profile but their professional and personal progress as well.

Refer students to other members of academic staff as appropriate, such as Unit Leaders or Clinic faculty.

Refer students to other sources of support within the UCO such as the Student Support Department, as required.

Document tutorial meetings by using the PDP to record what has been discussed and agreed as a plan of action. This can then be emailed to the student.

Keep any emails that have been sent between the tutor and tutee in case they are needed for reference at a later date.

1.3 ACADEMIC TUTOR MEETINGS

It is your responsibility to email the students once a term (Appendix 1) to advise them of your availability for both group and individual meetings. It is hoped that each student will meet with you every term, however this is not compulsory and students will decide for themselves whether or not they elect to meet with their Academic Tutor.

A) TERM ONE

Send an initial email to advise students' of the Academic Tutor role and invite them to a group Academic Tutor meeting in term one to discuss the possible challenges facing them in the year ahead. Attached to the email will be a PDP for students to fill out beforehand should they wish to, or they can do this in the meeting in discussion with you.

The main purpose of the group meeting is to highlight your role as an Academic Tutor to the students and promote the support services you can provide. This meeting can be used to flag up the main challenges which the students will face for any particular academic year, to point out sources of support and key areas for development. It is also an opportunity for them to raise any group issues or queries they may want advice about.

Within this introduction it is also important to acknowledge that students may feel comfortable raising non-academic or welfare issues with you and to highlight the limitations of confidentiality within these meetings. Although most concerns or issues discussed can remain between tutor and student, if the tutor feels that the student has raised an issue which threatens academic standards or quality, relates to serious misconduct on the part of other students and could trigger Fitness to Practice they must be clear with the student that they may have a duty to act upon the information given to them (see Section 3 & 4 for further detail).

The second purpose of this meeting is to encourage and guide the students in filling out their PDP. They will then be asked to type it up and email it to you prior to any subsequent meetings they have with you, or to bring it on a USB stick.

Please take a register of who attends this meeting.

B) TERM TWO & THREE

You will remind students of your services via email within the first two weeks of term starting and invite them for an individual meeting should they wish to access your support.

You should ask students to bring their PDP with them on a USB stick or email it in advance in order to assess how they have progressed with any action points. Additionally you should discuss grades and feedback from the previous year, or the first term where applicable and facilitate students' reflection on their grade profile. Points for improvement should be discussed, and the PDP can be updated within the meeting to reflect who they might need to speak to for support and what actions they need to complete to help them reach their goals. The PDP should then be emailed to the student as a record of what has been discussed and agreed.

1.4 STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND RETENTION GROUP (SARG)

Students may be referred to you following a SARG meeting which occurs approximately twice per term. If SARG require you to contact any students they will email you a table of actions to be completed. It is essential that you carry out your actions from SARG promptly, update the matters arising and email the outcome back to Registry. It is unnecessary to detail the nature of any personal or health issues. It is important to record when there is a special circumstance affecting the student, that you have given them appropriate advice as to completion of the special circumstances forms and identified the pastoral support available from Student Support where appropriate.

Usually Academic Tutors are requested to contact students returning from Time Out, those who are direct entry students from other UCOs or those who are repeating the year. This is in order to find out how the student is getting on and to meet with them to see what support they may require. You may be required to meet with some of these students on a slightly more frequent basis if they require extra guidance.

You may also be asked to contact students whose attendance in clinic or technique has dropped to find out if there are any special circumstances which are affecting them and directing them on to the appropriate person if so (as above).

If a tutor has concerns regarding a student who they have seen but has not been flagged to them via SARG, they may also contact the Academic Registrar in order to access the student's attendance. If the student's attendance has not yet been flagged up within a SARG meeting the tutor should encourage the student to speak with the Academic Registrar or Student Support to discuss any possible special circumstances.

2. SECTION 2 - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (PDP) GUIDELINES

2.1 WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PDP?

“Students need to know how much they have learnt in relation to learning outcomes, what they still need to know, where this might be found and what difficulties there might be. Tutors need to know how their students are progressing in relation to learning outcomes so they can support them appropriately. Professional Development Planning (PDP) is such a process” (Raiker, 2009)¹.

The above quote summarises the student tutor relationship and how this works with the PDP and with more emphasis being placed on autonomous or self-directed learning, the PDP is an essential tool for students within Higher Education. For PT students it forms part of their Clinic Workbook for the PCC Unit; however you may find that students need general guidance on how to plan their time and manage their studies as well. It is your job to guide them through this document and help them to identify other areas for development and put together an action plan.

Students do not need to spend vast amounts of time on the PDP as it will be covered by the PCC Unit, but if they are guided through them during their Academic Tutor meetings then they will be able to track their own progress better and it will be easier for them to self-evaluate and identify their own developmental plan of action. They can then use any notes they have made during the meeting and independently decide how they will execute any action points in a detailed and effective manner.

Students should be able to use feedback and grades to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses in order to plan how they will improve certain areas of their studies. It can also be used as a tool for students to work out how they might improve their self confidence in Clinic for example. By using the PDP the students will give themselves a definitive plan of action to follow throughout their studies and encourage them to get into good habits which will aid them in their professional life; once they have graduated when they will need to keep a well maintained and effective CPD portfolio. Self and critical reflection is a very important skill for osteopathic students. Its effective use should facilitate students' ability to enhance their achievement and reach their goals.

¹ Raiker, A. (2009) - 'A personalised approach to improving students' learning outcomes'. In C. Nygaard & C. Holtham (eds.). *Improving Students' Learning Outcomes*. Copenhagen: Copenhagen Business School Press

3. SECTION 3 – COMPLAINTS

3.1 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF A STUDENT QUERIES THEIR GRADE?

Due to the nature of the Academic Tutor role, students may use their meetings as an opportunity to discuss a grade.

In the first instance you should advise the student to meet with the relevant Unit Leader and ask them to go through the feedback received to clarify why the student did not achieve the grade they expected. You can find out who the Unit Leaders are by looking at the relevant BONE page for that Unit.

Our appeal process does not allow students to appeal their grades on the basis of disputed academic judgement. However, if they notify you of special circumstances which the assessors were not aware of at the time of the examination or if they believe there was a fault in the assessments procedure then they should seek advice from Phil Heeps (Academic Registrar), Heather Batten (Student Experience and Quality Manager) or the UCO Student Union who will provide them with advice and details of what to do.

3.2 WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF A STUDENT WISHES TO MAKE A COMPLAINT ABOUT ANOTHER STUDENT OR A MEMBER OF STAFF?

If a student chooses to voice a problem or complaint regarding another student or member of staff, you should encourage them to speak to this person, depending on the nature of the issue, before taking the matter any further in order to try and resolve the issues before they become formal. Ensure that you listen to what the student is saying and try to establish what the issues are and what they would like as a resolution. Please make a note of issues the student raises and if you need to speak with someone else to gain advice then ensure you request permission from the student to do so. There may be instances whereby the nature of the complaint means that you may need to act upon what has been divulged without the consent of the student due to our duty of care to the student, other students and the institution. This should be made clear to students with regards to confidentiality and the limitations this has within the Academic Tutor role.

Alternatively if the student does not wish to deal with the issue themselves it is essential that you advise them of what to do next. Please send them to see Heather Batten the Student Experience and Quality Manager, or the UCO Students Union who will provide them with confidential and impartial advice about what to do next and how to make a complaint should they wish to do so.

Guidance on this for both students and staff can also be found on the intranet under Policies and Procedures.

4. SECTION 4 – REFERRING STUDENTS

4.1 PASTORAL AND WELFARE ISSUES

It is important to recognise that your role is not a pastoral one and although students may choose to talk to you about personal problems, it is not the role of the Academic Tutor to give them advice in these matters. It is particularly important for Academic tutors to maintain appropriate boundaries with their tutees and to be mindful that their role is primarily to offer academic support and mentoring rather than welfare or personal counselling. However, it is the responsibility of the Academic Tutor to advise the student about who they should speak to in order for them to get the appropriate personal or welfare support. This includes advising them to speak with Registry or the Student Support Department regarding concerns they may have or any special circumstances they may wish to submit in relation to their academic studies. The Student Support Advisor can help students with a range of issues such as finance, health concerns and applying for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) as well as helping them submit special circumstances.

If a student chooses to disclose any personal matters to you during an Academic Tutor meeting it is important to adhere to the following guidance:

You should advise the student of the appropriate person to deal with the issues they are raising.

You must ask the student's permission before contacting the relevant person within the Student Support Department.

You should make a note of the student's permission or not to contact / inform others of their situation.

Make a note within the PDP that you have referred the student for additional support.

If the issues are affecting attendance and or assessments then advise the students to see the Academic Registrar, the Student Support Advisor (or the Student Support Manager if they are not available) in order to discuss submission of special circumstances form.

Ultimately it is the student's responsibility to seek the appropriate support on your advice.

If the student is very distressed then please consult another member of staff and refer to the Identifying and Responding to Students in Difficulty guide for staff for further information as to who to consult. You must advise the student that if you are concerned about their welfare to the extent that they may be a risk to themselves or others that you will need to break confidentiality. The Identifying and Responding to Students in Difficulty - A Guide for Staff can be found on the intranet.

4.2 ACADEMIC OR LEARNING ISSUES

If a student voices concerns about possible dyslexia they should speak with Student Learning Advisors. They will then take the next appropriate steps of arranging a screening for the student and if applicable, organising the appropriate support.

If a student voices concerns regarding more general learning issues, for example difficulty with note taking, learning and remembering information or essay writing skills, they should again be referred to the Student Learning Advisor for further help and support. This service is also available to dyslexic students who have already been diagnosed and you should advise dyslexic students to seek help for general organisation and study skills from the Student Learning Advisor. In addition they may be eligible for specialist help which they can discuss accessing through the Student Support Manager.

4.3 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ITS LIMITS

When a student discusses personal problems with a member of staff, it is important for the student to feel that the staff member can be trusted not to disseminate the information, unless the student asks/agrees for it to be passed on to appropriate members of faculty/staff. This applies to all members of staff but particularly those with a designated role in supporting students.

Members of staff do not, however, have a professional duty to maintain aUCOlute confidentiality within the UCO and indeed it is important to be able to consult others when needed. This may be necessary for example; if you feel that a student is a risk to themselves or other students. What is important is discretion, which means passing on personal information only on a 'need to know' basis and when consulting another member of staff it may be appropriate to take steps to maintain the anonymity of an individual student. This might mean not disclosing their name, year group or mode of study when seeking advice.

Before you do this, it is important that you either ask for permission to share this information in order to gain advice, or to advise the student that due to the significant nature of what they have disclosed you will have to consult another member of staff to gain their guidance.

There may be various different reasons why you may need to break confidentiality regardless of student consent to do so. If you feel that the student has raised an issue which threatens academic standards or quality, relates to serious misconduct on the part of other students and could trigger Fitness to Practice they must be clear with the student that they may have a duty to act upon the information given to them. This may include instances such as believing a student may harm themselves or others, disclosing boundary transgression between a member of staff and a student, concerns regarding a student or staff member's clinical practice or cheating in an examination. These issues raised may come under the Fitness to Practice Policy and also aligns with our duty of care and candour towards other students, the institution and the profession of osteopathy.

In line with the Equality Act 2010 the UCO recognises its duty that it is the right of the individual as to whether a health issue (including mental health) or disability is disclosed or consent is given to share information regarding the student's health with relevant members of staff. The UCO aims to promote an inclusive supportive environment and hopes that students will feel encouraged to seek appropriate help. The only exception to sharing information without consent would be if it was decided there was a threat to the student's safety or the safety of others, or under professional and legal requirements as outlined above.

In summary, you should inform the Student Support Manager in situations where:

- a) you have serious concerns about a student
- b) you feel you are getting out of your depth
- c) you think there may be legal issues
- d) you are not sure of the best course of action.

You can also talk to the UCO Counsellor to gain advice as to how to proceed if you are concerned about a student's mental wellbeing.

Key points:

- a) Consult with others if you think the student's problems may be serious or if you are uncertain what action to take.
- b) Be clear about what is realistic for you to deal with yourself:

- c) Decisions about what support to offer will depend on your role, whether you have relevant expertise and the time available to you.

Situations requiring immediate action are rare; if you are in doubt about how to respond to a student, it is nearly always possible to give yourself time by saying that you need to think over what the best way to help is and arrange to see the person again.

Ensure that you have information about other support services which you can pass on to students (See 4.4).

4.4 CONTACT DETAILS AND ROLE DESCRIPTION FOR THE STUDENT SUPPORT DEPARTMENT, ACADEMIC REGISTRAR AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE OFFICER

A) STUDENT SUPPORT MANAGER

The Student Support Manager is able to help with a range of issues which may be affecting a student's ability to study and/or their wellbeing. These may be personal issues, financial difficulties, health problems or anything which may be affecting their ability to study.

The Student Support Manager is also able to advise students who have a disability or long term health condition. They can help students apply for Disabled Students Allowance (DSA), which may, for example, include the award of provision for a Mental Health Mentor, for those with mental health problems. All information is treated confidentially: however students are encouraged to permit disclosure to other relevant staff members so that support arrangements can be implemented.

The Student Support Manager is also available for support if other members of the team are not available or for more serious student matters where further advice is needed (see Sections 3 & 4). They can also arrange for reasonable adjustments to be made such as extra time in assessments and special circumstances to be considered during periods of illness. The Student Support Manager can also liaise with a student's health specialist (with consent) regarding their condition. All information is treated confidentially: however students are encouraged to permit disclosure to other relevant staff members so that support arrangements can be implemented.

B) STUDENT LEARNING ADVISOR

The Student Learning Advisor is able to help students with learning techniques, planning and study skills. This can be helpful to students who may be suffering from stress and not coping well with the course. The Learning Advisor is also able to carry out an initial screening for dyslexia and give dyslexic students general support alongside the specialist support they will receive.

C) COUNSELLOR

The Counsellor is available to see students regarding issues which may be affecting them either inside or outside UCO. The Counsellor is able to refer outside of the UCO, if a student's concern is better dealt with by a specialist, or they may advise a student to visit their GP, if appropriate. The Counsellor can give advice on exam nerves and the general stress of university life. This is a free and confidential service and is available via Skype for Part Time students.

D) ACADEMIC REGISTRAR

The Academic Registrar is able to advise students what to do if they have any special circumstances which may be affecting their attendance or assessment performance, and give them the correct forms to fill out. The Academic Registrar can also refer students to the correct part of the student handbook if a student wishes to submit an appeal or complaint.

E) STUDENT EXPERIENCE OFFICER

The Student Experience Officer is available to provide impartial and confidential advice for any students who are involved in, or wish to pursue appeals and complaints.

| Role | Name | Room | Phone | Email |
|----------------------------|-------------------|-------------|---------------|--|
| Student Support Manager | | Room 3.08 | 0207 089 5334 | |
| Student Learning Advisor | Ugo Ejionye | Room 3.06 | 0207 089 5335 | u.ejionye@UCO.ac.uk |
| Counsellor | Clive Carswell | Room 3.12 | 0207 089 5333 | c.carswell@UCO.ac.uk |
| Academic Registrar | Phil Heeps | Room 4.07 | 0207 089 5353 | p.heeps@UCO.ac.uk |
| Student Experience Officer | Florence Nicholas | Room 4.03 | 0207 089 5355 | f.nicholas@UCO.ac.uk |

APPENDIX 1: TERMLY EMAIL TEMPLATE

Please copy and paste the below text into your termly email and amend the text where appropriate with your contact details etc.

Term 1 Email

Dear Students,

_____ and I are your Academic Tutors for this year and we would like to remind you that we are available to provide you with support and guidance at any point during the year. Our role as Academic Tutors is to help you identify strengths and weaknesses in your studies and to support you in creating an action plan for the year ahead to help you work on these identified areas. We are also the first port of call if you need support but are not sure who the appropriate staff member is to help. We can refer you to others for more subject specific support or pastoral and welfare support.

We will have a group meeting on _____ in which we will outline the challenges for the year ahead and what you might need extra support with. Following that, you are advised to meet with either of us once per term to follow up on how your plan for the year is going and discuss additional support if needed. The group meeting has been added to your FirstClass calendars so please check what time your meeting starts as it is tutor group dependant.

I am available at the UCO _____ (insert days and times), please email me to make an appointment.

Term 2 & 3 Email

Dear Students,

Just a reminder that _____ and I are your Academic Tutors and that we are available to provide you with support and guidance at any point during the year. Our role as Academic Tutors is to help you identify strengths and weaknesses in your studies and to create an action plan for the year ahead to help you work on these identified areas. We are also the first port of call if you need support but are not sure who the appropriate staff member is to help you and can refer you to others for more subject specific support or pastoral support.

Following our group meeting in the first term, please make an appointment to see either of us to discuss how you are progressing with your action plan and identify any additional areas you may need support with.

I am available at the UCO _____ (insert days and times), please email me to make an appointment.
