A guide for students

At King’s, all students on a taught programme are allocated a personal tutor who will play a key role in helping you to get the most out of your studies, providing support and encouragement for your time at university.

This guide explains the core aspects of personal tutoring at King’s.

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www.kcl.ac.uk/studentservices
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STUDENT SERVICES www.kcl.ac.uk/studentservices

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Your personal tutor
What is a personal tutor’s role?

Personal tutors are here to...

1. help you to adjust to being a student at King’s by providing guidance, support and encouragement.

2. provide opportunities for you to discuss your academic progress and develop confidence with independent learning.

3. support you should difficulties arise by offering you the chance to discuss how these may impact on your studies, and directing you towards further specialist support at the university.

4. provide encouragement for seeking out experiences and opportunities to enhance and complement your academic studies.

5. are a single point of contact throughout your programme of study to help you make a success of your time at King’s.
Your personal tutor

Personal tutors building blocks

Personal tutors...

- provide a single point of contact.
- are academic staff members with various responsibilities.
- have open office hours.
- offer support and guidance.
- discuss academic progress.
- direct to specialist support services.
- encourage extra-/co-curricular involvement.
- write references.
Your personal tutor

Why do I have a personal tutor?

A personal tutor is an important point of contact within your academic department: they will understand the university, and particularly the faculty that you are studying in.

They know what it is like to be a student working hard to achieve a degree, and they will be committed to ensuring that students achieve their potential and make a success of their time at King’s. Most importantly, personal tutors provide you with the opportunity to periodically take stock of your learning, academic progress and general wellbeing as you progress through your studies, offering guidance on how to seek further support if you need it.

Your personal tutor should be the first person at the university who you speak to if you are having any difficulties that are affecting your studies. These could be academic, financial, health-related or another type of problem. If you develop a friendly and professional relationship with your personal tutor they could be a vital source of support when you need it to ensure that your studies do not suffer if life becomes difficult.
For most students, the answer is yes: your personal tutor will support you from induction through to graduation.

In some cases, however, it will be necessary for you to be allocated a new personal tutor – this could be because your tutor goes on a period of sabbatical or other leave, because they move to a new role, or because they retire! If your personal tutor does change, your new tutor will make every effort to get to know you as soon as possible – and you are encouraged to be proactive in getting to know them, too.
Your personal tutor

Is personal tutoring different for postgraduate taught students?

The personal tutor role is the same, but as many postgraduates are only studying for a year the schedule of meetings will be different, and you may find that you also build a supportive relationship with your programme director or your dissertation supervisor.
Your personal tutor

Which members of staff are personal tutors?

Your personal tutor is an academic member of staff in your department – this could be a teaching fellow, lecturer or professor.

These academics will teach students, undertake world-class research in their field and sometimes they will also have responsibility within departments or faculties for other aspects of learning and teaching, such as admissions to university, education or assessment.
It takes a little time and effort to build a good relationship with your personal tutor, but it’s worth it! Your personal tutor can direct you to the right wellbeing services and supports your academic progress.

They may be able to give academic advice for certain aspects of your course in addition to writing you a reference and discussing career options.

Personal tutors are often well-connected, with internal links to other departments and external links to professionals. These qualities should enable you to feel at home in your department and lead to your growth and fulfilment.
Your personal tutor
The King’s College London Student Union’s (KCLSU) perspective

My personal tutor was of huge help in my course. He helped with academic referrals to other services and through his constant advice helped me to feel empowered. Best of all, he was always open and available to my means and made me feel at home within my department.

Ben Hunt
Former Vice President for Education (Arts and Sciences)
Your personal tutor
The King’s College London Student Union’s (KCLSU) perspective

My personal tutor was great. He encouraged me to make the most of the support from the Disability Advisory Service when I experienced depression and anxiety during my third year. He also helped me to get experience working in a lab and develop working relationships with other students and academics in my department.

Rachel Williams
Former Vice President for Welfare and Community
The scope of personal tutoring

When will my personal tutor direct me to other support?

Academic expertise
Working one-to-one
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Personal tutors and academic expertise

Personal tutors are academic members of staff with various research interests and expertise.

This means that your personal tutor will not always be an expert in all areas you are studying, although they will be committed to your academic progress and development more generally.

If your personal tutor does not have expertise in a particular area of your studies, they will direct you to other staff within the department.

Module leaders, academic tutors and course lecturers are on hand to provide support for your chosen academic subjects.
The scope of personal tutoring
When will my personal tutor direct me to other support?

Personal tutors organise time to meet with tutees to discuss their academic progress in general.

Unlike a private tutor, however, they are not able to work one-to-one with you to prepare specific pieces of academic work.

If you are struggling to complete work independently or experiencing other academic difficulties, you should still speak to your personal tutor. They will encourage you to develop an independent style of learning and help you to seek further specialist support with study skills, if you need it.
The scope of personal tutoring
When will my personal tutor direct me to other support?

Personal tutors are highly qualified members of academic staff with different skills and professional experiences.

They do not receive training to be student counsellors, careers advisers, disability advisers or immigration/housing/money/welfare specialists.

Student Services at King’s has staff trained in all of the areas just mentioned.

Your personal tutor will be committed to supporting your wellbeing and will be able to direct you to further specialist support or guidance, when required.

Crucially a personal tutor can discuss how difficulties may impact on your studies.
The scope of personal tutoring

When will my personal tutor direct me to other support?

The breadth of academic disciplines at King’s and the diverse needs of the student body mean that personal tutors cannot answer all questions about all aspects of your university experience all of the time...

They’ll do their best to help, even if that’s just pointing you in the direction of the answer!

Personal tutors will allocate time for tutees to either drop in or make appointments to ask questions.

King’s staff at Student Services or advisers at the Students’ Union (KCLSU) are also on hand to answer your questions.
Getting to know each other

How do I find out who my personal tutor is?
How do I meet with my personal tutor?
What do we talk about?
What do I do if my personal tutor isn't available?
Your department will tell you your personal tutor’s name when you begin your programme of study.

Your personal tutor details are also provided in Student Records. Once you log in, from the student homepage:
Find the “My Tutor” section
Click on “View Tutor Details”

You should expect to meet your personal tutor within the first week or so of starting at King’s.
Getting to know each other
How do I meet with my personal tutor?

When you arrive at King’s, either your department administrator or your personal tutor themselves will send you an email to arrange a first meeting. Many departments will also hold welcome events where you may be able to meet your tutor informally, too.

If you are not contacted by your department administrator or personal tutor within the first week of arriving at King’s, you are advised to email your tutor yourself to say hello and ask to meet with them. If you are emailing your tutor to arrange a meeting, it is always a good idea to suggest a few times that would be possible for you to meet them – that way they can respond with a mutually suitable appointment. Alternatively, check their office hours and drop in to see them at this time.

Once you are at King’s, you will meet with your personal tutor at least once each term.
Conversation will focus around how you are adjusting to life at King’s, your academic progress and goals, any difficulties that you might be experiencing and how they are affecting your studies, and what opportunities you are taking up. You might also talk about your results and your feedback generally – perhaps identify themes that are cropping up in your feedback, or to talk about areas of strength and weakness in your academic subjects.
Getting to know each other

What do I do if my personal tutor isn’t available?

If you have tried to meet your personal tutor and you discover that they are not available then you should contact the Senior Tutor in your department.

Senior Tutors oversee personal tutoring in each department and will be able to help you connect with your tutor, or will identify an alternative tutor if that is required.

A list of all senior tutors is available on the King’s website.
Frequently asked questions
Frequently asked questions
Academic difficulties

I’m finding academic work difficult – can my personal tutor help?
Yes. Your personal tutor won’t be able to work with you one-to-one to complete an assignment, but they can provide you with the opportunity to talk about what you are finding difficult to explore how you can improve or seek further help.

If, for example, you are struggling with academic writing, they may be able to help you understand feedback that you have received, or they may provide general guidance on academic practice in their discipline. They may also direct you to support from King’s Academic Skills for Learning.
Frequently asked questions
Personal difficulties

I’m having personal difficulties – do I have to tell my personal tutor?
I'm having personal difficulties – do I have to tell my personal tutor?

It’s your decision. If you are having personal difficulties that are likely to affect your studies then you are strongly encouraged to discuss these with your personal tutor. How much you choose to tell them is up to you. Your tutor will treat these discussions as confidential unless they feel that there is a risk to you or others, or if they need to share information with another service in order to access further support for you.

It is especially important that you consider discussing difficulties that are affecting your studies if you have assessment coming up so that you understand how to apply for mitigating circumstances, if necessary.
Frequently asked questions
Everything’s OK

Everything’s OK! Should I still arrange to see my personal tutor?
Frequently asked questions

Everything’s OK

Everything’s OK! Should I still arrange to see my personal tutor?

Yes. Personal tutorials are good opportunities to reflect on your progress generally, including all your successes; they can also be helpful for identifying other opportunities that you might want to take up alongside your studies so that you get the most out of your time at King’s – will you study abroad, for example? Are there co- or extra-curricular opportunities you might pursue?

Remember, too, that you may face some difficulties later on and it’s important to build a relationship with your tutor so that you feel comfortable approaching them, should difficulties arise.
I’m disabled – does my personal tutor need to know?
Frequently asked questions
Disability

I’m disabled – does my personal tutor need to know?

It’s your decision. If you require adjustments to support your learning, or your disability or disabilities are having an impact on your studies, then you are encouraged to seek specialist support at the university through the Disability Support Team, and to consider sharing this information with your tutor so they are aware of your needs within the department. Any information you share with your tutor will be treated sensitively and will not be shared with others without first seeking your consent.
Frequently asked questions

References

I need a reference – can my personal tutor write one?
Frequently asked questions

References

I need a reference – can my personal tutor write one?

Yes.

But only if you have got to know each other! This is another reason why it is important to meet with your personal tutor and build a professional relationship with them. Your tutor will be able to write an academic reference for you so long as they have access to further relevant information, such as your CV, job description or any other application criteria – remember to send these to your tutor along with any reference request.

Good reference protocol would be to ask your personal tutor if they are willing to be an academic reference on your CV, and then always let them know when you are applying for a job/award/course as soon to check that they can provide a reference within the necessary timescale. Asking for a reference with less than two week’s notice may mean that your tutor cannot provide one for you in time – so plan ahead and give as much notice as possible to your tutor.

Reference guidance for students
Find out more about how personal tutoring is organised on your course by consulting your programme or department handbook online.

More information about Personal Tutoring at King’s