

# **Partners for progression: engaging the learning community in supporting student success (PfP)**

## **The Role of the Personal Academic Tutor Report of findings from initial student survey**

[Draft]

The University of Northampton  
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## 1.0 Context

In a higher education context, personal tutors are usually academic staff who, in addition to their normal working duties, provide an extra layer of academic guidance and pastoral support to an assigned number of students (Wheeler & Birtle, 1995). At the University of Northampton, personal tutors work within a Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) scheme, which supports PATs through training and guidance. The PAT scheme is a specific strategy for supporting the student experience, promoting student progression and helping students achieve their academic goals.

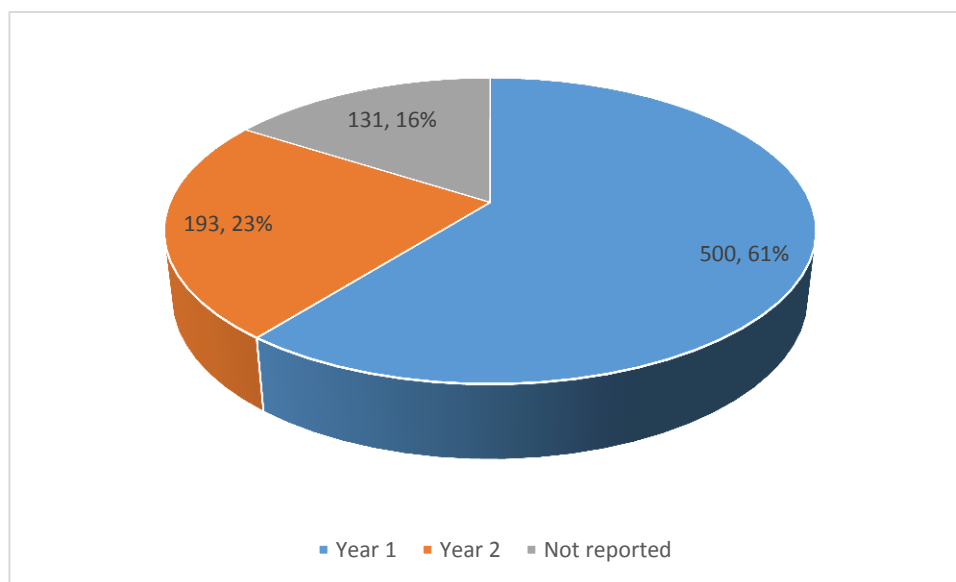
The Partners for Progression project aims to engage the entire learning community in supporting student success. As part of this project, several current initiatives are being reviewed to determine whether these are effective and/or if further support or resource is required. This report presents the findings of an initial student survey that was carried out in May 2014 to understand the PAT scheme from the students' (tutees') perspective. Findings from this survey will contribute to the Institution's understanding of the support, delivery and impact of the PAT scheme. Data are presented in the next section, followed by a set of possible recommendations.

## 2.0 Results

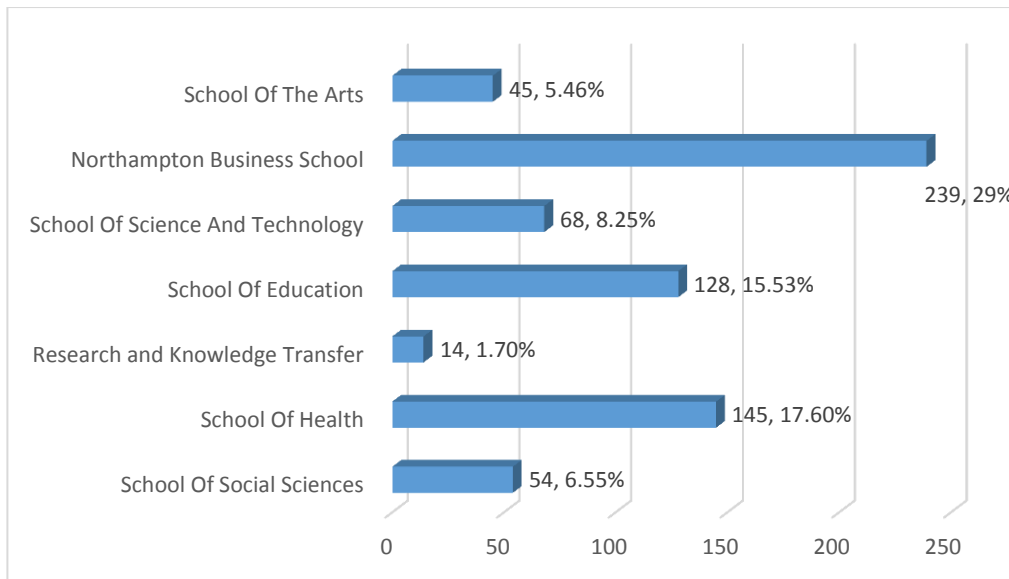
### 2.1 Participants

The survey included eight closed questions on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 'definitely disagree' to 'definitely agree'. It was distributed to Year 1 and Year 2 students by email. Students in Year 3 were not included in the sample since they were currently be surveyed for other purposes.

Completed surveys were received from 824 participants, which represents a response rate of 9%. Figure 1 shows the distribution of participants across year groups. Figure 2 shows the frequency distribution of participants across Schools/Areas.



**Fig 1.** Number, percentage of participants by year group ( $n=824$ )

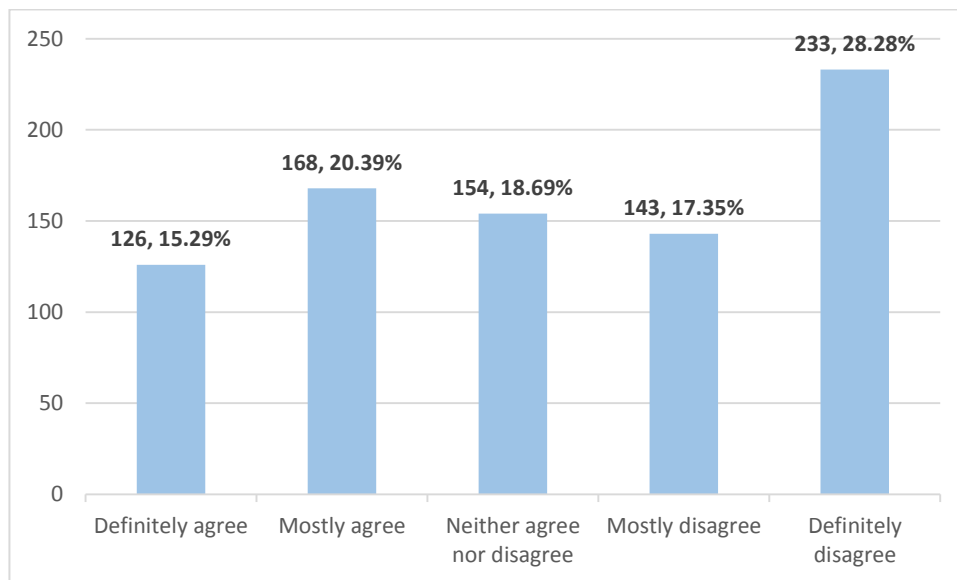


**Fig 2.** Number, percentage of participants by School/Area (n=824)

## 2.2 Perceptions of personal tutoring

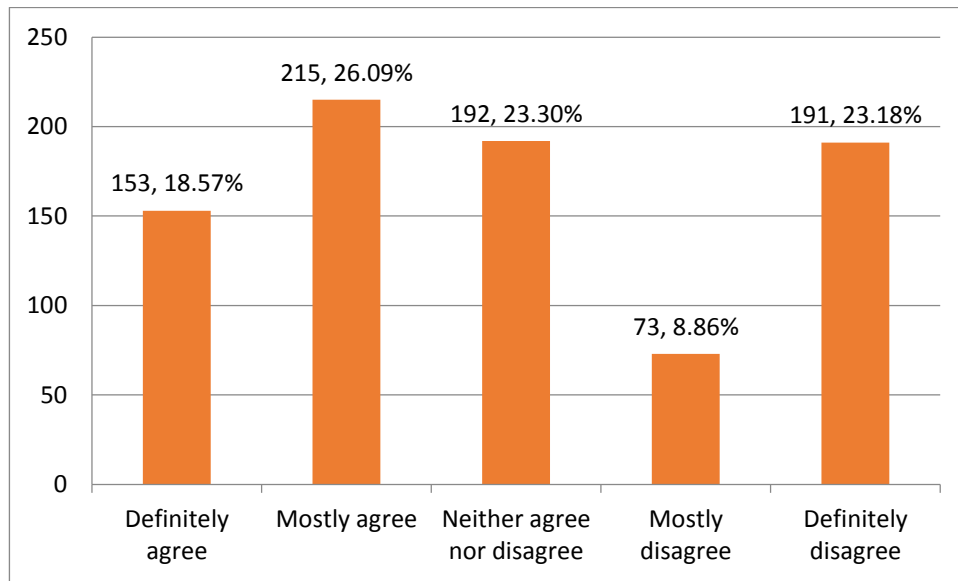
Students were asked to report their response to a series of statements. Responses to these statements are shown in this section.

### Statement 1: "I meet regularly with my Personal Tutor." (Figure 3)



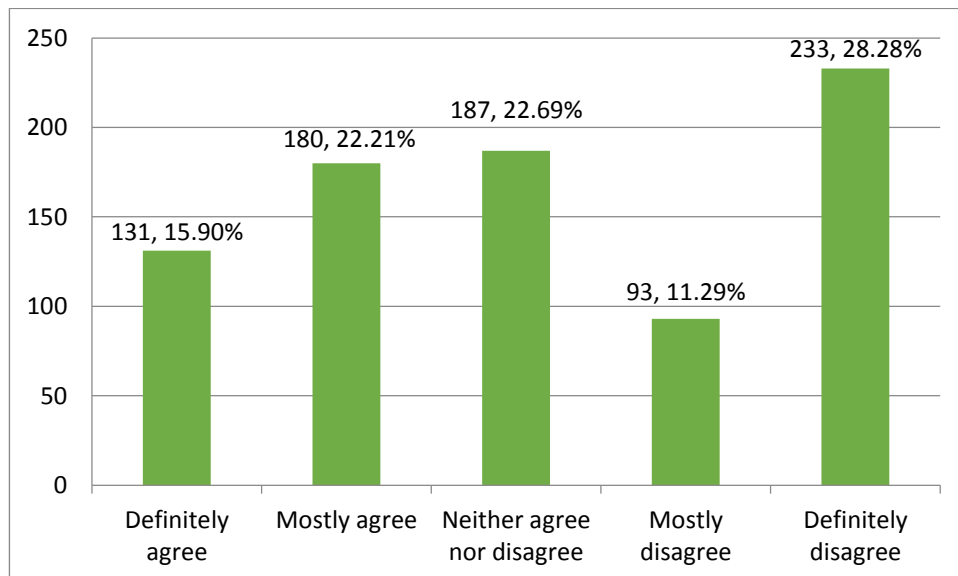
**Fig. 3**

**Statement 2: “My sessions with my Personal Tutor have made a difference to my university experience.” (Figure 4)**



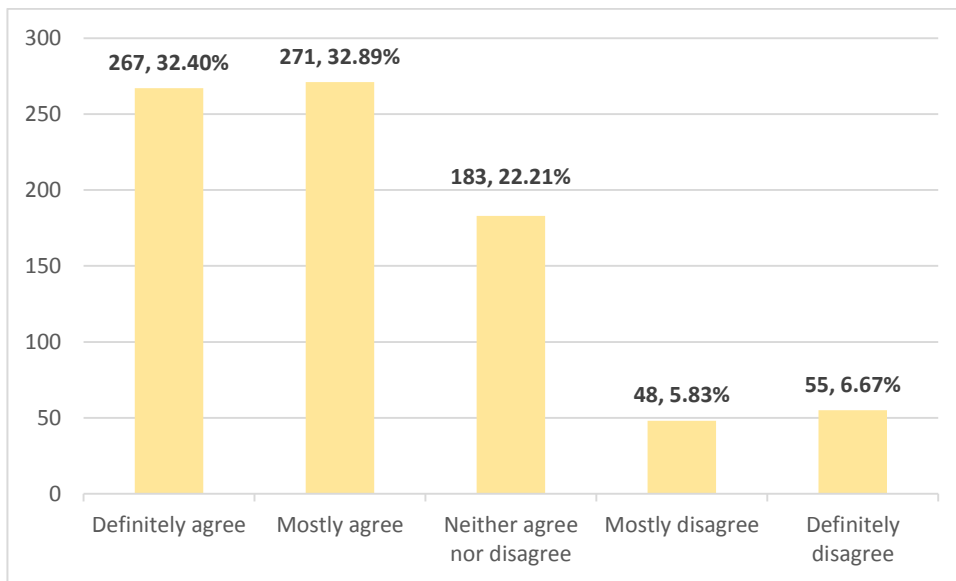
**Fig. 4**

**Statement 3: “During my sessions with my Personal Tutor, we review my personal development plan.” (Figure 5)**



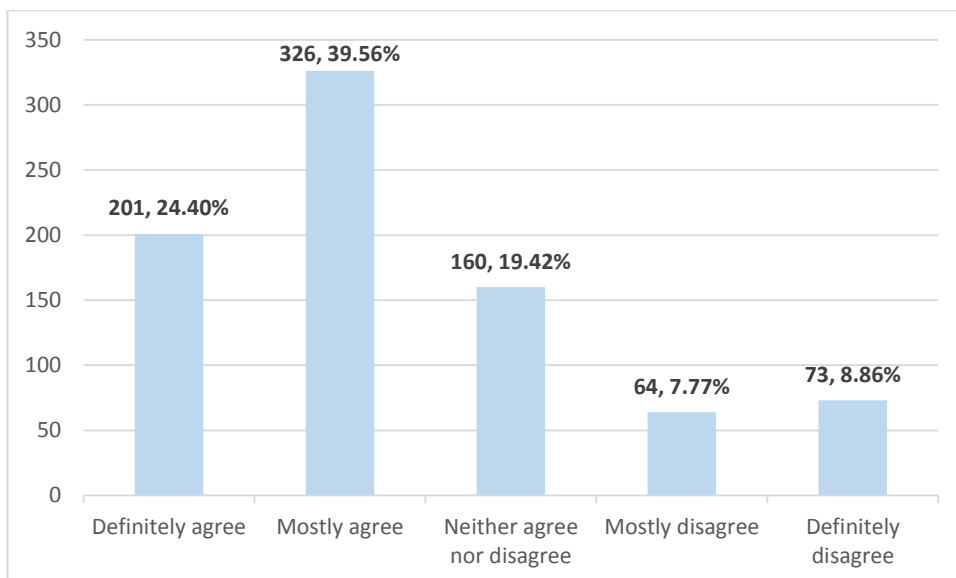
**Fig. 5**

**Statement 4: “It is really important for me to have a personal development plan.” (Figure 6)**



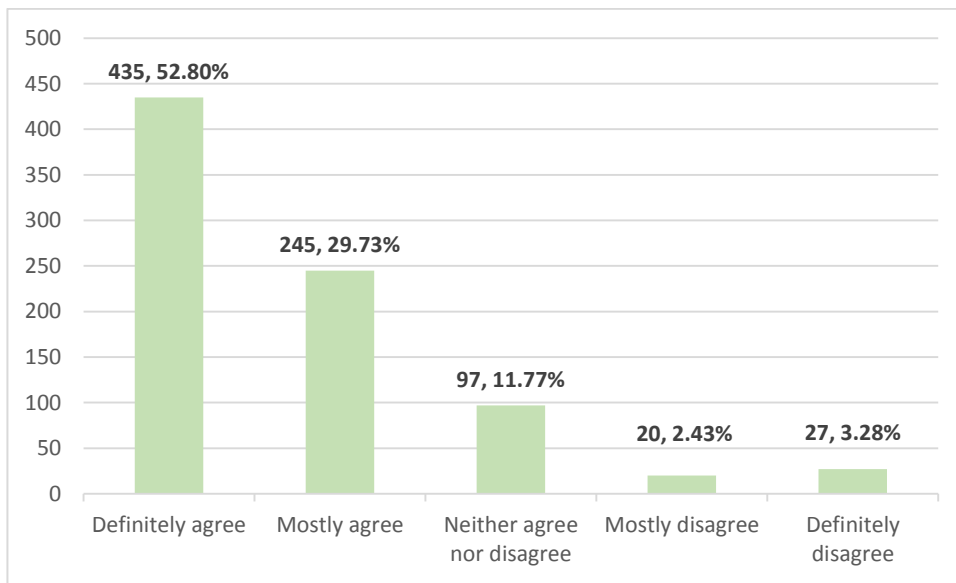
**Fig. 6**

**Statement 5: “I actively engage with other members of staff for support.” (Figure 7)**



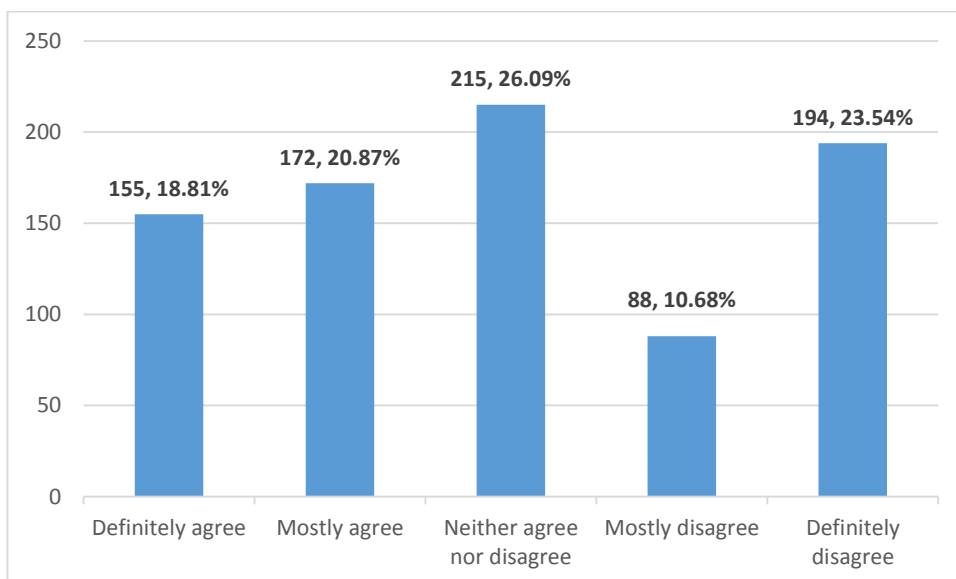
**Fig. 7**

**Statement 6: “I think it is really important for students to have a Personal Tutor.” (Figure 8)**



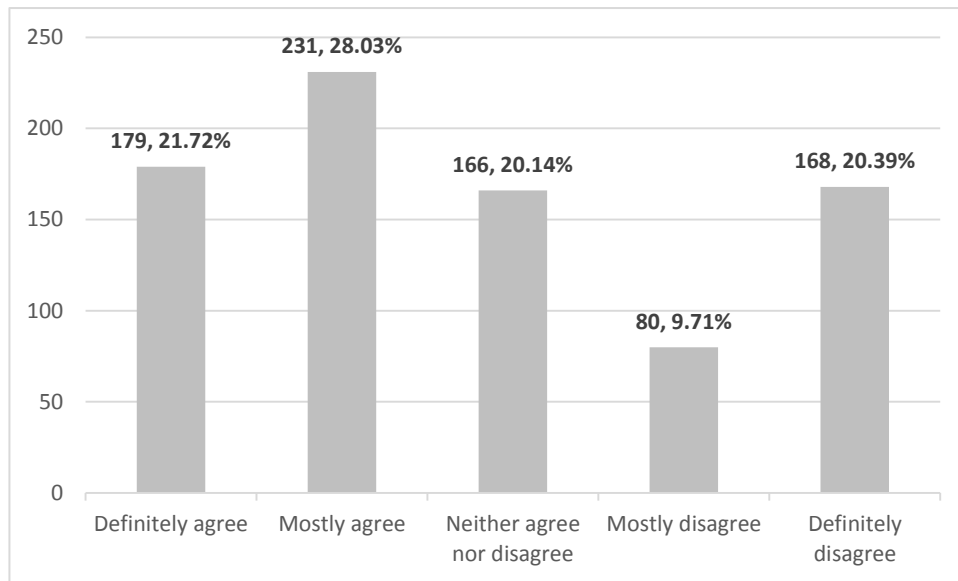
**Fig. 8**

**Statement 7: “I have been supported effectively by my Personal Tutor with pastoral issues.” (Figure 9)**



**Fig. 9**

**Statement 8: “I have been supported effectively by my Personal Tutor with academic issues.”**  
**(Figure 10)**



**Fig. 10**

### **Perception of impact by entry tariff**

The data were analysed to see if students with different entry tariffs responded differently to the following two statements. Low entry tariffs were estimated at less than 220 points. Medium entry tariffs were estimated at 220-280 points. A high entry tariff was considered as a score more than 280.

#### **1) I meet regularly with my Personal Tutor.**

The mean of each group was calculated for this statement (based on the 1-5 Likert scale).

**Mean (Low Tariff) = 3.232**

**Mean (Medium Tariff) = 3.85**

**Mean (High Tariff) = 3.67**

The difference in means was statistically significant between the Low Tariff group and the Medium Tariff group:  $t(162) = (-2.875)$ ,  $p = 0.005$ . The difference in means was statistically significant between the Low Tariff group and the High Tariff group:  $t(250) = (-2.360)$ ,  $p = 0.019$ .

In sum, those students with low entry tariffs responded less favourably to this statement than students with medium or high entry tariffs (significant at  $p < 0.05$ ).

#### **2) My sessions with my Personal Tutor have made a difference to my University experience.**

The mean of each group was calculated for this statement.

**Mean (Low Tariff) = 2.80**

**Mean (Medium Tariff) = 3.39**

**Mean (High Tariff) = 3.21**

The difference in means was statistically significant between the Low Tariff group and the Medium Tariff group:  $t(163) = (-2.732)$ ,  $p = 0.007$ . The difference in means was statistically significant between the Low Tariff group and the High Tariff group:  $t(251) = (-2.183)$ ,  $p = 0.030$ .

In sum, those students with low entry tariffs responded less favourably to this statement than students with medium or high entry tariffs (significant at  $p < 0.05$ ).

### 3.0 Discussion and next steps

The results of this survey indicate that 85% of students perceive personal tutoring as an important part of their university experience.

However there is room for improvement:

- 46% of students reported 'mostly disagree' or 'definitely disagree' when asked whether they had regular meetings with their Personal Tutor.
- 32% of students reported 'mostly disagree' or 'definitely disagree' when asked whether personal tutoring had made a difference to their university experience.
- 40% of students reported 'mostly disagree' or 'definitely disagree' when asked whether they reviewed their personal development plans with their personal tutors. (However, 65% of students agreed that personal development plans are important.)
- 34% of students reported 'mostly disagree' or 'definitely disagree' when asked whether personal tutoring was effective in helping them with pastoral issues.
- 30% of students reported 'mostly disagree' or 'definitely disagree' when asked whether personal tutoring was effective in helping them with academic issues.

Findings from the [staff survey](#) (March-April 2014) suggested there are constraints in delivering PAT provision due to workload management. The staff survey also indicated a need for improved staff development and PAT-related resources. Administratively, there are several areas that could be enhanced. Below is a set of possible action points that will inform further work in the Partners for Progression project.

#### 3.1 Possible action points (to inform the PfP project plan)

1. Use the current survey results to establish a set of improvement thresholds to inform Schools' plans for PAT provision.
2. Address the mismatch between positive expectations of personal tutoring and negative perceptions of personal tutoring by piloting specific interventions, staff development opportunities and resources for PAT provision in the 2014/2015 academic year. (See: [PAT Policy and Pilot Scheme](#)).



3. Raise awareness of personal tutoring among students so that their own involvement and derived benefit from tutoring can be self-regulated. This could include clarifying the role of the PAT in terms of personal development planning.
4. Create formative feedback loops to engage learners in the improvement processes around personal tutoring.

A project plan for a revised PAT scheme will be proposed in May/June 2014 for implementation in the 2014-2015 academic year.

## 4.0 References

Wheeler, S. and Birtle, J. (1995). *A Handbook for Personal Tutors*. Buckingham: SRHE/Open University Press.

## Appendix A: Results from Year 1 Students by School

Total 100.00% (824)		Year by School													
			SSC		SOH		SOE		SST		NBS		SOTA		
I meet regularly with my Personal Tutor.	Definitely agree	15.29%	126	18%	5	18.67%	14	12.86%	9	10%	2	15%	12	28%	5
	Mostly agree	20.39%	168	7%	2	32.00%	24	22.86%	16	0%	0	26%	21	0%	0
	Neither agree nor disagree	18.69%	154	7%	2	21.33%	16	15.71%	11	19%	4	15%	12	28%	5
	Mostly disagree	17.35%	143	18%	5	16.00%	12	25.71%	18	10%	2	13%	11	28%	5
	Definitely disagree	28.28%	233	50%	14	12.00%	9	22.86%	16	62%	13	32%	26	17%	3
	Total	100.00%	824	100%	28	100.00%	75	100.00%	70	100%	21	100%	82	100%	18
My sessions with my Personal Tutor have made a difference to my university experience.	Definitely agree	18.57%	153	18%	5	25.33%	19	20.00%	14	5%	1	16%	13	28%	5
	Mostly agree	26.09%	215	18%	5	38.67%	29	27.14%	19	19%	4	29%	24	22%	4
	Neither agree nor disagree	23.30%	192	18%	5	17.33%	13	18.57%	13	24%	5	18%	15	39%	7
	Mostly disagree	8.86%	73	7%	2	8.00%	6	15.71%	11	5%	1	7%	6	6%	1
	Definitely disagree	23.18%	191	39%	11	10.67%	8	18.57%	13	48%	10	29%	24	6%	1
	Total	100.00%	824	100%	28	100.00%	75	100.00%	70	100%	21	100%	82	100%	18
During the sessions with my Personal Tutor, we review my personal development plan.	Definitely agree	15.90%	131	18%	5	28.00%	21	18.57%	13	0%	0	12%	10	17%	3
	Mostly agree	21.84%	180	4%	1	26.67%	20	28.57%	20	10%	2	22%	18	6%	1
	Neither agree nor disagree	22.69%	187	21%	6	24.00%	18	21.43%	15	33%	7	26%	21	33%	6
	Mostly disagree	11.29%	93	0%	0	6.67%	5	12.86%	9	0%	0	12%	10	11%	2
	Definitely disagree	28.28%	233	57%	16	14.67%	11	18.57%	13	57%	12	28%	23	33%	6
	Total	100.00%	824	100%	28	100.00%	75	100.00%	70	100%	21	100%	82	100%	18
It is really important for me to have a personal development plan.	Definitely agree	32.40%	267	21%	6	48.00%	36	21.43%	15	14%	3	49%	40	33%	6
	Mostly agree	32.89%	271	32%	9	30.67%	23	41.43%	29	19%	4	34%	28	28%	5
	Neither agree nor disagree	22.21%	183	36%	10	16.00%	12	18.57%	13	29%	6	10%	8	39%	7
	Mostly disagree	5.83%	48	4%	1	4.00%	3	14.29%	10	10%	2	2%	2	0%	0
	Definitely disagree	6.67%	55	7%	2	1.33%	1	4.29%	3	29%	6	5%	4	0%	0
	Total	100.00%	824	100%	28	100.00%	75	100.00%	70	100%	21	100%	82	100%	18
I actively engage with other members of staff (e.g. my module tutor) for support.	Definitely agree	24.39%	201	21%	6	28.00%	21	20.00%	14	24%	5	17%	14	44%	8
	Mostly agree	39.56%	326	32%	9	37.33%	28	45.71%	32	24%	5	49%	40	28%	5
	Neither agree nor disagree	19.42%	160	29%	8	21.33%	16	22.86%	16	5%	1	16%	13	17%	3
	Mostly disagree	7.77%	64	18%	5	6.67%	5	7.14%	5	14%	3	4%	3	11%	2
	Definitely disagree	8.86%	73	0%	0	6.67%	5	4.29%	3	33%	7	15%	12	0%	0
	Total	100.00%	824	100%	28	100.00%	75	100.00%	70	100%	21	100%	82	100%	18
I think it is really important for students to have a Personal Tutor.	Definitely agree	52.79%	435	50%	14	65.33%	49	45.71%	32	38%	8	57%	47	50%	9
	Mostly agree	29.73%	245	29%	8	30.67%	23	35.71%	25	24%	5	27%	22	17%	3
	Neither agree nor disagree	11.77%	97	18%	5	1.33%	1	12.86%	9	29%	6	12%	10	28%	5
	Mostly disagree	2.43%	20	4%	1	1.33%	1	2.86%	2	0%	0	1%	1	6%	1
	Definitely disagree	3.28%	27	0%	0	1.33%	1	2.86%	2	10%	2	2%	2	0%	0
	Total	100.00%	824	100%	28	100.00%	75	100.00%	70	100%	21	100%	82	100%	18
I have been effectively supported in pastoral/personal issues by my Personal Tutor.	Definitely agree	18.81%	155	14%	4	29.33%	22	21.43%	15	5%	1	11%	9	22%	4
	Mostly agree	20.87%	172	14%	4	25.33%	19	14.29%	10	0%	0	30%	25	11%	2
	Neither agree nor disagree	26.09%	215	25%	7	22.67%	17	34.29%	24	43%	9	22%	18	28%	5
	Mostly disagree	10.68%	88	18%	5	9.33%	7	11.43%	8	5%	1	9%	7	22%	4
	Definitely disagree	23.54%	194	29%	8	13.33%	10	18.57%	13	48%	10	28%	23	17%	3
	Total	100.00%	824	100%	28	100.00%	75	100.00%	70	100%	21	100%	82	100%	18
I have been effectively supported in academic matters by my Personal Tutor.	Definitely agree	21.72%	179	14%	4	32.00%	24	22.86%	16	14%	3	12%	10	22%	4
	Mostly agree	28.03%	231	18%	5	40.00%	30	32.86%	23	14%	3	33%	27	6%	1
	Neither agree nor disagree	20.15%	166	18%	5	10.67%	8	17.14%	12	38%	8	20%	16	44%	8
	Mostly disagree	9.71%	80	11%	3	8.00%	6	15.71%	11	5%	1	11%	9	17%	3
	Definitely disagree	20.39%	168	39%	11	9.33%	7	11.43%	8	29%	6	24%	20	11%	2
	Total	100.00%	824	100%	28	100.00%	75	100.00%	70	100%	21	100%	82	100%	18

## Appendix B: Results from Year 2 Students by School

Total 100.00% (824)		2											
		SSC		SOH		SOE		SST		NBS		SOTA	
I meet regularly with my Personal Tutor.	Definitely agree	18%	2	24%	10	19%	6	14%	3	14%	4	0%	0
	Mostly agree	18%	2	26%	11	13%	4	0%	0	24%	7	30%	3
	Neither agree nor disagree	0%	0	12%	5	25%	8	18%	4	7%	2	30%	3
	Mostly disagree	45%	5	14%	6	19%	6	14%	3	14%	4	10%	1
	Definitely disagree	18%	2	24%	10	25%	8	55%	12	41%	12	30%	3
	Total	100%	11	100%	42	100%	32	100%	22	100%	29	100%	10
My sessions with my Personal Tutor have made a difference to my university experience.	Definitely agree	18%	2	24%	10	22%	7	14%	3	28%	8	10%	1
	Mostly agree	27%	3	26%	11	19%	6	14%	3	17%	5	20%	2
	Neither agree nor disagree	36%	4	26%	11	22%	7	23%	5	17%	5	40%	4
	Mostly disagree	0%	0	7%	3	6%	2	9%	2	7%	2	10%	1
	Definitely disagree	18%	2	17%	7	31%	10	41%	9	31%	9	20%	2
	Total	100%	11	100%	42	100%	32	100%	22	100%	29	100%	10
During the sessions with my Personal Tutor, we review my personal development plan.	Definitely agree	0%	0	21%	9	19%	6	9%	2	14%	4	10%	1
	Mostly agree	18%	2	40%	17	19%	6	9%	2	17%	5	20%	2
	Neither agree nor disagree	27%	3	17%	7	13%	4	18%	4	24%	7	30%	3
	Mostly disagree	9%	1	12%	5	9%	3	14%	3	10%	3	20%	2
	Definitely disagree	45%	5	10%	4	41%	13	50%	11	34%	10	20%	2
	Total	100%	11	100%	42	100%	32	100%	22	100%	29	100%	10
It is really important for me to have a personal development plan.	Definitely agree	27%	3	33%	14	31%	10	36%	8	45%	13	30%	3
	Mostly agree	18%	2	38%	16	28%	9	18%	4	31%	9	50%	5
	Neither agree nor disagree	45%	5	21%	9	25%	8	23%	5	17%	5	20%	2
	Mostly disagree	0%	0	5%	2	6%	2	5%	1	3%	1	0%	0
	Definitely disagree	9%	1	2%	1	9%	3	18%	4	3%	1	0%	0
	Total	100%	11	100%	42	100%	32	100%	22	100%	29	100%	10
I actively engage with other members of staff (e.g. my module tutor) for support.	Definitely agree	27%	3	33%	14	38%	12	27%	6	31%	9	30%	3
	Mostly agree	45%	5	38%	16	34%	11	36%	8	41%	12	40%	4
	Neither agree nor disagree	18%	2	19%	8	16%	5	14%	3	17%	5	10%	1
	Mostly disagree	9%	1	2%	1	0%	0	5%	1	3%	1	10%	1
	Definitely disagree	0%	0	7%	3	13%	4	18%	4	7%	2	10%	1
	Total	100%	11	100%	42	100%	32	100%	22	100%	29	100%	10
I think it is really important for students to have a Personal Tutor.	Definitely agree	64%	7	60%	25	59%	19	45%	10	55%	16	50%	5
	Mostly agree	18%	2	33%	14	25%	8	32%	7	24%	7	20%	2
	Neither agree nor disagree	9%	1	5%	2	3%	1	5%	1	10%	3	30%	3
	Mostly disagree	0%	0	0%	0	6%	2	9%	2	3%	1	0%	0
	Definitely disagree	9%	1	2%	1	6%	2	9%	2	7%	2	0%	0
	Total	100%	11	100%	42	100%	32	100%	22	100%	29	100%	10
I have been effectively supported in pastoral/personal issues by my Personal Tutor.	Definitely agree	27%	3	29%	12	28%	9	18%	4	17%	5	0%	0
	Mostly agree	9%	1	19%	8	22%	7	9%	2	21%	6	40%	4
	Neither agree nor disagree	36%	4	24%	10	13%	4	27%	6	24%	7	20%	2
	Mostly disagree	9%	1	14%	6	6%	2	9%	2	10%	3	20%	2
	Definitely disagree	18%	2	14%	6	31%	10	36%	8	28%	8	20%	2
	Total	100%	11	100%	42	100%	32	100%	22	100%	29	100%	10
I have been effectively supported in academic matters by my Personal Tutor.	Definitely agree	27%	3	31%	13	31%	10	23%	5	21%	6	10%	1
	Mostly agree	36%	4	29%	12	25%	8	9%	2	17%	5	40%	4
	Neither agree nor disagree	18%	2	19%	8	3%	1	27%	6	24%	7	10%	1
	Mostly disagree	0%	0	12%	5	9%	3	5%	1	7%	2	20%	2
	Definitely disagree	18%	2	10%	4	31%	10	36%	8	31%	9	20%	2
	Total	100%	11	100%	42	100%	32	100%	22	100%	29	100%	10