

Topic 1

Definition of tutoring and tutor responsibilities

Welcome to the first topic. In this topic we are going to discuss a variety of points including:

- What is tutoring?
- What is the role of the tutor?
- How is the tutor expected to behave?
- Learning, tutoring and mentoring styles
- Some learning centre philosophies.

What is tutoring?

Let's start by looking at the dictionary definition of tutors. The Longman dictionary describes a tutor as someone who gives private lessons to one student or a small group, and who is paid directly by them.

As you heard in the introduction to this course, tutors become role-models of learning and foster knowledge in those they are tutoring. We could use the terms 'student', 'learner' or 'tutee' to describe those people who are being tutored. While tutoring others and helping them to understand concepts, tutors develop self-awareness. They have the opportunity to consider their own challenges, experiences and benefits and can model these with their tutees. The primary goal of tutoring is to help students become more confident, successful and self-directed learners.

Tutoring is also known as 'peer-assisted learning'. Through this type of learning, those who have the knowledge are able to help others. Tutoring can incorporate different aspects, such as teaching, mentoring, and giving advice, also known as

counselling, as well as modelling good learning behaviour. Tutors can be of any age and can tutor in any subject. Anyone can tutor or be tutored.

Tutoring is flexible and can take many forms. It can be one-on-one, in small groups or even in or large groups. Whatever form it takes, the task of the tutor is always to support students, and to help them to grow and become independent.

Tutoring has benefits for both the tutor and the tutee. The tutors gain as they become motivated to learn more about the topic. It is as they discuss and explain the material to their students that they test and clarify their own understanding. During discussions they reorganise and build ideas and expand their knowledge. Tutors do not need to be experts in what they are tutoring, they can also be learning.

Let's take a look at what tutoring is and what it is not.

Tutoring is collaborative and student-centred, but IT DOES NOT take away the ownership of learning from students.

It helps students understand and correct their own errors, but IT DOES NOT correct errors for students.

It offers an honest assessment of the strengths and weaknesses that students have within a safe and supportive environment, but IT DOES NOT heap unconditional praise on students.

It is focussed on providing academic support and equipping tutees to find their own answers. It shows learners how to seek help when they don't know something by modelling these skills. IT DOES NOT mean being an expert in all aspects.

What is the role of the tutor?

If we were asked to give a job description of a tutor we could say that tutors are students who:

- Provide individual or small group learning assistance in specific subjects to learners.
- Keep a regular weekly schedule of the hours they spend tutoring.
- Keep regular and accurate records of their tutoring sessions.
- Have attended a tutor training course such as this one.
- Assist with other duties where needed, such as administrative tasks or creating materials.

So what exactly are tutors expected to do? What are their responsibilities?

Their responsibilities include:

- Working with students on a one-to-one basis or in a small group.
- Asking open-ended questions to get learners to think about the course content.
- Help the learners to understand the material and to self-direct their own learning.
- Show learners how to become better at their studies by building in aspects such as time management, study skills and note-taking into the sessions.
- Become a positive role model by showing learners what it means to be responsible and mature.
- Arrive early or on time for tutoring sessions.
- Dress appropriately. While jeans are acceptable attire, torn jeans and scruffy clothing are not.
- Maintain a professional and welcoming attitude at all times.
- Respect learners' rights and don't disclose any confidential information.
- Make sure that the learners sign the register at each session.
- If you are unable to attend a session make sure that you inform the learners as well as your supervisor.

How is the tutor expected to behave?

In general, tutors are expected to show an interest in helping people. They should be open to learning about their learners. They should be familiar with different teaching and learning techniques and use them to connect with their learners. While they need not be first language English speakers, they should be able to explain difficult concepts in simple, easy to understand language.

So the expectation is that tutors should have all the following characteristics as these will help them become effective:

- They need to be knowledgeable of the course material, although they don't need to be experts in the subjects.
- They should be reliable, committed and punctual.

- If they do not know the answer, then they should be honest about it and make a point of finding out what the answer is.
- They need to show patience, be considerate and always aware of their own abilities.
- They need to be observant and to be aware of the tutees' response to their tutoring methods. The, when one method doesn't work with that tutee, they can always adjust it.
- They need to understand the different teaching and learning styles. Then, once they know how best their tutees learn they will be able to match their teaching styles to the tutees learning styles.
- They need to be able to listen actively so that they become aware of their tutee's concerns and understanding of the learning material.
- This will assist them be become knowledgeable of their tutees' strengths and weaknesses.
- They must continually encourage their tutees and show enthusiasm about their successes.
- They must be able to communicate effectively.
- In their demeanour, they must be professional in their manner and confident in their abilities. They should, however, still be humble enough to admit when they are wrong and that they are still capable of learning.
- They need to have creative minds and to be and dedicated to promoting an active, enjoyable learning experience for all the tutees.
- They need to be respectful of their tutees' privacy as well as to differences in ethnicity and opinions. They need to make it clear to the tutees that they are entitled to have their own opinions and that they should be allowed to express them.
- They must be able to keep an open mind and should never be judgmental. They should maintain a non-judgemental approach at all times.
- They should, at all times, be supportive of their tutees' efforts and their accomplishments.
- Above all, they need to bear in mind that there are not teachers or lecturers. They need to be facilitators of learning.

Learning, tutoring and mentoring styles

We all have different ways, or styles of learning. In teaching, the VAK also known as the VAKT, model is often used. This model is based on the three main senses through which we learn. We learn mainly through our sense of sight, or **visual**. The second sense through which we learn is the sense of hearing, or **auditory**. The third is our sense of touch and movement, known as tactile and **kinaesthetic**.

Once you know what the student's mode, or style, of learning is, then you can address them using that method. It's usually a good idea to use all three methods during your tutoring sessions. We will next give you some ideas as to how to adapt your tutoring style to the learners whom you will meet.

Ideas for tutoring visual learners:

- Sketch a diagram of the concept or allow tutees to draw diagrams.
- Use charts, pictures and diagrams.
- Encourage visual learners to take notes during the tutoring session.
- Give tutees handouts so they have a visual link to the concepts.
- Use a whiteboard or paper to explain concepts and work through problems.
- Refer to the text, diagrams, charts and pictures in the textbook when it is appropriate.
- Use flashcards to explain concepts.
- Encourage tutees to make their own flash cards as writing and viewing the cards increases understanding.

Ideas for tutoring auditory learners:

- Stress key words so that tutees can relate to them.
- Use auditory methods such as stories, anecdotes, jokes and puns.
- Build in time for discussion of concepts. This will assist auditory learners to come to grips with the concepts and to fully understand them.
- Read explanations out loud and ask the tutees to read them out loud as well. Reading them aloud will assist them to remember the key points.
- Encourage learners to speak through new information as they are learning. Once again, this will help them to understand and to remember the concepts.

- Promote the use of songs or rhymes to remember facts, dates or names.
- Ask learners to write out any sequence of steps that must be learned and to then read them aloud.
- If you are working with more than one learner, ask them to get into pairs and take one or two minutes to discuss what they learned.

Ideas for tutoring kinaesthetic/tactile learners:

- Use a hands-on approach. Get learners to actually do what they are learning. For example, if the subject is mathematics, allow learners to use manipulatives so that they better understand the abstract concepts. If the subject is science, then it is important for the learners to actually do experiments. Remember that the always work from concrete to abstract and from simple to difficult.
- Build in role-play where this is applicable. It helps learners to understand concepts by acting them out. This would work well when tutoring languages, for example.
- Allow the learner to stand and write on the whiteboard. In this way, by using touch and movements, the concepts 'come alive.'
- Point to concepts as you explain them.
- Encourage learners to write things down as they discuss concepts. Again, the act of writing is both tactile and kinaesthetic, as both touch and movement are involved.
- Allow learners to create handwritten charts that demonstrate key concepts.
- Ask learners to create their own flashcards of what was covered during the session. This is similar to the previous point.
- Give learners the opportunity to get up and move around as they are learning new concepts. The act of movement will make the concepts clearer and is another form of role play.

Codes of ethics

If you were working in an organisation you would need to follow the professional code of ethics that the organisation follows. A code of ethics is a set of guidelines that people can follow in order to make good decisions. Even though you are working on your own, you still need to have your own code of ethics. A code of

ethics is a set of principles that help you to distinguish between right and wrong and how to approach problems.

The Association for the Coaching and Tutoring Profession <https://www.myactp.com/code-of-ethics/> has some good ideas that you can follow.

We can summarise the code of ethics that will help you, as a tutor, by looking at the following points:

Respect for individual differences: Tutors will respect cultural, individual, and role differences, including those based on age, sex, gender identity, race, ethnicity, culture, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, disability, language and socioeconomic status.

Your roles as tutors: Your role is to help students learn, not to do their work for them.

Responsibility: You are responsible for your own behaviour and need to work to resolve conflicts that may arise between yourself and your tutees.

Conflicts of interest: You need to be conscious of any conflict or potential conflict of interest. If there is any conflict of interest, then you should openly disclose any such conflict and offer to remove yourself when a conflict arises.

Academic integrity: As a tutor you need to create an environment in which accuracy, honesty, truthfulness, and individual effort are valued and encouraged.

Fairness: you need to use your judgement and take precautions to make sure that you do not show bias towards your tutees and that you do not condone unjust practices.

Excellence: You need to maintain excellence by continuing to improve your tutoring skills and to develop yourself professionally.

Professionalism: As a tutor you should never engage inappropriately with tutees.

Think about what you have read. Remember that you need to be aware of your own code of ethics and to always conduct yourself in an ethical way in your relationship with your tutees. Through reflecting on your own learning approach, you will be able to develop new strategies for working with students.