The tutor’s role and parameters of responsibility

The questions below are intended to help clarify the role and responsibilities of tutors who are asked to do some tutoring on a temporary basis and who do not have primary responsibility for the students they are tutoring. In particular, graduate students, junior research fellows, post-doctoral researchers, and departmental lecturers who are new to tutoring may find the list a helpful prompt to consider the responsibilities they are taking on as tutors. Some of the questions may also be relevant to tutorial fellows who are tutoring students from a college other than their own.

The answers to these questions vary from college to college and from discipline to discipline. It is therefore necessary to clarify for yourself what is expected of you and what support is available to help you to fulfil your responsibility to your students and college.

Once you have sufficient information in response to the questions below, you then need to consider its implications for the learning context of your students. Your answers should suggest particular needs that students have at different stages of their course and particular tools and resources that you can draw upon as their tutor.

College Context

1. What level of responsibility (teaching, pastoral care, administration, admissions) is implied by your appointment?

2. What are the students’ expectations of you as a tutor?

3. How is student feedback about tutorial teaching elicited? How and when is this feedback communicated to tutors?

4. To whom can you turn for support as you develop your tutoring skills?

5. If a student’s subject tutor is on sabbatical and out of Oxford, who is your point of contact within the college?

6. What expectations are there about students’ attendance of tutorials?

7. What kind of content is expected in end-of-term reports and how is the information in them used?

8. What arrangements are there for collections (post-vacation examinations)? What is their function?

Department/Faculty Context

9. How do tutorials fit in with other aspects of the undergraduate course (lectures, classes etc)?

10. How closely should tutorials follow other aspects of the curriculum (lectures, examination requirements)?

11. What teaching materials will you need to prepare, and what is available from your department/ faculty that you might be expected to use or could use?
12. Is there a statement of learning outcomes you should be aware of? How are these outcomes used in practice?

Assessment

13. What expectations are there about taking in work and providing written feedback?
14. What is the range of practice in marking and giving feedback?
15. What rewards, if any, are there for good work in tutorials, collections, practicals or research project work? (Some colleges and also some departments have prizes.)

Pastoral Care

16. What are the limits of your responsibility in pastoral care?
17. What sources of pastoral care exist for students in college?