

UNIVERSITY COLLABORATIVE AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

APPLICATION FORM

Reference Number :005/2021

Please refer to the [scheme criteria and guidance](#) when completing your application.

Please save as a PDF file and submit your application to Martin Wise: m.wise@reading.ac.uk

Nominator's details

Name:	Orla Kennedy
Role:	Teaching and Learning Dean
School / Service:	Vice Chancellors Office
Department / Unit:	PVC Education and Student Experience Team
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Team Leader's details (This may be the same person as the Nominator)

Name:	Orla Kennedy
Role:	As above
School / Service:	
Department / Unit:	
Contact Telephone number:	
Email:	

Team Name / Project Title

Academic Tutor System Project Team – ATS Team

Team Members

(Include all members of the group applying for the award, including the team leader and any student members. Indicate the percentage of the award that each group member should receive. This should total (and must not exceed) 100%.)

Name	Employee Number	School/Function	Role in Team	% of Award per team member	
Pip Oppenheimer*	N/A	RUSU Welfare officer 2016/17	Student member- student members organised student engagement surveys/ input into student & staff consultations/ input into development of student toolkits/videos/communications campaigns/conference presentations and actively involved in steering groups meetings and student engagement workstream.	**	
Ed White*	N/A	RUSU Education Officer 2017/18			
Rose Lennon*	N/A	RUSU Welfare Office 2017/18			
Lilly Mae Fermin*	N/A	RUSU Education Officer 2018/19			
Dan Bentley*	N/A	RUSU Welfare Office 2018/19			
FiFi Bangham*	N/A	RUSU Education Officer 2019/20			
Gemma King*	N/A	RUSU Welfare Office 2019/20			
Jack Paulley	N/A	Academic Governance			JP-Member of original working group and ATS team, governance input plus external benchmarking.
Michelle Reid*	N/A	Library/Study Advice			MR & SH-input into staff and student toolkits, for academic development and inclusion in Study Smart MOOC, involved in both staff and student engagement workstream.
Sonia Hood	N/A	Library/Study Advice			
Beth Blewitt	N/A	Student Services/Support Centre Manager			BB led on the consultations with Support centres, with ongoing input to student and staff workstreams, and staff development and training.
Paddy Woodman	N/A	Student Services/Director of Student Services			PW-Member of original working group and ATS team, led the development of the student welfare team(SWT).
Elaine Miles	N/A	Student Services/Student Welfare Manager	EM joined the team, to establish the SWT , led the development of ways of		

			working across the ATS and firmly embedded the role of the student welfare team in the university.	
Jennifer Corless*	N/A	Marketing and communications/Student Services	JR and JC took the lead on the student engagement workstream working in partnership with RUSU and led on the development of materials and communications to students and to staff- JE, EHS and GOC took charge of the delivery of Marketing and Comms for all activities.	
Jen Rich	N/A			
John Elluli	N/A			
Esther Hanley-Clark	N/A			
Gemma O Connell	N/A			
Helen Bilton	N/A	Institute of Education/Chair of Senior Tutors Community of Practice (CoP) 2016/17	HB original member of working group and member of ATS. Part of the core team that established the review.	
Maddie Davies	N/A	School of Literature and Languages/Chair of Senior Tutors CoP 2017/18	HB and successive chairs, were members of the team, input into the development of the SDAT and ATS roles, led consultations with schools and CoP, surveyed expectations and experiences of SDATs and ATs throughout and inputted to the staff engagement workstream, in providing training, advice and content and advocacy. All have been champions of the ATS and ensured leadership is visible at school and University level.	
Amanda Millmore	N/A	School of Law/Co-Chairs of School Directors of Academic Tutoring (SDAT's) CoP 2018/19		
Rachel Horton	N/A			
Paul Jenkins	N/A	School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences/Chair SDAT CoP 2019/20		
Alastair Culham	N/A	School of Biological Sciences/Chair SDAT CoP 2020/21		
Em Brady	N/A	Planning and Support Office (PSO), project officer	EM Project admin and organisation support 2017/18.	
Maura O'Regan*	N/A	Centre for Quality and Staff Development, Academic Development	MoR ADE lead 2017/18, and ST CoP convenor, JC took over role 2018 onwards and led on the staff engagement workstream,	
Jo Cordy	N/A			

		& Enhancement(CQSD ADE)/Academic Developers	development of AT toolkit, and leadership development of SDATs.	
Jess Johnson	N/A	PSO/Project Manager	JJ managed the review and introduction of the Academic Tutor System (2017-2018), including managing the institutional change workstream.	
Cindy Isherwood*	N/A	CQSD ADE/ATS Project Implementation Officer	CI managed the implementation of the ATS (2018-2020), including overseeing project evaluation and continuous improvement.	
Clare Furneaux	N/A	Vice Chancellors Officer/Team Lead/ Chair of Steering Group 2018/19	Team lead (2018/19) & oversaw the implementation in 2018/19.	
Orla Kennedy	N/A	Vice Chancellors Office/Team lead/Chair of Working group and steering group 2016-2020	Team lead, working group initiator, and project team lead.	
Left the university* ** Donation to Hardship fund				

Previous Funding

Has anyone in your team previously been awarded in these or any other Awards at the University?	Yes
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If yes, please give details of date and type of award:

Yes, many in the team have been part of other University Collaborative T&L awards teams alongside TLEP and UTFS awards- a sample of which are below

Kennedy, UTFS project award 2013, University Collaborative T&L Award for THRIVE Career Mentoring (2016)

Davies- University Collaborative T&L award for [Second Sight: The Margaret Atwood Learning Journals \(2018 19\)](#) and [Celebrating 100 Years of Women's Voices: a Play, a Book and a Symposium \(2019-20\)](#), Horton part of the latter project

Reid/Woodman- University Collaborative T&L award for [Launch of Study Smart \(2017 2018\)](#)

White- University Collaborative T&L award for [Developing an Institutional Approach to Student-Staff Partnership \(2019-20\)](#)

Davies, Millmore, Bilton, Culham, Kennedy, Furneaux, Reid, Woodman are all University Teaching Fellows awardees

Bilton, Woodman, Furneaux- are National Teaching Fellows

Case for Award

Please outline your case for an award, referring to the scheme criteria as appropriate (1000 words maximum):

Articulate the aims, objectives, and rationale for the team's approach

How do we offer appropriate support to every student on their journey from foundation year to postgraduate in a consistent way across the University? This was the question which the Academic Tutor System (ATS) project was designed to answer. Back in 2016 a working group was established to review the existing personal tutor system, gathering information from students about their experience and the tutors and Senior Tutors working with them. The feedback received demonstrated the need for a university-wide culture change to move from a reactive system to a proactive one, enabling students, academic and professional services staff to work together in partnership to enhance students' academic, personal and professional development.

Recognising the range of perspectives and areas of expertise that would be needed to achieve this, we created a cross-university steering group tasked with collaborating to improve the tutoring system for the benefit of all students. The membership of the steering group reflected our collaborative and consultative approach to both the design and delivery of the ATS, bringing together students (past and current RUSU officers), professional services staff (including the Head of the newly established Student Welfare Team) and academic staff (including Chairs of the Directors of Academic Tutoring Community of Practice) to work in partnership. All members of the team are named here as we strongly believe our commitment to working collaboratively was key to the creation, introduction (2018/19), and success of the ATS (2017-2020).

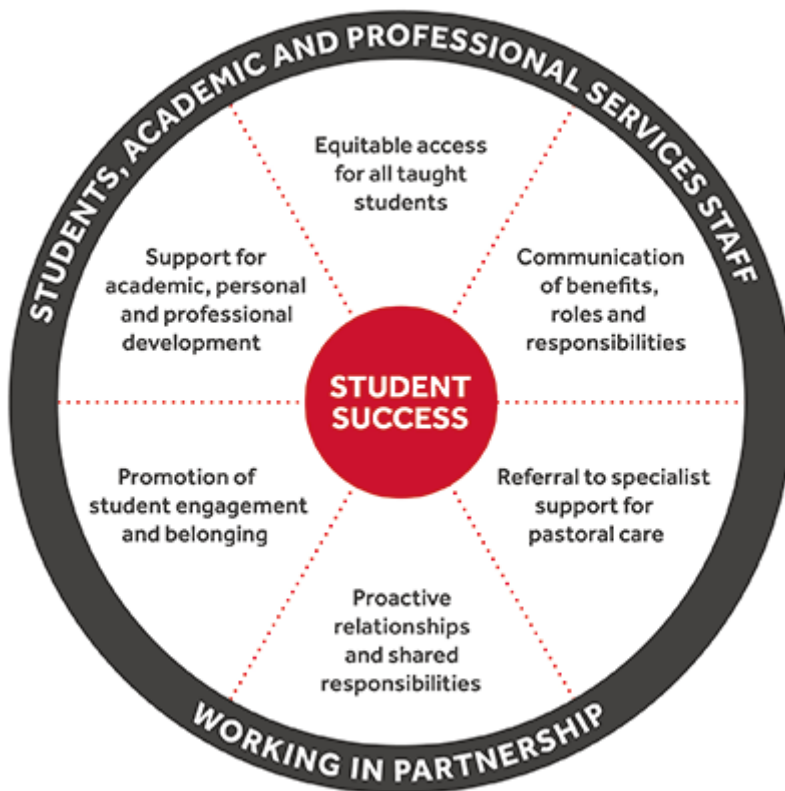
237 words

Outline how the team works collaboratively, including how students have been directly involved with the team, and the advantages of this (i.e. what has been achieved beyond that which could have been done by a group of individuals);

Central to our approach throughout the project was the wide consultation with students and staff. At the outset, we worked with academic staff and RUSU course representatives to explore their experiences of tutoring. Using this feedback as well as undertaking ongoing consultation with students, academic and professional services staff, we identified several issues, including inconsistency in delivery and experience for staff and students and a lack of engagement with the system. We combined these findings with extensive research into tutoring practices across the sector to propose a new Academic Tutor System (ATS) to provide a consistent experience for staff and students across the University and to address the issues raised in the feedback.

Our collaborative, consultative approach with widespread student and staff support meant that we secured funding to make the ATS a reality. To embed fundamental changes in practice and culture across the institution we needed not only top-down support but buy-in from staff; as student, academic and professional services staff representatives, we were able to engage widely. By drawing upon their diverse expertise, team members led workstreams focusing on student engagement, student welfare, staff engagement and institutional change.

We created the ATS wheel of success which visually depicts the 6 principles underpinning our approach to tutoring, but also highlights the partnership approach that epitomised our project and the nature of the academic tutor/tutee relationship.



227 words

Provide evidence of the impact of the collaborative work, specifically how it has enhanced the student learning experience, and how this impact has been/will be evaluated;

The impact of the ATS project is felt across the whole University, both in terms of structural and culture change.

- We developed the role of Academic Tutor (AT), allowing academic staff to focus on supporting students' academic, personal and professional development.
- The role of School Director of Academic Tutoring (SDAT) is now recognised as an essential leadership role, and an FTE has been agreed.
- We have invested in our student welfare provision through the introduction of a new dedicated Welfare Team.
- We have developed bespoke training and guidance for SDATs and ATs, to support them to fulfil their roles and signpost students effectively.
- We have developed a Student Toolkit to support proactive engagement with ATs, maximising the valuable development opportunities that Academic Tutors can provide, which covers the student journey from foundation to postgraduate level.
- We have developed a framework articulating the roles and responsibilities of different support services to signpost the range of support available to students.



The measurable impact of the ATS can be seen in increased student satisfaction within both the National Student Survey(NSS) and UK Engagement Survey(UKES):

NSS Questions				
Year of Survey	2018	2019	2020	2018-2020 Change
Q12 I have been able to contact staff when I needed to	85.1%	86.7%	86.2%	+1.1
Q13 I have received sufficient advice and guidance in relation to my course	72.5%	74.9%	76.1%	+3.6
Q14 Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course	67.6%	69.2%	71.4%	+3.8

UKES Institution-specific Questions	Percentage of respondents agreeing			2018-20 Change
	2018	2019	2020	
I can talk to my Academic Tutor about academic issues such as grades, coursework and examinations	74.1%	76.6%	81.4%	+7.3
My Academic Tutor showed interest and provides support in my academic development and progression through university	60%	65.9%	72%	+12
My Academic Tutor signposts me to appropriate support services across the University	53.1%	59.0%	68.0%	+14.9
Overall I have had a positive experience with my Academic Tutor	66.7%	70.6%	78.0%	+11.3

Our students are now better informed about what to expect from their Academic Tutor and both are better equipped to identify and source support appropriate to their needs from across the University. We continue to work with students to test out toolkit materials and promote the partnership approach of the ATS: [An introduction to... Your academic tutor](#)



This positive impact is further bolstered by the positive feedback from our students and staff.
259 words

RUSU Education Officer 2018-19, who said:

“The new Academic Tutoring System has been a great step forward for the student experience at the University. This change helps to ensure that students receive a high standard of academic and professional guidance, as well as guidance on personal matters from the new Welfare Team. The feedback I’ve had this year from students is overwhelmingly encouraging, especially in regards to the improvement of academic tutors’ ability and confidence to signpost correctly. There has been a huge positive impact on the student experience because of this”

Staff feel more valued, and the positive impact of our new welfare team is felt by all who work with them.

Calvin Smith - SDAT

“The way I like to think about this is, if you have ever played Mario we used to be the little Mario [as Personal Tutors] and now we have had the ‘power up’ to become big Mario’s as Academic Tutors. What this has meant is that our responsibilities, which used to be this mishmash of pastoral care, academic guidance, professional development has now moved much more towards the skills that are actually aligned with job that we are employed to do, so it is much more aligned to this academic focus. That doesn’t mean that we have stop caring about our students, far from it, the University has invested an enormous amount in a Welfare Team to pick up that job that was previously being done by Personal Tutors. [And] If nothing else, I would just like to put on record how lovely, amazing and supportive the Welfare Team have been for supporting students in our School, so ‘Go team!’.”

Amanda Millmore - SDAT

“The role of the (S)DAT is empowering and is increasingly being recognised at both school and institutional level, with our expertise and experience in supporting students being valued within School management structures and as part of wider university projects; the response to the Covid pandemic being an example of where we have been able to influence the university’s approach to supporting students.”

Identify how the outcomes and impact of the work have been/will be disseminated:

- The ATS forms a key part of our Teaching and Learning Strategy- in *offering an outstanding student learning experience*.
- Our student and staff team members have co-presented aspects of the ATS at a number of external conferences including SEDA, AdvanceHE, QAA and UKAT.
- Our case study on the ATS was accepted for 'The Higher Education Personal Tutor's and Advisor's Companion' due to be published in 2021.
- We have hosted visits from Kings College London, Edinburgh, Bath and Lancaster and been approached by Sunderland to share best practice on our successful collaborative approach; it's not merely the creation of the ATS that is of interest, but the way we created it together that has been recognised and acknowledged.

Working on the ATS has been a fantastic and at times challenging experience for us all. As a team we are immensely proud of what we have achieved as a student and staff collaboration, and are excited about how we can keep evolving the ATS to continue supporting our staff and the academic, personal and professional development of our students.

177 Words

Head of School / Service (Please answer all questions and delete as applicable)

Is your Head of School/Service aware of this application?	Yes (Julian Park)
Is your Head of School/Service supportive of this application?	Yes