Cannington

ACTIVITY: The Tutorial and Monitoring System

CONTEXT
Country: UK
Institution (type):   Land-based colleges
Students concerned in this activity (number, % of group):
All students
Age: 16+
Course, training, options: All courses
Level (European):   1-3

AIMS
To support students' progress and achievement on their learning programmes, to give pastoral support, to maintain communication between staff and students.

OBJECTIVES
Expected results; concrete products; expected benefits for the student(s):
Tutorial sessions (individual and group). A record of these is kept by the tutor, by the student and filed in the Student File. The Tutor Manual/Handbook provides tutors with guidance on the tutorial role and the whole process, including actions to be taken at certain times (eg Termly Review).

PROCESS
1) Setting up, preparation
What; for whom; why; who takes the initiative?
How (tools, techniques, procedures):
Resources:
Who participates?
A tutor is allocated to each group; contact is made on the student's first day at college, as the tutor is fully involved in the Induction process. In addition to group tutorials, timetabled appointments are made for individual tutorials and discussions of the student's progress, plus any actions arising, is recorded on the Tutorial Review and Action Plan ('TRAP' form).
Tutor liaises with other support staff as and when necessary (ie with Learning Support staff), and reports back to the rest of the teaching team at the regular course team meetings.
Group tutorials provide an opportunity for the whole group to raise/discuss issues with the tutor and for the tutor to cover specific topics with the group (ie study skills, careers advice, work placement, etc).

2) Sequence
Each person's role; when; at what time of the year; is it during or outside timetabled (class) time:
1. Tutor meets and greets new students, introduces self, and is fully involved in the Induction timetable.
2. In addition to the regular group tutorials, a meeting is set up with each student individually. These individual meetings are held regularly.
The student is also free to seek out his/her tutor for advice/guidance at any time, or to make an appointment as necessary. This may be formal or informal.

How long does the activity last?
The average time spent on tutorials varies between approximately 20 minutes (individual), according to need, to one hour (group). Tutorials continue throughout a student's course.

RESULTS OBTAINED
(Products achieved)
Were the stated objectives achieved? Yes/No
Yes. There is an expectation on all sides that the student's progress will be monitored regularly – ideally there should be no surprises (eg it should not be possible for a student to fail for a long time before this is noticed by the tutor, who will intervene to try to assist).
A good rapport is (usually) built up between the student and personal tutor, which provides the student with on-going support.

Has the activity had an impact on interpersonal relations (between teachers/students, between students, between teachers, etc)?
The system builds a relationship of trust between the student and the tutor. It also encourages and facilitates good communication between staff; ie between the personal tutor and the vocational staff, and support staff.

Has the activity had an impact on the student's plans; personal, academic, professional?
Yes, an important one. The activity allows the student to build valuable self-evaluation skills. By considering his / her own progress, expectations, monitoring own achievement and making realistic career plans (with tutorial assistance); students develop in maturity and self-understanding. Communication skills are also enhanced through this activity.

EVALUATION METHOD
1.   How is the activity evaluated; by whom?
The system is monitored and evaluated in a variety of ways: through the Termly Course Reviews, which give the students the opportunity to comment and suggest improvements, and the ensuing Focus Group Discussions.
Tutorials are also monitored through the college's internal academic Quality Assurance system. Student tutorials are observed, both 'internally', for self-assessment (internal college procedures), and by 'outside' inspectors.
The Retention and Achievement of students is considered alongside the tutorial system, in an effort to judge if the tutorial system is effective.
2.   How is student progress evaluated?
Through student achievement on their course and in personal development.

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED
What difficulties (if any)?
Time is generally limited; resources to increase the level (frequency) of tutorials for those in need of more regular monitoring and support would be welcome.
How were these overcome?
This may be overcome using additional funding for students who need extra support.

MINIMUM CONDITIONS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO DEVELOP THIS TYPE OF ACTIVITY IN AN INSTITUION
Conditions relating to time, place, resources, legal regulations etc:
The recognition that the Tutoring and Monitoring role has great value and that it is the right of all students to have access to a personal tutor. It must be a recognised and important role for teachers, with the necessary funding provided to support it in terms of time available and resources.

ANALYSIS AND BENEFITS FOR THE STUDENT
- The students share a tutor and have group tutorials together (common experience).
- The tutor is often a vocational specialist and therefore can advise on subject-related issues.
- The activity contributes to the student's academic results though good communications, the student's developing self-awareness (as a result of the activity), the student's awareness of the expectations of the industry, and the monitoring of the student's progress.
- The benefits to the student are great; the students are consistently satisfied (evidence: Course Termly Reviews) with the activity.

- Tutors discuss student progress (in various forums), using the information from the tutorial process, and so are also aware of the benefits.
- The process makes the students more self-aware, they feel supported; it keeps them on track.
- The Staff get to know the students better as a result of the activity; this helps them to assess the level of their commitment, motivation and responsiveness to support.

LINKS WITH OTHER SUPPORT PRACTICES
- Link to the Learning Support activities (tutor communicates directly with LS), and other student services.
- Link to parents (ie Student Progress Meeting, which uses the information gained through the tutorial/monitoring process)
- Links to overall vocational course and progress.

THE EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SUPPORT PRACTICE
Guidance
Support
Monitoring

CONCLUSION, SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS