Embedding Mental Wellbeing: Methods and Benefits
Collaborative Enhancement Project 2021

Supporting wellbeing in large cohorts – effectively using data to personalise tutor-tutee relationships

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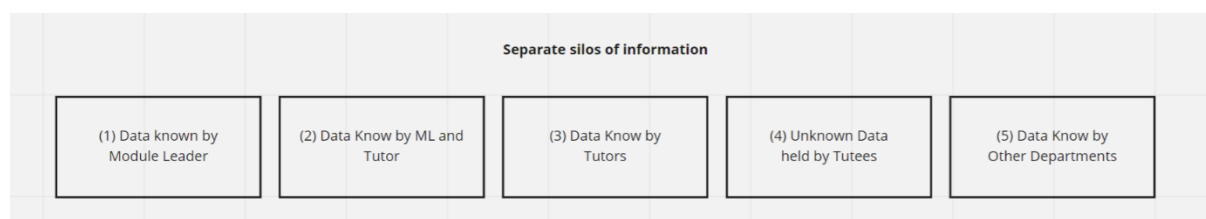**Ron Gibson, University of Greenwich**

Rationale

Increase the tailored support for effective wellbeing via personal/placement tutors. This submission will discuss the mechanism for collecting and assessing wellbeing and how that is fed forward to personal/placement tutors to utilise during personal tutee meetings.

Method

Through an online student survey, linked to a shared online document fed with a range of student information, tutors can utilise the range of data to tailor meetings in style, activity and purpose.

While it is common to have personal tutors attached to tutees, and even to have a tutee management system to log meetings and support provided, it is uncommon to have all necessary information linked into one space. Typically, information is spread across multiple disconnected, and in some cases inaccessible, systems leaving tutors to contact students blindly and impersonally. With technology readily available, a module leader can quickly put together a shared spreadsheet with remarkably high value to personal tutors and is adjustable to their needs with little to no staff training necessary. This makes data accessible immediately for a cohort, tutor groups and at individual student line-level.

The first step is to group tutors and tutees, followed by sourcing who carries what information. Then pulling in all pertinent information from disconnected 'siloed' systems - grades, attendance, engagement, retention, tutors, internship/employability departments. All information used is available to personal tutors and module leaders through university systems; however, this process makes it all visible in one place. This drastically reduces time needed to examine any single student across multiple siloed systems. It is essential that information is handled according to institutional best practice for data management. Pulling in the hard figures from those systems provides a rolling snapshot for tutors to utilise. Adding in the ability for tutor notes, meeting times and red-flag moments assists the module leader in cohort reviewing.

Separate silos of information

| (1) Data known by Module Leader | (2) Data Know by ML and Tutor | (3) Data Know by Tutors | (4) Unknown Data held by Tutees | (5) Data Know by Other Departments |

A pilot system is needed to work out any unforeseen issues such as information timing, and utility of information for the use of the shared document.

Monthly, the module leader can highlight non-engagement to tutors, and to other departments to check in on students who are non-engaged.

The addition of a mandatory periodic student survey with responses added to the personal tutor shared document enables individualised communication even for the least engaged students. This adds information previously unattainable, enabling identification of students struggling with emotional wellbeing who may have lacked tutor engagement. This can also enable tutee handover from tutor to tutor in case of illness, holiday, or staff turnover.

Assessing emotional wellbeing is a complex activity and we suggest using resources including Mental Health First Aid (https://mhfaengland.org, www.mind.org.uk, www.samh.org.uk) to devise a set of questions appropriate for your student cohort. Additionally, we recommend personal/placement tutors are trained as Mental Health First Aiders.

Questions such as how to contact, what is sought in tutee meetings, and emotional wellbeing aids the tutors in how to approach, where to direct, and provides the module leader with a full overview of the student cohort, and how that cohort may change over time.
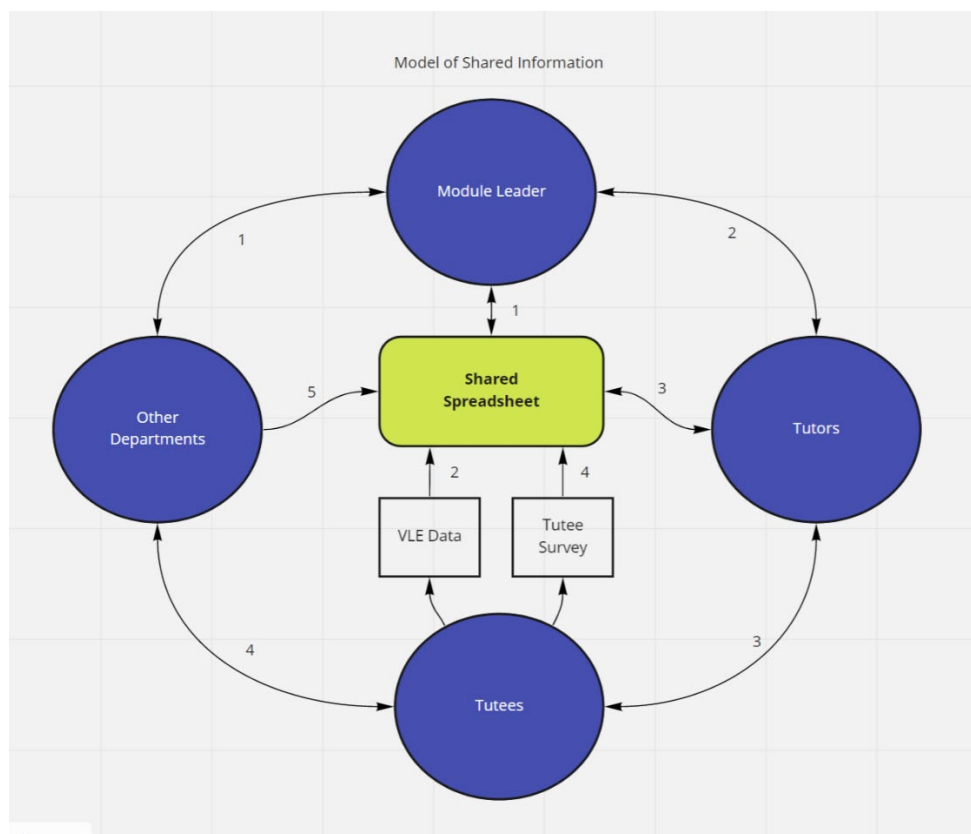
In the model of shared information above, data is provided from multiple sources, but is only accessible by the module leader and the personal/placement tutors. The data itself remains behind the university data firewall. Through use of the University OneDrive, access, changes, and data retention can be tracked.

As the shared document contains large volumes of data, it is important to keep the spreadsheet manageable. In the case of our spreadsheet - covering over 300 students per cohort over the course of 12 months - the spreadsheet could contain up to 200 columns of

student information. Therefore, it would be wise when implementing this to ensure that the module leader is confident using Excel.

Evaluation

The activity was evaluated through secondary survey and module leader/personal tutor meetings. Further smaller surveys allow personal tutors and the module leader to see how the engagement with personal tutors is changing, and how tutees utilise the system, or need further encouragement.

While the information is available, it can be difficult to add a new process and receive staff buy-in. Key to the success of the pilot was a commitment by the module leader to maintain the data and to use it to support personal tutors and tutees. The volume of data acquired means that effective filtering is essential so that tutors only see the most relevant parts. Whereas the complexity in the background provides clarity for the tutor and tutee.

Tutees may also not see the benefit of providing information on wellbeing and may be reluctant. If stated as a mandatory survey, those who do not complete can be followed up with their personal tutor, thereby individualising the connection, and encouraging future survey response.

Take-away message

This is an additional process undertaken by a module leader and, as such, could be seen as 'yet more work.' However, while the activity and process are not revolutionary, the time invested in this approach saves the module leaders', personal tutors' and tutees' time overall. By focusing on the practical use of the information gathered, students and tutors are supported more effectively, and better emotional wellbeing support is delivered.

This document was produced as part of the [Collaborative Enhancement Project - Embedding Mental Wellbeing](#).