PPLS Skills Centre Manual v7.1a

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Changes in v7.1a — Redacted some text, e-mails, and links for public posting

Changes in v7.1 — Minor updates

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Overview

The PPLS Skills Centre (PPLSSC) was established in 2016 to help students improve as writers. Students book writing appointments with writing tutors through our student-facing site. These writing appointments are delivered in two ways: in-person in one of our official rooms in [location], or online via Microsoft Teams. In either case, the tutor will let the student know what the essay is like for a first-time reader and help the student decide what to focus on next. The tutor then writes a report to summarise what happened.

Before the appointment

Section A: Technology and sites to support your work

1) You should use one of your **university-provided accounts** for all tutoring work.
   a) **Microsoft 365** is supported and vetted for data protection. External calendars should not be used.
   b) All student tutors have two accounts. It's important to **monitor both student and staff accounts** and make it easy for others to see which one you primarily use. See "Working with two accounts" under "Technology" at [link] for tips on setting up browser profiles, desktop/mobile applications, etc.
2) Our (student-facing) **site** is at [link] redirects to our site), and it contains four sections. Please familiarise yourself with the contents of these sections.
   a) **Writing**: Appointment booking, writing guidance, and examples of student work
   b) **Learning**: Study recommendations and guides for using software and the library
   c) **Research**: Data collection & analysis, corpora, etc.
   d) **Classroom**: How to teach and how to take part in tutorials
3) Our **tutor hub** is at [link], and it contains the links you will need to do your job. It is not for our students.
   a) **Forms**: You can submit session reports, adjust your schedule, book rooms, and provide feedback.
   b) **Reference**: You can also access this tutor manual, discover room codes, and return to training.
4) Internal communication and scheduling happen through **Outlook**.
   a) Use **Outlook Groups** ("PPLS Skills Centre - Tutors") to stay up to date with announcements from the centre. You are welcome to reply-all to any messages. You will receive a notification when you have been added.
   b) Your **calendar** will be used to organise sessions. [dat tip link]
   c) Consider changing your settings to **prevent auto-deleting calendar invitations** – by default these automatically vanish when you click "Accept", which can be confusing. Contact me if you need help with this.
   d) Use the **Address Book** in Outlook to look up student numbers if necessary. Teams also works well for this.
   e) Set up **templates** to make communicating with students easier (see Appendix A)

f) If you want to learn how to use the calendar more effectively, try watching the LinkedIn Learning course "Outlook: Time Management with Calendar and Tasks" by Gini von Courter.
5) Online appointments happen through **Teams**
   a) Online appointments will be placed on your calendar with links and appointment details.
   b) These appointments are updated when details change (date, time, tutor, etc.). Changes sometimes mean the link changes, so do not rely on e-mail links if the appointment has been reassigned from another tutor.
6) Establish an **Internet presence** for yourself so that students can look you up.
   a) At a minimum, your **Edinburgh staff profile** should be updated with your research interests.
      i) You can find yours at https://edwebprofiles.ed.ac.uk/profile/FIRSTNAME-LASTNAME (it's probably easiest to search for "site:ed.ac.uk FIRSTNAME LASTNAME" on Google).
      ii) To learn how to edit it, consult the guide here: https://www.wiki.ed.ac.uk/display/edweb/Editing+your+profile. Basically, click "CMS login >" and then "New draft". The more information you provide, the better:
         (1) **Biography**: Biography, Qualifications
         (2) **Research**: Summary of research interests
         (3) **Teaching & PhD supervision**: Undergraduate teaching responsibility, Postgraduate teaching responsibility
         (4) **PhD details**: Thesis title
      iii) If you have a personal site, you can link to it under "Contact details" -> "Extra details" -> "Type: Web" (provide "URL" and "Link text").
      iv) Don't forget to click "Publish" when you're done.
   b) Ideally, you should also maintain an **academic website**. There are many services.
   c) For more information on both profiles and academic websites, please see [link]

Section B: Joining the centre and engaging with training

1) Every year there is a process for registering as a writing tutor:
   a) Applicants must be **current PhD students** and have **experience marking work within PPLS**. We mainly hire from the PPLS PhD student pool, with some candidates taken from neighbouring disciplines (e.g., Informatics). All interested applicants must apply through the annual PPLS tutor hiring procedure, which contains a section for writing tutors.
   b) All tutors who have been selected undergo an **onboarding** procedure at the beginning of the academic year. Until this onboarding procedure is complete, tutors will not be placed on the rosters, even if they have many years of experience.
      i) Complete the "Welcome (back)" form to update about your status and requirements for the upcoming academic year.
      ii) Complete the "Change your schedule" form to provide an initial Tutor Schedule (see section C)
      iii) Complete any training that has been passed along to you
         (1) First-time tutors must complete the induction and a shadowing session.
         (2) Returning tutors may be asked to update their training; this changes from year to year.
2) Training is important for both new and returning tutors (links are sent by e-mail at the appropriate time and are archived in the Tutor Hub for later reference)

a) The new-tutor **Induction** is a multi-part combination of videos and exercises. New tutors are led through an overview of the centre followed by guidance on appointment delivery and technical aspects. There is overlap with this manual, but the induction goes into greater depth about some topics while leaving other aspects out completely.

b) All novice tutors have a chance to observe a real appointment in the field. This is called a **Shadowing** and is an essential part of training. Novice tutors reflect on this via a form.

c) At some point in their first year, all novice tutors will normally be asked to host an **Observation** session in which a senior tutor watches. Both tutors are asked to complete a reflection form at the end of this. It's important to note that this observation is developmental, not evaluative. That is, we're not trying to grade you as a tutor, but rather help you identify aspects of your tutoring that you might want to pay particular attention to.

d) Ongoing training is provided through collaborative **Reflections** and **e-mailed advice**
   i) Reflections involve pairing up experienced tutors. You will sit in on each other's appointments and afterwards reflect on any differences you noticed. This is meant to spur discussion so that we can form a true community of practice. You will be told when Reflections are available and invited to participate.
   ii) E-mailed advice is sent out in several ways: group messages that go out to everyone, and individual messages in response to reports, feedback, and tutor requests.

e) You are both welcome and encouraged to request a meeting at any time. Write [link].

Section C: The booking process

1) There are several layers to the scheduling process:
   a) The **(Centre) Hours** set firm limits on when appointments can be held.
      i) Online hours are 9:00 – 19:00, 7 days a week.
      ii) In-person hours are 10:00 – 16:00, 5 days a week.
      iii) If these change, an announcement will be made.
   b) Your **(Tutor) Schedule** allows you to semi-permanently select a subset of the Hours
      i) You can set this through the Tutor Hub at any time, and are required to do so at the start of each academic year.
      ii) You cannot adjust online and in-person hours independently.
   c) Your **Availability** is set through appointments on your Outlook calendar.
      i) Even if your Schedule is wide open, the system will not allow students to book you when you are already busy; **it will check your calendar first**.
      ii) The best way to **control your Availability** is for you to use your calendar for everything (tutorials, research, meetings, time/days off). These appointments will block all requests. For instance, if you don't want to work Fri-Sun, create recurring "Out of Office" appointments spanning those days.
      iii) One note of caution: All Outlook appointments are set to display as "Free", "Tentative", "Busy", or "Out of Office". Only the latter two will block appointments. Normal appointments are "Busy" by default, but all-day appointments are "Free" by default. Make sure to change all-day appointments to "Busy" if you want appointments to be blocked.
   d) **Blocks** can be put in to lock down certain days. You can request these if you're going to be busy for an extended period. I may put a block in if I've noticed that you're already overworked with too many sessions per day/week/month/year. I may do the same if I notice that you're out of contact and may be ill or otherwise unavailable. Contact me if you want any of these blocks removed.

2) If you're not sure when students can book appointments, you can check on your own.
   a) Do this by visiting our booking page, selecting the relevant service (Phil/Psych/Ling) and your name, and then viewing the calendar options that remain.
   b) The portal requires **advance notice (usually 48 hours)**. Students may write you to try to get around this limitation, but please do not agree to take them on. If we made an exception, students would end up writing the tutors directly in every case. This is absolutely firm.
   c) Tutors are expected to make **at least 6 hours available per week** (provided, of course, that you are well and that there are no personal emergencies).
3) When a student books you, automatic **notifications** will arrive with information about the session (subject, student name, notes, etc.).
   a) It's particularly important to note the **course code** and the **area to concentrate on**.
   b) Check the course code to see if you will possibly be **grading** the student. If so, please let me know.
   c) Note whether the work has been marked already. **Postmortem** sessions are for helping the student interpret feedback.
      i) Ask the student to bring both the feedback and the grade
      ii) Postmortems are sometimes more straightforward because the outcome of the essay is already clear and you don't need to be as cautious about guiding the student or commenting on content errors, but please make sure not to second-guess the grade.
      iii) Your job is to help the student turn commentary into an action plan for future essays. If asked for your opinion on the comments, remember that it's hard for you to say anything because you weren't part of the class and so you don't know the context.
4) Sometimes appointments don't work out as planned and need to be **changed**
   a) If the **date and time still work** but either the tutor or the student cannot make an in-person appointment, the session can be held **online instead**. This conversion can happen at any point up until the session is held as long as the date and time do not change; just let me know. This can be done at your own discretion.
   b) Sometimes the **tutor** cannot make the appointment as scheduled.
      i) If this happens, please **write me as soon as possible** so that the student can be rebooked with a substitute teacher or shifted to another date/time. Make sure to update your availability immediately.
      ii) Clicking "Decline" on the invitation is like ripping up a parking ticket in order to cancel it; it doesn't accomplish anything except for hiding the problem.
      iii) **Never renegotiate a date or time directly with the student**, even if you are the driver behind the change. Date/time changes create downstream issues with room availability and fairness, plus they also place undue pressure on students who might have required a time for a reason.
   c) More frequently, the **student** cannot make the appointment as scheduled.
      i) Students can **modify or cancel** appointments until **48 hours before** the appointment.
         (1) These changes will appear as standard Outlook calendar notifications and do not require centre approval.
      ii) Students can also request **emergency cancellations** after that point through a link they receive with their booking.
         (1) You will receive this request as an immediate e-mail.
         (2) If the request is stamped with a time before 20:00 on the day before, the appointment is off and you should **not claim**.
         (3) If the request is stamped with a time at or after 20:00 on the day before (or does not show up), **claim** for the appointment (late notification).
      iii) **Never change** the date or time at the student's direct request. If a student ever contacts you seeking to change or cancel the appointment, redirect them to the instructions

given with their booking notification. The modification/cancellation policy is also posted on our site here: [link]

d) tl;dr

    i) Someone can't get to an in-person session? Hold the session online instead.

    ii) Tutor requesting a change? Write to me, not to the student.

    iii) Student requesting a change? Direct them to our cancellation/modification policy.

5) At this point, you are responsible for **arranging the details** of the appointment.

a) Have an introductory e-mail ready (again, see appendix). Sending this out at least 48 hours in advance can help avoid communication issues.

b) Online session? You should use the link in the invitation for Teams, but remember to be ready to call the student on Teams using their student ID if nobody shows up.

c) In-person session? **Book a room** using the Tutor Hub and **notify the student** of the location. We have a page with directions to our rooms with videos: [link]

    i) Do **not** forward any room booking links to the student.

    ii) Do **not** share any door codes with the student.

6) I will periodically scan for students who do not follow the centre's rules. It's not your responsibility to do so as well, but I'd appreciate you flagging up anything you happen to notice.

a) I will remove appointments from students who book **without using their student e-mail address beginning with their student number**.

b) I will remove appointments from students who book **more than 1 appointment per day** or **more than 3 appointments per semester**.

7) If a student ever asks about an appointment being cancelled, you can refer them to this page: [link]. You should also familiarise yourself with this page.

During the appointment

Section D: Academic writing

This manual doesn't cover the topic of academic writing itself. We do have some guidance that you should use:

1) Courses at PPLS take a wide range of approaches.

a) If we allow generalisations, Philosophy essays focus on the quality of the argument itself, Psychology essays are about empirical rigour, and Linguistics essays take a variety of approaches centred on the examination of concrete examples of language.

b) We've explored how they are similar and where they differ at this page: [link]

2) There are five fundamental skills that students can choose to focus on in your sessions.

a) These skills are: demonstrating **understanding** of the material, establishing and supporting claims through **reasoning**, critically **evaluating** other research, **writing** clearly and effectively (grammar and style), and **referencing** appropriately (mechanics)

b) A more thorough account of what these skills mean is outlined here: [link]. Make sure to click through to the explanations of how to write, for example, introductions.

3) Please take the time to familiarise yourself thoroughly with both of these collections so that the advice you give is in line with our policy. For instance, the passive voice is used anywhere from 1/4 to 1/3 of the time in a lot of academic writing… it's not something to be eliminated! In fact, I used it twice in that last sentence.

4) The best external place to look for guidance on how to write well is **Booth et al.'s The Craft of Research**. There's an e-book available through DiscoverEd (see the link in "Writing" -> "Resources" on our site). Refer to it frequently; it will help you in your tutoring and in your own research.

Section E: Principles and guidelines

The PPLSSC has general principles that are embodied in soft and hard guidelines. The soft guidelines are intended to provide support and direction, but can be changed at your discretion to suit the situation. The hard guidelines must be followed for a variety of reasons (financial, ethical, etc.).

Principles

1. **Indirect instruction**, but a **direct personal connection**
   a. Rather than telling students what to do, you'll be guiding them towards their own decisions.
   b. But that doesn't mean that you'll stay at an arm's length from them. Instead, be kind and straightforward; a significant part of what we do is pastoral.
2. **Narrow and deep**, not wide and shallow
   a. Trying to cover too much means that you overwhelm students without really getting to the heart of the issue.
   b. Doing one thing thoroughly is the best use of everyone's time.
3. **The student does all the work**.
   a. You're there as a coach, not a pinch hitter. It's the student's essay, not yours.
4. **The student should be the topic expert**
   a. Your job is to evaluate how well they communicate that expertise, not to provide your own expertise.
5. **Use sandwiching** (i.e., something before and something after)
   a. Sandwich criticism with praise and/or encouragement
   b. Sandwich the appointment itself with action plans

Soft guidelines

1) **Set a timer** at the beginning to avoid running over.
2) **Be chatty**. Talk informally for a few minutes before starting. It will improve the actual work you do.
3) **Establish a plan**
   a) Is it the student's first session? Explain what the writing appointments we offer are about (argumentation, flow, etc., not grammar or content). Emphasise that this approach gives the best results. But don't do this if the student has attended before, as that would be a waste of time.
   b) Is it the student's first session **with you**? Introduce yourself and your background. Students will appreciate some context so they know how you're approaching the paper.
   c) Ask the student how it's going with the paper and what they'd like out of the session.
   d) You can sketch out a brief schedule of things to cover and agree on it with the student.
   e) Ask about the prompt, and where the student currently is in the writing process (due date? # of drafts? how much revision? has there been any other advice? how useful was it?)

f) Check carefully to see how the student understood the prompt. Again, always use questions ("So what would you say is required in an essay that asks you to "evaluate" a hypothesis?")

g) If your student is a little reticent, give them space to think while maintaining an encouraging attitude. You might want to ask them which part they are least confident in, or what the last thing they did was.

h) Once you have established a plan, it's your job to carry it out by steering the discussion.

4) Next, the relevant section of the paper will have to be **presented orally**.

a) By default, the student will do this, but you can fill the role if you think that will work better or the student expresses reluctance. Both approaches have strengths:

i) If the student reads, you have a better chance to take notes and plan out your approach.

ii) If you read, the student gets to hear how their words sound in someone else's voice.

b) The person who is listening should take notes about things to discuss.

c) As you go through, you should both put marks in the paper to indicate sections you want to come back to. It's up to you about how frequently to interrupt the reading:

i) Stopping too often can harm student confidence or lead to getting bogged down in confusing details. And sometimes you stop only to find out that whatever you wanted to address is actually explained in the next paragraph.

ii) Stopping too infrequently makes it harder to go back and get to work: you end up needing to refresh your memory of the introduction and your impressions of it. It can also lead to spending too much time reading and not enough time discussing.

d) Reading out loud has several advantages:

i) it places the section in question "on the table" without any time devoted to awkward silent reading

ii) it forces the student to listen to the way the writing sounds (many people read their writing aloud to themselves so that they can catch things that aren't as obvious when silently reading), and

iii) having one person diligently listen to another person reading can highlight the importance of communication, which students often ignore.

5) **Ask the student for comments** directly after the paper is read out loud.

a) "What do you think my comments will be?" "Did you notice anything new this time through your paper?" "Now that you've heard it again, what do you want to fix?"

b) It will be a rare student who feels completely confident at this point.

6) **Find something to praise**, but don't be fake.

a) There is usually something positive to say about every paper.

b) Positive feedback is important, too. The student might not be aware of which parts are successful.

c) Remember, too much criticism can cause anxiety. You can use praise to sandwich criticism that is hard to hear: negative comments lose some of their sting if they're preceded and followed by more positive ones.

7) **See if the student has communicated effectively**:

a) "This is what I understood your essay to be about [. . .] Is that a good summary or did I miss anything?"

b) If the student says it was inadequate, shift responsibility back to the student. Why does the essay create the wrong impression?

8) **Tackle larger general issues first**. If you start with the details, the student will get attached to those newly polished sentences instead of feeling free to hack away at organisational issues. And sentences have a way of tidying themselves up when more general issues are treated first.

a) Key issues: Does the essay match up with the prompt? Is the thesis clearly stated? Do the main arguments clearly support the thesis, and are they in turn supported with evidence and reason? Does the essay demonstrate adequate critical thought?

9) A few **key problems** come up repeatedly. It's nearly impossible to suggest fixes for everything that might arise, but you should get familiar with the topics posted on the site and also with the central books in the PPLSSC library. Here's a very partial list of issues that we often encounter:
   a) awkward nominalisation-heavy language
   b) abstraction instead of concrete images
   c) not explicitly tying paragraphs to the thesis
   d) inadequate motivation at the start of paragraphs (topic sentences)
   e) the paper being a record of the research or thought process instead of an attempt at communication (acknowledgement of reader)
   f) a patchwork of sources without supporting commentary
   g) inadequate documentation of sources
   h) visual communication issues (graphs, tables)
   i) information packaging issues (violations of old before new, light before heavy)
   j) attributing too much or too little knowledge to the reader
   k) ineffective introduction/conclusion
   l) presentation of statistics

10) **If there's a problematic section**:
   a) Ask the student **questions**:
      i) "What led you to put this section here?"
      ii) "Is there a connection to the previous paragraph that I'm not seeing?"
      iii) "How does this support your thesis?"
      iv) "What do you want your reader to be thinking about at this point? What do you think I was thinking about?"
      v) "Would all of your readers consider your argument fair to all sides? What objections might someone raise?"
      vi) "This paragraph has a variety of ideas. Do they all stem from the sources you quoted, or are some your own original contributions?"
      vii) "You've got a lot of sources here... to what extent are they in agreement? Are there any points of contention? What's the overall message you want to get across by listing them?"
      viii) "I think I know what you're saying here, but I had to read the sentence a few times to be sure. Is there an easier way to put it?"
   b) Ask the student to **propose a solution** at least some of the time. It can help to see what their thoughts are first.
   c) Make **suggestions** based on the student's comments
      i) "You need to make that explicit here to help your readers see the connection."
      ii) "I think that what you've just said would be an interesting addition... it would help you to engage with the sources more deeply."
      iii) "You should try to be more explicit when you're contributing something original. I thought this bit here was something from one of your sources."
      iv) "I understand the urge to cover everything, but it might be good to narrow your focus a little so you can engage with your sources more effectively."
   d) Consider having the student spend 5-10 minutes rewriting that section if you feel it's necessary.

11) Pay attention to your own **body language**. Don't look out the window or check the time too often. Make sure the student knows you are interested in what they have to say.

12) At the end of your session**,** take 5 minutes to **have the student articulate what they are going to do next**.
    a) If you carefully monitor their response here, you can also get a good idea of how much they took away from your session.
    b) If you think it would help, **invite them to book another lesson** so that you can follow up.

Hard guidelines

1) **Do not provide assistance with content**. This is partially in place to help you: you're not expected to be an expert in the subject area and so should not spend any amount of time getting familiar with the subject area. That would be a drain on your time. But the primary reason for this is that the essay work has been assigned to the student, not you.   It's natural to want to break this rule when you are an expert in the topic, but you must fight the urge. It's not fair to the other students and undermines the whole process of evaluation.

2) **Do not turn the appointment into a proofreading session**. It's okay to give out grammar advice if it's in the service of clarity, but the student should not leave with a marked-up paper.

3) **Do not guess at the mark that a paper should receive**. This does not serve a purpose and can only do harm. On a similar note, do not judge marks or comments if you're looking through work that has already been graded (postmortem). And never compare a student's essay to others you've seen. Instead, stick to:
    a) Bounded, specific praise ("I think you've treated some really interesting ideas here.")
    b) Tutor limitations ("I don't tutor on this course, so I can't really comment.")

4) **Treat the student as an equal.** Students can feel very exposed when they come to us for help. Talk to the student in a collegial way. Try not to say things that might make students question their own competence.

5) You may have **concerns** about a personal problem disclosed to you in a session. It is extremely important that you refer the student on appropriately. In most cases, you can simply **direct** the student toward support, but if you have more serious concerns, you can **make contact yourself**.
    a) **Pastoral** issues are handled by the Student Support Officers (SSOs) for undergraduate [link] and postgraduate [link] students.
        i) Remember that you haven't been trained to deal with these situations and missteps can have awful consequences, so forward everything to the SSOs.
        ii) Never offer confidentiality. You could find yourself in a really tough situation if you promise confidentiality and end up burdened with information that you know you are obligated to share. Instead, just say "I need to be transparent with you that, as a member of staff, I need to pass things on to Student Support if I have a safety concern".
        iii) There is a guide that the University of Edinburgh has prepared to help you deal with distressed students [link]. It has a list of signs that a student might be having a rough time and also provides a decision chart that will help you find the right place for them to look for help.
    b) **Teaching** and **learning** issues are handled by the relevant Personal Tutor or Course Organiser.

6) Students can only bring in **work that is directly related to PPLS coursework or dissertations**. You should not help the student with anything else. The only parts of applications that we can deal with are research proposals or samples of academic writing.

7) **Protect the students' privacy**. Never include multiple students in the To or Cc fields of an e-mail. Either use Bcc or write the students individually. And never mention other students' names in e-mail messages.
8) **Never read in advance**. It ruins the communicative moment, and it creates unfair expectations on you and other tutors. You should be coming to the work with fresh eyes at the moment of the tutorial.

Section F: Handling online appointments

1) If the student does not show up in the first 5-10 minutes, try **directly calling their student number (e.g., s0000000)**. Some students accidentally click on old links and end up in empty rooms.
2) If you run into problems with connectivity, try turning off video, rebooting laptops, using headphones, or finding a quieter place. If someone is having Wi-Fi issues, try tethering from a mobile device.
3) Make sure you have a way of **pointing to specific parts** of the essay. There are a few ways to do this:
    i) The student could use screen sharing from within Teams
    ii) If the document is a Word file, you could try opening it together online so that both of your cursors are visible (use your cursor as a pointer; the student should be the only one who makes changes).
    iii) Try using line numbers if the software allows it:
        (1) Most LaTeX editors do this automatically in the source, and you can render a PDF with "\usepackage{lineno}" and "\linenumbers"
        (2) In Word you can turn it on by going to the Layout tab and selecting Line Numbers (Windows) or choosing Format -> Document… -> Layout -> Line Numbers… (macOS).
4) Remember to **keep focused on your screen** when the student is speaking. Students might interpret your looking away as a lack of interest.

After the appointment

Section G: Submitting reports

1) When you have finished, please make sure to **submit a tutor report** through the form on the tutor hub.
2) Take no more than a few minutes to write the report, but do it **before the end of the day** (the sooner the better, so you can remember details more easily)
    a) You don't need to type long answers, but they should be **specific** to the appointment.
    b) Taking the time to reflect on the appointment is part of how you'll make progress as a tutor. I want you to get in the habit of considering what more can be done to help the students who come to us.
    c) Anonymised reports (without accompanying identification of tutors or students) will be used more broadly for training, policy, and research.
    d) Don't use boilerplate like "good session" or "we discussed structure" or "the student read the paper out loud". This doesn't really tell anyone anything.
    e) A report should still be submitted if the student cancelled late or did not show up; you are still paid for your time.
    f) Examples of helpful and unhelpful reports are included as an appendix to this manual.

3) You should receive an e-mail copy of your form submission shortly after you finish.

Section H: Claiming hours

1) I will send you a summary of your appointments toward the end of each month.
    a) The summary will contain full details of all the work you've done that month so that it's easier for you to submit your hours. Please verify all figures against your own records.
    b) Around the same time, I will also notify you of any bookings without corresponding reports (missed reports) or reports without corresponding bookings (reports filed in error).
2) Access People and Money [link] using the same account you use for your other tutoring positions.
3) Follow the directions in your summary to make sure that you file these correctly. There are currently four categories
    a) **Appointments**: These last 50 minutes each but are billed at 1.2 hours.
    b) **Training**: This includes observation/shadowing sessions and general training.
    c) **Meetings**: This covers any sort of group meeting or one-on-one meeting with me.
    d) **Tasks:** This covers any other work for the Skills Centre.
4) You have **Guaranteed Hours** contracts. We will offer you at least as many hours as you are contracted for. You can refuse particular tasks, but the hours will still count as having been offered. For example, if you have a 10-hour contract and you refuse 2 of the hours we offer, you will only be guaranteed 8 hours of work.

Glossary

Sites

(Tutor) Hub: [link] For tutors only

(Student) Site: [link] For everyone

Training

Onboarding: The procedure of getting both new and returning tutors onto the rosters.

Induction: The video & activity training given to all new tutors (part of new-tutor Onboarding)

Shadowing: When a novice tutor watches a senior tutor deliver an appointment (part of new-tutor Onboarding)

Observation: When a senior tutor watches a novice tutor deliver an appointment.

Reflection: When two experienced tutors watch each other deliver appointments.

Appointments

(Centre) Hours: The hard limits on tutor availability that cannot be changed by individual tutors

(Tutor) Schedule: Recurring limits on availability that tutors can set for themselves.

Availability: Day-by-day changes in availability that tutors can set through calendar appointments.

Blocks: When the centre prevents new appointments for a particular tutor. These can be removed.

Postmortems: Appointments for work that has been marked already. These focus on turning feedback into action plans.

Appendix A: Sample Letters

It would be a good idea to enter versions of these into **Outlook templates** to avoid excessive admin work. These are just suggestions; please customise them as you see fit.

New appointment

Hi STUDENTNAME,

I'd be happy to be your tutor for a writing appointment at the PPLS Skills Centre.

ONLINE: We'll be meeting through Microsoft Teams (https://teams.microsoft.com). You should already have access to Teams with your student account. Please make sure you can log in before the date. Have a PDF of your essay ready, but don't send anything in advance, as I will be encountering your essay for the first time at the appointment.

IN-PERSON: We'll be meeting in room X in [location]. Here are some instructions for how to get there: [link]. Have paper copies of your essay ready or send a PDF on the day. Don't send anything in advance, as I will be encountering your essay for the first time at the appointment.

We'll be meeting at TIME on DATE. The session will last 50 minutes. To join, click on the link in the invitation.

I'd also like to remind you that writing tutors don't work on the actual content of the essay, so if you're having trouble understanding the topic, it's best to see your teacher during office hours. We also don't do proofreading, but there are several services within the university that do (see "Is other help available?" at [link] for details).

I'm looking forward to our session and would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Best regards,

TUTORNAME

Improper cancellation before 20:00

Hi STUDENTNAME,

Thanks for telling me that you can't make the appointment. To let the Skills Centre management know, please fill out the form located here: [link]

Best,

TUTORNAME

Improper cancellation at or after 20:00

Hi STUDENTNAME,

Thanks for letting me know of your intention to cancel.

At this point, the session has been paid for, so it will have to count as one of your three appointments for the semester. For that reason, I'd suggest finding some way to use at least part of the time.

If you still need to cancel, please use the form here: [link]

Best,

TUTORNAME

Appendix B: Sample reports

Helpful reports tend to do things like…
1) Note the exact advice that's given
2) Allow individual teaching styles to come across
3) Emphasise aspects of writing in the various disciplines (e.g., philosophers concerning themselves with roadmaps)

Less helpful reports tend to...
1) Be opaque ("helpful feedback was provided")
2) Repeat instructions from the manual ("We read through the essay together")
3) Be so brief that they act as attendance trackers more than descriptions.

Note that the less helpful reports have something in common: they hide the good work that you're doing with the students!

Helpful reports

"The session focused on how to write a discussion section. I gave the writer an idea of what is expected in their discussion: start with a summary paragraph that restates aims/findings, structure the discussion of the findings to mirror the methods/results so as to guide the reader more easily, recontextualise results with other work/theories."

- It's clear that the focus of this session was on a single section of a dissertation, and it's also clear what the discussion of that section involved.

"[Rearrange] the sections of the essay so that the writer's own argument takes centre stage. This can be achieved by making the section that includes the objection and response the last one. A definition for 'vindication' in the context of the discussion should be provided. The paper should also include a clear thesis statement that directly answers the question, as well as a roadmap of the argument."

- I know exactly what the student was advised to do (reorder things to make argument support clearer; supply definitions where they're required; supply a roadmap in the introduction (often a requirement in Philosophy)).

"The student should focus on explicitly tying their responses to the questions posed in the prompt. This can be achieved by introducing topic sentences at the beginning of each paragraph which a) state the purpose of the paragraph and b) tie the paragraph directly to the question by using the same (or similar) terminology as the question."

- Again, a particular example of advice ("topic sentences") was given along with a description of what the tutor said. This is valuable because I can compare how the tutor defines topic sentences to the official definition held at the centre (not exactly the same here, but close enough!)

> *"Structure the introduction like a funnel, beginning with a description of the broader context and ending with your central claim. When evaluating a claim, the goal isn't to present all the issues of a particular study - place more emphasis on the relevant details that may strengthen/weaken your overall argument."*

- Again, I have an idea of what was said here, and the funnel image matches up with the centre's definition (Creating a Research Space) without clashing. Maybe I can incorporate the image into our advice. I also know that this session focused on keeping the text relative to the claim being made.

> *"The main focus should be on developing your original arguments, and re-organising and/or reframing (parts of) the discussion to make it clear that you have addressed all parts of the question. In particular, bring to the fore your evaluation of Nader's and Schwartz's considerations. When developing your original arguments, make sure that you define and spell out the relevant injustices with regard to dating apps."*

- This is really helpful. Note that even though the tutor was specific about content ("Nader's and Schwartz's considerations", "relevant injustices with regard to dating apps"), this was to recommend places for the student to develop or rearrange their argument …. This is different from content help!

> *"The primary focus should be on ordering the argument. The student was concerned they might be trying to cover too much material. We discussed ways of narrowing down the exegesis and making their critique more precise to achieve this. We also identified a way to simplify the argument over all as an alternative."*

- Not only do I know what the discussion involved, I also know how the student raised concerns that the tutor dealt with. I can also see that alternatives were presented to the student – and a brief description is enough! No need to get bogged down in details.

Less helpful reports

> *"The writer wanted to know if their arguments were coming across well enough. We tried to read as much as possible of their work, focusing on consistency of topic/argumentation/idea presentation. Continue working on the structure."*

- This is less a description of what happened in this particular essay and more of a summary of the instructions we give you in training.

> *"Introductions and conclusions, referencing; good no problems"*

- I have no idea what advice was actually given in this session!

> *"We had a discussion on how to improve his essay. I made some general points regarding clarity and structure. We were able to cover 1/3 of the whole essay. A very productive meeting"*

- Again, this provides zero detail of what was covered. Why was it productive?