# Personalised Student Support (Emotional Engagement)

**This means ensuring students feel they are regarded and supported as individuals on their courses.**

**Overview**

Opportunities for student-staff contact is a key factor in student motivation and involvement; knowing members of staff well can enhance a student’s experience on their course and enable them to get the most out of university life ([Richardson et al, 2007).](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01421590701529389) Building a human social presence as much as possible into online courses is vital.

All our students need to know who they can turn to for help especially as the nature of their courses change. This might be [technical support](http://libguides.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/it_support) as our courses move more online, individual [academic advice](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/staffsite/services/student-services/resources-for-staff/academic-advisors/) or [personal matters](https://my.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/webapps/portal/execute/tabs/tabAction?tab_tab_group_id=_126_1), e.g. relationships or personal circumstances affecting their University performance.

Students may feel they cannot approach the module tutor or their allocated [Academic Advisor](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/staffsite/services/student-services/resources-for-staff/academic-advisors/) for some reason, in which case they need an alternative line of support. Positive, personalized, support may involve listening to and engaging with a students’ concerns or just pointing a student in a certain direction; introducing them to the right people with the skills to better support them.

Fostering relationships between students and staff and between students and other students is particularly important in the first stages of a course. The move to becoming a university student can be an emotionally challenging, particularly if juggling a degree with a job and family caring commitments ([Tobbell et al, 2009](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1469787408100193)). A student may feel anxious about starting university learning and unsure of the academic expectations. The primarily independent learning required from university study can feel isolating and individual students may lack confidence with their academic work ([Richardson, 2007](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01421590701529389); [Al Zumor et al, 2013](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/256598064_EFL_Students%27_Perceptions_of_a_Blended_Learning_Environment_Advantages_Limitations_and_Suggestions_for_Improvement)). Attempts to address this through extra-curricular opportunities may have the unfortunate effect of further isolating those students who cannot participate or will not take advantage of them because they feel they don’t belong.

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| **Course teams could ask:*** How can we design and structure the course to **foster a real sense of belonging** for the students? How can we build online relationships and a learning community with students? This may be more difficult in online environments particularly when students have been familiar primarily with campus-based learning.
* How can we help students who are working online or at a distance feel that they are not just one of a crowd? How are academic advisors **engaging with the students**? Do you have a proactive course contact strategy? Are the first years receiving meaningful contact swiftly on arrival, so they have an individual link to academic staff? How effectively are staff referring the student on for specialist help? Are they using the online student support framework (available via [MyBeckett](https://my.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/)?
* How do you **build your social presence** in a course to convey a sense of your own engagement and personality? Could you use personalised student and [staff profiles](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/mybeckett/add-module-contacts/), start each online session with a regular personalised check-in and disclose personal information snippets appropriately to build staff/student trust? Could you follow-up with individual students after the online session and design online “coffee shops”?
* What [online digital tools](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/adobe-connect/choosing-a-digital-classroom-tool/) might help you do a **one-to-one online session** with a student who may need individual academic support? Could you simply call them?
* How do we deliver our online activities in a **personalised**, individual, way? How do we know that each of our students is receiving the type and level of support they need?

This could be done by using [adaptive release](https://teachlearn.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/guides/mybeckett-and-digital-learning-guides/mybeckett/adaptive-release/) and rules in [MyBeckett](https://my.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/), recording short update videos based on feedback or the previous activity to show the students their engagement is seen and that you are actively engaged in the content.* Do we use **diagnostic assessment** at appropriate points in the course? How do you identify and support struggling students when they are working and learning online?
* Do you use [MyProgress](https://myprogress.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/) to access **student results, progress and profiles**? [MyProgress help and guidance](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/staffsite/services/registry-services/myprogress/) is available online.
* Do all new students **know who to contact** if part of the experience isn’t working for them? Are they signposted to their Course Director as well as [Academic Advisors](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/staffsite/services/student-services/resources-for-staff/academic-advisors/) for quick responses? Can you replace nameless institutional contact with a personal approach? The [Academic Advisor guidance](https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/staffsite/-/media/files/staff-site/services-for-students/resources-for-staff/cltguidanceforacademicadvisorssep17v1.docx) has ideas for how you can best link up with your students remotely.
* How might you **re-visit student support** in subsequent weeks?
* Can you use **student mentors or cross-level support** to build personal support between students as well as between tutors and students?
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**References**

References and further reading for this section can be found in the [Personalised Student Support](https://rl.talis.com/3/beckett/lists/086BF37E-85D6-9E4A-D3A6-B7EA51D08C98.html?lang=en-US&login=1#1CCD2B49-9705-BF89-AA8B-9D983DA2C0EA) section of the [Course Development Principles reading list](https://beckett.rl.talis.com/lists/086BF37E-85D6-9E4A-D3A6-B7EA51D08C98.html) on Talis Aspire