

A Student's Guide to the PAS

Academic Year 2002/3



A practical guide to the
Personal Assistance Scheme
(P.A.S.)

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What is the Personal Assistance Scheme?

The Personal Assistance Scheme was set up at UCE in 1994 to enable students with disabilities to participate equally with their peers, and to take part fully in the student experience. To do this successfully it was decided that most support workers should be recruited primarily from the student community or be graduates themselves. This is because they have a true understanding of what is actually entailed in being a student: the tensions involved in meeting course work deadlines, note taking and organising their work, and can provide discreet peer support.

We do our best to match students and support workers with similar academic knowledge or backgrounds. You may, however, find that your support worker has no previous knowledge of your subject. Please provide him or her with as much information as you can about your course. Support workers are selected for their support skills and you should have confidence that your support worker will carry out their tasks effectively and to a high standard.

The Roles of the Personal Assistance Scheme Staff

Your friendly Co-ordinator !



What are the roles of the PAS staff?

The Co-ordinator will organise the recruitment of support workers through a structured application and interview process. It is the role of the Co-ordinator to draw up rotas, to introduce support workers to students and to complete

Payroll. It is also the co-ordinator's duty to arrange emergency cover, talk to lecturers and assist the Disability Advisers.

The Scheme Administrator keeps records up-to-date and will invoice your Local Education Authority (LEA) or other funding provider on your behalf to obtain payment for the support you use.

The Personal Assistance Scheme Training Programme Manager puts together a programme of training for all support workers who have no professional qualifications, and organises an in-depth Induction to the Scheme for student users.

What do the Personal Assistance Scheme staff need from you?

You must provide up-to-date contact details:

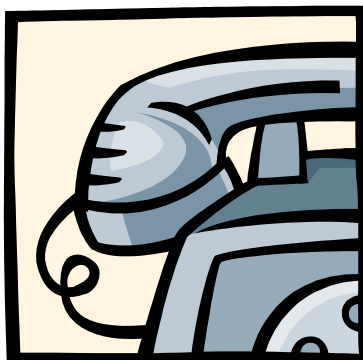
- Your full address and telephone number
- Your mobile number, if you have one
- Your e mail address

PAS staff also need to know:

- Your student identification number
- The name of the course you are studying and your tutor
- Your status – whether you are a full time, part time or post graduate student

MOST IMPORTANTLY, YOU MUST PROVIDE AN UP-TO-DATE TIME TABLE FOR THE CO-ORDINATOR TO WORK FROM.

If any of your details change during the academic year, please pass on the information to PAS staff. Remember, your timetable may change in the second semester!



Your funding

Funding for your support will be requested on your behalf by your Disability Adviser from the relevant organisation. This could be your LEA, Social Services Dept. or other funding body (eg Access fund, NHS, Charities, etc.)

After your support needs have been discussed with the Disability Adviser they will work out with you and possibly your tutor how many hours of support you will require per week and the nature of that support or any aids or equipment you need. Your Disability Adviser will then write to the relevant organisation on your behalf with details of the support required and what it will cost for the academic year.

Your support cannot start until funding has been agreed. The funding organisation will agree a set amount and this can be used only to pay for the

support requested. This information is passed to the PAS Co-ordinator who will monitor the balance regularly to ensure you do not exceed your allowance. If you are in danger of exceeding your allowance you will be warned about this and advised what to do. You will normally be given information about the balance of your funding on a termly basis.

If, after a while, you feel the amount of support you are having is insufficient for your needs you must see your Disability Adviser to discuss the situation and if necessary to apply for additional funding.

The funding is used to pay your support worker a set hourly rate; the amount he or she is paid depends on their qualifications and may include a National Insurance contribution. An administration charge is also included.

It is *your* funding

Your support worker is there to provide the support you need. Please explain clearly to him or her how you like things to be done, especially if you are used to receiving support. You must give your support worker 48 hours' notice if you are not going to need their support on any occasion – if you are ill, going away, or unable to attend a session for any reason. If you fail to give the required notice then your support worker will be paid for the hours they would have worked. This is a waste of funding and if it occurs regularly without a valid reason you will be warned by the Co-ordinator.

Please do not ask your support worker to do anything that is not covered by your funding – they are bound to refuse and this could damage your working relationship.

Your funding organisation requests auditable evidence of the way your funding is spent and would seriously consider withdrawing funding if it is not properly used.

Contracts

You will be signing a contract with each support worker who works with you. This is for insurance reasons, and provides them with a contract of employment. It also sets out the kind of work that they are expected to do, which will be agreed between you based on their skills and your needs. You will also sign a contract with the Personal Assistance Scheme itself as your agent. Again, this is to cover insurance also to set out the duties that the Scheme will undertake for you



Boundaries

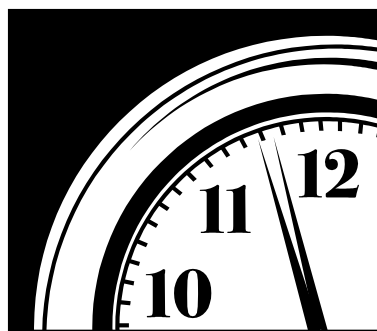
It is important that both students and support workers recognise that they are committed to a working relationship. Below are some guidelines that will help you to develop appropriate working practices. If there is anything you are unsure of, contact the PAS Co-ordinator.

- You will have been assessed by a Disability Adviser and your funding is based on the needs he or she discussed with you. Your support worker will receive clear information about what their work with you is to involve, based on this assessment. Do not ask them to do anything that has not been agreed with your Disability Adviser because your funding will not cover it.
- If you think at any time you need more support you must make an appointment with your Disability Adviser first of all to see if additional funding can be arranged.
- If you think you need less support than before, please discuss this with the PAS Co-ordinator. It is her role to inform your support worker of a reduction in hours.
- Do not expect your support worker to stay on after their contracted hours without being paid, even if your work has overrun its time.
- Your support worker is contracted to work specific hours with you. If you are unable to meet up for any reason, you **MUST** give your support worker 48 hours notice of cancellation otherwise you will have to use your funding to pay for all the hours he or she would have worked for you.
- With reference to the above and other issues, it is a good idea to exchange phone numbers with your support worker if you are both happy about this. A lot of time can then be saved.
- If you frequently miss or cancel sessions with your support worker, or are late, he or she is encouraged to report this to the PAS Co-ordinator. If the Co-ordinator judges that it is necessary, she will issue a warning to you.
- If you have a problem with your support worker, try to sort it out together first of all. If this is not successful you should contact the Co-ordinator as soon as possible for advice.
- You cannot 'sack' your support worker and should always discuss any problems with the Co-ordinator.
- Plagiarism (presenting another's work as your own) and collusion (improper collaboration in production of work) are cheating – please ensure that you only ask your support worker to act as a 'pair of hands' in assisting you with your work. He or she is not a tutor and must not give you instruction or do your work for you. If this should occur you would both run a very serious risk of losing your places on your respective course. As a department, we should have to take action and inform your faculties.
- Your support worker must not attend any session if you are absent, unless exceptional circumstances are involved. In such a case this would need to be approved by your funding organisation.

- You are expected to participate fully in all sessions by paying attention, listening, responding etc. as your support worker is not your representative, merely a pair of hands.
- If you are using a support worker as a note taker, you must supply the paper, pens, highlighters etc. that you expect them to use.
- Please treat your support worker with the same courtesy with which you would like to be treated. Remember that although your funding is paying for their employment you both have rights and responsibilities in your working relationship.
- Keep all information between yourself and your support worker strictly confidential.
- If you need to speak to the Co-ordinator then try to use the 'drop-in' times. If this is not possible, contact reception first (0121 331 5588) and they will then find out if there is someone available to talk to you. We try very hard to be available for students. However, the office is generally closed to visitors on Monday mornings to allow payroll to be completed and on alternate Friday mornings for team meetings.

What do I do if.....?

- **I am meant to be in a lecture and the support worker doesn't turn up?**
If possible, contact the Co-ordinator who will do her best to provide emergency cover for you. Failing this, ask a friend to give you the assistance you require on this occasion. Please report the matter to the Co-ordinator as soon as possible.
- **I am ill.**
As soon as possible, call your support worker, if you have their number and tell them that you are unable to attend the session. If you cannot contact your support worker direct for any reason, contact the general number given in the 'contact us' section of the site and leave a message. Remember our office hours are 8.30 to 5.0 and there may be no-one available to respond to your call outside these hours



- **My support worker and I are not getting on.**
Discuss the matter with him or her. If you feel that the situation is not improving speak to the Co-ordinator who will arrange a joint meeting with you and your support worker to help sort out the problem.
- **My disability means that I may suddenly be taken ill**

Please be open with the PAS Co-ordinator when you first join the Scheme and explain the situation. The Co-ordinator will request that you make the necessary information available to your support worker. Your support worker is trained to keep confidential any information about students for whom he or she works.

- **I would like my support worker to help me with other types of work or to give me more hours**

Your support worker's time must be paid for. Contact the PAS Co-ordinator to see if you have enough funding and to confirm whether you are within the boundaries of your assessment. If you need to arrange for more funding or to have your needs re-assessed you will be asked to make an appointment with your Disability Adviser.

- **I would like my support worker to work at my home**

If work has to be done at home on a regular basis this will be discussed with the Co-ordinator and agreed with you and your support worker beforehand. It is not acceptable as a general rule for support workers to work in their student's home.

- **My support worker and I are becoming really great friends, so I feel I can ask for a bit of extra time or help with other things.**

Remember that first and foremost your relationship with your support worker is a professional one. They are trained to stay within the boundaries of such a relationship and risk losing their job if they transgress these. If you are becoming friends that's fine but you must keep work and friendship separate to avoid unintentionally 'putting on' people.

- **I would like my support worker to act as amanuensis in my exam**

This is against the policy of the University. Generally, your Faculty will provide an amanuensis for you. If the PAS provides an amanuensis then he or she must not have worked for you previously on the subject concerned.

- **I prefer one of my support workers to the other and would like to change so that the one I like best does all my work**

Please discuss the situation with the PAS Co-ordinator. It is not acceptable to change your support worker if his or her work is satisfactory unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Some case studies are included as part of this pack. They are based on situations that have actually occurred between support workers and students using the Scheme. Read through the first one so that you can see how the boundaries of the relationship are supposed to work. Then try to work out the next for yourself.

CASE STUDIES

Gloria had three support workers taking notes for her at different times of the week. They all produced good notes but she felt she had developed a specially good relationship with Jim and would have liked him to do all her note taking for her. She suggested this to him discreetly and discovered he could fit this in with his timetable. Next time she saw Perry, one of her other note takers, she told him she did not need him any more. Later in the week she phoned the PAS office and complained that the notes she had been

getting from Zena, her third support worker, were just not up to standard and that she would like to change her for Jim, who could now cover all her time table.

ISSUES

A student does not have the right to 'sack' support workers. If a student has concerns about their work or behaviour this should be reported to the PAS Co-ordinator who will help to try to negotiate a solution if possible. If this is not possible then the Scheme's disciplinary procedure will be followed. In this case Gloria had nothing to complain about with her support workers. She had a selfish motive it changing her support and Jim was unaware of this. If a complaint is made such as the one made by Gloria about Zena, it would be investigated by the Co-ordinator and in this case Gloria would receive a warning about her behaviour. Students may recruit their own support workers if they wish, but these people must go through the PAS application and interview process and undertake the training if unqualified.

Miriam had already been given a time extension on her latest piece of assessed coursework due to her dyslexia. Now she only had a couple of hours to get her work in otherwise she would automatically fail. Now she wished she hadn't gone out on the last 2 evenings and had spent more time on her work, but her friends had been so persuasive... Then she had an idea – she could ask Lata, her note taker, to attend her next lecture and take notes. Lata's notes were excellent and Miriam privately felt she hardly needed to attend the lectures anyway when she got such good notes. She rang Lata on her mobile. Lata was prepared to attend the lecture to note take and didn't see any reason why she should not help Miriam out, so agreed to do so. Next day she handed over her usual high quality notes and Miriam was very pleased. Meanwhile Miriam met the deadline for her assignmentjust!

ISSUES?

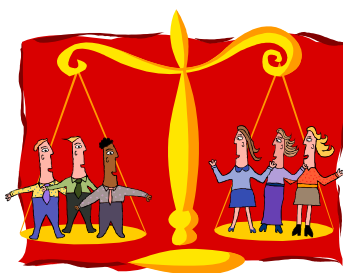
Timesheets

When you sign a timesheet you are certifying that your support worker has worked for you for all of the hours on the dates he or she is claiming. It is therefore in your interest to check the accuracy of the timesheet before signing. **NEVER SIGN A BLANK TIMESHEET** (if you are asked to do so, please discuss with the Co-ordinator). Timesheets have to be made available to funding organizations for audit purposes. All timesheets have to be handed in by 9.0 am on Mondays. Your support worker cannot be paid unless you have signed the timesheet for them so please make sure you give them time at the end of your sessions, or negotiate a convenient time when you can check and sign the timesheet for them. If checking or signing the timesheets is impossible for you, you may nominate someone to do this on your behalf.

Equal Opportunities

The Personal Assistance Scheme endorses the equal opportunities policies of the Universities of Aston, Birmingham and Central England.

The Scheme is committed to a policy of equal treatment and opportunity for all regardless of sex, marital status, disability, religion, race, colour or ethnic origin in all aspects of the working relationship between student, support worker and Scheme staff. All those associated with the Scheme have an obligation to respect and act in accordance with this policy.



Monitoring and evaluation

You will be invited to the meetings of Scheme users that are held each term. This is an opportunity for you to discuss with the Personal Assistance Scheme team any general difficulties or problems you are having, to make suggestions for improvements and to find out about new developments. You will also meet other Scheme users.

Towards the end of the academic year, you will be asked to complete a short survey questionnaire about your experiences of using the Personal Assistance Scheme. The responses to the survey are collated and analysed and, after discussion, action can be taken to make improvements to the service we offer.

THE PERSONAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME TRAINING PROGRAMME

The Personal Assistance Scheme Training Programme is designed to provide training for all unqualified support workers, and students, who use the Personal Assistance Scheme at the universities of Aston, Birmingham and Central England. All support workers, including qualified BSL interpreters and dyslexia tutors will receive a copy of the Support Worker's Handbook which covers issues similar to this one.

Support worker training

If your support worker on the Personal Assistance Scheme is unqualified, he or she will attend the training programme to gain basic skills in the areas of disability and support work. They may ask you from time to time to sign or certify certain documents for them. These may be:

- A witness testimony – this will state that your support worker has assisted you in a way that cannot be assessed formally and when you sign one of these forms you are stating that your support worker has reached a

standard that is satisfactory (or better) for you and meets the stated criteria.

- Copies of notes that your support worker has taken for you – to certify that you are satisfied that these were produced on time and that their standard is satisfactory (or better) for you.
- Descriptions of situations in which the support worker feels he or she has achieved certain criteria.

Please do not sign if you are not happy with your support worker's work in any way. Tell them you would like to postpone this for a while and speak to the PAS Co-ordinator and Training Manager so that the situation can be handled in a supportive way.

You will also be asked to complete a Learning Styles self-assessment to compare the learning styles of yourself and your support worker, after which you will discuss whether any adjustments need to be made in the way in which you work together to complement your learning style.

These activities will take only a few minutes of your time over the whole year, so please be supportive and help your support worker build up their portfolio of evidence to enable them to seek accreditation for the work they are doing.

Aims of the Support Workers' Training Programme

- To prepare support workers for working in a one-to-one situation
- To provide clear guidelines on the boundaries of the support worker's role
- To give support workers the skills and knowledge needed to work productively with people with disabilities or other learning needs
- To equip support workers with generic work skills that will be of interest to future employers
- To enable support workers to gain recognition of achievement through accreditation for their work on the Scheme and attendance on the training programme
- To provide continuing personal development

Training for you and other Scheme users

Training is also provided for students who use the Scheme, covering the topics that are dealt with in this handbook. The training has been developed because many students encountered difficulties with the boundaries of the Scheme, understanding the limitations of their funding and other issues. The training takes the form of an induction to the Scheme which will explain the relationship between you and your support worker, how to use your funding and the roles of the Disability Services team. You will receive an invitation during your first term.

Aims of the Scheme Users' Induction

- To explain how the Personal Assistance Scheme works
- To make students aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to their support workers and the Personal Assistance Scheme
- To provide clear guidelines on the boundaries of the support worker's role
- To ensure that students are aware of, and can deal with, funding issues

- To introduce the Disability Services team

We hope you find this handbook helpful and welcome any feedback you may have about its contents or presentation.

We wish you success in your studies, and hope you also find time to enjoy your experience of university life.

For further information about PAS matters please contact the appropriate person at your university using the 'CONTACT US' section on this site.