

# BETA ALPHA PSI TUTORING HANDBOOK



TUTORING TRAINING

2018-19

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## Professionalism

We expect BAP potentials to conduct themselves professionally. You represent BAP and WMU as a whole. Please remain conscious of this fact even while you are not working. Your time at Beta Alpha Psi is an opportunity for professional growth, and your supervisors are here to help you. If you are having trouble with anything, please ask!

- Remain approachable and attentive while working – Be prepared and willing to help students who may ask general questions about BAP or WMU, specific questions about when an individual tutor is working, or where to find another resource on campus. No social visits are permitted while you are working!
- Headphones/Social Media – Facebook, Netflix, YouTube, or other forms of social media while working. Sorry! We know this may be tough at times but it causes distraction and takes away from the experience of visiting students who need a focused environment in which to study.
- Personal cellphones laptops – Phones and laptops need to be put away while working with students. “Google-ing” a work-related question is okay but texts/phone calls should only be answered in an emergency. In summary, your phone and laptop should only be used in your engagement with your student, never for your own personal use.
- Homework – It is okay to work on, but only if there are no students present and you have checked with your supervisor to make sure no other tasks are pending. If a student arrives, you must dedicate your full attention to them and put your own work away.
- Use your head – When interacting with others, be polite and professional: no excessive noise, distasteful or offensive language/commentary, or inappropriate discussions. If you have to ask yourself first whether a subject is appropriate or not, it probably is not.

## Roles & Responsibilities

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### Your Role

Your role is to provide academic assistance and course knowledge using empathy, honesty, humor, a caring attitude, and a variety of teaching strategies. The purpose of student assistance is to guide students to a point where they can be an **academically successful, independent learner**.

- *How would you define being an academically successful, independent learner?*

The term *peer* implies that there is sameness while the term *coach or tutor* implies there is a difference between you and the student you are working with.

- *How would you explain differences and similarities between yourself and those you will be assisting?*

A good student success specialist builds rapport as they establish a relationship with their students. Be genuine and honest. It is typical for students to be reluctant to talk to about their academic problems. However, students will find it less painful to open up if they see you as nonjudgmental, caring, and having a genuine desire to listen to them.

- *Share a time when you had to ask for help or someone asked you for help.*

Humor is a great tool for reducing tension. When used appropriately, it builds upon the rapport you are establishing and helps individuals feel at ease. Shared laughter can break down walls, lessen intimidation, and fortify learning. Although humor can be used to compliment or take the edge off negative feedback, you must also be culturally sensitive in order to avoid having your humor being perceived as offensive. When in doubt, err on the side of caution.

- *Give an example of an improper use of humor at work.*

You Are:

- A role model of a successful student.
- A helper – you listen, suggest a course of action, assist students to learn to help themselves.
- A learner – you will attend a weekly pedagogy training where you will learn better ways to assist your students and develop your own repertoires.
- An educator – you direct students to additional resources, (i.e., instructors, trainers, program coordinators, advisors) outside your scope of knowledge.
- A facilitator – you explain concepts and review techniques in courses in which you are proficient.
- An BAP Potential – you are a representative of Beta Alpha Psi and Western Michigan University, explain university policies as needed, and adhere to scheduling commitments and university/BAP policies and procedures.

You Are Not:

- The source of content (*why not?*)
- A substitute for attending class – you are a resource to supplement what is taught in class.
- Here for a social visit – your relationship is professional with the students that you work with, and you should not be having your friend's visit you while at work.
- Responsible for having ALL the answers.
- An Academic Adviser

## Your Rights

- You are not expected to tolerate threatening or disruptive abusive behavior, physical or verbal. If you do not feel emotionally or physically safe with a particular student, please contact your supervisor. If at any time you feel threatened, do not hesitate to call campus police (387-5555). For medical emergencies, make sure to ask for an ambulance.
- You are not a mental health professional and should not counsel students on issues of mental health.
  - *Instead, how can you help?*
- You are not expected to have all the answers! Remember, the course instructor is ultimately responsible for all questions on the course content.
- You are not expected to be a miracle worker. Although you provide academic support, students must make academic performance their own responsibility.
- You have the right to bring up concerns or questions to your supervisor. We encourage mutual support and open communication and love to hear new ideas and suggestions!
- You are a student employee, not a full-time staff member. This means you are a student first so prioritize your academics. Please let us know if you are feeling overwhelmed or need to make changes to your schedule.

## Ethics Workshop

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Ethics are standards of conduct based on shared values and principles. Having a code of ethics is essential for our programs to be effective. A code of ethics helps you anticipate interpersonal and potential problems and prepares you to develop appropriate responses to situations before they occur.

- Never criticize an instructor/professor or an assignment
- Never criticize another academic support program
- Never do a students' assignments
- Remember that you represent our program even when you are not on the clock. How you conduct yourself outside of your work hours affects how students and faculty perceive **S**<sup>3</sup>.
- If you're presented with an ethical dilemma, don't hesitate to ask a supervisor.

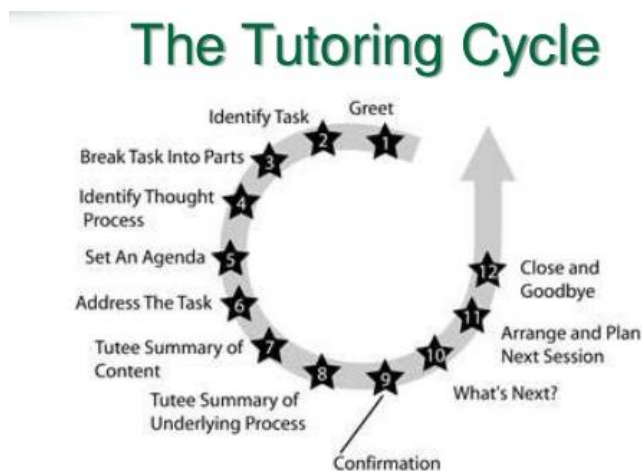
### Scenarios and Discussion

1. You had a rather stressful interaction with a student you tutored during your shift. Afterwards, you see another BAP potential who is also tutoring. You think you are alone. Is it okay to unload your frustrations?
2. You had a series of challenging sessions today with various students. When you arrive home your roommate asks, "How did your day go?" Does this change your answer from the previous scenario?
3. You run into a student you have been regularly assisting in the hallway as you are exiting class. They just received a low grade on quiz from a professor who also has given you a hard time in the past. You and many of your peers believe this professor to be difficult to talk to and unfair.
4. One of your student's professors emails you to ask if the student has come in for any help.
5. Facebook friending the students you are working with.
6. Sharing your cell phone number with the students you are working with.
7. At Waldo's after a football game, you run into a student you have been assisting.
8. Your student wants you to help him write the answers to a take home exam.
9. A student you're working with missed last week's classes. They ask you if they can have your notes from when you took that class.

## The Tutoring Cycle

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- The Tutoring Cycle is a 12-step tool you will use to guide students through your interactions with students
- Consistent use of this tool will help you become more effective in helping your students become independent learners
- You can use the tutoring cycle as a framework to guide your interactions. Different steps take different amounts of time.



### Step One: Greet

- Make sure your student has checked-in and indicated the purpose of their visit.
- Set a positive tone as you greet the student (introduce yourself, make eye contact, have a genuine smile, use a student's name if you know it).
- Position yourself appropriately: for one-on-one interactions, sitting side by side is the best. *Why?*
  - The course material should be equally available to both individuals.
  - *What if the student hasn't brought any course material?*
- Do not grab a pen or pencil. *Why?*
- *Why is step one so important?*

### Step Two: Identify Task

- Clarify the purpose of the session by identifying what your student wishes to work on.
- Ask to see a textbook, e-learning, assignment sheet, lecture notes, or syllabus when appropriate
  - Don't attempt to help with content if there are no materials available. Encourage students to come prepared.
- Follow-up with questions or statements that will:
  - Allow your student to clarify their concerns (open-ended questions).
  - Reinforce the fact that your student is knowledgeable and that you intend to build on that knowledge.
- *Restatements* – Reassure your student that you understand what they want to work on by restating it. For example, your student states, "I need help with my accounting homework." You respond, "I'd be happy to help you with your accounting homework. Which class are you in? What would like to work on from that class?"

- *Empathetic statements* - An empathetic statement indicates you understand some of the feelings your student may be experiencing. Example: "I don't know where it starts. I'm so behind in this class." How would you respond?

#### Step Three: Break task into parts

- Breaking the task into manageable steps will make the student feel less overwhelmed.
- Let the student lead the discussion about what the first step should be in addressing the task (and subsequent steps).
- Example:
  - Task identified-big accounting test tomorrow morning
    - Step 1-read the study guide aloud together
    - Step 2-student will share what he/she knows about each topic briefly
    - Step 3-use textbook to review confusing/unknown topics
    - Step 4-make flashcards with the student

*What is the benefit of breaking the task into parts? How could this step be useful as a student success specialist even if you are not familiar with the material at hand? When might this step not be necessary?*

#### Step Four: Determine Necessary Thought Process to Complete the Task

This is a **CRITICAL** step. In this step, you will assist your students in developing the strategies they will use to improve academically. Remember the goal is to help empower the student to become an independent learner. Be patient and careful not to pressure or rush the student through this process, i.e. Bloom's Taxonomy.

- Uncover prior knowledge – find out what the student already knows regarding the question or topic. They may give a short, generic response. Encourage them to explain in as much detail as possible.
- Utilize Information Sources – Ask your student for any materials available to them: textbooks, course packs, class handouts, lecture notes, etc. You should not be a source of course information. *Why?*

*How is the information organized? Be mindful that if your student cannot master how to learn from their course materials, then they will always need someone else to explain things to them.*

#### Step Five: Set an Agenda

To be efficient, a good student success specialist must practice two things: knowing the task at hand and how much time is allocated for each step. Tutors are often assisting more than 1 student simultaneously and must be aware to distribute their time fairly. Either way, the potential must be aware of the time and their pacing. Agenda tips:

- Remember you already broke the task into parts in Step 3. Use this to figure out how much time each part should take, approximately. Then set your agenda for the session.



- You are trying to give the student structure. Keep them on task. Organization, structure, and pacing might be things that the student is missing when studying independently. Think of these as tools you're giving to the student.
- Don't let the number of students waiting affect the quality of the time you spend with each student. Don't rush. *Subway analogy*.
- Students working with a drop-in tutor may stay in the room as long as they'd like; however, the tutor is in charge of discerning how much time is appropriate to work with a student. It is okay to let the student know that you have successfully worked through all of the steps of the task and encourage them to continue the work independently.

#### Step Six: Addressing the Task

Now that you have the necessary information and the agenda for the session, begin working on the course material:

- This should consume more time than any other step, or possibly than all other steps combined.
- Take this time to engage the student in meaningful dialogue either about the questions he or she has brought to the meeting or about issues you notice as you begin to assess the student's work.
- Start with the positive (you did X really well, I can see you understand Y or have spent a lot of time on Z). *Why is this important?*
- Effective tutoring involves an exchange of information; at times, the tutor should explain concepts to the student but should remain quiet at others to allow the student to explain his understanding. Both should ask questions and utilize books and other resources. As you spend more time gaining experience, the rhythm of question and answer during sessions will become second nature to you, but never forget to ask yourself if you are helping to fulfill the primary goal of tutoring: to encourage independent thought in the student.
- It is okay to say "I don't know" and refer student to 1) professor 2) TA 3) other resource, etc. It's better to do that than give the wrong information.
- Experienced employees – share tips

#### Step Seven: Tutee Summary of Content

#### Step Seven Eight: Tutee Summary of Underlying Process

- When you feel the task the student wanted to complete is fully addressed (or when your time with that student is coming to an end), give the student a chance to tell you what they learned.
- Never interrupt to critique, correct, or help them.
- Silence is key during this step
- Pay attention:
  - Do they understand the material?
  - Are they utilizing the discipline-specific terminology?
  - Can they verbalize their thought processes?

Your student will often give you verbal cues that demonstrate whether or not they "get it." One is the light bulb effect. The other is the *fake* light bulb effect.

- Light Bulb Effect: student becomes animated, may interrupt you, and says things like, “Oh, I get it! Red blood cells are important for health because...” or, “Oh, an example of a metaphor would be...”
- Tutor Response: Get out of the way (be quiet) when you see the light bulb go on and allow your student to continue summarizing
- Fake Light Bulb Effect: no animation present. Student will say things like, “Oh, okay. I get it. Thanks.”
- Tutor Response: Ask your student to explain/summarize the content or revisit the content together.

Your goal is to make the student a more independent learner. Remember, you set the example. If the student is not showing a good understanding of the content after Step 8, now would be a good time to encourage the student to work independently while you check-in with others. As the student practices steps 1-8 on their own, the processes will become more natural and will increase their independent learning.

#### Step Nine: Confirmation

Without going overboard, reinforce your student’s milestone with a congratulatory statement. Be natural and genuine. Don’t say things that aren’t true but highlight any progress the student has made.

*Affirm specific accomplishments* - “You memorized a lot of vocab. words today. Great job!” or “That [subject matter/problem] was really difficult. Good job sticking with it. Keep up the good work!”

#### *Thoughtful evaluations* –

- Show a positive attitude by giving praise for real achievement
- Praise should not only be offered for a perfect performance; progress, no matter how small, should be rewarded
- Take responsibility for your part in the session: don’t take all the blame if things didn’t go perfectly but don’t blame the student either. Use inclusive language like “we” instead of “I/you.”

#### Step Ten: What’s next?

Before the student packs up, you want to encourage them to work independently until you see them again. If the student hasn’t completed all their work by the end of the session, help them make a plan for what they will do next. Unless it’s the end of the semester, there’s always more work that can be done to prepare and stay ahead.

- Review the flashcards independently or with a friend
- Go to office hours
- Work with another tutor (give them a copy of the tutoring schedule)
- Go to the Writing Center
- Attend Learning Assistant Sessions, if applicable
- Read the textbook

- Finish problems independently
- Request a peer coach

For a coach, “What’s next” could go beyond the task for that day to a planning for future coursework, even in other courses. It could also include other non-academic “homework” you and the student have discussed—go to financial aid, make a counseling appointment, make an advising appointment, etc.

#### Step Eleven: Arranging and Planning the Next Session

1. Always invite the student to come work with you again and let them know when your shifts are.
2. Confirm day and time of next session.

#### Step Twelve: Close and Goodbye

Close your session with a genuine goodbye or other closing statement, i.e. “Thank you for being so prepared today.” As with the opening remarks, the closing should include the use of the student's name. The closing of any activity is as important as the beginning.

## **Problem Solving and Conflict Management**

### **How to Help a Friend**

Living in a college community, there are likely to be times when you become concerned about someone else. This could be a friend, your roommate, or just someone you see in a class or in your dorm. You may not do anything about your concerns because you do not know how to help, or do not want to make things worse. Here are some guidelines to help you know what to do when you are concerned about someone else on campus.

### **When to be Concerned**

Everyone experiences distress sometimes. Adjusting to college, experiencing academic stress, struggling with a recent break-up or having worries at home can all create some temporary difficulties. Any one of the following signs when taken alone is not necessarily a sign of severe distress. However, when someone is experiencing several of them, or if they persist, then it may be indicative of more severe difficulties that warrant professional help.

- Deterioration of physical appearance or personal hygiene
- Excessive fatigue or sleep difficulties
- Skipping class or absence from other activities
- Difficulty completing schoolwork or other obligations
- Avoidance of friends or uncharacteristic social isolation
- Marked decrease in concentration, motivation or energy
- Visible increase or decrease in weight
- Looking sad, worried or preoccupied
- Irritability or temper outbursts
- Impulsive behavior or acting with poor judgment
- Direct statements about problems with family or friends
- Statements of hopelessness or comments about death, self-harm or suicide

### **It's okay to Ask**

When you are concerned about a peer, you might hesitate to inquire further about her well-being. You may feel that it is an invasion of her privacy, or that talking about things will make it worse for her. If you know someone who you are concerned about, it is fine to express genuine interest or concern – they can always decline to talk with you if they are uncomfortable. In fact, authentic interest is often felt as caring by someone, and may be the opening she needs to talk about important things.

### **Handle or Hand-off**

For the following scenarios, say whether you would handle the situation or hand it off to someone else. If you would hand it off, say who you would hand it off to.

- A student tells you that they need help studying for an exam
- A student asks you which classes they should take the following semester
- A student tells you, "I don't think anyone would miss me if I were gone"
- A student tells you that they got kicked out of their house

- A student complains about their professor every time you meet with them
- A student constantly comes to you during your hours but does not actually have any questions other than ask for your number and out on a date
- A student is yelling and getting visibly upset and aggressive
- A student tells you that they are having a really hard time keeping up with their course work and watches too much Netflix
- A student tells you that their instructor was making racist remarks to them which made them very uncomfortable
- An instructor tells you that they are not happy with the way that you assist their students
- You feel that your supervisor is treating you unfairly