

4 Tuition

Main Themes: What is tuition? The diversity of tasks which may *be carried out by staff designated as 'tutors'*. *The tutorial role of the tutor.* Learner perceptions about tuition. Monitoring *the performance of* tutors and the quality of correspondence tuition. Unreliability in script grading. The importance of tutor comments on assignments and their role in learning. *Criteria* in assessing quality in tutor commenting and the correspondence role *more* generally. Face to *face* tuition and the *different* forms it can take. Measuring attendance at sessions and the student user *rate*.

'Tuition' is used here to refer to course-related teaching/support provided by an individual for a particular learner or group of learners who are also using prepared materials as a resource. The tuition may take a variety of forms but is usually focused on facilitating the learning of a known group of learners not on replacing the materials. It usually involves a local tutor with whom learners are in direct (if infrequent) contact, whose role may be defined variously, for example, as interpreting course materials, enriching course content, diagnosing learning problems, helping with study skills and practical activities. The overlap with counselling may be more or less encouraged, depending on the kind of system set up, but counselling issues are treated separately here, in chapter 5.

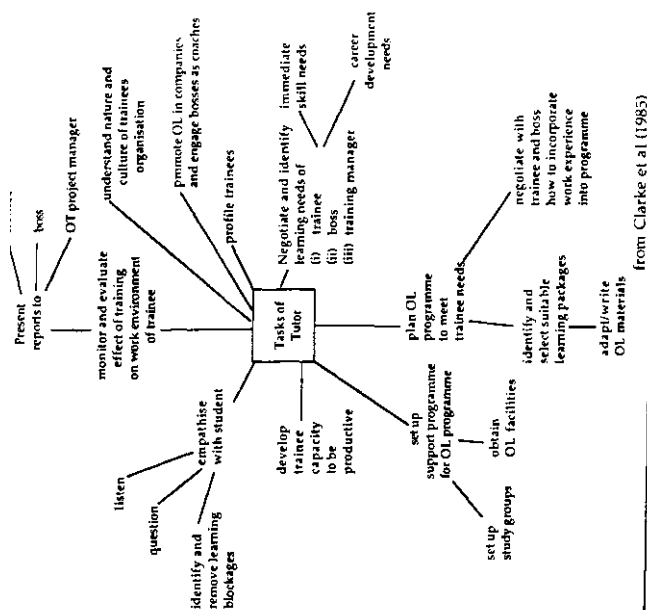
What tutors actually do again varies widely, and they may have different titles in different systems - trainer, tutor-counsellor, learning advisor, teacher, and so on. However there are a number of major topics in tuition evaluation which provide a general introduction to the area -- the tutor role, correspondence tuition and face to face tuition at workshops, resource centres and so on.

The role of the tutor

In systems like the Open University which commit very large amounts of resource to the design and presentation of multi-media

packages, the question 'what is the role of the tutor?' has been from the beginning a focus of interest, research and development, particularly among regional staff and tutors themselves. The University has of course designated the role of the tutor in its staff development materials, and oriented it towards the facilitation of learning, especially for new learners, with perhaps more emphasis on a remedial role after the first year, when it is hoped that learners will be increasingly 'independent' in their approach. However there has also been evaluation of the role that tutors actually do play at the OU and in a variety of open learning systems. During 1983-84, researchers from the Industrial Training Research Unit, (sponsored by the then Manpower Services Commission) reported on the role of the tutor in the OU and in 27 vocationally oriented open learning courses: 14 in colleges, nine in companies and four

Figure 4.1: The main tasks of a tutor for the Kingston Open Learning Action Project for Industrial Supervisors



from Clarke et al (1985)

training association/TB courses. (Clarke, Costello and Wright, 1985.)

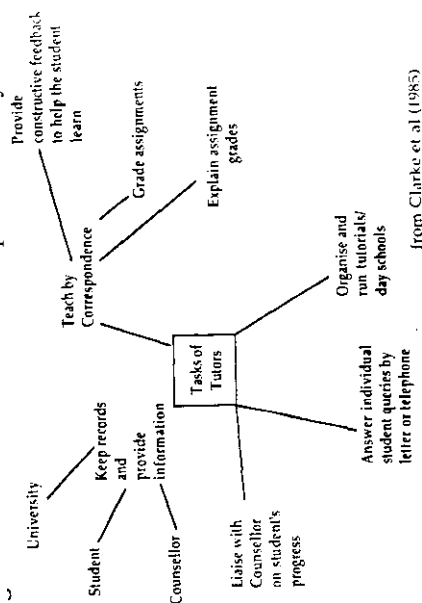
The ITRU researchers distinguished between three main types of open learning which determine key differences between the role of the tutor:

- (a) those where tutors both prepare and deliver open learning materials;
- (b) those where bought-in materials are modified by tutors for a specific learner group and then delivered;
- (c) those where tutors deliver bought-in materials unadapted. (Clarke et al, 1985)

Forty-eight tutors involved in the 27 courses sampled, completed a questionnaire on a wide range of aspects of their role. A selection of some of the questions together with the responses is shown in table 1. The tutors surveyed were on the whole experienced, with an average of over five years in open learning and experience of around 50 learners on average. Fourteen said they had had some training for open learning, the rest not.

Five in-depth case studies of particular courses revealed that tutors may combine marketing as well as authoring with a tutorial role, in some schemes. The authors mapped the range of tasks on each scheme and the example shown in figure 1 (the Kingston Open Learning Action Project for Industrial Supervisors) shows how all-embracing the role of 'tutor' can become, certainly by comparison with figure 2 (an Open University tutor).

Figure 4.2: The main tasks of an Open University tutor



from Clarke et al (1985)

Table 4.1: Tutor responses on a selection of issues concerning their role

Industrial Training Research Unit survey of tutors on vocationally oriented open learning courses.

	Number of Responses	
	YES	NO
Are you involved in the preparation of learning materials for this scheme?	23	24
Are you involved with students before they undertake the course?	26	21
Do you arrange tutorials?	24	22
Where are you expected to be available?		
at all times	7	
at all times at work	4	
by appointment	24	
on the telephone	32	
Do you have to set assignments?	20	26
Are you responsible for marking assignments?	37	8
Do you keep records?	41	5
Are you responsible for evaluating/monitoring		
(a) the students	25	20
(b) the course	16	23

The title open learning 'tutor' therefore can cover a very wide range of tasks, some of which have little to do with tuition, though they may influence how the tutorial role is carried out. This is summarised in figure 3.

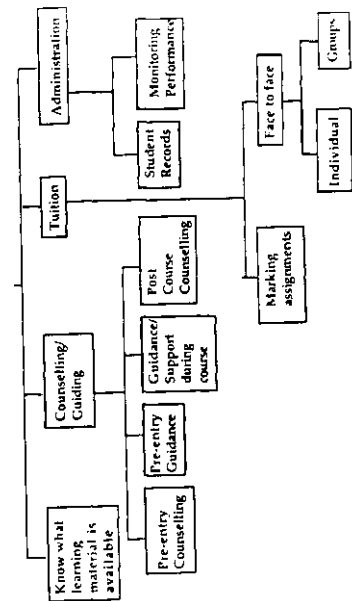
However, whatever the job specification of tutors on different schemes, the facilitation of learning is often specified as at the core of tuition specifically. The components of this role are also varied, and not all schemes involve all of those shown in figure 4 below. One of the key 'optional' areas for example is the counselling/guidance area, which may be provided independently of the tutor in some schemes, or not at all.

Figure 4.3: A range of tasks which may be carried out by open learning tutors

Tasks	Skills/Knowledge required
Negotiation with organisations	business Marketing, interviewing, negotiating skills. Understanding of business organisation and practices.
Selection and adaption of existing OL materials	Awareness of OL databases and course OL materials. Content of qualifying syllabus.
Preparation of OL materials	Knowledge of target audience, learning goals and assessment needs. Ability to author and design learning materials.
Pre-course counselling (determining knowledge of open learning material learning needs and assessment of available. Skill in assessment, counselling, ability and potential)	Knowledge of open learning material learning guidance, interpersonal relationships.
Induction	Communication, guidance, knowledge of the course and the open learning system concerned.
Supporting learning	Knowledge of what OL involves. Coaching, adapting to learning styles, teaching of study skills and examination techniques, running tutorials, telephone tutorials, assignment marking, record keeping, counselling/ guidance, dealing with personal problems.
Post-Course counselling	Counselling/guidance, knowledge of career paths.

Includes material from a table in Clarke, Costello and Wright, (1985 p.43).

Figure 4.4: Component tasks of tuition in Open Learning



Adapted from a diagram in Clarke, Costello and Wright (1985), p.45

Learner perceptions of tuition

The role of tuition and the tutor within distance open learning has been explored in an OU project which surveyed over 5,000 students studying a variety of post-foundation courses, i.e. these students had already studied at least one foundation course at minimum, and many had studied and passed several other courses as well. They were asked to comment on their tuition on the course just completed, and on their experience of tuition in general. Kelly and Swift (1983)

The questionnaire used a five point rating scale to explore reactions to the provision of different media on the course students had just completed.

Table 4.2: Student reactions to media provision

Components:	Much too much		About right		Too little		Much too little		No answer
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Correspondence materials (including units, supps., readers, set books)	2	17	76	5	0	1			
Broadcasting (including TV/video, audio cassettes)	2	11	70	12	2	3			
Tuition (including TMA grades and comments, tutorials, etc., informal tutor contact)	0	1	58	29	10	1			

Kelly and Swift, 1983

Of the three main components listed in table 2, tuition is the one eliciting most of the 'not enough provided' responses. Four in ten respondents noted too little provision of tuition and, when specifically asked, 45% favoured reduction in TV broadcasts if that allowed more tutor contact instead. 29% of students *were* also against this idea, however.

Having established something of the value of tuition relative to other media, the questionnaire then attempted to explore the quality of the role of the tutor in general. Students were asked to respond to a very wide range of statements, both about the course they had just completed (table 3) and about their experience of post-foundation tutors generally (table 4).

Table 4.3: Student perceptions of the help they need from tutors

Type of help needed from tutor:	% needing		Total requiring 'some' or 'a lot' of help
	A lot of help	Some help	
Analysis of the errors and deficiencies in my TMAs	21	45	66
Explanation of what a good answer to a TMA would have been	21	37	58
Clear identification of the good points in my TMAs	19	39	58
The clearing up of problems, obscurities in the teaching materials	14	44	58
Developing a fuller, more rounded understanding of the subject area than that provided by correspondence and other materials	16	42	58
Analysis/feedback on how I was progressing in my understanding of the subject	15	42	57
Human support and encouragement from tutor	19	34	53
Advice on strategies for coping with materials and set tasks	13	38	51
Identification of the requirements of TMAs/CMAs	12	38	50
Understanding the main themes and issues of the course	10	40	50
Help with preparation for the final exam	16	33	49
Development of my skills so that I can do better in the future	8	34	42
Advice on essay writing/structuring TMA answers/study skills	7	27	34
Help with identifying my strengths and weaknesses as a student	6	26	32
Discussion, practice in developing skills in argument	8	24	32
Support, reassurance when depressed, worried about my studies	9	21	30
Help with pacing my studies, identifying priorities	3	18	21

Adapted from Kelly and Swift (1983)

NOTE: TMA - Tutor Marked Assignment CMA - Computer Marked Assignment

Table 4.4: Student evaluation of the role of the tutor and tuition generally

Attitude Statements:	Strongly Agree		In between		Disagree		Disagree strongly		No views	
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Apart from having my TMAs graded and commented on, I don't want or need other contact with a tutor	2	5	14	36	41	77*			2	
Without a course tutor there would be no-one in the OU system to whom I could turn for help with study problems	23	46	11	14	3	17			3	
A good tutor can make a course, a poor tutor can spoil one	34	32	15	11	3	14			4	
Some aspects of most courses can only be taught effectively on a face-to-face basis	13	45	20	14	13	17			6	
If the amount of tutor support were reduced it would adversely affect my ability to cope with OU studies	14	31	20	22	9	31			3	
Without the help of a tutor I would probably have dropped out from at least one course that I stuck with	10	15	10	33	27	59			6	
If there were no provision for contact with the course tutor, the OU would lack credibility as an academic institution ...	28	40	11	11	3	14			8	

* Percentages are rounded up or down, as appropriate
 Swift and Kelly (1982)

Students were asked whether they had needed help from their tutor on the course they had studied in 1982 and the responses are shown in table 3. On all except one of the 17 types of help listed, at least 30% of students reported needing some or a lot of help. Predictably most (two-thirds) needed help on continuous assessment (tutor marked assignments or TMAs) over half had also needed 'human support and encouragement', 'feedback on how I was progressing in the subject', and help in 'developing a

fuller, more rounded understanding of the subject area than that provided by correspondence and other materials'.

Overall, it was clear from this survey that students value tuition as a whole very highly. **68% felt that** without a course tutor there would be no one to help with study problems and 25% definitely felt that without the help of a tutor they would probably have dropped out from at least one course. Over two-thirds felt that 'A good tutor can make a course, a poor tutor can spoil one'. (See table 4).

It was only possible to devise these lists of attitudinal statements because individual tutors had already described their own role in accounts published in 'Teaching at a Distance' and much discussion with tutors had occurred either in interviews or through the regular staff development role of regional staff. Much qualitative 'research' had already occurred, albeit informally; this provided a firm basis for the design of the questionnaire, especially the attitudinal statements shown in tables 3 and 4.

Correspondence tuition

Many open learning providers will want to monitor and evaluate the performance of tutors in this area which remains otherwise a private transaction between tutor and learner where the learner is especially vulnerable to the effects of poor quality tuition.

Turnround

There is first the turnround issue — how quickly does the learner get back an assignment after posting or handing in, and how much of this time is taken by the tutor in marking? Many of the European correspondence schools can monitor tutor turnround very easily because learners mail their assignments direct to the institution which then mails on a batch to the tutor, who also returns marked scripts to the school. The system 'knows' therefore when the tutor should have received what, and can chase late returners, if there are any.

In a system like the OU, where students send assignments direct to their tutor, such checking is not possible. Tutors return marked assignments to the University where a record is made onto computer files for both the tutor and the student. Where no assignments have been received by 21 days after the cut-off date (the date by which tutors should receive scripts from their students for that assignment) a 'marker' against the tutor name is made automatically by the computer and the appropriate staff to

Open Learning and Evaluation

Why are markers 'unreliable' in the first place, you may ask? Evaluation of tutor marked assignments at the Open University in the later seventies confirmed earlier findings from other contexts, that a group of tutors marking the **same** set of scripts was likely to grade them differently. A selection of assignments covering all faculties was chosen and for each assignment, three tutors marked the scripts of the same 12 students. Some indication of the differences between the assignments is shown in figure 5.

The results of the study of grades awarded showed that:

- the same script was given different grades by different tutors; there was often a difference of two to three grades on scripts from group one. Variation in the grades awarded was much larger for scripts in Group 1 than it was for those in Groups 2 and 3, where Group 3 was slightly better than Group 2 (See figure 5).
- tutors also differed in their ranking of scripts, especially tutors in Group 1.
- the average (mean) of all grades awarded by each tutor showed that means often differed, indicating that tutors vary in leniency/severity
- some tutors used a wider range of grades than others
- tutors interpreted the grading scale differently; for example they might agree that a script was one of the best but grade it anything from C+ to A-.
- tutors of students in Groups 2 and 3 did tend to be more lenient in marking scripts from 'their own' students but the effects were small by comparison with the variation in grades given the same script.

It may be surprising to discover that, even in a subject like mathematics, experienced tutors do not agree absolutely on grades. This means that we would expect to find different grades for the same script even among experienced tutors, and figure 6 suggests the range based on the findings discussed here.

Figure 4.6: Approximate frequency with which two tutors would be expected to award grades differing by at least one point on a large set of scripts (expressed on a 0-10 scale)

Group	At least 4 points	At least 2 points	At least 1 point
1	1 in 25	1 in 3	2 in 3
2	Very rare	1 in 25	1 in 3
3	Very rare	1 in 70	1 in 4

Byrne (1979)

The value of this kind of evaluation is not primarily the discovery of unreliability *per se* since, on the basis of previous research in conventional education 'unreliability' can be expected. Its value in this case was, first, that it demonstrated that tutor unreliability on continuous assessment was no worse than that reported in studies elsewhere on examination marking. Second, it stimulated consideration of the possible causes of unreliability, and provided a very helpful form of staff development for those taking part.

Those tutors involved discussed their grades and discovered why others had judged a script differently in an atmosphere which was supportive rather than threatening. As suggested earlier, similar exercises, especially at the beginning of a course, can improve both grading and commenting on scripts thereafter.

Although the exercise demonstrated that it would be unrealistic to hope to eradicate unreliability completely, some of the reasons for unreliability became clearer, and a number were associated with the quality of assignment design, where improvements can be made. Some assignments generated more unreliability than others, because of unclear wording, poor student or tutor notes. The single essay question generally came out worst, of all question types, and can be improved by being broken down into a number of components, if that is possible. Students then need guidance on the relative importance of these parts, and problems can be created if this is not given, or if unrealistic word lengths are provided.

Evaluation of tutor reliability can therefore be as much an evaluation of the quality of assignments on a course as of the quality of tutor performances. During discussion of differences of opinion, it was possible to pinpoint aspects in the advice to students, or in the notes to tutors, which were the cause of disagreement, or to pinpoint other inadequacies. These are valuable findings for the redrafting of assignments.

Tutor comments and correspondence teaching

Although the grade awarded a script is very important to the learner, the purpose of the assignment interchange includes far more than assessment of the standard that it reaches. It may often be the case that the learner's work is not graded at all. Whether there is a grade or not, however, the learner is looking for feedback on general progress with the course and specific help with areas of difficulty. The quality of the tutor's comments on a script therefore also matter as well as the grade, and are not unconnected. A low grade for example can make it very difficult for some students to read comments carefully and learn from them, disappointment and a sense of failure making them want to push the script away

and forget about it. Clearly this is a very individual matter, but survey findings suggest that there is little basis for the view that Students are only interested in the grade (see table 5).

Table 4.5: The importance attached by students to provision of four types of content in their tutor's comments on assignments for the course

	Importance attached to attributes:			
	VERY IMPORTANT	FAIRLY IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	AT ALL IMPORTANT
Attributes of TMA comments:	%	%	%	%
Analysis and clear explanation of where things went wrong and why.	78	17	4	
Constructive criticism - helpful and encouraging comments.	68	25	6	
Understanding of reasons for grade awarded to TMA.	52	30	16	
Assessment of general progress at several stages throughout the year.	33	33	31	
TMA — tutor marked assignment				
Kelly and Swift (1983)				

The 1983 OU Survey of students mentioned earlier provides conclusive evidence for the importance of correspondence tuition. Table 5 indicates that almost all respondents (over 90%) felt assignment comments *were* important for explaining errors and making helpful criticism. Students were also asked what they usually did with marked assignments and table 6 indicates that fewer than 10% are only interested in the grade. 72% read comments carefully and tried to use them in subsequent assignments. There seems good evidence that the quality of correspondence teaching is a vital part in the effectiveness of the system as a whole, from two points of view: the learning process and the performance of students on continuous assessment.

Table 4.6: Types of use of correspondence teaching by students

	Usually did this	Sometimes did this	Never did this	No answer
Read comments carefully and, where appropriate, tried to incorporate advice into later assignments.	72	23	3	3
Made use of comments for examination revision.	43	33	19	5
Read comments carefully and followed up references made to units, books, articles, etc.	33	45	17	4
Took up points made on TMAs in tutorials.	17	29	50	4
Did additional work on TMA in the light of comments.	12	33	53	3
Only ever took a quick look at grades and comments.	9	19	68	4
Contacted tutor outside tutorial to take up points.	5	22	70	4
Used comments in self help groups.	6	12	75	7
Looked at grades but ignored comments.	2	6	88	4
TMA — tutor marked assignment				
Kelly and Swift (1983)				

Given the importance of correspondence teaching, it is an important area for monitoring and evaluation. This can be done by asking students directly, as in the case of the survey findings reported above. However, it may also be particularly important to check that professional norms are being achieved by individual tutors, and this requires the judgement of professional peers. In a system like the OU, monitoring of tutor comments requires that scripts are read by a subject expert with experience of correspondence teaching. A proportion of scripts is selected from one or more assignments marked by the tutor being monitored. A tutor can expect that the scripts they mark will be monitored at least twice a year on a full credit course (440 hours and around 8 assignments) , and at least once a year on a half credit course (220 hours and around 4 assignments). New tutors, and any tutor whose work causes concern, are monitored more often.

The criteria which can be used to judge the effectiveness of an example of correspondence teaching naturally depend on the type of learning outcomes of a course, and its difficulty. Figure 7 lists a range of possible criteria.

As important as checking standards is the communication back to a tutor of the results of monitoring. During the course of an evaluation of the OU's briefing of its part-time staff, it was discovered that tutors value monitor comments and use them as an indication of whether they are meeting the University's requirements for correspondence tuition. (Thorpe, 1985) Some faculties now send the monitor's comments direct to the tutor, who has the right of reply, if necessary. The monitor's comments therefore need to be phrased with the kind of constructiveness and consideration that is expected of tutors in their comments to students.

Figure 4.7: Criteria which can be used in monitoring a tutor's scriptmarking

A tutor marked assignment *can* be assessed *for*

Efficiency:	returns marked script within the period required by the system writes legibly Completes associated records/forms in full and accurately
Grading:	accurate/lenient/severe correct use of marking scheme (if there is one)
Relationship with learner:	tone friendly and sympathetic Comments likely to encourage continued learning Further contact suggested, where desirable
Overall appraisal of learner's work	praise on achievement reasons for the grade given suggestions for what would have been necessary to get a higher grade improvements needed for next assignment assessment of progress in course as a whole
Detailed comments	

corrects any errors
suggests improvements in approach/structure as necessary
suggests course pages or components learner needs to revise
tells learner what she is doing well/adequately
comments on any irrelevance by referring to wording of the assignment
shows where marks have been lost (if relevant)
picks up over/under length, poor presentation
points to the relevance of materials/developments outside the course for development of ideas the learner has expressed.

Face to face tuition

Face to face tuition takes different forms depending on the context for open learning. Figure 8 indicates some of the variety in this

Figure 4.8: Some of the forms of face to face tuition

Category	Duration	Learning context
On-site supervision	Mostly under 1 hour, available continuously, on demand from learner	Often 1 to 1: Job supervisor may act as tutor for employee on the-job training
College-based 'class' or workshop	Approximately 1-3 hours	By appointment or drop in. Learners may consult a tutor for 1 to 1 help. Group work also organised
Resource Centre	By arrangement	Learner uses packages (text, video or audio based, or CBT) either on site or elsewhere. Help often available on site, on demand
Tutorials in distance open learning		
— weekday evening	1½-2 hours	Usually 1 tutor with a group of learners
— Saturday	½ to 1 day	1 or more sessions available to learners, led by different tutors
— Specially scheduled session	around 1 hour session scheduled during study to respond to needs of one or more learners which had not been predicted	Tutor with one, or a group of learners
Residential Schools	Weekend, up to one full week	Variety of group and one to one activities with several tutors. May include lab work, lectures and counselling too

In most forms of open learning, face to face tuition has a voluntary aspect; it is provided with the assumption that learners will want to use it. But do they in fact use it, and for how long and how often? There are also important managerial considerations for monitoring attendance, because buildings, rooms and salaries are costly resources to offer a group of learners. Does take-up justify provision? Could we increase take up if we re-organised provision, to better match learner convenience? These are important questions, particularly for providers like the OU which has not made tutorial attendance compulsory; although the value of face to face interaction and group tutorials is emphasised, it must still be possible to pass an OU course without having attended tutorials.

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have been allocated to them and are due to attend every Monday afternoon. It is also possible to generate a printout for every learner, showing all sessions attended, and total hours (figure 10). This enables the counsellor, or a clerical assistant to pick up all who have missed for more than, say, two weeks, (or a specified number of attendances), so that a follow-up letter can be sent, offering support and asking the learner to get in touch.

Figure 4.10: GCSE Mathematics: Learner Register

Name: MISTRY		Course: A3	
D of Birth: 30/10/51		Subject(s) Pure Maths. Applied Maths	
Reg Number: 7145313		Start Week No 07	
Attendance details as at 27.11.87		Week No	Sessions
		1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12	act/poss
Tue Eve 5.30-8.00		/ / / / / / / / / / / /	3/3 7.5/7.5
Thur Eve 5.30-8.00		/ / / / / / / / / / / /	3/3 7.5/7.5

Source: N. Dow, Mathematics Workshop, BiCC

Where learners are using flexi-study or distance learning options, it is more likely to be the tutor who records contact. South Manchester Community College uses a proforma similar to that shown in figure 2 chapter 5, which is provided in duplicate form to flexi-study tutors who complete and return the duplicate copy to the college on a monthly basis. The open learning staff transfer the information to a cumulative form for each tutor, and also onto a computerised learner database. These records are regularly checked by the Workshop Co-ordinator; if a tutor has no contact with a learner for two consecutive months, the co-ordinator sends the learner concerned a follow-up letter.

Each of these systems could be used to produce a cumulative total of actual versus possible attendances for all learners (in the case of workshops), and number and type of contact between learner and tutor, in the case of flexi-study. The Open University has undertaken a large number of studies of this kind for two main purposes: the first to ascertain the nature and distribution across the year of tutorial and counselling tasks; the second, to provide indicators of the efficiency with which face to face tuition has been provided and its effectiveness as a medium for teaching and learner support. I shall return to the value of attendance rates as indicators, but first we need to look more closely at the methods which can be used.

Monitoring attendance can take a variety of forms but is the basis of calculating usage and therefore must be done systematically

7 8 Open Learning and Evaluation

This is one of the features of 'openness', most obviously for those who are physically disabled, geographically isolated, or otherwise prevented from attending.

Reliable figures for learner attendance can only be gathered by a meticulous and systematic monitoring process. This is likely to require the co-operation of learners, clerical staff and tutors, depending on the system. In the case of a college-based workshop, the learner initiates a record of attendance which is collated and reviewed by clerical or tutorial staff. At the Bradford and Ilkley Community College (BiCC) Workshops for Mathematics and Communications, learners are asked on enrollment which sessions during the week they elect to attend. This information is entered onto the microcomputer database set up for the Workshops. A new printout is produced for each day of the week, listing the names and sessions of all those who ought to attend on that day. As each learner comes in, they sign for the appropriate session against their name and at the end of the week, all the registers are entered onto the learner database.

Figure 4.9: Session Register: Mathematics Workshop

Attendances for the first ten weeks by all learners electing for the Monday afternoon session

Counsellor	Student Registration Number	Part-time/ Full-time	Name (Alphabetical order)	Monday Afternoon										A* A/P
				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
ND	7099487	F	ALNASEER	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	etc
SH	7115180	F	BASHIR	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	10/10
ND	7071191	P	CHAN	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	4/9
PB	7126522	P	CLARKE	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	X 2/2
PB	709437A	P	CLOUGH	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	0 2/10

* - Attendance: Actual/Possible X - indicates withdrawn
Source: N. Dow, Mathematics Workshop, BiCC

Data can be taken off the database in various ways, for different purposes. Figure 9 shows a version of the printout of a cumulative register for the Monday afternoon session, showing all learners due for attendance at that session together with the number of attendances achieved out of the total possible (remembering that learners can register at any point during the year, after week one). This register would enable a counsellor scheduled to cover Monday afternoon sessions, to check the attendances of all learners who

and reliably. Collecting attendance data is only the beginning though, and a review of the findings of OU evaluation in this area will serve to indicate some of the pitfalls.

Some of these arise from differences in what has been measured. For example, two measures have been used most often, and they produce quite different rates. The first measure is the student user rate, that is the proportion of students who have used tutorials at least once on a course. Three major studies since 1976 have consistently produced a figure of around 60% of students who say they have used tutorials during the course studied. In 1979, a survey of 16000 students studying 91 courses produced findings shown in table 7 below.

Table 4.7: Student use of tuition

	Percentage of students making	
	Use	Extensive Use
Correspondence tutoring	90	31
Study Centre Tutorials	59	29
Telephone Tutorials	15	02
	Source: Grundin (1980)	

Similarly 63% of the post foundation students surveyed in 1983 said that they used tutorials, whether evening or Saturday morning sessions. However this survey also asked students to discriminate between different forms of tuition, and to say whether they were aware that a particular form of tuition was available to them. As table 8 shows, if we take this awareness into account in calculating percentage usage, rather higher figures result. Thus 75% of those

Table 4.8: Student reported usage of tutorials

Types of Tuition:	Col. 1 % aware of % using tutorial programme	Col. 2 ¹ % taking up the mode	Col. 3 ² % taking up option
	%	%	%
Day/half day schools	53	33	62
Evening (or Saturday equivalent) face-to-face tutorials	83	62	75
Individual face-to-face tutorials	11	6	55
Group telephone tutorials	6	2	33
Individual telephone tutorials	26	12	46
¹ base = all respondents			
² base = all in column 1			
	Kelly and Swift (1983)		

saying they knew about the programme of tutorials on their course attended one or more sessions.

The second common measure of attendance is the *rate of attendance* at each tutorial during a particular course presentation period, often presented as an average for the period as a whole. Rates of tutorial attendance measure different things from the student user *rate* — estimates of the proportion students who use tutorials — and there are important implications for the way these two indicators are used. If, for example, the 60% of students who stated they had attended one or more tutorials, only ever attended one, and that the first scheduled tutorial for the course, this would be vital information for those organising the tutorial programme — and for the tutor. The only way of checking this out is to measure attendance at each tutorial, using attendance records.

A number of such studies has been done by OU regional staff, who organise tutorial programmes annually and therefore need to monitor the extent to which a cohort of students is being 'reached' by their allocation of tutorial resources. These rates of tutorial attendance vary widely by course/faculty, by tutor and even by different years. The attendance rate also varies during the year and the first tutorial may often produce 90-100% attendance, with another peak before the examination being a common pattern. Again, the drop in attendance does vary by course, being noticeably less for example on some third level maths courses known to be very difficult. Overall averages of attendance for the whole year have been found of around 30% going up to 60%, — the higher figure taking into account dropout during course study. (Thorpe, 1983)

Apart from the need for care in specifying what has been measured, and in clarifying terminology, there is the question of the accuracy of the base on which percentages are measured. If a learner has dropped out, or is not actively pursuing a particular course, it would seem reasonable to exclude them from the total number of those doing a course and therefore considered eligible for tutorials. Tutorial attendance rates appear higher where the base has been adjusted in this way to account for drop-out. However it is not always easy to find out who is 'actively studying' and thus rates of attendance are best seen as approximations of more or less accuracy depending on how carefully they have been generated.

Apart from the difficulty of calculating accurate attendance rates, is the issue of how they are used as performance indicators. While they may offer an indicator of the efficiency of resource allocation, can they tell us anything at all about the educational effectiveness of tutorials or workshops? Unfortunately the existence of data on attendance can encourage an over-simple interpretation of their

meaning: 'high rates of attendance justify the provision of tuition, low rates justify cutting tuition'. Tutors themselves are likely to be very wary of these kinds of response, knowing as they do how many factors affect attendance on a specific occasion — only one of which, albeit important, is the quality of tuition they provide. And, if only five out of (say) 16 students attend a tutorial, but value what they get out of it, does that adequately justify provision? And what about the 11 non-attenders? Are they happy with the situation, or would they prefer some other kind of tutorial support?

There are no hard and fast rulings here; decisions can only be taken effectively in the light of local resources and learner needs. Nor is it argued that attendance data, though difficult to interpret, are not worth having. It is now possible to see in the OU that the same tutor, on the same course, operating the same tutorial programme, can get very different attendance rates from one year to the next (Thorpe, 1983). This is one reason why surveys of the preferences of students for particular locations and times of the week for tutorials can offer misleading data for designing future programmes so as to maximise attendance rates.

However, collecting evidence of attendance over several years or several course presentations can be useful because it establishes at least the upper and lower parameters of what can be expected. A fall in attendance rates then is likely to indicate the need for further investigation. It may be that the distribution of tutorials throughout the course clashes with other demands, like the cut-off date for submission of an assignment, so that some students who would otherwise attend choose not to do so. By re-scheduling the times or locations of tutorials, it may be possible to increase attendance and thus use staff resources more efficiently.

The performance that attendance rates do not measure directly of course, is that of the tutor. This requires qualitative evidence from students or colleagues or both. On first appointment, new OU part-time tutors are usually observed during a tutorial by a member of full-time regional staff, and all those tutoring at summer school are observed, whether new or experienced. At the Social Science Foundation Course Summer School, students are asked to complete a questionnaire (anonymously) on the performance of tutors with whom they have worked during periods of 9-12 hours each tutor. Tutor competences are listed (clarity of presentation, responsiveness to questions, handling discussion, and so on) and tutors are rated on a five point scale from 'excellent' to 'very weak'. Tutors are provided with the feedback on their own performance

evaluation is seen as important and worth taking into account. It may also help some students with strong negative reactions to express their feelings and to learn from the experience. This is also a useful mechanism for identifying weaknesses in the design of the summer school, and thus improving it for future students. (Bradshaw, 1987)

Tutor performance is one of the most difficult areas to evaluate and to develop subsequently, because the needs of learners are so varied and because the way one behaves as a tutor is so closely tied to personality factors. Any significant changes in behaviour require the tutor's voluntary commitment and a personal conviction that change is necessary. A positive step in that direction is the use by tutors themselves of some form of feedback from learners on the quality of tutorials they give, and if relevant, the helpfulness of their other functions, like assignment comments and telephone contact. Feedback forms can be handed out at the end of several sessions or when several assignments have been marked, and returned by learners anonymously. One format is to list a number of desirable characteristics of the tutoring concerned, and to ask the learner to rate the tutor against each one on a five point scale, as in figure 11. This example also includes a rating for the general importance of each item, so that the tutor can see how important a good or poor rating of one characteristic is likely to be to the learner.

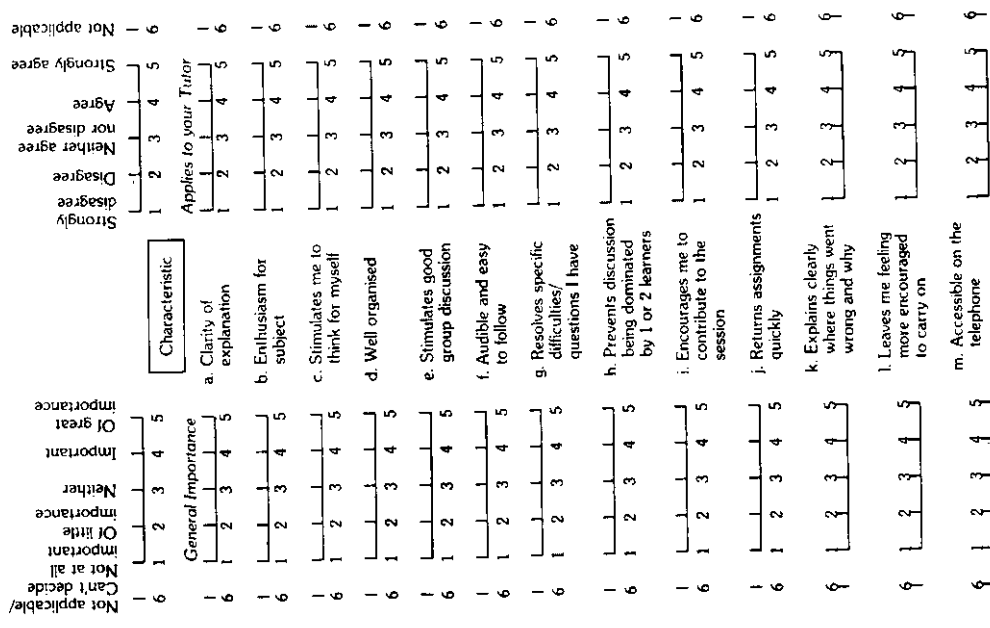
It is also useful to ask learners to complete ratings of this kind *before* tuition starts, as an indication of their expectations. In this case, additional items exploring their perceptions of themselves in the group context might also be helpful: for example —

- 'I find it very difficult to speak out in a group'
- 'I prefer groups of 3 or 4 to bigger groups'
- 'I can speak more easily when the tutor isn't there'
- 'I tend to keep quiet not to show my ignorance'
- and so on.

Even if feedback forms are not used, it can still generate thought provoking comments from learners to ask them how helpful they are finding the tuition provided. Three questions which can be used in discussion to pick up most of the responses in this area are:

Figure 4.11: Learner ratings of tutor competences

Learners can be asked to rate the importance of particular features of tuition in general, and the effectiveness of their tutor in relation to each one.



OU students have also been asked why they attend tutorials in general and, of the reasons shown in table 9, 'to meet my tutor and discuss course study matters' was chosen by 63% of all respondents. Of the reasons given for non-attendance, the 1983 survey notes the following:

The most common reasons respondents gave for not going to all the tutorial events for their course all related to personal factors: family, personal and work commitments. However, the second most frequent was distance/time spent getting there. Further, significant minorities did not attend because the potential value was too little relative to the time/money/effort involved or they preferred to spend their time on the units/assignments. Student decisions were also influenced by disappointing early tutorials on their course and by past experience of unhelpful tutorials.

Asked to assess their degree of satisfaction with the face-to-face tuition available to them on their course, 24% of respondents reported being fully satisfied, 32% satisfied but with reservations, 11% fairly dissatisfied, and 5% very dissatisfied. A further 23% had not attended any tutorials and 5% did not respond to the question.

Insufficient tutorials to cover the course adequately stood out as the most common cause for dissatisfaction with tutorials, 24% giving this as a reason.

(Kelly and Swift, 1983)

Table 4.9: Reasons for attending tutorials

	% for whom reason applied
To meet my tutor and discuss course/study matters	63
Help with difficult aspects of the course	51
To meet other students and discuss course/study related problems with them	50
To extend my understanding of the subject beyond the limits/scope of the units	45
Discussion and help with TMA's	44
To sustain my interest and motivation	40
Revision and preparation for exams	38
General support for studies	37
Experience of practical work/lab. sessions/computing	9*
Just because tutorials were provided	8

*These are a feature of only a small proportion of sessions.
Kelly and Swift (1983)

86	Open Learning and Evaluation	87	Tuition
<p>Conclusion</p> <p>This chapter has not provided a comprehensive account of all the media through which tuition can be provided; telephone tuition is especially important, audio tape can also be used, and computer conferencing offers an exciting technology which opens up the possibility of a very much greater communication between learner and tutor (Ryan, 1987, and Kaye, 1987). However, all three can be evaluated by drawing on existing knowledge of learner perceptions and use of the core tutor functions of face to face and correspondence teaching. And some of the clearest messages in the evaluation of tuition derive from learner perceptions of the general role and value of the tutor, irrespective of the medium through which particular functions are carried out.</p> <p>The effective evaluation of tuition requires, at minimum, regular monitoring of the quality of tuition offered all learners, and tutor evaluation of the quality of their own interaction with a particular group of learners. Direct tutor involvement in evaluation need not always require the tutor to invite written feedback from learners; it may take the form of meetings with learners to review their progress, or discussion with other tutors at staff development meetings. The essence of tuition should be its responsiveness to the learner, and that requires tutor self-evaluation, as well as system evaluation.</p>		<p>individual concerned. The report takes the form of a brief summary of evaluation of the staff development needs of open learning tutors, together with the staff development units produced out of the project: unit one — the concept of open learning, unit two — the initial meeting, and unit three — a continuing dialogue.</p> <p>Clarke, A., Colstello, M., Wright, T. (1984/5) <i>The Role of Tasks of Tutors in Open Learning Systems</i> Industrial Training Research Unit, Cambridge.</p> <p>A very useful typology of different systems for the provision of tuition and counselling, with detailed descriptions of the tutor role in particular. Twenty-seven open learning courses were surveyed, and five very different courses studied in depth.</p> <p>Rowlands, S., and N. (1986) <i>Into Open Learning</i> Open Learning Systems Ltd., 6 South Molton Street, London.</p> <p>Includes some useful formats for recording workshop loading, tutor/student contact sheet, student attendance record, counselling contacts and so on.</p>	
<p>Further reading</p> <p>Murgatroyd, S. (1980) What Actually Happens in Tutorials in Teaching at a Distance No 18.</p> <p>Summarises models of face to face teaching and presents analysis of tutor-student interaction in tutorials at the Open University. Teaching at a Distance: formerly published by the Open University and since 1986, replaced by Open Learning, published jointly with Longman. Both journals have many articles relevant to the tutor role and its evaluation. Contact Regional Academic Services, the Open University, Milton Keynes.</p> <p>Estell, G.R. (1986) <i>Staff Development for Open Learning Tutors</i>. Harrogate College of Arts and Technology co-ordinates a particularly 'open' form of open learning. 'OWTLET' accepts all enquirers irrespective of their learning goal and the period they have available for study, providing a tutor can be found, who selects any materials used and negotiates a learning programme with the</p>			