

# **Journey together through the three years:**

**An evaluation of the personal tutor system, a student support model embedded in a Bachelor of Nursing programme in New Zealand.**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree of**

**Doctorate in Education**

**at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand**

**Kathryn Maree Hoare**

**2015**

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

## **Abstract**

Student support is an important part of tertiary education with different models, systems and approaches used internationally and nationally. The personal tutor system is one such approach to student support embedded within a new Bachelor of Nursing curriculum in a New Zealand tertiary institution. Through the personal tutor system students were assigned a lecturer, an academic member of staff, at the commencement of their study, for the duration of their programme. The purpose of the personal tutor system was to offer students support with their academic development and personal guidance that involved: scheduled and ad hoc meetings; monitoring of progress; personal assistance; and directing some students to seek additional support.

Using a mixed methods design, the personal tutor system was evaluated at the time the first student cohort completed the new programme. The study focused on factors that influenced the personal tutor system experience. Third year students and lecturers were invited to participate in two-phase data collection that involved the completion of a questionnaire (third year students: n=86 and lecturers: n=19) followed by semi-structured interviews (third year students: n=38 and lecturers: n=10).

Most participants confirmed that their personal tutor system experience was positive. Interpersonal interaction between students and lecturers was a key factor, as relationships were central to the personal tutor system. Flexibility was important as the personal tutor system was not a one-size-fits-all approach to student support. At times, competing responsibilities gave rise to undue tension particularly with lecturers' availability and accessibility for support. Unfamiliarity with the personal tutor system guidelines led to different interpretations for use and consequently confusion with support expectations. However, almost all participants acknowledged the value and potential for the personal tutor system in the BN programme.

Recommendations for changes to the personal tutor system included: the creation a proportional co-ordination role for ongoing management; a review of the guidelines that linked to support resources; time integrated into the BN programme for flexible arrangements with meetings and contact; and a time allocation for lecturers' workload with resourcing for associated responsibilities.

## **Acknowledgements**

I want to express my sincere thanks to all the people, who have supported me during this study. My thanks to students and lecturers who participated in this research, without you, this study would not have been possible. Thanks also to my current and previous work colleagues in the School of Nursing, for your support.

To my academic supervisors, I am grateful for your different and complimentary skills and expertise. Thanks to Dr Linda Leach for your focused guidance and constructive suggestions that have been invaluable in the development of this work. Thanks to Dr Cat Pausé for your broader direction and helpful insights that directed and shaped this work.

My sincere thanks to incredible family, particularly my Mum and my daughter, and all the friends who have been with me from the start and amazingly are still present at the end. I am so grateful for your support, which has kept me going throughout.

Finally, I acknowledge my Dad, Francis (Frank) Hunter Hoare - (31 January 1931- 3 July 2010) who encouraged me to begin this journey. It has been a long and arduous, undulating trek to finally reach the summit. Dad, I wish you were here to share this moment, but in your absence, I guess I get to have a rare last word.



## Table of Contents

Chapter One: An Introduction to Student Support.....	1
A Personal Context .....	1
An Overview of the Global Context .....	2
The New Zealand Context .....	4
The Nursing Context.....	6
Innovation within a Bachelor of Nursing .....	9
An Evaluation of the Personal Tutor System .....	12
Statement of purpose .....	12
Structure of the thesis.....	13
Chapter Two: A Literature Review of the Personal Tutor System .....	15
A Brief History .....	15
The Literature.....	16
The Terminology .....	18
The Three Models .....	19
Purpose and Role .....	22
Makes Economic Sense .....	31
Summary and Conclusion.....	33
Chapter Three: The Research Design and Process.....	35
The Research Design .....	35
Mixed methods .....	35
Evaluation and research.....	39
Data collection and analysis.....	42
Ethical Considerations.....	49
The Research Process.....	53
Research participants.....	54
Phase one: Questionnaire development and data analysis.....	54
Phase two: Individual interviews and data analysis.....	58
Integration of findings.....	61
Conclusion .....	61

Chapter Four: Phase One Questionnaire Findings .....	63
Section One: Demographic Information .....	63
Section Two: Aims of the Personal Tutor System .....	66
Section Three: Policy and Guidelines .....	71
Section Four: Allocation, Communication and Time .....	75
Section Five: Meetings Arrangements and Availability .....	81
Section Six: Use of the Personal Tutor System .....	89
Section Seven: Student Support Options.....	93
Section Eight: Your Overall Experience .....	95
Conclusion .....	98
Chapter Five: Phase Two Interview Findings and Integration of Findings .....	99
Building Relationships: It's all to do with ... the way you relate .....	99
Flexible Engagement: There's no-one-size-fits-all approach .....	106
Supporting the Journey: Together through the three years.....	112
Integration of Findings: Putting it all together.....	124
Conclusion .....	128
Chapter Six: Major Factors Influencing the Personal Tutor System Experience.....	130
Relationships were Essential to the Personal Tutor System Experience .....	130
Flexibility was Integral to the Personal Tutor System Experience .....	134
Embedded Support Enhanced the Personal Tutor System Experience .....	140
Issues Related to Implementation were Important to the PTS Experience.....	145
Conclusion .....	151
Chapter Seven: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion.....	153
Summary of the Thesis.....	153
Research Recommendations.....	155
Issues and Limitations .....	160
Future Research .....	162
Conclusion .....	163
Final Personal Statement .....	165
References.....	166

## **List of Figures**

Figure 4.1. Percentage of student and lecturer respondents from the School of Nursing .....	63
Figure 4.2. Students' age at commencement of the BN .....	64
Figure 4.3. Students' highest academic achievement prior to BN.....	65
Figure 4.4. Length of lecturers' employment in education at this institution .....	66
Figure 4.5. Students' rating of personal tutor system in relation to aims .....	67
Figure 4.6. Lecturers' rating of personal tutor system in relation to aims .....	67
Figure 4.7. Students' rating of the personal tutor system guidelines.....	71
Figure 4.8. Lecturers' rating of the personal tutor system guidelines .....	71
Figure 4.9. Personal tutor system communication methods used .....	81
Figure 4.10. Students' year one personal tutor system meetings .....	82
Figure 4.11. Lecturers' year one personal tutor system meetings .....	83
Figure 4.12. Students' year two and three personal tutor system meetings .....	84
Figure 4.13. Lecturers' year two and three personal tutor system meetings .....	85
Figure 4.14. Initiation of additional meetings.....	88
Figure 4.15. Focus of personal tutor system discussions.....	89
Figure 4.16. Student use of the personal tutor system .....	91
Figure 4.17. Lecturers' experience of students' personal tutor system use.....	91
Figure 4.18. Support for Students with BN related matters .....	93
Figure 4.19. Lecturer referrals to wider institutional centralised services .....	94
Figure 4.20. Overall student and lecturer experience with the personal tutor system .....	96
Figure 4.21. Overall success of the personal tutor system for student support.....	96

## **List of Tables**

Table 3.1. Sequential two phase data collection .....	38
Table 3.2 Planned analysis of data, presentation and integration of findings. ....	47
Table 4.1. Lecturer time and number of meetings with each student each year.....	77
Table 4.2. Students number of meetings with PTS lecturers each year .....	77
Table 4.3. Lecturer time and number of additional meetings for students each year .....	78
Table 4.4. Reasons for change of personal tutor .....	79

## **Chapter One: An Introduction to Student Support**

This thesis is an evaluative study of the personal tutor system (PTS) developed for use in one Bachelor of Nursing (BN) curriculum in New Zealand. The PTS was embedded in a new, and arguably innovative, BN programme that moved to a student-centred learning philosophy where students were engaged as active participants in their study. Students were assigned a PTS lecturer, a member of the BN academic staff, at the commencement of their programme. It was envisaged this student-lecturer relationship would continue for the duration of students' enrolment in the three year programme. As a teaching and learning strategy, the purpose of the PTS was to offer students academic and personal support, direction, and guidance.

Student support is an important part of undergraduate nursing education in New Zealand. As students commence their BN a process of change begins that will be easier for some than others (Huyton, 2011). The nature of student support may be general or specific, it can involve development, direction or guidance for students in their programme (Kuh, 2008). The academic and personal support BN students receive as part of the programme and from the tertiary institution can influence their study experience.

In this introductory chapter an overview of the background and circumstances for this PTS evaluation will be presented. The broader context of student support in tertiary education, in New Zealand, and in particular in nursing education will be discussed. Finally, the research purpose, study questions, outline of the thesis, and brief summary of each chapter will be presented.

### **A Personal Context**

In my career as a nurse that spans over 25 years I have held various positions in the healthcare and educational settings. Over half my professional life has been in education working in Schools of Nursing as a lecturer with students in undergraduate programmes. There is an expectation within undergraduate BN programmes that students will be supported in both the academic and clinical healthcare settings. My nurse education roles and responsibilities have been clear when working with students in academic and clinical settings. What has been less clear are the ways to formally and informally support students as part of my lecturer role.

In the absence of a student support model, system or approach, my role has centred on the general context of education, with progression in academic and clinical BN papers as the primary drivers. Interactions with student in the academic and clinical contexts were within set periods of time. Individual interactions with students were limited. As a lecturer responsible for a particular group of students this most often related to an academic and clinical BN paper for time periods ranging from four weeks to four months, and student groups varying in size from 30 to over 100 in lectures, 10-30 in tutorials and 10 or more on clinical placements throughout the region. Student-lecturer interactions and support opportunities outside the classroom or clinical contexts were also limited. Student support remained focused upon programme requirements. The occasion to support students was restricted except in the sense of academic and clinical paper achievement or overall programme completion. While student support continued as an expectation, it was vague. In short, student support was unclear and not a formalised part of my lecturer role and responsibilities.

The introduction of a formal system of student support, in this case the PTS, reframed student support expectations within the School of Nursing. The PTS in the context of the BN curriculum became important for student support as each lecturer, including myself, had responsibility for an assigned group of students throughout their degree. Embedding the PTS in the BN programme created an opportunity for a formalised support relationship with students. The PTS allowed for ongoing student interactions through academic development and personal support for the duration of their enrolment. However, as an innovation, PTS implementation within the context of the BN programme was not necessarily a straightforward process.

## **An Overview of the Global Context**

That students require support and are supported within their curriculum is a well-established view that has existed since the inception of tertiary education and globally stimulates ongoing discussion and debate (Gillespie, 2003). Support remains important with widening participation that increased the number of students enrolled in tertiary education and correspondingly the growth of diversity within student communities, in particular those from non-traditional backgrounds (Shaffer, 2014; Tinto, 1998; Warren, 2002). Widening participation strategies have generated a greater range of students in their age, sex, culture, ethnicity, English as a second language (ESOL), disabilities, minority representation and varied

educational backgrounds that includes first generation enrolments (Tinto, 2014; Warren, 2002). As student communities have changed, with a combination of traditional and non-traditional students, so does the requirement for tertiary education to remain responsive to their emergent needs (Tinto, 2014). The mandate is for tertiary institutions to provide support responsive to students' changing needs.

Student support is a priority across a number of countries, including the United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand (Warren, 2002). However, increasingly institutions have to manage student support within a tertiary educational context that is fiscally restrained (Earwaker, 1992). Tertiary institutions endeavour to keep pace with student diversity and their evolving support needs as they are confronted by the financial constraints of education (Earwaker, 1992; Shaffer, 2014; Tinto, 2014). The challenge then becomes integrating support that is cost-effective and responsive to students' needs (Purnell, Rodriguez-Kiino, & Schiorring, 2014).

Tertiary institutions respond to their student support responsibility, as many support models, systems and approaches have been introduced (Prebble et al., 2005; Zepke, Leach, & Prebble, 2006). As the body of student support literature continues to grow, no preferred option exists (Zepke et al., 2006). With consideration for the different tertiary institutional contexts, conceivably there may never be one model, system or approach favoured. Institutions will favour different distinctions of student support that can be separate to or integrated within programmes (Warren, 2002). Institutions will determine the option most responsive to support the needs of their student communities in accordance with their educational context (Shaffer, 2014). With reference to institutional differences, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, and Whitt (2005) found increasingly there are shared understandings that surround student support. Stewart (2010) discusses these similarities together with the differences of support needs, drawing comparisons in students' experiences of "bumps in their educational road" (para. 9) related to academic and personal issues that require comparable support for resolution.

Mobilising collective student support insights was the impetus behind a review completed by the National Academic Advising Association [NACADA] (2006) of the many educational, institutional student support philosophies and definitions. From this review NACADA (2006) developed a concept of student support with three pillars that were common to many philosophies and definitions. The three pillars relate to: the curriculum as it pertains to support; the pedagogy of how support is accomplished; and educational outcomes that result

in achievement through student support (NACADA, 2006). This concept of student support was intended to provide a reference point and potentially some clarity and consistency across different tertiary contexts (NACADA, 2006; Stewart, 2010). However following from NACADA (2006), in 2011 two key findings emerged from an extensive literature review completed by Purnell et al. (2014). First, Purnell et al. (2014) found student support is a required part of students daily experience and second, it is necessary to include in the overall curriculum. Students require recognised support, not as an optional extra but, rather, an established part of the programme (Johnston, McLean, & Lang, 1998; Owen, 2002). Support is important to the student experience and their programme (Purnell et al., 2014).

With consideration for NACADA's (2006) concept and Purnell et al.'s (2014) views, student support has become an established expectation of institutions and programmes with teaching and learning strategies. Student support may be all-encompassing and relate to any direction or matters associated to the programme (Kuh, 2008). Student support can involve advice, guidance, counsel/counselling, insight, discipline, information, and instruction (Gordon & Habley, 2000; Kuh, 2008). This broader understanding acknowledges all staff associated with the academic programme can be involved with student support. However, specific student support would come from the programme, faculty, and institutions' centralised services. Faculties and programmes increasingly offer student support in conjunction with the institution's centralised academic or student services (Gordon & Habley, 2000). Student support then becomes the responsibility of all staff involved with students in their academic programme.

## **The New Zealand Context**

Student support is a recognised responsibility of tertiary institutions and programmes in New Zealand. In 2003 the New Zealand Ministry of Education distributed for national consultation, a discussion document entitled: Student Support in New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2003). The purpose of this discussion document was to develop a shared understanding for student support systems within tertiary education. The priorities focused on the continuation of participation strategies in tertiary education and involved an in-depth discussion on sustainable funding. The Ministry of Education then expanded their focus to consider a broader understanding of student support with a commissioned a report that centred on



student support services, academic professional development programmes, and achievement in tertiary education.

The Ministry of Education's (2005) report had two clearly defined parts. The first part of the report drew attention to the "effect of support practices on student outcomes" (Prebble et al., 2005, p. ix) and the requirement for tertiary institutions to remain committed to student support. Findings in the first part of the report confirmed that there was no preferred model or system and summarised qualities for successful student support services for which there were two main approaches were identified. The first approach was assimilation, which was predominant and widely accepted. Assimilation approaches support students to integrate into the culture of tertiary institutions to effect achievement of outcomes (Prebble et al., 2005). With increased student diversity, assimilation alone was no longer considered adequate as the sole approach to support students (Prebble et al., 2005). The second approach focused on adaptation, a process by which institutions themselves change to accommodate the support needs of their student communities (Prebble et al., 2005). Adaptive approaches, focused on institutional change to better meet students' needs. With adaptive support, students develop through the realisation of their individual capability with a view to lifelong learning (Prebble et al., 2005; Warren, 2002). Adaptive support is increasingly employed in tertiary institutions and programmes that embody the notion of a student-centred approach. The student support approaches identified by Prebble et al., (2005) are not mutually exclusive and while these can be separate, semi-integrated or integrated within programmes, in combination may be more responsive than when used separately (Warren, 2002).

The second part of the Ministry of Education's commissioned report explored the role of professional development for academic staff in relation to student support in tertiary institutions (Prebble et al., 2005). Professional development of academic staff was understandably directed toward teaching and learning strategies related to the classroom. Prebble et al. (2005) found there was a general lack of attention toward student support as part of such development. More specifically it has been documented in New Zealand there is an absence of professional development for academic staff related to student support in tertiary institutions (Prebble et al., 2005). Gordon and Habley's (2000) review of student support also reported that a lack of professional development was one of the "weakest links" (p. 42) in tertiary education. According to Gordon and Habley (2000) further examination of teaching and learning practices for student support is needed in the tertiary education sector. Prebble et al. (2005) concluded further research is required to understand whether support

provided by tertiary institutions and faculty enabled students to progress through to the successful programme completion, particularly when students were faced with challenges.

Since these reports were published, there have been major changes in the tertiary education sector and with funding arrangements that have reduced the income of tertiary institutions in New Zealand. The initial priority for tertiary education funding has changed. In this fiscally constrained environment, the Ministry of Education (2014) tertiary education strategy remains focused on students experiencing “an inclusive tertiary education system that supports achievement” (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 12). Widening participation remains part of tertiary education strategies, with limited focus on students’ academic and personal support requirements. While the Ministry of Education (2014) identifies pastoral or personal support for particular groups, specifically Māori and Pasifika<sup>1</sup> students, there is no indication of a similar commitment to support others, such as non-traditional or first-generation students. It would be surprising if this was an indication that the priority for student support in tertiary education was shifting. Intrinsic within the Education Act 1989, is reference to the education sector’s responsibilities for all aspects of non-academic support students may require (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, 2013). The importance of support, both academic and personal, has been emphasised by the Ministry of Education and through the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

## **The Nursing Context**

The particular group of tertiary students that is the focus of this inquiry are those who enrolled in BN programmes. While nursing degrees share many characteristics of other tertiary programmes there are also some key differences which suggest that student support is of particular importance to student nurses.

Recognising the complexity of the BN was in part the rationale and focus for the Ministerial Taskforce on Nursing report (Ministry of Health, 1998), that was followed by an independent review of undergraduate nursing education commissioned by the Nursing Council of New Zealand in 2001 (KPMG Consulting, 2001). The Nursing Council of New Zealand is the national regulatory nursing organisation in New Zealand (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2014). The

---

<sup>1</sup> The New Zealand Ministry of Education (2014) is focused on strengthening support to improve the opportunities and outcomes for Māori and Pasifika students in tertiary education who are currently under-represented.

result of these reviews was the 2002 revision of Education Programme Standards for the Registered Nurse Scope of Practice, that were revised and updated in 2014 (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2014). Review recommendations included the need for BN programmes to use support approaches that are appropriate and flexible within education, and responsive to students' changing needs (KPMG Consulting, 2001). Support needs to build on previous student success in programmes with strengthened links to the wider institutions' centralised services. With consideration for diversity, in particular those who identify as being of Māori and Pacific decent, the expectation for undergraduate nurse education was that all students would receive support to promote successful programme completion through teaching and learning strategies, services and resources that were accessible and available (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2014).

Undergraduate BN students have both academic and clinical competency programme requirements alongside demonstrating an understanding of cultural safety. Clinical competencies are professional standards of practice set and monitored by the Nursing Council (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2014). Working within the legislative framework of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (2003), the Nursing Council provides oversight for the nursing profession that sets standards for undergraduate nursing education programmes in New Zealand. On completion of the BN and with endorsement by their Head of School, students apply to the Nursing Council for acceptance as a candidate to enter nursing's national State Final Examination<sup>2</sup> in order to demonstrate competence and become a registered nurse.

Clinical practice, with the associated competency requirements, adds complexity to the programme (Litchfield, 2001; Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2014). In addition to the academic curriculum BN students are required to complete up to 1500 hours of clinical practice across a range of settings over the three years of the BN programme (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2014). These clinical environments include both community and hospital settings, in the areas of aged care, medical, surgical, paediatric, mental health, and primary health care. Clinical practice experiences are frequently facilitated across wide-geographical regions that necessitates travel and accommodation arrangements, with associated costs often borne by students. Additionally, students' clinical practice experience often requires the commitment of a 40 hour week, undertaking shift-work of eight to 10 hour days (or shifts) that

---

<sup>2</sup> State Final Examination: At the completion of a BN programme students are required to sit and pass the Nursing Council State Final Examination to establish competence and safety to practice as a registered nurse.

may be rostered throughout a 24 hour period and rotate to extend over a seven day week (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2014). This clinical experience represents the work environment in which nursing graduates will be employed.

Students' involvement with patients, their family, and significant others are an important part of clinical practice. This experience can be complex and intense as is highlighted in the definition of nursing from the International Council of Nurses:

Nursing encompasses autonomous and collaborative care of individuals of all ages, families, groups and communities, sick or well and in all settings. Nursing includes the promotion of health, prevention of illness, and the care of ill, disabled and dying people. Advocacy, promotion of a safe environment, research, participation in shaping health policy and in patient and health systems management, and education are also key nursing roles (2015, p. para. 1)

These intense interpersonal interactions represent the nature of nursing and may be particularly demanding for students within the BN as they learn to manage life and death situations. Beyond simply learning about nursing, students learn to become a nurse (School of Nursing, 2008a).

Unique to the socio-political context of nursing in New Zealand, are the concepts of cultural safety, the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi<sup>3</sup> and Māori health (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2011; Ramsden, 2002). The Nursing Council require the incorporation of these within undergraduate BN curriculum and application in clinical practice as requisite competencies (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2011, 2014). Cultural safety in nurse education is “the understanding of self as a cultural bearer; the historical, social and political influences on health; and the development of relationships that engender trust and respect” (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2011, p. 5). Students are required to develop their nursing practice in a manner that patients determine to be culturally safe and demonstrate an ability to apply the principles of partnership, participation and protection that embody the Treaty of Waitangi/Te Tiriti O Waitangi, inherent to Māori health and positive health outcomes (Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2011). As core Nursing Council competencies in BN programmes, students have historically struggled to understand and demonstrate competency within practice. The integration for most nursing students takes time, requires personal reflection and can be a

---

<sup>3</sup> Treaty of Waitangi/ Te Tiriti O Waitangi: New Zealand's founding document was to be a partnership between Māori and the British Crown. Although intended to create unity, different understandings and breaches have caused conflict. From the 1970s efforts to honour the treaty and its principles expanded. <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/treaty-of-waitangi>

challenging process. Cognisant of this extra complexity in BN programmes, support for students enables the process of self-reflection and personal growth.

In addition to these complexities, in New Zealand, nursing and other applied degrees can extend beyond the standard academic year, starting earlier and finishing later than other tertiary programmes. Other applied programmes may have intense academic and practice requirements or national examinations, but few have both. The complexity of BN programmes means non-nursing literature, while relevant, has limitations (Litchfield, 2001).

## **Innovation within a Bachelor of Nursing**

Understanding the context of tertiary and nurse education in New Zealand was part of the motivation for a School of Nursing to develop a new BN curriculum with the first student cohort commencing in 2009. Academic staff selected from within the School of Nursing, formed a working group to develop the new BN programme. The opportunity to write a new programme was both exciting and challenging as it invited critical exploration of different approaches to the BN's underpinning philosophy, theoretical approaches, clinical practice, assessment processes and student support. Decisions on the BN's theoretical approach and underpinning philosophy together with teaching and learning strategies were made by the working group. School of Nursing lecturing staff and student representatives along with the BN stakeholder groups were consulted on, and informed of programme decisions and invited to offer comment throughout the process.

The BN curriculum was founded on the educational philosophies of student-centred learning, an individualised approach to learning as students transition through the programme, together with the framework of Benner (1984), novice to expert for the incremental and structured development of nursing competence (Benner, 1984; School of Nursing, 2008a). In accordance with this programme's educational philosophies, the PTS, as a model for student support, was embedded in the BN programme. The PTS complemented the student-centred learning approach through acknowledging students as individuals with appreciation for their collective diversity. Accordingly the PTS supported academic and personal development that corresponds to the incremental progression of students' transition through the programme emphasised by Benner's (1984) framework.

Student-centred learning focuses on developing independence and self-motivation toward lifelong learning. Foundational to student-centred learning is knowledge acquisition using students' unique individual experiences. Principle to student-centred learning, is rather than students relying on the transmission of information through others, they construct their own knowledge (L. Young & Paterson, 2007). Education, with student-centred learning commences as new information began to construct a new understanding. New knowledge inevitably changes students. The School of Nursing (2008a) intended that, in partnership with lecturers, students would be supported to determine their learning needs and maximise the opportunity to meet these in the programme. Students would be respected as individuals and this respect translates to their nursing practice as knowledge and skills are applied within clinical context (School of Nursing, 2008a).

The PTS was considered an appropriate model for student support in the context of the new BN programme. Research into BN programmes operated elsewhere shows that, combined with student-centred learning, the PTS, encourages students to develop lifelong learning skills for professional practice through facilitated reflection and evaluation (Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006). It was expected the PTS would strengthen the position of lecturers to enhance the student learning experience and support achievement of programme outcomes through relationships that conveyed mutual respect and trust (Jeffreys, 2007; School of Nursing, 2008a). Phillips (1994) describes the PTS as "...an effective teaching/learning strategy, contributing to the emergence of an autonomous, accountable practitioner on qualification and registration" (p. 217).

Lecturers in their PTS role ensured the availability of support for all students with their academic development and personal needs. The PTS guidelines developed in 2008 were circulated to lecturers within the School of Nursing. The guidelines offered an overview of the PTS, rationale for use and direction for lecturers in their new student support role. First year BN support was considered a priority as students develop skills to manage academic and clinical programme requirements within the context of their life commitments (Evans, 2012; Gilchrist & Rector, 2007; School of Nursing, 2008a).

Students have an allocated PTS lecturer as they commence the BN programme and this relationship continued through the three-years (School of Nursing, 2008b). PTS allocations were to consider student demographic information and background such as age, sex, ESOL and educational experience (School of Nursing, 2008b). Lecturers' PTS student allocations were pro

rata with their employment equivalence (either full-time or part-time) along with other School of Nursing responsibilities that have allotted time (School of Nursing, 2008b).

The PTS guidelines required lecturers to contact and meet students at the beginning of their programme. The initial contact was planned in the first week during students induction into the BN programme (School of Nursing, 2008b). Lecturers were to arrange the first of two compulsory meetings early in semester one, with the second meeting to be scheduled at the beginning of semester two, and thereafter negotiated according to individual needs (School of Nursing, 2008b).

In their PTS role lecturers were to monitor students' academic progress through the programme, support with any personal matters or issues, and direct to centralised services for assistance when necessary (School of Nursing, 2008a). PTS support did not replace or replicate the institution's centralised services; rather the aim was to strengthen links as lecturers direct students to particular support as required. The PTS was to be the first point of contact for students who wished to contact a lecturer for any reason. The student-lecturer PTS relationship would continue for the duration of a student's enrolment in the undergraduate programme. Through the PTS, both academic and personal student support became a recognised part of lecturers' roles and responsibilities (Phillips, 1994).

The premise of the PTS was to facilitate a negotiated partnership to foster student empowerment (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006; Gidman, Humphreys, & Andrews, 2000; Phillips, 1994). The PTS emphasised the negotiated balance between support, direction and guidance to promote autonomy and independence (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006; Gidman et al., 2000; Phillips, 1994). Researchers Por and Barriball (2008) and Dobinson-Harrington (2006) argue the PTS can be a fulfilling role however demanding at times, given the diversity of nursing cohorts, complexity of student needs, and increased professional educational expectations. The PTS used within this BN programme was a combination of the pastoral and professional support models (Earwaker, 1992). Those models will be subject to elaboration as part of the PTS literature review in chapter two.

## **An Evaluation of the Personal Tutor System**

The PTS as a model of student support is well recognised within the United Kingdom tertiary education in nursing (Bramley, 1977; Gidman et al., 2000; Phillips, 1994). However the PTS is unfamiliar to nursing education in New Zealand. The PTS appeared to complement the BN philosophies of student-centred learning and Benner's (1994) description of the transition from novice to expert. Nevertheless it has yet to be determined how the PTS, either in its entirety or a modified form, transfers to New Zealand nursing education and the context of this BN curriculum. This evaluation arose from the need to understand the influence of the PTS for students and lecturers within the context of this BN programme and this is what initially drew my attention. As a researcher I was interested to understand the PTS experience of students and lecturers.

Muir (2008) and Rossi, Lipsy and Freeman, (2004) maintain that change to a new or existing programme, that includes a new or different intervention or innovation requires evaluation in order to establish whether the desired outcome has been fully or partially achieved. Programmes, in this instance, the PTS, commonly rely on anecdotal or informal evaluations, such as feedback from students and lecturers. Embedding the PTS presented an opportunity to formalise evaluation beyond the anecdotal and use research as a systematic approach for inquiry. Results from the research were keenly anticipated as this was an opportunity to discern whether a student support system adopted from nursing programmes in the United Kingdom translated to nursing education in New Zealand for students and lecturers in this BN.

### **Statement of purpose**

The purpose of this study is to evaluate the PTS in the context of this BN programme from the perspective of students and lecturers in this School of Nursing in New Zealand. Through evaluation research factors that influence students' and lecturers' PTS experiences may be understood. Evaluation research has distinguishing features that include recommendations for ongoing development (Muir, 2008; Polit & Beck, 2012). It was anticipated that while this evaluation would contribute to the existing body of literature, the research is primarily intended to inform this particular BN programme. It was not intended to extrapolate findings beyond this BN programme. However it was expected that there may be relevance for other educational contexts.



### ***The research question***

What factors influence students' and lecturers' experience of the personal tutor system?

### ***Associated research questions:***

1. What were students' and lecturers' experiences of the PTS?
2. What factors enable or impede students' and lecturers' involvement with the PTS?
3. To what extent do the PTS guidelines and processes facilitate or obstruct the students' and lecturers' experience?
4. To what extent has the PTS facilitated students' and lecturers' knowledge and use of centralised services and support external to the institution?

### **Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is presented as seven chapters, the first of which has been an introduction that outlined the background and context for the research along with the circumstances that led to the evaluation of the PTS. In chapter two the literature review notes the paucity of relevant research and publications.

Mixed methods evaluation research was selected to answer the research question. In chapter three the reasons for this selection are discussed together with the explanation of the research design and process. This mixed methods evaluation used sequential two phase data collection. Research participants were third year student nurses and lecturers in the BN programme who were part of the PTS. Phase one data collection involved the completion of questionnaires followed by phase two semi-structured interviews. The difference in student and lecturer participant numbers in phase one (students: n=86 and lecturers: n=19) and phase two (students: n=38 and lecturers: n=10) means the students' experience is somewhat foregrounded in the data presentation.

Chapters four and five present the findings of the study. Phase one questionnaire findings are presented in chapter four and relate to the PTS guidelines and delivery in the BN. Chapter five presents students' and lecturers' PTS experience with key findings identified from the phase two interviews. Chapter five concludes with an integration of phase one and two findings.

Central to the discussion in chapter six are the four major factors that influenced to students' and lecturers' PTS experience.

Chapter seven begins with a summary of the thesis which is followed by recommendations for the PTS development. The limitations of the study are presented together with suggestions for future research. The broader context of student support within education and nursing draws this inquiry to a conclusion.

Chapter two now follows with a brief history of the PTS. Different systems, models and approaches are outlined together with the PTS student support role in tertiary education and nursing.

## **Chapter Two: A Literature Review of the Personal Tutor System**

The personal tutor system (PTS) has been used extensively throughout the United Kingdom in the disciplines of medicine, teaching, engineering and is considered valuable for supporting students in tertiary institutions (Thomas, 2015). However, despite the ubiquity of the PTS various models and approaches in the United Kingdom, published research is scant. In 1977, Bramley noted that virtually no PTS publications existed. Fifteen years later Wheeler and Birtle (1993) reported there was minimal availability of PTS literature. Laylock (2009) confirmed the paucity of literature on the topic has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. That there are a small number of publications may, in part, result from the PTS being a feature distinctive to tertiary education in the United Kingdom, some tertiary institutions in Ireland and a few in Western Europe. Consequently, the PTS literature reviewed in this chapter is drawn predominantly from undergraduate tertiary education research conducted in the United Kingdom.

The search for PTS literature is complicated by the fact that, in common with other applied and vocational degree programmes, nursing has different requirements to other undergraduate qualifications. In this respect, general PTS literature has limitations (Kevern & Webb, 2004; Litchfield, 2001). For this thesis the PTS, its purpose, and the complexity of PTS lecturer roles are discussed with consideration for the context of nursing education.

In any research field with limited literature, variations in terminology, models and approaches arise. The PTS literature is no different. This chapter first overviews the PTS history, and then reviews the nature of PTS research with consideration given to the terminology and language associated with the PTS. Following consideration of the terminology, the chapter provides an outline of the three models associated with the PTS, discusses the economic value, and explores the various roles filled by the PTS. The literature around the complex nature of the roles and responsibilities of the PTS is reviewed, and the particular functions of the PTS in nursing programmes are explored.

### **A Brief History**

The PTS in tertiary education originated during medieval times in elite institutions in the United Kingdom when tutors (lecturers) were in-loco-parentis for students in their programme of study. (Earwaker, 1992; Huyton, 2011). Students were usually the sons of the aristocracy

and young when they moved from home to attend tertiary education. Lecturers would monitor and advise students, support their academic development and provide moral guidance and direction (Grant, 2006; Shaffer, 2014). This PTS approach continued until the 1970s with tertiary institutions and lecturers responsible for students until they became legally adult at the age of 21 (Grant, 2006).

Through the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century government policies in the United Kingdom widened access to tertiary education which increased student numbers and diversity within institutions (Earwaker, 1992). At the same time changes to funding meant less monetary contribution came from central government. Tertiary institutions had to contend with increased financial pressure that often resulted in higher student-to-lecturer ratios and an educational context very different to the one for which the PTS was originally developed. However, the requirement for student support continued with considerable modification in emphasis given the changing complexities and student diversity of the contemporary tertiary education context (Earwaker, 1992; Grant, 2006).

Many tertiary institutions in the United Kingdom addressed the challenge of the changing educational context by maintaining a commitment to the PTS in programmes. Centralised student support services, an approach in the United Kingdom that dates back to the early 1900s, also continued to be provided. Lecturers in their PTS role encouraged students to use centralised support, by directing them to specific services. Centralised services offered support for students, such as career guidance or professional counselling, and academic development beyond lecturers' PTS support role (Grant, 2006). This shared approach to student support remains a feature of tertiary education in the United Kingdom (Grant, 2006; Lago & Shipton, 1994).

## **The Literature**

An initial literature search from 1990 onwards of nursing publications in the databases of Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Cochrane, EBSCOhost health, Google Scholar, Medline, Scopus and Web of Science was undertaken. The primary search terms used were: personal tutor, student support, nursing, nurse education, higher education and tertiary education in various combinations. This search produced fewer than 25 publications specific to the PTS and less than 25 related publications included PTS commentary

on the role or as an approach to student support within their programme. The primary focus of these related articles was directed to other matters such as student stress, attrition, or retention.

As a result, the search was widened to include all personal tutor publications related to any aspect of the system. This included any literature that detailed PTS development, models for use, roles and responsibilities, and research on the strengths and limitations of the PTS in programmes and tertiary education. No timeframe was defined. In addition, the databases Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), British Library Electronic Theses Online Service (EToS), and ProQuest were accessed. Extending the search increased the number of PTS publications to over 50. With the additional related literature that included some PTS discussion, the number of publications more than doubled. However, the PTS literature remains limited with sparse research available.

The studies accessed were primarily qualitative (Bassett, Gallagher, & Price, 2014; Dobinson-Harrington, 2006; Gardner & Lane, 2010; Gibbons, Dempster, & Moutray, 2008; Gidman et al., 2000), with many being exploratory (Hamshire, Willgoss, & Wibberley, 2012; Last & Fulbrook, 2003; Litchfield, 2001; Rhodes & Jinks, 2005; Ross, Head, King, Perry, & Smith, 2014; Stephen, O'Connell, & Hall, 2008). Some studies used a mixed method approach (Braine & Parnell, 2011; Malik, 2000; Newton & Smith, 1998; Sayer, Colvin, & Wood, 2002; P. Young, Glogowska, & Lockyer, 2007) and a few publications utilised quantitative methods (Cottrell, McCrorie, & Perrin, 1994; Sosabowski et al., 2003). Most studies used self-reported data and two also included document analysis (Por, 2008; Richardson, 1998). There were two literature reviews (Gidman, 2001; Laylock, 2009), five books (Bramley, 1977; Earwaker, 1992; Lago & Shipton, 1994; Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006; Wheeler & Birtle, 1993) and some chapters that focused on the PTS within broader educational publications (Marr & Aynsley-Smith, 2006; Quinn & Hughes, 2007; Wisker, Exley, Antoniou, & Ridley, 2008). The PTS literature also included reflections (Kay, 2011; Watts, 2011a), commentaries (Attwood, 2009; Evans, 2012; Raisbeck, 2012; Stanley & Manthorpe, 1999; Taylor, 2002) and discussion papers (Hughes, 2004; Phillips, 1994; Watts, 2011a).

## The Terminology

Although the terminology and language associated with the PTS appears relatively consistent, there are differences related to the various models, with different titles and specific roles and responsibilities (Harrington, 2004; Wheeler & Birtle, 1993). Terminology and language variations were anticipated and encountered as different PTS models exist and have been modified in response to changes in tertiary education and student support requirement within programmes (Earwaker, 1992). This brings into question conceptual congruence when the PTS literature is reviewed as inconsistencies in terminology creating confusion. Variations may result in ambiguity with terminology, language and assumptions made about understandings (Neary, 2000).

Wheeler and Birtle (1993) found terms historically associated with the PTS included moral tutor, welfare tutor, and course tutor. Phillips (1994) suggested that as characteristics of facilitation have been attributed to the PTS, personal facilitator would be an appropriate term. More recently, personal tutors were referred to as personal supervisors (Litchfield, 2001) and personal advisers (Grant, 2006). Personal tutor titles have also been modified to reflect particular student support responsibilities. Since 2006 Ross et al. (2014) have used the terms personal development tutors and personal development system when personal development plans were integrated in their programme. Ross et al. (2014) explained the personal development system meant lecturers, along with academic and personal PTS responsibilities, also supported students to achieve their personal development plans. Laylock (2009) advocates for a name and role change to personal development tutors in order to focus on the developmental aspect of the PTS support role to promote students' academic and personal independence.

The PTS remains intrinsic to student support in the United Kingdom with further variations in terminology and language that arise from the use of different models and approaches. The PTS is referred to variously as a model, a framework, a system, a scheme, and an approach (Owen, 2002). Neary (2000) advises caution when considering language modification as this adds to the challenge of eliciting a clear understanding of the PTS. However, the PTS and the language used continues to be revised and modified in response to ongoing changes in tertiary education and the needs of students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006).

For consistency in terminology throughout this thesis the terms personal tutor system (PTS), PTS lecturer and personal tutor are used. The PTS relates to the system of student support while the expression PTS lecturer and personal tutor refers to lecturers' PTS roles and responsibilities.

## **The Three Models**

Earwaker (1992) identified three PTS models: the traditional pastoral model, the professional services model, and the integrated curriculum model. Each model has distinct strengths and limitations, and is influenced by educational changes in the United Kingdom. The selection of a PTS model as part of an undergraduate programme is directed by the philosophy underpinning that programme (Huyton, 2011). Some programmes favour a proactive approach whereas others are reactive. Lecturer interactions and interventions may be structured or unstructured; the focus may be on interpersonal relations or orientated in directing students to professional services (centralised services); and the PTS system may have greater or lesser integration within the programme (Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006; Warren, 2002). Whatever approach is used, the purpose of the PTS in providing student support remains constant (Earwaker, 1992; Laylock, 2009).

### ***The pastoral model***

The pastoral or Oxbridge model was the original PTS model, and continues as the most commonly used approach to student support in United Kingdom (Owen, 2002). This traditional model assigns students to a specific lecturer who offers academic guidance and pastoral support from the commencement of their programme (Wheeler & Birtle, 1993). While support is integrated within the programme, this model tends to be semi-structured or unstructured as students tend to access the PTS as required. This flexibility is a recognisable characteristic of the pastoral model with some students using the PTS more than others. Huyton (2011) notes that lecturers and students may be more proactive or responsive with guidance and support, depending on their interpretation and use of the pastoral model. Students with specific needs may be directed to centralised services. Thomas and Hixenbaugh (2006) report some lecturers are better at using this model than others as Stephen et al. (2008) found some lecturers were laissez-faire in their approach. An unstructured approach works well for some students but less so for those who may lack confidence or be reluctant to approach lecturers. When

students experience issues that affect their programme Owen (2002) and York and Thomas (2003) found that a more structured pastoral model, with clearer guidelines and regular meetings that focus on programme objectives, was beneficial as access was less dependent on students' and lecturers' schedules.

### ***The professional model***

In contrast to the pastoral model, the professional model is characterised by lecturers' referral of students to designated professional staff who are trained to undertake these full-time roles (Owen, 2002). Once again, students are allocated a lecturer for the duration of their programme. However, unlike the pastoral model, in the professional model students who approach their personal tutor are immediately referred to the institution's centralised services. Staff within the institution's centralised services provide professional and specialised advice such as career guidance, academic skills, professional counselling, housing and finance assistance, disability support, and help from welfare rights workers (Grant, 2006; Laylock, 2009).

Thomas and Hixenbaugh (2006) discuss that the professional model appears more reactive as students are more likely to approach PTS lecturers and access centralised services in response to an issue. When the professional model is used in this way there may be limited possibilities for proactive student' support with academic and personal development. In contrast Huyton (2011) it was suggested that the professional model maintains a proactive focus as PTS lecturers continue to work with students to develop, support them to self-reflect, manage and prevent issues. As with all PTS models, the professional model is open to individual interpretation as the approach of some students' and PTS lecturers' allows for developmental support. The professional model is often used in combination with the pastoral model within a programme (Huyton, 2011).

Some tertiary institutions have developed the professional model into a shared approach of 'one-stop-shops' where professional advisers are based within academic departments (Marr & Aynsley-Smith, 2006). However, Moriarty (2009) discusses that, while professional advisers are specialists in the broader context of education, they are unlikely to have particular knowledge related to programmes. Consequently, Moriarty (2009) suggests when programme knowledge is required for students in complex, applied or vocational degrees, professional advisers may be limited in their support role which has particular relevance for BN programmes.



Studies completed by Kevern and Webb (2004) and Litchfield (2001) support Moriarty's (2009) position. At times nursing students in Kevern and Webb's (2004) study were disinclined to use professional services as staff have little or no context specific knowledge or understanding. Kevern and Webb (2004) found some students preferred PTS lecturer support to that of centralised service staff as it less helpful to have "somebody who doesn't know what nursing is about" (p. 302). While students continue to be referred to professional services, Kevern and Webb (2004) reported some nursing students preferred to work with their PTS lecturer who was someone known to them, and who knows the programme inclusive of nursing specific requirements. Kevern and Webb (2004) and Moriarty (2009) argue both professional centralised support services and PTS lecturers remain essential for students. Rather than having one support system in preference to another, more effective use with closer links between the PTS and centralised support services is required.

### ***The curriculum model***

In the curriculum model, the PTS is integrated within papers students complete in their programme. The allocation of lecturers to students is part of the first paper students complete in the programme of study with the relationship continuing throughout their enrolment (Owen, 2002). Some institutions selected the integrated curriculum model in preference to the pastoral or professional models, as its structured approach is considered more appropriate for non-traditional and minority students who are part of the diverse cohorts (Laylock, 2009). The focus of the integrated curriculum model is more proactive, with the emphasis on individual development as PTS meetings are scheduled within timetables in the programme papers (Watts, 2011a).

Earwaker (1992) outlines six intended outcomes of the integrated curriculum model. These include: an introduction to the institution; developing an understanding of institutional expectations; appreciation for discipline specific expectations; assistance to learn how to learn; encouragement of peer interaction and support; and direction to access professional support as required (Earwaker, 1992; Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006). The integrated curriculum model required students to prepare for and attend meetings as other sessions facilitated by their PTS lecturer. While some students value this structured PTS approach, others may find this level of support unnecessarily intrusive (Sosabowski et al., 2003). Owen (2002) and Watts (2011) favour the integrated curriculum model as it can be refined to a specific programme rather

than imposing standardisation. However, as Watts (2011) reports, the integrated curriculum model requires considerable institutional investment with more lecturers, time and resources which may be prohibitive for some programmes.

All PTS models are used in tertiary institutions throughout the United Kingdom. There is no recommended PTS model or approach given the diversity of students' need and the requirements of different disciplinary conventions (Huyton, 2011). Some programmes use a single model, others use both the pastoral and professional models (Huyton, 2011) or may combine all three (Harrington, 2004). Each PTS model requires differing levels of resources and lecturers' time commitment. Model selection is decided with consideration of curriculum philosophy, resourcing and student support needs in the programme.

## **Purpose and Role**

The PTS offers both proactive and responsive support for students. The Higher Education Academy (2015) defines the role of the personal tutor as an academic member of staff whose role is to provide students with academic direction and guidance together with pastoral support for the duration of their programme. Wheeler and Birtle (1993) view lecturers' personal tutor role in relation to their responsibilities. PTS lecturers are responsible for a student's personal development, monitoring of progress, available as a confidant, and as a liaison within the programme or institution (Wheeler & Birtle, 1993). Phillips (1994) defines lecturers' PTS role in broader terms as the designated person responsible for "guiding a student, or group of students, towards meeting objectives. These objectives may be formal, as indicated by the course curriculum, or more subtle and personal to assist each student to maximise personal potential" (Phillips, 1994, p. 217). In a qualitative case study Carrotte (2007) explored the PTS role, constructing a PTS definition similar to Phillips' (1994). Carrotte (2007) described the PTS as a relationship that encouraged students to realise their educational goals. Support is available to resolve any learning barriers that may be personal, academic or institutional (Carrotte, 2007). Gidman's (2001) literature review focusing on the PTS role found the role was one of all-encompassing academic and pastoral support that may include liaison with others involved in students' teaching and learning.

Given the different models used within programmes and across institutions PTS role variations are to be expected. According to Phillips (1994), PTS roles and responsibilities could include: academic development, pastoral or personal support, monitoring of academic progression, reflection on progress, documentation, individual meetings, group tutorials, collaboration with others, and referral to centralised services. Other PTS responsibilities may include structured tutorials, disciplinary processes, assessment requirements, personal development plans and a programme portfolio (Watts, 2011a). When the PTS role includes assessment and disciplinary processes, Last and Fullbrook (2003) and Dobinson-Harrington (2006) signal this may bring a different dimension to the role. Some PTS are more structured and include a minimum requirement for meetings and contact (Watts, 2011a) while others are flexible as contact is negotiated between the student and lecturer (Gidman et al., 2000).

Common to the role, lecturers within their PTS role ensure students are provided with support for academic development and personal needs. In applied or vocational programmes, in particular, nursing, Gidman (2001) also argues this may extend to the practical or clinical requirements of the programme. The studies of Rhodes and Jinks (2005) and Por and Barriball (2008) with BN programmes also report that the PTS role offered all-encompassing support for the development of students for the duration of their programme although do not consider this as a specific clinical support role.

### ***Developing relationships***

The PTS role requires the development of a relationship between students and lecturers that Phillips (1994) argues is important to the success of the PTS. Stephen et al. (2008) found students and lecturers viewed trust alongside connectedness as important to the relationship. Trust and connectedness engendered a sense of belonging that is a main theme reported by Thomas (2012) in her student support research has a broader application in tertiary education. Other studies highlight the importance of trust in the PTS relationship. Phillips (1994) supports this view, as the professional relationship remains a central feature of the PTS as an expression of trust, honesty, confidentiality, and mutual respect. Dobinson-Harrington (2006) also reports that “mutual trust, engagement, respect and accepting responsibilities are important elements” (p. 35) for the PTS relationship.

Dobinson-Harrington’s (2006) phenomenological study into “the lived experience of the ‘support’ relationship between students and their personal tutors” (p. 35) enabled a better

understanding of roles and responsibilities within the PTS as she searched for meaning, insight and any variation in the PTS relationship experience. The perception of variation in relationships and quality of support was emphasised in her research by both students and lecturers who confirm the PTS role necessitates a skill mix that includes effective interpersonal interaction (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006).

Students and lecturers recognise when there is a lack of meaningful interest in the PTS relationship (Stephen et al., 2008). In the study of Sosabowski et al. (2003) that used a questionnaire with two student cohorts of 90 and 99 respectively, participants reported being aware when PTS relationships were more for “bureaucratic reasons rather than a genuinely-held belief in them or the system” (p. 105). As a result some students in Sosabowski et al.’s (2003) study were reluctant to use the PTS. Similar issues were found in the mixed methods study of Sayer et al. (2002) and the commentary of Taylor (2002). These researchers also explained that for a few students experiencing difficulties were hesitant to approach personal tutors raising concerns around feeling a lack of trust in their PTS lecturers maintaining confidentiality. These findings compare to Cottrell et al.’s (1994) earlier quantitative study reporting a small number of students were unwilling to consider using the PTS with the potential lack of confidentiality stated as a concern.

The importance of the relationship to the success of the PTS is reinforced by Owen (2002) and Stephen et al. (2008) who found the approachability of lecturers to be most important. Students are reluctant to approach lecturers who appear extremely busy (Stephen et al., 2008). Cottrell et al. (1994) report that students’ satisfaction with the PTS also relates to the regularity, rather than frequency, of meetings and time. Moreover, the descriptive study of Gibbons et al. (2008) that included 16 nursing students in the final year of their BN programme identified personal tutors who were considered effective did not necessarily offer any more time than others who were perceived to be less effective. The difference was effective PTS lecturers “seemed more effective at tuning into students’ concerns, showing more empathy and offering clearer guidance” (Gibbons et al., 2008)(p. 282). The perception of quality with interactions may be related to lecturers’ educational and PTS experience and role commitment (Gibbons et al., 2008). Students acknowledge many lecturers would “go-the-extra-mile” (Stephen et al., 2008, p. 452) to support as part of the PTS role offering additional time when required that encroached on their other responsibilities and personal time (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006; Stephen et al., 2008).

Unsurprisingly, given the centrality of the relationship, Gardner and Lane (2010) found the PTS relationship extends beyond the usual student - lecturer interactions. In their auto-ethnographic inquiry, the PTS relationship included comparisons to the therapeutic relationship established in the health care services, in particular, nursing. The PTS relationship can facilitate trust, understanding and learning as the student and lecturer negotiate the location of boundaries between the PTS role and therapy (Gardner & Lane, 2010). Watts (2011a) also discusses how the personal tutor, who, in BN programmes are registered nurses, reflect on the parallels of the patient and nurse relationship. However, Phillips (1994) suggests caution that considering the PTS role beyond the boundaries of the programme as the PTS relationship is a teaching and learning strategy for student development and support: although lecturers, in their PTS role, may draw on counselling skills “counselling per se, is best referred to a professional counsellor” (Phillips, 1994, p. 217). Within the PTS relationship, Braine and Parnell (2011) and Phillips (1994) recognise the importance of maintaining balance through shared expectations with established boundaries. Most students and lecturers report a characteristic of the PTS is a “...working relationship over and above that attributed to the normal student–lecturer liaison to engage in any meaningful dialogue” (Sosabowski et al., 2003, p. 105) that enables a shared understanding of expectations. This approach is favoured by most as Ross et al., (2014) found the PTS relationship requires a mutual commitment from students and lecturers to have meaning and purpose.

### ***Academic and personal support***

As previously identified, the PTS lecturers offer both a proactive and responsive support role. Earwaker (1992) and Huyton (2011) found that lecturers supported students to develop “resilience to overcome difficulties, rather than dealing with the difficulties for them” (Huyton, 2011, p. 10). Similarly, Dobinson-Harrington (2006) and Gidman (2001) viewed their PTS role was to support students to understand situations and recognise the options for resolution.

Students require particular guidance and support as they commence their programme of study (Waters, 2008). Gilchrist and Rector (2007) and Litchfield (2001) argue year one support is of greatest importance. As students transition into their programme of study they are required, often for the first time, to manage the complexity of academic and life commitments. Applied or vocational programmes include the additional complexity of managing practice or clinical requirements. Gibbons et al. (2008) explain students who experience academic or personal issues are more likely to approach a known lecturer and seek PTS support within their

programme. Through the PTS, students were directed to centralised support services when required. The PTS was not intended to replicate or replace the institution-wide student services, rather the focus was on strengthening students' access to the support required (Litchfield, 2001; Owen, 2002). Gilchrist and Rector (2007) found student support was more successful when included within the programme, with an institutional infrastructure for lecturer resourcing along with direction to centralised services.

Interestingly, and despite the availability of centralised services and the role of lecturers in directing students to these accessible services, personal tutors may fail to help students make the necessary contact with professional support staff. Litchfield's (2001) small exploratory study, using interviews with five BN lecturers across multiple sites, uncovered factors that influenced the PTS. Particular attention was drawn to lecturers' awareness of issues that surround students' failure and the direction they required to access centralised support services (Litchfield, 2001). Litchfield (2001) reports that some lecturers were unsure of their support role especially when dealing with student failure and others fostered student dependency. Litchfield (2001) identifies that irrespective of lecturers' knowledge about centralised support services, lecturers did not direct students as they "saw themselves as the first line in examining students' difficulties" (p. 147). Watts (2011) similarly found lecturers may directly support students experiencing difficulties rather than refer to centralised services. Although Litchfield (2001) and Watts (2011) do not provide details of any student issues, there appears a sense that, for some lecturers, the support role may be antithetical to student development and the principles of student-centred learning. There is potential for boundaries to be blurred. Some personal tutors require support to realise the PTS is a teaching and learning strategy that needs to be balanced within the boundaries of their lecturer role (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006).

Glogowska, Young, and Lockyer (2007) and Bowden (2008) found students had varied support experiences. Bowden's (2008) mixed method case study explored the experience of students who had seriously considered leaving the programme, yet continued. Students reported PTS support was most influential in the decision to continue with their studies (Bowden, 2008). Other studies identified multiple factors influenced students' continuation with, or departure from, a programme (Glossop, 2001, 2002; Last & Fulbrook, 2003). Glogowska et al. (2007) and Walters (2008) found students usually experience numerous intersecting factors before considering leaving and then finally withdrawing from a programme. In the qualitative study of Glogowska et al. (2007), 49 students were interviewed: 30 who considered leaving their

nursing programme yet stayed and 19 who left. This study recognised six push-factors reported by both groups of students in their deliberations to leave or continue in the programme. The six push-factors were: academic work challenges; stress of other commitments; finances; lack of support; initial experiences were negative; and illness or injury (Glogowska et al., 2007). Additionally, in applied and vocational programmes such push factors may be compounded by clinical practice requirements (Waters, 2008). Glogowska et al. (2007), found the PTS conveys to students that they are not alone or isolated when issues arise and there is support within their programme. Students identified PTS support as important in their decision to remain in and complete their programme.

As the number and diversity of students applying for entrance into tertiary programmes has increased, the enthusiasm of students can quickly diminish once the complexity of managing their programme's requirements becomes a reality. Walters (2008) explored the experiences of two nursing students from two different tertiary institutions, one who successfully completed the programme and the other who left feeling "cheated out of an education" (p. 12). Common to both student nurses was the stress and struggle with "juggling academic work and [clinical] placements" (p.15), although the student who left the programme had the additional challenges of part-time work and childcare. The major reported difference between the two students was the support experience within their nursing programme and from the tertiary institution. Walters (2008) concludes that while some students' issues are beyond the capacity of the PTS, programme or tertiary institution, support may nevertheless make the difference between being able to continue, having to withdraw or being able to resume study at another time.

The importance of individual support and direction, may or may not include continuing in the programme, was also recognised by Rhodes and Jinks (2005). These authors considered it unethical of institutions to not offer appropriate student support to enable success. Support through the PTS and centralised services requires the prioritisation of individual student's needs. It is recognised that some students are not ready or able to make the commitment required of a programme (Litchfield, 2001). Indeed, Waters (2008) acknowledged a full-time nursing programme can be "tough" (p. 12) and some students found they were not suited to their selection of nursing as a career. Consequently, at times, PTS support may include guidance and direction that will not eventuate in programme completion as an outcome (Litchfield, 2001; Rhodes & Jinks, 2005). Whilst PTS support does not determine the student outcomes, it remains an obligation for programmes and institutions (Rhodes & Jinks, 2005).

Watts (2011a) affirms the importance of support for undergraduate students in particular. In her reflections Watts discusses PTS support that may be unnoticed in the programme, yet is important for many students' programme experience. Watts' (2011a) position is supported by Dobinson-Harrington (2006) and Por and Barriball (2008) along with Laylock (2009) who also contend that while the PTS is valued, the status of the student support role in tertiary education is a concern. Laylock (2009) found the "status of personal tutoring has always been an issue in relation to other more high status activities" (p. 9) such as teaching and research as the latter, in particular, attracts funding and institutional recognition.

### ***Focus for nursing***

It has long been recognised that students in nursing programmes require additional academic and personal support and the Nursing and Midwifery Council United Kingdom identify this support provision as a priority. (Gidman, 2001). The PTS is used extensively throughout the United Kingdom and is considered valuable for supporting students as Por and Barriball (2008) highlight its importance within nurse education. The Nursing and Midwifery Council in the United Kingdom realised personal tutors' importance as they support students' teaching, learning and development in both the academic environment and clinical practice placements (Nursing and Midwifery Council United Kingdom, 2015).

Some nursing programmes acknowledged the shared attributes of the personal tutor and clinical supervisors (Neary, 2000; Phillips, 1994; Quinn & Hughes, 2007). Hughes (2004) suggests combining the personal tutor role with the clinical support role of mentor or preceptor in their Fitness for Practice curriculum. This academic and clinical programme revised assessment strategies with particular focus on students' clinical competence development (Hughes, 2004). The personal tutor role was considered fundamental for students' development not only with academic requirements but also with clinical components of the programme. Newton and Smith (1998) also examined the role of personal tutor support in the supervision of students during clinical placements. In their descriptive study Newton and Smith (1998) used self-administered questionnaire with a single cohort of 94 nursing students who have had the experience of personal tutors supporting them during clinical placements. Students' responses were somewhat polarised, with 55 students reporting some value in the additional role and the remaining 39 students stating there was none (Newton & Smith, 1998). Hughes (2004) and Newton and Smith (1998) continued to contend that merging the personal



tutor and clinical supervisor roles could positively enhance the learning experience for students in both academic and clinical settings. However, it appears these roles have remained separate (Hughes, 2004; Newton & Smith, 1998).

Neary (2000) conducted two mixed methods studies with 515 lecturers and 1632 students over six years. The aim was to identify the support nursing students receive during their clinical practice in relation to assessment of competence throughout their programme (Neary, 2000). Findings included that differentiation of the personal tutor role in the academic environment from the mentor or preceptor roles in clinical settings was considered important. Different roles contributed to the development of students' confidence and independence. The programmes' teaching and learning strategies can support a student-centred learning focus that capitalises on the potential for the academic and personal development of each student. Neary (2000) determined the value of all staff involved in teaching and learning work together to support students. The findings of Hamshire, Willgoss, and Wibberley (2012a) are similar to those of Neary (2000) as the importance of different student support roles are emphasised and include those of the personal tutor and placement mentor or preceptor.

Viewing the personal tutor and clinical roles as separate or combined is an oversimplification, and there may be an argument for the two roles working together. Hughes (2004) and Newton and Smith (1998) found there was substantial support for personal tutors facilitating students' reflection during or following their clinical experience. They contend that the PTS relationship is strengthened through collaboration with clinical mentors or preceptors and other staff to support student-centred learning, reflection and on-going development. Neary (2000), Phillips (1994), Quinn and Hughes (2007) advocated for the use of reflection with students for their learning and development. Reflection was an important part of student support, especially following clinical placement experiences. In contrast, Burton (2000), argued for restraint with the use of reflection in nursing as the evidence was largely anecdotal as opposed to empirical. However, on balance Burton (2000) and most PTS lecturers, believe reflective principles have a place to inform students' critical thinking and support the development of their nursing practice.

### ***Contextual challenges***

The role of personal tutor is a complex. It requires both institutional and individual commitment, motivation and time. Tertiary institutions and programmes need to fully

consider all aspects of the PTS role when resourcing the PTS. These aspects include ensuring time is allocated for lecturers to attend to the PTS role and requisite responsibilities. Lecturers require a minimum allocation of time for the PTS role to attend to meetings, contacts and documentation, especially with first year students as they come to terms with the demands of programme (Cramp, 2011; Gilchrist & Rector, 2007). For some the PTS role is additional to their other lecturer commitments that include teaching, research, professional development, and course convenor responsibilities. In applied or vocational programmes this role may also include practical or clinical support of students (Por & Barriball, 2008).

Inconsistent interpretations of the associated PTS responsibilities may create confusion, uncertainty in respect of expectations and boundaries with the role, and a lack of consistency for some students and lecturers (Gidman, 2001; Richardson, 1998). Richardson's (1998) PTS inquiry found that the multiple broad interpretations created indistinct understandings of the academic and pastoral role that in turn could affect students' and lecturers' role and relationships. Richardson aimed to understand the personal tutor role using grounded theory and a combination of document analysis and semi-structured interviews with students and lecturers. Richardson's (1998) research findings show that lecturers may face conflicting expectations that could be based upon mistaken assumptions of shared conceptual understandings. The inference of shared knowledge can result in role confusion (Richardson, 1998). Gidman et al. (2000) and Por and Barriball (2008) found that as lecturers endeavour to make the PTS role clear, apparent ambiguous expectations may result in an approach of convenience rather than one based on effectiveness.

The importance of a common understanding with clear expectations for PTS lecturers and shared responsibilities with students was also highlighted by Neary (2000), who noted that students and lecturers do not always have the same expectations. Stephen et al. (2008) particularly comments on the different understandings amongst lecturers. Some lecturers considered the PTS relationship central to their role as they managed the increased numbers, diversity and needs of students whereas others were concerned they may be assailed by students' support expectations (Stephen et al., 2008). Lecturers, more so if they were new to the role, may feel overwhelmed by student numbers and their potential support needs (Stephen et al., 2008). Few studies appeared to consider professional development for the PTS role (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006; Stephen et al., 2008).

Guidelines and strategies for the PTS role offer clarification and direction for students and lecturers. Guidelines serve as a means to establish shared expectations and boundaries (Rhodes & Jinks, 2005). These two authors used a qualitative exploratory approach with a view to developing practice guidelines for the PTS role. Although they do not report on progress toward the development of guidelines, they emphasise the need for PTS resourcing from the institution (Rhodes & Jinks, 2005). Por and Barriball's (2008) qualitative study supports the argument for institutional resourcing, noting that lecturers experience limited time, heavy workloads and institutional constraints that impacted on their ability to offer optimal and timely support. Similar to others mentioned in this section, Por and Barriball (2008) note that lecturers were challenged in their PTS role by unrealistic support expectations and unclear guidelines. In contrast to Rhodes and Jinks (2005), Por and Barriball (2008) sought to develop a PTS strategy rather than practice guidelines to improve student support through a unified understanding (Por & Barriball, 2008).

Por (2008) examined the "complex social processes" (p. 335) and wider institutional influences on the personal tutor role using soft system methodology. The fundamental PTS role was considered the lecturer's individual responsibility, although the factors that influenced their responsibilities were often institutional. Following a document analysis and interviews with lecturers and managers, Por (2008) stressed the importance of considering the cultural, social and political context of tertiary education. Tensions can result from competing demands made of lecturers with teaching, research and support responsibilities when there was limited or no time recognition, increased diversity of students' needs and role complexity. This is further compounded by the continued growth in student numbers. The PTS support role is desired and achievable with acknowledgment of the tertiary educational reality. This requires a commitment to bring the interests of students, lecturers and institutions together. In this way the culture of the organisation may be open to change and recognise the investment of resources such as lecturers' time (Por, 2008).

## **Makes Economic Sense**

It may seem ironic that the PTS has been progressively used as a way to support the growing numbers and diversity of students in an era of institutional economic limitation, given the system appears to add to organisational costs. Owen (2002) found tertiary institutions were extremely cognisant of their responsibility to student support that was progressively more

challenging given the demand on resources which includes academic lecturers together with centralised support staff in the fiscally restrained educational context. Earwaker (1992) recognised that the commitment to resourcing a PTS can be difficult within complex financial pressures. However, Simpson (2006) and Huyton (2011) argue that the financial cost of not investing in student support can be even greater.

An evaluative study, conducted at the Open University, found that the actual PTS cost outlay to the university was £200 per student each year (Simpson, 2006). The Open University was primarily distance based education therefore lecturers' student contact was most often via phone or e-contact. The identified cost included PTS lecturers' time in relation to student contact, administration such as documentation following each student contact event and institutional overheads. At first this financial expenditure per student seemed untenable until viewed in real terms. The cost benefit of the PTS was £1300 for each student who continued in their programme, resulting in a net yield per student of £1100 to the institution (Simpson, 2006).

Waters (2007) also discusses the significant financial impact on universities of student attrition rates that vary between 6% - 41% amongst United Kingdom tertiary institutions. For example, student attrition from nursing programmes alone was estimated to cost £99 million each year for tertiary education (Waters, 2008). Tertiary programmes and institutions have concomitant concerns about student retention and completion. Those concerns are beyond the scope of this study, however they remain an important consideration.

Personal tutor literature contends that investment and resourcing are required to provide appropriate and responsive student support within the tertiary education context (Laylock, 2009). There is often disparity between students' needs and personal tutors' capacity to provide required support (Laylock, 2009). The challenges that may affect the PTS can also affect centralised services of the tertiary institution. Thomas (2006) comments that the challenge for tertiary institutions is in developing a proactive and responsive "personal tutoring system which is not overly onerous for staff, makes appropriate use of professional services, and is cost effective" (p. 31).

## Summary and Conclusion

The review of PTS literature was largely drawn from undergraduate tertiary education in the United Kingdom. Attention was focused on applied and vocational degree programmes, in health, education, and in particular nursing. While all PTS literature has relevance for students in tertiary education, the experience of vocational and applied degree programmes, such as nursing, is not always reflected in broader PTS student support research or discussions from other disciplines.

Common throughout the literature is lecturers' PTS role to impart programme and institutional knowledge to enable students to manage the requirements of their study (Carrotte, 2007; Phillips, 1994). Irrespective of the PTS model, lecturers assist students with their academic development, are also available for personal support when issues arise and refer students to centralised services as required (Phillips, 1994).

As has been identified, the PTS role becomes progressively more complex with increasing student numbers and diversity, higher student to lecturer ratios; and lecturers' competing demands (Laylock, 2009). Many lecturers appear to adapt as most students acknowledged satisfaction with the support received through the PTS (Stephen et al., 2008). However, not all students and lecturers have a positive PTS experience or are able to adjust to the complex context that is tertiary education.

Braine and Parnell (2011) found that the "current literature also reveals a dearth of studies that have evaluated" (p. 905) the PTS in education. Other studies in this literature review affirmed the need for further PTS evaluation both from the students' and lecturers' perspective (Braine & Parnell, 2011; Owen, 2002; Por & Barriball, 2008). In nurse education Gidman (2001) identified that the limited available PTS research:

... highlights the need for nurse lecturers to evaluate the effectiveness of support in place. There is also a need to undertake further research studies, in order to provide the evidence needed by nurse lecturers to determine the most appropriate approach model for student support (p. 359).

As authors in the United Kingdom, within nursing, education and other health programmes have confirmed the need for further evaluative inquiry of the PTS, this study can add to the current body of knowledge. This was, in part, the motivation for this evaluative PTS research. The previously identified priority and purpose of this research is to focus on an evaluation of

the factors that influence students' and lecturers' experience of the PTS, with a view to ongoing development of this programme within this BN. Following this literature review, the study design and process is outlined in chapter three. The discussion includes the various issues inherent when undertaking research.

## **Chapter Three: The Research Design and Process**

At the conclusion of the chapter two literature review, it was established further personal tutor system (PTS) research and in particular, evaluation was required. This need for PTS evaluative research was part of the rationale for the research design and together with the research question this directed study decisions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2001). Mixed methods were selected for this evaluative research using the theoretical perspective of pragmatism. The research design drew on the combination of Patton's (2008) approach to evaluation together with Rossi, Lipsy and Freeman's (2004) applied social research in evaluation. Presented in two sections, this chapter first presents the research design discussing the relevance and justification of mixed methods and evaluative research, and second outlines the research process.

### **The Research Design**

#### **Mixed methods**

Mixed methods research emerged in the latter part of the last century and combines both quantitative and qualitative methods (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Prior to mixed methods, research traditions made the distinction between quantitative and qualitative approaches (Crotty, 1998). Associated with the scientific world, quantitative research relies on objective hard data, statistical information and deductive reasoning (Bamberger, Rugh, & Mabry, 2012; Polit & Beck, 2012). Qualitative research within the humanities and social sciences focuses on subjective data to inductively understand the complexity of the human experience (Bamberger et al., 2012; Polit & Beck, 2012)

The theoretical perspectives or paradigms that underpin these two approaches are fundamentally different as quantitative research aligns with objectivism, positivism and post-positivism whereas qualitative research aligns with subjectivism, and constructionism (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Polit & Beck, 2012). Each respective paradigm has a particular research epistemology (knowledge), ontology (understanding) and methodology (design strategy and methods) (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research conventions historically maintained separation and the notion of their combination was initially dismissed (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). However, this position changed.

In the 1970s and 1980s, applied disciplines such as nursing and education were influential in the shift that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2012). Considered part of a research evolution, mixed methods was recognised as the third research approach (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddle, 2010). Different names, terms and definitions have been used with reference to this research and have created some confusion when using this approach. Mixed methods remains the term most commonly associated with the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in a single research study (Plano Clark & Creswell, 2008; Tashakkori & Teddle, 2010). Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) defined mixed methods as “research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both quantitative and qualitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of inquiry” (p. 4). This definition, published in the first issue of the *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, has been used by nursing researchers (Polit & Beck, 2012; Schneider, Whitehead, LoBiondo-Wood, & Harber, 2013) and referred to by others (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). This research uses the term mixed methods and is directed by the definition of Tashakkori and Creswell (2007).

The emergence of mixed methods included a paradigm debate. Although different paradigms, either singularly or in combination, have been used with mixed methods research, pragmatism has most often been associated with this form of study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Polit & Beck, 2012; Teddle & Tashakkori, 2011). Teddle and Tashakkori (2011) believe pragmatism will be acknowledged as the principal paradigm for mixed methods. Central to pragmatism is the research question that dictates “the value of the experiences, and practical consequences, action, and understanding of real world phenomena” (Cresswell, 2011, p. 276). Pragmatism, as the name suggests, embraces a practical approach to answering the research question with consideration for the context of a study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Pragmatism rejects a forced relationship between the paradigm, design and methods (Polit & Beck, 2012). As a theoretical perspective, pragmatism applies to both quantitative and qualitative approaches and was used in this evaluative research in response to the research question.

All research approaches, including mixed methods, have both strengths and limitations. However pragmatism, together with mixed methods, engenders flexibility for studies not available in singular research traditions. Teddle and Tashakkori (2011) argue such eclecticism is essential in mixed methods as it involves the selection then synergistic integration of the most suitable methods to investigate the research question. Past concerns about mixing



quantitative and qualitative approaches, with their different epistemological and paradigmatic positions, can arguably be addressed through eclecticism that is distinctive to mixed methods research (Teddle & Tashakkori, 2011). Although, mixed methods researchers need to consider and manage this, eclecticism promotes selecting the most appropriate method combination in response to the research question and was used in this study. Rossi, Lipsey, and Freeman (2004) argue research that is flexible and employs multiple methods to gather data will yield more utilisable results.

Applied disciplines, that include nursing and education, rely on both quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of what is often considered a complex context (Punch, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddle, 2010). In applied programmes, such as this BN programme, in particular the PTS that is the focus of this study, evaluation researchers Rallis and Rossman (2003) not only advise but also argue for the inevitability of combining quantitative and qualitative data to gain the desired depth of understanding the research. A single qualitative or quantitative approach would not fully consider the context of research that include the disciplines of nursing and education, and respond to the research question (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Shaw, Greene, & Mark, 2006).

Qualitative and quantitative data in mixed methods may be collected simultaneously or in sequential phases. A sequential design has the benefit of organisational simplicity as it is often easier to arrange than a simultaneous design (Bamberger et al., 2012). Sequential data collection gathers either qualitative or quantitative data first, with the sequence determined by the researcher's question. Morse and Niehaus (2009) suggest the nature of the first phase informs the second phase in the sequential design and process. Polit and Beck (2012) support this position and argue that, in well-conceived sequential research design, the first phase of data analysis and interpretation informs the second phase of data collection. Morse and Niehaus (2009) and Polit and Beck (2012) state that a sequential design enhances the potential for depth and richness with findings. The disadvantages of sequential design include the potential for participant attrition with a loss of momentum between phases and research time as the next stage cannot progress until the previous stage has been completed, particularly if analysis is required. This can be problematic for researchers if not attended to as part of the design and process. In this study it was a matter that required management.

It was evident in chapters one and two that the support student context, more specifically the PTS, can be involved. In this study, the mixed methods design selected sought to provide more

than either quantitative or qualitative approaches could offer in isolation. A two-phase sequential design allowed the first phase to inform the second phase. In phase one of this study the focus was on the collection of quantitative data, using questionnaires. Following the preliminary analysis of responses, an interview topic guide was developed for phase two qualitative interviews. The mixed methods, two-phase sequential design (refer Table 3.1) was responsive for this research question and context. This enabled a more complete exploration of the PTS with consideration for the wider context of nursing and education.

**Table 3.1. Sequential two phase data collection**

Phase one: Quantitative approach	Phase two: Qualitative approach
Questionnaires	Individual interviews
Preliminary questionnaire analysis informed the phase two question guide development	

The use of multiple qualitative and quantitative data collection methods with the integration of findings presents an opportunity to capture a more complete and contextual understanding that overcomes inherent limitations of a single method (Polit & Beck, 2012; Schneider et al., 2013). Triangulation as part of this design involved the integration of research findings from the different methods in phases one and two. Integration is important within mixed methods and in this instance the two-phase sequential design that “refers to the combinations and comparisons of multiple data sources, data collection and analysis procedures, research methods” (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 717). The integration of findings is seldom straightforward as this often involves attention to contrasts due to the innate differences of quantitative and qualitative methods (Patton, 2015; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011). Integration may draw on pragmatic approaches to assist with the synthesis of findings that would not commonly be expected to come together as an organised whole (Patton, 2015; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2011). Rather than forcing dichotomous decisions, integration focuses on determining the extent to which consideration and interpretation are required (Patton, 2015). Morse and Niehaus (2009) and Polit and Beck (2012) argue that through the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings a greater depth and richness of understanding may be revealed as conclusions establish a closer link to the research context.

In this research, the mixed methods, two-phase sequential design with integration of findings provided a flexible and pragmatic approach for this study. This was an appropriate way to investigate the PTS as a new initiative in conjunction with evaluation.

## Evaluation and research

Evaluation research corresponds with 20<sup>th</sup> century developments (Rossi et al., 2004). Defined in its broader sense, evaluation establishes the merit, value, worth, quality or significance of something (Cronbach & Shapiro, 1982; Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Beyond this accepted understanding, the combination Patton's (2008) evaluation approach and Rossi et al.'s social (2004) research methods in evaluation were drawn on for this study. Evaluation, as an approach, can focus on a programme or part thereof that in this research is the PTS. Given the research question, Patton's (2008) definition of evaluation, with specific reference to programmes, was relevant for this study. He describes evaluations as the "...systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics and results of a programme to make judgements about the programme, improve or further develop programme effectiveness, inform decisions about future programming and/or increase understanding" (p. 38). Alongside, Rossi et al.'s (2004) focus on evaluation that includes programmes uses "...social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of social intervention programs in ways that are adapted to their political and organisational environments" (p. 16). The evaluative approaches of Patton (2008) and Rossi et al. (2004) highlighted three areas germane to this research: 1) the systematic approach to data collection, with 2) a broad and flexible approach that 3) results in a range of potential recommendations used for programme development (Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 2004). Consequently, as a mixed methods evaluation, different methods for data collection were used in this research with the intention of PTS development.

Evaluation research covers the spectrum of applications, from context-specific use through to generalizable results or theory testing (Patton, 2008). Inquiries can have the intended focus of generalisation (Patton, 2008) beyond the immediate setting with subsequent hypothesis development. This is more common with single quantitative studies and is not often the intended purpose for qualitative or mixed methods studies (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Patton, 2012). Evaluation research may contribute to the wider understanding in social science knowledge, however that is dependent on the emphasis and may tend to be a by-product rather than the primary focus (Rossi et al., 2004). Indeed, context-specific judgements and conclusions is a distinguishing feature of evaluation research. Use of a particular evaluative research approach is appropriate as this research was not intended to generalise beyond this PTS context.

Common to the evaluation definitions for programmes from Patton (2008) and Rossi et al. (2004), is the purpose of making inherent value and merit judgements about a programme (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This highlights a key characteristic of use with programme evaluation. However, not all evaluators stress the significance of utility. Stufflebeam (2001) cautions that, although use is important, overemphasis may have the unexpected consequence of confusing the intended evaluation purpose. Relevant to this study was the more expansive meaning of evaluation within the programme where the focus moves beyond judgements to the utilisation of results.

Nursing has viewed research utilisation as a priority since the 1980s with the intention that findings would be incorporated in both programmes and practice (Miller, 2010; Polit & Beck, 2006). Research utilisation can include direct and explicit use or have an implicit and more diffuse influence. Miller (2010) and Polit and Beck (2012) note research utilisation, from emergent innovations has involved the integration and application of findings that align with evidence-based practice. Evidence-based practice is part of nursing educational practice as educators use research in programme development. Nursing education remains reliant on evidence-based research in BN programmes to ensure trustworthy programme decisions.

In contrast to some PTS research examined in chapter two, this study intended to achieve pragmatic and, to the extent possible, unambiguous outcomes and conclusions for key stakeholders' use (Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 2004; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Evaluators draw attention to the key stakeholders, who in this instance are students and lecturers within the BN programme, to determine the effectiveness of the programme as a whole, part or new initiative (Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 2004). With an expectation to inform and effect stakeholders improvement, evaluation findings are important primarily for those within the programme directly affected (Rossi et al., 2004). This holds to the practice of evaluation research where the priority is "specific intended primary users for specific intended use ..." (Patton, 2008, p. 37).

Indeed, the motivation of Patton (2008) with utilization-focused evaluation is one of utility that is implicit in the name, and was drawn on for this evaluation study. Consideration was given to using Patton's (2008) utilization-focused evaluation in a modified form. However, given the nature of this research context, including unforeseen changes that are explained later in this chapter, it was not possible to observe the actual or modified requirements of utilization-focused evaluation. Therefore the premise of Patton's (2008) evaluation approach guided this

study that is “intended use by intended users” (p. 37). The evaluation emphasis is not on those who may be interested in these findings, rather the focus is on those who will use them (Rossi et al., 2004). Attention in this research was directed to students and lecturers as key stakeholders and the intended users of findings from this study.

Participatory or collaborative involvement with key stakeholders is considered important as evaluations respond to their needs and generate findings for use (Patton, 2008). Patton (2008) emphasised stakeholder participation through involvement from commencement to completion. Researchers strive for optimal involvement and consensual participation; however, they may find the research context reality often does not meet the original expectation (Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995). Mabry (2010) outlines the intrinsic difficulties of this as “those who promote attention to the values of stakeholders beyond those of program managers or funders...often refer optimistically to the importance of building consensus...[can find]...the diversity of stakeholder interests may be irreconcilable” (p. 84). Research, programme and evaluation contexts are complex and have been referred to as messy (Patton, 2008). Change may be the only constant over the course of an evaluation. Continuity of stakeholder participation with evaluations is an issue that Patton (2008) identifies as the “Achilles’ heel” (p. 566) particularly for utilization-focused evaluation. Over the course of an evaluation, staff change. This is often due to resignations or role variation, change of commitments or motivation and limitations with availability to participate in the process. Planning stakeholder involvement requires consideration of these and other evaluation bounds such as time, resources and funding. Polit and Beck (2012) found researchers’ adherence to a research design may present some difficulty. Modification may be the resolution required to respond to changes in the research context.

The research design requirement for stakeholder participation presented a specific challenge for this study due to three issues that impacted this research context. First, before key stakeholders (student and lecturers) could be approached, the development of a detailed research proposal for the Graduate School of Education and ethical approvals (both the university and the tertiary institution) were required. This meant research methods and design decisions were necessary before stakeholder involvement could be considered. Second, Ministry of Education changes in the tertiary sector funding outlined in chapter one resulted in an institution-wide review and subsequent School of Nursing restructure. This meant key stakeholders (including the Head of School and lecturers who endorsed this evaluative

research through their support in principle) were no longer available to be part of this research as the review resulted in position changes that involved disestablishment. Third, given the time-bound nature of an academic year, unforeseen delays, and my student researcher role, it was not possible to establish and maintain key stakeholder groups with representation across the three School of Nursing sites from commencement to completion of this mixed methods evaluation. Fulfilment of key stakeholder participation as outlined by Patton (2008) was not possible. Responsive to the evaluation research context, stakeholder involvement remained an intention that underpinned this study. However the reality was a consultative contribution from students and lecturers in this evaluation.

There was another unanticipated issue for this study with the Ministry of Education changes. The School of Nursing had other students (n=26) and lecturers (n=4) eligible to participate in this study. However tertiary sector changes resulted in these potential participants no longer being part of the School of Nursing. While disappointing, the study was able to continue. This overview of changed circumstances is purposely brief and circumspect to minimise information that might identify the School of Nursing and tertiary institution.

Evaluation requires imagination, planning and, often, compromise as evaluators affirm there is no single evaluation approach that will respond specifically to an evaluation context (Cronbach & Shapiro, 1982; Patton, 2008; Rossi et al., 2004; Weiss, 1998). Rossi et al. (2004) argue that research involves negotiation between the study purpose and question with minimum disruption for the programme context and, as Weiss (1998) acknowledged, some programmes may be innately less than receptive to evaluation. Achievement of the most appropriate fit between the evaluation context, purpose, design and process becomes the focus of the research with flexibility an inherent part. Mixed methods evaluation allows for modifications and adjustments in response to changes in the research context and this is what occurred during this study.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The methods selected for this study were determined by the research question, purpose and context. Morse (2003) states the intention of social “research is to understand the complexity of human behaviour and experience. The researcher’s task - to understand, describe and explain the reality of this complexity - is limited by our research methods” (p. 189). Morse and Niehaus (2009) discuss that research data collection method selection and tools involve an

appreciation for this study to provide an “accurate portrayal” (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 725) of students’ and lecturers’ PTS experience. The research population across the three School of Nursing sites was intended to be all third year students and lecturers who were personal tutors in this BN programme with the School of Nursing at the tertiary institution where this study was completed. The mixed methods evaluation combination of phase one questionnaire and phase two interview data collection methods with the integration of findings maintained the focus on the research question.

### ***Questionnaires***

Questionnaires are a method of data collection through which the research participants respond to the same pre-set questions (Bamberger et al., 2012). Often considered quantitative as a research method, questionnaires can also gather qualitative data depending on the questions included or, more commonly, if there is the option for additional, open and unstructured comments. Researchers can use questionnaires to increase control over study variables and allow for a large number of targeted individuals to be included in research. Dependant on the research population and sampling strategy results may be generalisable. Compared to other forms of data collection, questionnaires can be cost-effective (Bazely, 2010). Questionnaires are frequently self-administered with the researcher explaining the study purpose and respondents often responsible for the questionnaire return (Bamberger et al., 2012; Oppenheim, 1992). Oppenheim (1992) suggests questionnaires can increase the population who participate, allow for necessary explanations, use assistance from others such as research associates and minimise potential for researcher bias.

Questionnaires have the disadvantage that questions are pre-determined and the responses constrained or supplied such as with rating scales. Respondents can find this somewhat frustrating as responses may be limited to specific options that do not allow for the expression of their views. Response quality can be an issue particularly with recall questions (vary in accuracy over time), motivation and loss of interest (Bamberger, Rugh & Mabry, 2012).

Previously used questionnaires have the advantage of being tried and authenticated as data collection tools, although Oppenheim (1992) cautions that indiscriminate reliance on questionnaires from other researchers can be imprudent or naïve. While Oppenheim (1992) states it can be appropriate to use or adapt previously developed questionnaires it remains the researcher’s responsibility to ensure that it is suitable for the intended population to yield the

required data. Pilot work in questionnaire development and the process of design and trialling, needs to be considered as part of the research process (Muir, 2008; Oppenheim, 1992). Muir (2008) suggests that trialling may require focused time and effort. However, a questionnaire that fails to generate results will be much more time-intensive for the researcher. It was planned that the phase one, self-administered questionnaire would draw on an earlier validated tool. Cottrell et al. (1994) developed a PTS questionnaire in 1993 that was subsequently modified and used by both Malik (2000) and Sayer et al. (2002). The modified questionnaires would be piloted with a similar research population of students and lecturers.

The questionnaire was to focus on information related to the PTS with particular reference to: aims; guidelines; communication; meetings; use; support options; and success within the BN programme (see Appendices D and E). The questionnaire made it possible to survey the total research population of students and lecturers.

### ***Semi-structured individual interview***

Interviews are recognised as a familiar form of qualitative data collection. Gubrium and Holstein (2002) state “virtually all researchers and professionals who deal with people now make use of some form of interviewing” (p. xi). Tierney and Dilley (2002) explain in the context education interviews are a central method used in research. Interviewers seek information through a form of guided conversation that has the intention of understanding the participants’ experience through their responses (Gubrium & Holstein, 2002). While questionnaires generate data in quantity specific to the questions “they lack the depth of understanding that a qualitative interview provides” (Tierney & Dilley, 2002, p. 455). Interviews are recognised as a valuable tool for collecting participants’ experiences though their perceptions, views and attitudes, and bring depth, breadth and richness to data collected. However, interviews are non-anonymous, can be time consuming and may involve more of a financial outlay to complete than other forms of fieldwork (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Many forms of interviews are used by researchers. These include unstructured, where questions are unplanned, semi-structured, where broad topics guide the direction of questions, or structured with a set of predetermined questions (Polit & Beck, 2012). An interview may be face-to-face, telephone or via the internet. Phase two interviews were designed to be face-to-face, and semi-structured, using a developed question topic guide that was informed by preliminary analysis of phase one questionnaires. Richards and Morse (2013)



suggest “the use of semi-structured interviews is appropriate when the researcher knows enough about the study topic to frame the needed discussion” (p. 127). The focus allows for relevance of questions and freedom with responses. Central to this form of interview Gubrium and Holstein (2002) suggest the focus remain on encouraging participants to share their experiences without restriction. Where research requires quantitative and qualitative links, semi-structured interviews can be essential to gathering an in-depth understanding (Richards & Morse, 2013) as was the case in this study with the integration of phase one and two findings.

As a form of data collection, semi-structured interviews were intended as a means to understand students’ and lecturers’ PTS experience. The face to face interviews offered additional information not available through questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews often commence with a broad, open-ended question to guide the conversation. Phase two interviews in this study were planned to begin in this manner. Polit and Beck (2012) and Warren (2002) discuss the value of topic question guides that may include probing questions to follow up participants’ responses to gain an understanding of their experience, that in this instance was the PTS.

The initial number of interview participants was anticipated to be between 10 - 15 students and five - eight lecturers. This indication of numbers for student and lecturer interviews reflects the differences in their respective numbers, although it was intended the total number of interviews would ultimately be determined by data saturation. Patton (2015) states the indication of a sample size is often a practical requirement for research approval and he, together with other researchers, recommends interviewing to the point of saturation or redundancy, when participants no longer reveal new information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Interview participant selection was a process intended to maximise participation from across the three sites as well as include a range of perspectives identified in questionnaire responses (positive, neutral and negative) while minimising unnecessary replication. Interviews were anticipated to be 30 – 45 minutes in duration and not expected exceed 60 minutes. The time and location for interviews was to be mutually agreed. The potential for follow-up interviews was anticipated to ensure sufficient data had been gathered, as there may have been aspects missed or points which required clarification. Participants were to be informed of the possibility of a follow-up interview that could be via phone, e-mail, video link or another brief face-to-face interview with audio recording. Follow-up interviews were expected to take

around 10 - 15 minutes and were not anticipated to exceed 30 minutes. Again, this would be negotiated at a mutually agreed time.

### ***Analysis of data***

Data analysis required a combination of techniques to manage the quantitative and qualitative data along with the integration of findings in this mixed methods study. The focus of the phase one quantitative analysis was on descriptive statistics while the phase two qualitative analysis was on themes using Burnard's (1991) thematic approach (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Oppenheim (1992) confirms the importance of descriptive questionnaire analysis as a means to "...tell us how many (what proportion of) members of a population have a certain opinion..." (p. 12). Counting responses gives numbers representative of respondent views and experiences (Oppenheim, 1992). Students' and lecturers' questionnaire responses were important to inform the factors influencing the PTS experience.

Quantitative analysis can use descriptive techniques to systematise, summarise and understand the interview data (Onwuegbuzie & Combs, 2010). Descriptive quantitative analysis techniques were to be used in the interpretation of questionnaire responses (Polit & Beck, 2006). Use of Burnard's (1991) systematic approach to thematic analysis has been described as pragmatic and guided the analysis of interviews (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, & Chadwick, 2008). Haitana and Bland (2011) argue for the appropriateness of Burnard's (1991) qualitative research analysis with audio recorded and transcribed interviews. In accordance with Burnard (1991) each interview was transcribed, viewed line-by-line with colour coding of the initial profusion of codes to be reduced to categories, and refined into key findings. Students' and lecturers' interviews were important as these also informed of factors influencing the PTS experience.

Subsequent to questionnaire and interview analysis, findings were integrated across phases one and two. Researchers discovered greater completeness of research through the integration of findings when multiple data collection methods are used (Bamberger et al., 2012; Schneider et al., 2013). Data gathered using different methods brings greater confidence in the findings through strength of conclusions and recommendations (Bamberger et al., 2012). The integration of findings can reveal similarities and differences and a more complete

understanding of the PTS and the factors that influenced students' and lecturers' PTS experience.

These forms of data analysis and integration of findings are appropriate to use within this study. The planned steps in the data analysis processes for phases one and two are presented along with the integration of findings in table 3.2.

**Table 3.2 Planned analysis of data, presentation and integration of findings.**

Data Analysis			
Steps	Phase one	Phase two	Integration
<b>Step 1</b>	Questionnaires reviewed with number assigned each script.	Interviews transcribed with pseudonyms for confidentiality.	
<b>Step 2</b>	Preliminary analysis to inform phase two questions topic guide.	Transcript validated by participants with transcript release form signed.	
<b>Step 3</b>	Data entered into excel with written responses collated in word.	Transcript viewed while listening to recording with open coding.	
<b>Step 4</b>	Analyses with relevant levels of measurement applied.	Transcript reviewed while listening to recording to collapse categories.	
<b>Step 5</b>	Written responses thematically analysed.	Consult with participants on categories and preliminary themes.	
<b>Step 6</b>	Consultation of analyses and themes.	Computer colour coding of data into categories.	
<b>Step 7</b>	Generate graphic representation of responses.	Consult on final themes apply to interviews.	
<b>Step 8</b>	Presentation of findings in chapter four.	Presentation of findings in chapter five.	Integration of findings across phases and present in chapter five.

### ***Quality considerations***

Quality is important as findings need "...to be useful and to merit use, ... should be as accurate and believable as possible" (Patton, 2008, p. 396). As research seeks to gain insight into "another person's perceptual world, then the researcher should attempt to offset his [or her] own bias and subjectivity that must creep through any attempt at making sense of interview data" (Burnard, 1991, p. 464). O'Cathain (2010) comments that in mixed methods research "the language of quality" (p. 537) is developing and as this discussion continues consensus has yet to be reached. Different quality terms in mixed methods research have been introduced such as inference quality (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) and legitimization (Onwuegubuzie & Johnson, 2006) with a move away from more familiar terms such as reliability and validity

(O'Cathain, 2010). The introduction of new terms has been rejected by some who advocate for the continued use of traditional terms, reliability and validity, as these arguably apply to both quantitative and qualitative methods (Richards & Morse, 2013). Whether new or traditional, quality terms may be rejected by some and embraced by others, and in the meantime this discussion continues as researchers seek acceptance of terms and criteria (Polit & Beck, 2012).

Polit and Beck (2012) considered quality more pragmatic in mixed methods and evaluation together with Johnson and Turner (2003) who state "valid research is plausible, credible, trustworthy, and, therefore, defensible" (p. 300). Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss research trustworthiness as important to the evaluation of quality. In this mixed methods research, trustworthiness was the term and quality measure to be used. Similar to Johnson and Turner (2003) trustworthiness, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), establishes the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of research findings. Trustworthiness in this research involves consideration of credibility, confirmability and dependability. However, as has been discussed, transferability, was less relevant for this study.

Trustworthiness of quantitative and qualitative methods was managed together in phases one and two of data analysis (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The processes of phase one questionnaire development, data collection and analysis were intended to uphold the requirements trustworthiness with particular consideration for dependability. This would include conferring with experts, questionnaires developed from a previously validated tool, consultation (research associate and research colleague) and pilot testing with similar research respondents. Questionnaires would then be modified. In combination these enhanced trustworthiness with phase one data collection and analysis. Rossi et al. (2004) discuss response rates can increase the trustworthiness of questionnaire findings as when high express views representative of students and lecturers. Trustworthiness with interviews was planned through theme verification. Burnard (1991) also recommended the same quality processes as part of the thematic analysis. This would first be sought through member-checks, whereby participants review the preliminary data analysis along with another researcher not involved in the study but who was familiar with thematic analysis (Burnard, 1991; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Triangulation in the integration of phase one and two findings supports credibility and confirmability as salience is revealed through uncovering patterns and contradictions that in this research is the consideration of similarities and differences (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## **Ethical Considerations**

Before this mixed methods evaluation could begin, ethical approval was required by and subsequently confirmed from both the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) (See Appendix A) and the research committee of the tertiary institution where this research was undertaken (See Appendix B). Cognisant of the ethical requirements and my researcher responsibility, the following issues were addressed: my researcher role (bias, conflict of interest as an inside researcher which also may identify the institution and relationship with the research population); power, coercion and protection from harm; anonymity, confidentiality and consent; and compensation.

### ***My researcher role***

When the researcher is part of the group that is the focus of the study, this is referred to as “insider research” (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 730). As a lecturer in the BN programme and School of Nursing, my research role was that of an inside researcher. More often associated with ethnographic design, the insider researcher role has both strengths and limitations. This insider role can bring an intrinsic awareness that is not otherwise apparent or expressed in the research (Monroe & Horm, 2012). Polit and Beck (2012) acknowledge three inherent benefits of insider research: 1) it can bring an ease of access through a researcher’s cultural capital; 2) it can also circumvent participant or context disturbance; and 3) an insider researcher has a wealth of implicit and explicit knowledge. Conversely, caution is advised as there is potential bias and predetermined views along with the possibility of participants’ perception of power and coercion issues (Polit & Beck, 2012). This can be addressed through the use of appropriate strategies that include identification and acknowledgement of potential issues and then managing them (Weiss, 1998). As an inside researcher, my role required cognisance of these potential issues together with management strategies.

### ***Managing the inevitability of bias***

Denzin and Lincoln (2011) state that “all research is interpretive: guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied” (p. 13). Researchers are aware that as their beliefs and feelings impact on the study this becomes a bias, that they have a duty to acknowledge and then moderate this effect (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Weiss, 1998). This is particularly relevant as an inside researcher. As lecturer and personal tutor in the BN, it was important to minimise the impact I would have on the research. Reflexivity is used

by researchers as it serves “to guard against personal bias...//...reflecting critically on the self...analysing and making note of personal values that could affect data collection and interpretation” (Polit & Beck, 2012, p. 179). It is impossible maintain distance and objectivity and to mitigate the potential impact of my bias I planned to use reflexivity. This included reflective conversations with my supervisors and nurses researchers named in the MUHEC application. Reflection would involve consideration of my personal perceptions, interpretations and presence in the research context to minimise my impact on this study. One such example was needing to be mindful of my reluctance to use the terms associated with the PTS as these are unfamiliar to the New Zealand nursing and education context. Reflection would also involve keeping the perspective of participants at the fore through regularly challenging my thoughts and ideas. Throughout the research, consultation with would also challenge any assumptions or bias.

### ***Potential issues of power, coercion and risk***

This study generated interest from both students and lecturers. Although this was pleasing (and somewhat of a relief) it was important not to exert pressure to participate. Strategies were required to protect research participants from the risk of overt or covert power or coercion. As this evaluation study was undertaken by me as a lecturer (and personal tutor) in the BN programme, the research population of third year students and lecturers were known as I had worked with many of them either directly or indirectly. Considered approaches were used to mitigate the potential for coercion to participate, in particular to safeguard those with whom I have or had a direct or indirect relationship. In respect to my involvement with students and lecturers, it was important there was no sense of obligation to contribute to this research. Participation, or not, was to be entirely voluntary and would not have any favourable or adverse impact whatsoever. Due consideration was given to the timing of the research and data collection for participants, in particular, the students. At the time of data collection my responsibilities with third year students had concluded for the academic year and I had no managerial role with the lecturers in the School of Nursing. In addition, the assistance of a research associate with the process of phase one data collection assured a ‘level of distance’ with research participants, in particular those with whom there had been or was a direct association (third year students on one site and all lecturers).

Research populations also require protection from potential emotional harm. Students and lecturers may experience varying degrees of discomfort when asked to critique the PTS and

share their experiences. Questionnaire completion and consent to interview denoted a level of comfort from the research population. For sensitive issues or data that may surface, support services were accessible for student and lecturers.

### ***Confidentiality and consent***

Confidentiality presented a challenge in the wider research context. While the School of Nursing, geographical sites and tertiary institution remained unnamed in all research related documentation, identification was possible as the PTS is uncommon in BN programmes within New Zealand and few schools of nursing have multiple sites. Confidentiality was acknowledged as a challenge in the context of this research with the School of Nursing and the tertiary institution. This was outlined in the applications to MUHEC and the research committee at the tertiary institution. Challenges with confidentiality were outlined in the letter to Faculty Dean (Appendix C), discussed with the Head of School, pointed out during study presentations and included in information sheets for phases one and two. While acknowledged, challenges related to confidentiality were not considered a reason to not proceed with this research. Rather, strategies to manage confidentiality were used such as no recognisable names or information related to the research (population and context) were used to minimise this possibility of identification. These issues were addressed in order to be granted ethical approval from the two institutions.

Questionnaire responses were anonymous for the students and lecturers who participated in phase one. For those who agreed to a phase two interview, confidentiality strategies would be used. No information provided by students and lecturers would be shared or used in a way that could reveal their identity. Confidentiality was to be maintained through: the use of phase one questionnaire numbering; phase two participant-chosen pseudonyms; secure storage of their consent forms and interview data; and the destruction and disposal of interview audio recordings and transcribed interviews when no longer required to be stored. Additionally confidentiality agreements (see Appendix K) were to be used with any person involved in this study who had access to research data, such as research associates, research colleagues and transcribers. Further, any names or identifying information in the data would be removed e.g. students and lecturers, the geographic sites and the educational institution and were to be replaced with neutral reference terms such as student, lecturer, personal tutor, smaller site one, tertiary institution.

Confidentiality was in part why students and lecturers were not asked to identify their ethnicity or gender sex as part of the demographic information. The potential number of individual ethnicities and males, both students and lecturers, in the research population were appreciably small across the three sites. For instance there were three male students on the larger site, one on a smaller site and none on the other. The presentation of such information may identify an individual student or lecturer and had limited relevance as ethnicity and gender were not a focus in this study. However students and lecturers were invited to offer comment throughout the questionnaire and share their experiences at interview that may include the influence of being in a minority group.

### ***Inclusion and exclusion criteria***

Unique to mixed methods research populations is the possibility of different research populations and exclusion criteria for the quantitative and qualitative data collection (Polit & Beck, 2012). This research involved a single research population and set of inclusion and exclusion criteria for the phase one quantitative and phase two qualitative data collection.

Students invited to participate in this study were to be on their first and only BN programme enrolment and have progressed within the expected three year timeframe and were near completion of their study in 2011. Students were to be excluded if they had commenced the BN prior to 2009 or transferred from another tertiary institution. Excluded students could offer a comparative perspective to programme without the PTS or with an alternate support system, but this was not the study focus. The research population included four students for whom I was their personal tutor and, although able to complete the phase one anonymous questionnaire, these students were to be excluded from the phase two interview to avoid the conflict of interest issues.

Lecturers invited to participate in this research had a personal tutor role in the BN. While the perspective of lecturers who may have experience with the PTS in another programme, may offer a useful and different viewpoint, again, this was not the focus of the study.



### ***Compensation***

Compensation was to be offered to the research participants in both phases one and two with the cost personally met by me. Respondents who returned completed questionnaires would go into a prize draw for a gift card to the value of \$100. There was to be a prize draw for each of the three student cohorts and one for lecturers. On the larger site, where the student numbers were nearly double that of the smaller sites, two prize draws were offered. The research associate was to coordinate the prize draw and gift card distribution to assure recipients confidentiality. Phase two participants would have light refreshments offered at interview and compensation of either a petrol voucher or phone card to the value of \$10. Participants were to receive their voucher or card in the post together with a letter of thanks (see Appendix L) for their contribution to this research.

### **The Research Process**

The two-phase sequential design proved beneficial in this study. As the sole researcher, it was advantageous to organise and complete phase one before the commencement of phase two. However, phase one started later than planned due to unanticipated changes to the BN programme that were outside of my control. This resulted in the delay with phase one questionnaire distribution and preliminary phase one data analysis that was required to inform question topic development for phase two interviews. Consequently this created pressure for scheduling phase two interviews. Timeliness for student participant interviews was a primary consideration as there was a narrow completion timeframe. At the time of interview students were in the midst of their final BN paper, a clinical practice experience of nine weeks. In the weeks following completion of this paper and the BN programme, students focused on preparation for the Nursing Council of New Zealand state final examination. This national exam is scheduled in the third week of November each year.

Once ethical approvals were confirmed, a letter was sent to the Faculty Dean at the tertiary institution (see Appendix C) to request consent to conduct the proposed research. After meeting with the Dean, permission was given to access the three School of Nursing sites; approach the research populations; use the student database and the institution's learning management system at the tertiary institution for the contact information for interview participants. Meetings were then arranged with the Head of School and programme leaders

regarding the specific details to access the research population. Support and access arrangements were confirmed by mid July 2011.

### **Research participants**

Across the three School of Nursing sites, the research population were students who enrolled in the new BN programme in 2009 and had a personal tutor, and all lecturers who were currently personal tutors. The total eligible research population of all third year students (n=106) and lecturers (n=26) was invited to participate in both the phase one questionnaires and phase two interviews. The student cohort numbers on: smaller site one was n=25, smaller site two was n=27, and larger site three was n=54. The PTS lecturer numbers on: smaller site one was n=4, smaller site two was n=6, and larger site three was n=16.

### **Phase one: Questionnaire development and data analysis**

A modified PTS questionnaire was developed based on the previously validated tool of Cottrell et al. (1994) and Malik (2000). The questionnaire was intended to be the earlier validated tool of Cottrell et al. (1994) and used by Malik (2000) and Sayer et al. (2002). Permission was sought from Professor David Cottrell to use the PTS questionnaire and while willing, unfortunately, with computer changes and document rationalisation, no longer had an electronic or hard copy of this data collection tool. Dr Salahuddin Malik was also contacted, but regrettably, the response from was the same as Professor Cottrell. Attempts to contact Dr Melissa Sayer were unsuccessful. Professor Cottrell and Dr Malik confirmed the information required to replicate the questionnaire was presented in their publications.

Separate student and lecturer, self-administered, PTS questionnaires were developed (see Appendix D and E). The questionnaires had additional questions drawn from other BN programme evaluations that included PTS questions. The student and lecturer questionnaires included eight sections with four types of questions. Most questions used a five point rating scale, some sought a choice from available options, a few requested a numerical or yes/no response with one open-ended question included. Most sections included the opportunity for students and lecturers to include additional comments as they may wish to offer more detail related to particular questions. The final page was also blank for additional comments. Questions for students and lecturers were primarily the same or similar. The differences in

some questions related to the particulars of students' or lecturers' role, view or experience. All questionnaire respondents were part of the PTS and able to answer all questions. Consultation with Massey University statistics personnel in the development of this questionnaire resulted in the deletion of one section, removal of two questions and modification to one rating scale.

The draft questionnaire was pilot tested to the extent that it was possible with respondents similar to the research population. Excluded from this study were third-year students (n=11) from across the three sites students who had experienced the PTS in the previous BN programme together with lecturers (n=3) who had previously been personal tutors. These students and lecturers were invited to participate in the questionnaire pilot. Of these, two lecturers and 10 students participated in the pilot.

Although the pilot was limited due to the available population, student and lecturer responses and review discussions were valuable to the final questionnaire development. The pilot testing and reviews informed and shaped the final questionnaire as the quantitative data collection tool. Following pilot testing, questionnaire questions were reduced in number, reworded for clarity, removed due to repetition or deleted as they were not manifestly relevant to the research.

The invitation to participate in this study and distribution of the finalised phase one questionnaires in hard copy was negotiated for students in August 2011 and lecturers in July 2011. The day, time and place for questionnaire distribution was agreed with programme leaders for students on each site and with the Head of School for lecturers. Information about the research presented to each of the three student groups and lecturers in separate oral presentations was followed by an invitation to participate in this study. This presentation along with phase one information sheet (See Appendix F) highlighted students' and lecturers' rights with phase one questionnaire completion and phase two interviews (relevant if agreeing to participate by completion of the final section of the questionnaire). Particular participant rights details related to consent, anonymity (phase one), confidentiality (phase two), data collection, no obligation to answer questions, information dissemination and decline involvement without penalty.

Confidentiality concerns were voiced by lecturers at their presentation. As an appreciably small research population it was considered possible that individual responses could be linked

with demographic information. It was agreed lecturers' demographic information would be separated from their responses by the research associate before questionnaires were viewed. Confidentiality was not a concern voiced by students. For students and lecturers with whom there was a direct, ongoing or previous relationship the research associate distributed hard copy questionnaires in the room and collected questionnaires (via sealed container). On sites where I had no direct relationship, hard copy questionnaires were distributed in the room and collected (via sealed container) by me.

Most students had one PTS experience as the relationship with their own personal tutor was intended to continue throughout their three-year programme. However PTS lecturers may change for different reasons. As a result students may refer to more than one PTS experience in phases one or two. This was discussed with students at the time of questionnaire distribution with direction that responses would relate to the PTS lecturer who was identified as their primary assigned personal tutor. If students wished to offer information related to their previous PTS lecturer, this could be included in the questionnaire.

All questionnaires were handed out in hard copy with research information sheets attached, coloured laminated numbers (for prize draws) and envelopes available for postal returns. The questionnaire return date was included on the questionnaire. Options for questionnaire returns included: 1). complete questionnaire and return to sealed container immediately; 2). postal return with envelope, stamps and address provided; 3). return to a sealed container placed in a secure location on each site. This location was confirmed with each student and lecturer presentation, for example the site library. A follow-up reminder was sent via the institution's learning management system after one week to encourage questionnaire completion and return.

There was high rate of questionnaire returns and completion with 81% (n=86) for students and 76% (n=19) for lecturers that denotes the trustworthiness of findings as responses representative of the research respondents. This is suggestive of student and lecturer interest in the research and motivation to share their PTS experience. The phase one data were analysed and reported in two discrete groups: students and lecturers. Questionnaire responses generated both quantitative qualitative findings. Phase one data entry and analysis included assistance from a research associate. After a confidentiality agreement was signed, the research associate created a Microsoft excel template to enter questionnaire responses and a Microsoft word template to enter the open ended question responses together with the

additional free text comments. A preliminary questionnaire analysis informed the development of the phase two interview topic guide.

Demographic information for lecturer questionnaires was separated from their responses which limited the opportunity for comparison. Student demographic information and questionnaire responses remained together which allowed for comparisons to be made. Comparisons across the three School of Nursing sites were not planned as part of this research. Nonetheless, when differences became apparent, and these were noted although this was more obvious in phase two. To manage the difference in size between the student and lecturer groups, percentages and numbers were reported.

All respondents had attempted to complete the eight questionnaire sections. However, not all questions within the sections were answered. Some questions had incomplete answers or responses that suggested questions had been interpreted by respondents in a way that was not intended. For example, in place of a requested numerical response, words such as few, some, many or lots were used. This resulted in some missing data. As the total research population was invited to participate in this research and all were involved in the PTS, it was considered improbable missing data would result in correlated bias (Oppenheim, 1992). Consequently missing data was omitted from the percentage responses for questions. Most students responded to most questions, however there was usually one or two and sometimes more who consistently did not answer a question. Conversely, almost all lecturers responded to almost all questions. For reporting purposes, the number of respondents not answering each question was noted in chapter four.

Once data entry for 10 questionnaires had been completed these were reviewed. The research associate then completed data entry for the remaining questionnaires. When all data were entered, consultative discussions related to the analyses were arranged with the research associate and a research colleague who had also signed the confidentiality agreement. The data analysis appeared relatively uncomplicated. At the completion of phase one analysis, figures were generated by the research associate. Percentages and total response numbers are presented in chapter four as: percentage, n=number.

Based on Burnard's (1991) thematic analysis detailed in phase two, a simplified version was used with the open-ended question and the unexpectedly high number of respondents' additional free text comments. The research colleague, who signed the confidentiality

agreement and was a consultant in phase two, also consulted and concurred with the thematic analysis of questionnaire written responses. Many respondents provided additional comments that added depth to their questionnaire responses. Respondents' comments were an important contribution to questionnaire data and findings that are reported in chapter four and are presented as: for students, S: allocated data entry number; and lecturers, L: allocated data entry number; for example S:18 or L:3.

### **Phase two: Individual interviews and data analysis**

A greater than expected number of students and lecturers indicated their willingness to be interviewed. All 46 participants agreeing to phase two interviews were contacted although not all were interviewed. Student and lecturer questionnaires were reviewed using the selection criteria of maximising participation from across the sites and a range of PTS experiences (positive, neutral and negative). The final two survey questions were used to indicate the range of responses as these asked students and lecturers to rate the overall success of the PTS and their experience. In total, 38 participant interviews were completed across the School of Nursing. This included 28 students; eight from each of the smaller sites and 12 from the larger site, and 10 lecturers; two and three respectively from the smaller sites and five from the larger site.

Of the 35 students agreeing to interview two did not meet the criteria for inclusion as I was their PTS lecturer, one withdrew, one was non-responsive to communication attempts via email and mobile phone (including verbal and text messages), two were not interviewed as data saturation was achieved. At interview another student was identified as not meeting the inclusion criteria. This student had been enrolled in another BN and although they had withdrawn before the programme commenced, their interview and questionnaire could not be included in this study. All 11 lecturers agreeing to interview met the inclusion criteria and only one was not interviewed as again, data saturation had been achieved.

All student and lecturer participants were contacted by me via email within two weeks of questionnaire completion to acknowledge their willingness to participate in the phase two interviews. Once selected for interview, subsequent contacts were via mobile phone, unless participants had indicated an alternate communication preference. Interviews were organised outside of work and study commitments at a venue agreeable to participants and appropriate for digital voice recording. Participants were also aware of possible follow-up interviews.

At each interview, information sheet two (See Appendix G) was given to students and lecturers that outlined their rights. Time was taken to draw participants' attention to information around consent, confidentiality, data collection, storage, destruction, their right to decline to answer any of the questions and information dissemination. Participants had time to read the information with an opportunity to discuss any concerns or queries prior to signing their consent forms (see Appendix H). Confidentiality was maintained with participant-chosen pseudonyms. Many chose names with which there was a connection such as a grandparent, friend or someone deceased while the remainder chose names because they were liked. Interestingly the names did not necessarily relate to a participants' gender. A copy of the interview question topic guide (see Appendix I) was given to participants to review at the time of the interview and remained available for their reference. This technique appeared helpful as all were aware of the indicative interview questions that lessened the possibility of mishearing or misinterpretation and provided time to consider responses. Participants agreed to interviews being recorded with a copy available on request. Two participants requested and were given a digital copy of their interview.

Most interviews were completed during a single meeting however two participants required a second meeting. For one participant, the interview was longer than the time they had available. The other participant wished to discuss their particular experience complexities prior to interview and was then given time to consider this discussion. Both participants voluntarily agreed to complete the interview at another time.

During the interviews it became clear that participants' experience and questionnaire responses of positive, neutral or negative did not always directly correlate and were more diverse or complex. This supported the decision for a mixed methods design and resulted in more participants being interviewed than originally planned.

All semi-structured interviews began with a single, broad open ended request for participants to: Tell me about your PTS experience. Once their initial response was given, additional questions were posed to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' PTS experience. The question topic guide was further informed by the initial review of interviews (See Appendix I). Any additional questions asked were dependent on participant responses as not all questions were relevant to all students and lecturers.

Of the 38 interviews, 22 were between 30 – 60 minutes, eight were longer than 60 minutes and eight were a little less than 30 minutes. At the completion of the 38 interviews data saturation was achieved and no follow-up interviews were necessary.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. Transcription of the first three interviews was completed by me and was beneficial as it allowed for further awareness of the interview process, a sense of question effectiveness, attention focused on their voice and to become more familiar with participants' experiences. Completing these transcriptions confirmed no changes were required for interview questions however my interview technique was modified to minimise dialogue with participants during interviews that allowed for greater expression of participants' PTS experience. Once interview data was analysed, selections were presented in chapter five with minimal punctuation included for the purpose of clarity.

The services of transcribers were enlisted earlier than planned as transcriptions were too time consuming and needed to be managed efficiently. After signing confidentiality agreements, transcribers completed the transcription of the recorded interviews. In total, four transcribers were used. The two initial transcribers had an unexpected change of availability after three and four interviews respectively. An agency transcriber proved unsatisfactory and their service was not used after five interviews. The fourth transcriber proved exceptionally efficient and completed transcribing the remaining interviews.

All participants were offered the opportunity to review, validate and modify their transcribed interview. Mindful that verbatim transcription can make for difficult reading, this was explained to participants at interview. Of the 38 participants interviewed, four reviewed a copy of their transcript and two made minor changes. All interview participants signed the authority to release form (see Appendix J) before their interview data was analysed.

Thematic analysis of interview data required recognition of both descriptive and interpretative characteristics. The process involved immersion in the text of transcribed interviews while listening to participants' interview recordings. Initially, 12 codes were identified and then collapsed into six categories that became three key findings. All interviews were then reviewed through these three themes.



A number of students and lecturers were invited to review the thematic analysis along with a research colleague. This occurred as soon as possible after the completion of data collection and analysis as delays can diminish participants' motivation and research cognisance. Student and lecturer participants were consulted as part of the preliminary analysis and review of emerging themes. Student and lecturer reviews resulted in modifications whereby categories were collapsed. At this time student participants had completed their BN, and the opportunity for their timely ongoing involvement was limited. Later consultation was more reliant on lecturer participants and the research colleague who reviewed the final analysis with agreement of identified themes.

The presentation of phase two interview findings in chapter five used a similar approach to that in phase one, although in place of an allocated data entry number, students' and lecturers' self-selected pseudonym are used. Interview excerpts are prefixed or suffixed by the participant's pseudonym and is followed with an S for students or L for lecturers and then the relevant transcript page numbers. For example; Sam: S, p. 7 for students and June: L, p. 22 for lecturers.

### **Integration of findings**

The integration of phases one and two findings allowed this study to more fully respond to the research questions. As the same students and lecturers participated in phase one and two this enhanced confidence with the integration of findings as similarities and differences were identified. In isolation, questionnaire responses were found to be more one-dimensional as a representation of students' and lecturers' PTS perspectives. This became apparent when participants were interviewed as they shared a deeper and richer complexity of their PTS experience that had not previously been apparent. The integration of students' and lecturers' questionnaire and interview findings was presented in response to the research questions of this study. The combination of phase one and two findings bought a more complete understanding of students and lecturer PTS experience.

### **Conclusion**

Disciplines such as nursing and education have been important in the development of mixed methods research as they depend on both quantitative and qualitative approaches to

understand an often a complex social context. In this chapter the research design and process were presented along with the associated complexities related to this study. The selection of mixed methods for this evaluation research afforded pragmatic flexibility which was important given the unexpected changes during this research. Rossi, Lipsy and Freeman (2004) describe an evaluator's role as one that "must often innovate and improvise as they attempt to find ways to gather credible, defensible evidence about social programs" (p.17). Evaluation requires considered effort to generate meaningful data to understand programme effectiveness, or part thereof, as researchers "...create spaces for those who are studied (the other) to speak. The evaluator becomes a conduit for making such voices heard" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 15).

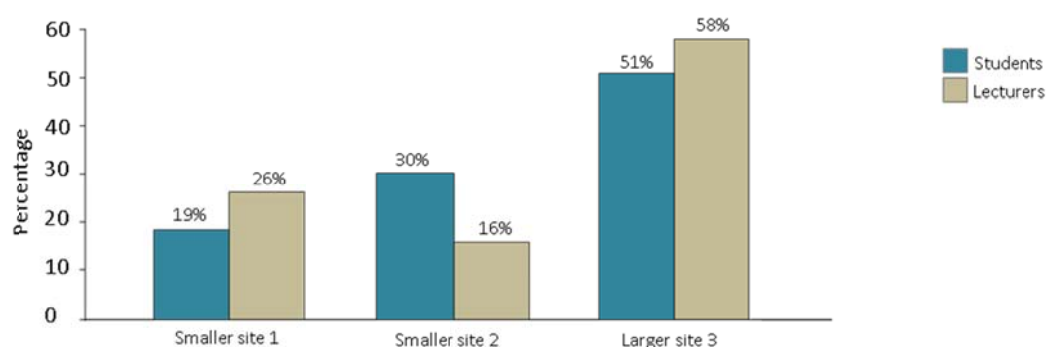
Presented in chapters four and five are the findings from the phase one questionnaires followed by the phase two interviews. The research participants' voices resonate in the next two chapters. The integration of findings at the end of chapter five completes the presentation of findings for this mixed methods evaluation.

## Chapter Four: Phase One Questionnaire Findings

The findings from phases one and two of the research are presented in these next two chapters, concluding with the integration of phase one and two findings. In this chapter phase one findings are presented under eight headings that align with the eight sections of student and lecturer questionnaires. Some questions have moved between sections for the purpose of clarity with the presentation of findings. The phase one questionnaire findings initially focus on demographic information and then moves to the personal tutor system (PTS) with attention drawn to the aims, guidelines, communication, meetings, use, links to centralised services, support beyond the institution, and finally students' and lecturers' overall PTS experience.

### Section One: Demographic Information

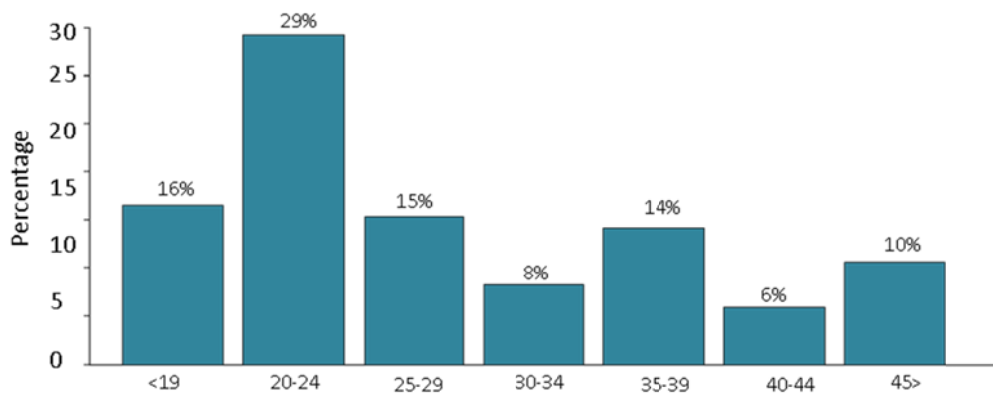
General demographic information was asked of students and lecturers in section one. Across the three sites just under half of student respondents (49%, n=42) were from the smaller sites one (19%, n=16) and two (30%, n=26) and just over half of student respondents (51%, n=44) were from larger site three. Lecturers showed similar representation across the three sites. Less than half of lecturer respondents (42%, n=8) were from the smaller sites: one - 26%, n=5; two - 16%, n=3; with more than half of lecturer respondents from the larger site three - 58%, n=11. The number of student and lecturer respondents from the three School of Nursing sites is detailed in Figure 4.1.



**Figure 4.1. Percentage of student and lecturer respondents from the School of Nursing**

### ***Students' demographic information***

At the time of enrolment, the age of students in the BN was varied as seen in Figure 4.2. Some students commenced the programme immediately after secondary school, others started following time away of one or more years. For some mature age students (25 years or older) enrolment in the BN may signal a career change or returning to work after focusing on other commitments such as family. The student ages range was greater than 25 years with the median age of 28 years. Close to half of the students (45%, n=39) were 24 years or younger, just under a quarter of students (23%, n=20) were aged between 25-34 years with the remainder of students (31%, n=26) aged over 35 years. One student did not respond to this question.



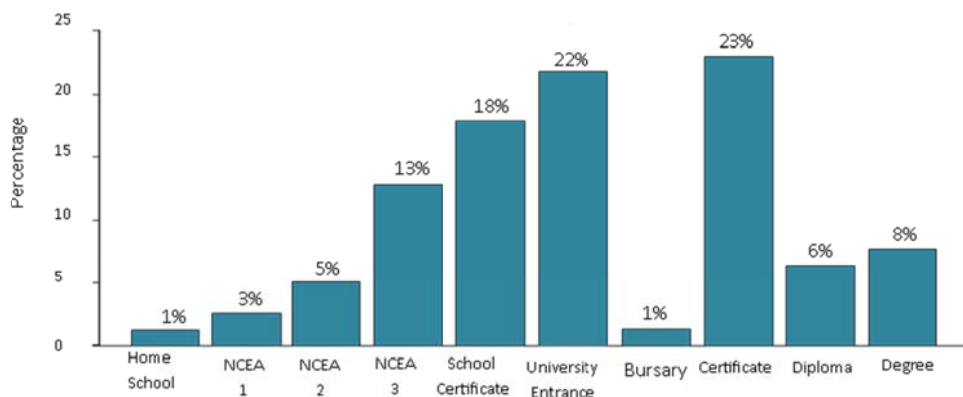
**Figure 4.2. Students' age at commencement of the BN**

Students enrolled in the BN had different educational experiences and therefore differing needs and expectations (School of Nursing, 2008). The highest level of academic achievement for most students prior to the BN is presented in Figure 4.3. Most students (91%, n=78) responded to this question although a small number (9%, n=8) did not respond. Almost two-thirds (63%, n=51) of students had a secondary school qualification or equivalent<sup>4</sup>. Over a third of students (37%, n=29) had a completed tertiary qualification<sup>5</sup>. For nearly a quarter (21%, n=18) was a level four or five certificate. This may be due in part to prospective students

<sup>4</sup> Secondary school qualifications in New Zealand are completed in the final 3 years of secondary school (years 11 – 13). New Zealand has two secondary school qualification systems that include: the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) with levels 1-3 in years 11-13; and the alternative of home school education. Student respondents used 3 systems for secondary school qualification as the previous system phased out between 2002-2004 included School Certificate in year 11, Sixth Form Certificate and University Entrance in year 12 with University Bursary in year 13. The 3 secondary school qualifications are commensurate with the variation in student ages (New Zealand Qualifications Authority, n.d.).

<sup>5</sup> Tertiary institutions offer qualifications across 10 programme levels that range from: certificates (levels 1-4), diplomas (levels 5-6), degrees (level 7) through to postgraduate study and research (levels 8-10).

completing a pre-entry certificate in health science or similar qualification. Some students will choose to complete a pre-entry certificate and others are directed to do so as preparation for the BN programme. Other tertiary qualifications completed included level six diploma (6%, n=5) and level seven degree (8%, n=6). In accordance with the Ministry of Education and the policy of the tertiary institution, there is provision for applicants over the age of 20 years to enrol in the BN program when able to demonstrate capability to complete the programme irrespective of previous academic achievement.



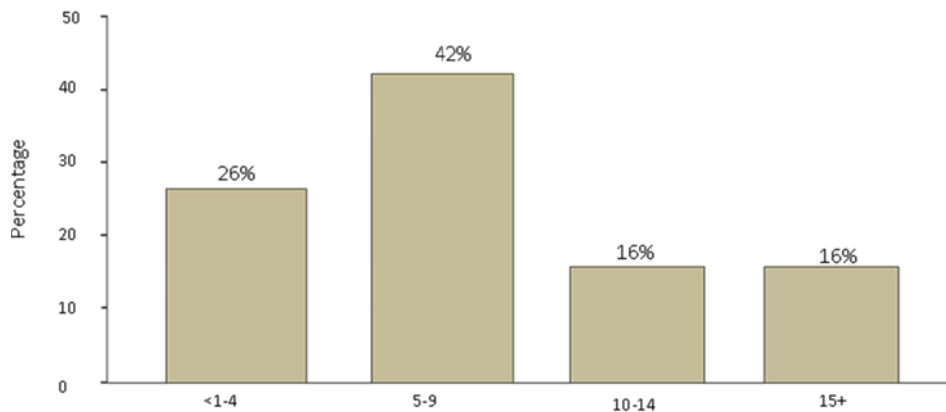
**Figure 4.3. Students' highest academic achievement prior to BN**

The final question in section one asked students if they were aware of the PTS prior to enrolling in this BN. Most students (84%, n=72) enrolling in the 2009 BN intake, did so without prior knowledge of the PTS. Of the students who were aware of the PTS prior to enrolment (16%, n=14), some had been informed at the BN programme information evenings (13%, n=11), at the tertiary institutions open information days (5%, n=4) and from their enrolment information (5%, n=4). Interestingly, most, if not all students would have been expected to receive PTS information with enrolment documentation.

#### ***Lecturers' demographic information***

Almost all lecturers who completed the phase one questionnaire (95 %, n=18) have been a registered nurses for more than 16 years. Only one lecturer had less experience; this lecturer reported having between 10 and 15 years' experience as a registered nurse.

The length of time lecturers had held their position at the tertiary institution was more varied as presented in Figure 4.4. Many lecturers (32%, n=6) had been in their position for more than 10 years; most (42%, n=8) had been in their position for between 5 and 9 years and the remaining lecturers (26%, n=5) had been in their role for four years or less. Almost half the lecturers (47%, n=8) had achieved senior lecturer status as formal recognition of their educational expertise and excellence.



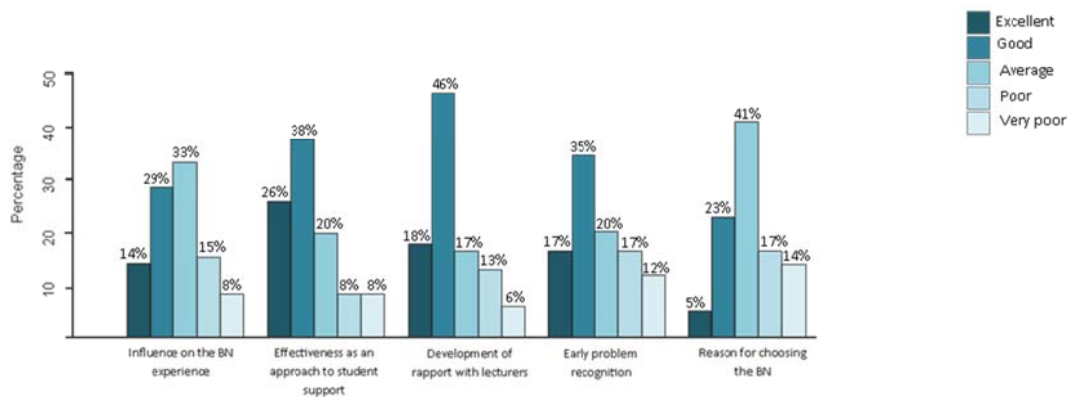
**Figure 4.4. Length of lecturers' employment in education at this institution**

Most lecturers (84%, n=16) had participated in the PTS for between 3-4 years since the informal introduction of the system in 2008. A few lecturers (10%, n=2) had been part of the PTS for 1-2 years since its formal introduction in 2009 and one lecturer had worked with the PTS for less than one year. At the time of questionnaire completion most lecturers (79%, n=15) had worked exclusively with the undergraduate BN in the School of Nursing where this research was conducted. While some (21%, n=4) had worked in other tertiary institutions within other undergraduate nursing programmes, only one lecturer reported having previous experience with a student support system in another BN programme.

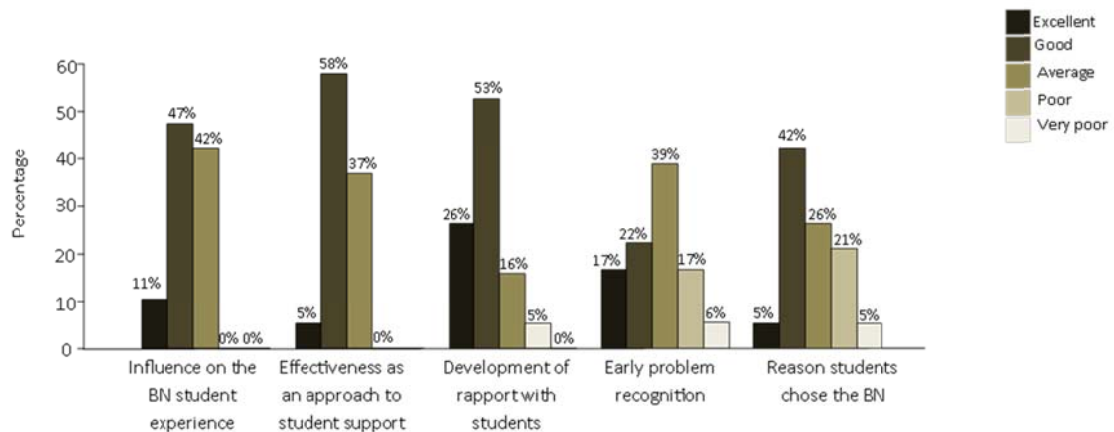
## **Section Two: Aims of the Personal Tutor System**

The six aims of the PTS were the focus of section two questions for students and lecturers. The first four PTS aims related directly to student support, that is: retention, success, early problem identification, and monitoring of progress. The final two aims focused more on PTS operationalisation in the programme, that is: equitable student support workload for lecturers

and BN marketing with identifiable student support providing a market edge to the BN. The questions were framed so students and lecturers could apply the rating scale in relation to their experience. Students and lecturers were asked five questions that related to influence on the BN experience, effectiveness of support, rapport with lecturer, early problem recognition and reason for choosing this BN. A sixth question was asked only of lecturers as it related to the PTS aim of equity with the student support workload. Student and lecturer responses are shown in Figures 4.5 and 4.6.



**Figure 4.5. Students' rating of personal tutor system in relation to aims**



**Figure 4.6. Lecturers' rating of personal tutor system in relation to aims**

In the first question, respondents were asked to rate the influence of the PTS on the BN student experience, with responses from lecturers more positive than those from students. The influence of the PTS on the BN experience was considered excellent or good by less than

half of students (42%, n=36) and more than half of lecturers (58%, n=11) with a third of students (33%, n=28) and the remainder of lecturers (42%, n=8) rating it as average. Almost a quarter of students (23%, n=20) considered the PTS was a poor or very poor influence. No lecturers rated the influence of the PTS as poor or very poor. There were two students who did not answer; all lecturers responded to this question.

The additional comments provided on the PTS influence on students' BN experience were mixed. Students had varied PTS experiences as S:3 shared *"this may depend on the personal tutor ... mine was excellent ... every personal tutor is different"*. One student indicated the PTS *"contributed very little to my experience"* (S:60) and five students (S:32, S:48, S:56, S:58, S:78) noted that they *"did not use the personal tutor system ... "*. Lecturers reported that *"being available to [support] students ... has proven great worth for all students who use PTS system regularly"* (L:8) along with L:10 who also commented the *"influence and effectiveness of the personal tutor system are dependent on the students' engagement with the scheme"*.

In the second question, respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the PTS as an approach to student support and again lecturers were more positive than students. The effectiveness of the PTS was rated as excellent or good by many students (64%, n=54) and lecturers (63%, n=12), an average rating was given by some students (20%, n=17) and the remainder of lecturers (37%, n=7). Again, some students (16%, n=14) rated the effectiveness as poor or very poor. One student did not respond to this question. No lecturers identified the PTS as a poor or very poor approach to student support. All lecturers responded to this question.

Lecturers had a greater appreciation for the value of PTS support that for students was not always immediately obvious. Students' appreciation for PTS support developed during the course of the programme. As S:27 commented *"initially the personal tutor system didn't seem to have much relevance, but as I progressed through the course I appreciated knowing there was a 'go-to' person if I needed it"*. Over time other students also found the PTS was *"great for personal help"* (S:18). S:46 stated:

*At times, I didn't need my personal tutor, then when I did need her she was there for me 100%, it was a great assurance and 'safety net'. I think this was partly due to her as a person rather than the fact that she was a personal tutor.*

S:48 reported that *"personally I did not utilise this support as best I could. But it was good to have a member [of staff] to go to"*.



Lecturers emphasised the importance of both proactive and responsive PTS use. One lecturer noted that the PTS *“gives students one specific person that they know can talk to/suggest/assist/refer/clarify issues – particularly often students feel overloaded or are struggling with issues”* (L:12). Although L:13 reported *“many students chose not to engage [with the PTS] until a problem arises with academic work”*, as lecturers have the knowledge and *“ability to direct students to other resources and support”* (L:1). Similar comments were made by four other lecturers (L:5, L:6, L:9, L:10) who found offering support was more of a challenge when students engaged with the PTS only as an issue surfaced.

The third question related to the development of rapport between students and lecturers through the PTS. Lecturer and student responses to this question were more closely aligned than in the first two questions and are noticeably positive. A rating of excellent or good was indicated by many students (62% n=54) and most lecturers (79%, n=15). Some students (17%, n=14) and lecturers (16%, n=3) considered the PTS as average for developing rapport, and some students (19% n=16) considered it poor or very poor. One lecturer rated it as poor. Two students did not respond to this question. All lecturers responded.

Students’ comments drew attention to the importance of rapport with lecturers. Rapport along with relationships, the interpersonal interaction between students and lecturers was a repeated theme in students’ questionnaire comments and subsequently in phase two interviews. For students and lecturers the PTS *“could be much more effective if...greater rapport was built”* (S:47). The PTS experience for others, including S:10, was *“very poor, I believe it has the possibility to be very effective [through] one-on-one time with the personal tutor to build a rapport”*. A few lecturers also noted that *“to some extent how tutor and tutee relate to each other”* (L:10) was relevant as the *“development of good rapport...increased comfort with sharing personal issues”* (L:1). In contrast to students, most lecturers’ questionnaire comments did not include PTS relationships or interpersonal interactions.

The fourth question asked respondents to rate their experience with the PTS in relation to the early recognition of student problems. Student responses rated their experience with the PTS and the early recognition of problems more positively than lecturers. It was found to be excellent or good by over half of students (52%, n=43) and more than a third of lecturers (39%, n=7) with some students (20%, n=17) and lecturers (39%, n=7) rating it average. About a quarter of students (29%, n=24) and lecturers (23%, n=4) rated the PTS as poor or very poor in relation to the early recognition of student problems. Again, two students did not answer this

question or offer additional comments. This was the first question not answered by all lecturers as one did not respond. The PTS was generally considered a *“very useful process for early detection of any academic problems”* (L:8). Responses from other lecturers related to concerns that *“student[s] with problems engage less with the PTS system”* (L:9).

The fifth question asked of students and lecturers was to rate the PTS as a reason to enrol in this BN. More than a quarter of students (28%, n=22) and close to half of lecturers (47%, n=9) considered it excellent or good while less than half of students (41%, n=32) and just over a quarter of lecturers (26%, n=5) rated it as average. The PTS was considered a poor or very poor reason to enrol in the BN by some students (31%, n=24) and lecturers (26%, n=5). Eight students and two lecturers did not respond to this question. Lecturers believed students were *“generally aware that personal tutor system is available to them before enrolment”* (L:8). However this did not correspond with students’ earlier responses that indicated less than a quarter (22%, n=19) were aware of the PTS prior to starting the BN. Irrespective of students PTS awareness, L:6 didn’t *“believe having a personal tutor process would influence someone to study”* in this BN.

Lecturers had an additional question in section two related to the equity and balance of the student support workload with their PTS role. This question was not included in Figure 4.6. Some lecturers rated the PTS as excellent or good (32%, n=6) with balancing their student support role and some rated it as average (41%, n=7) or poor (24%, n=4). No lecturers rated this as very poor. Two lecturers did not respond. Lecturer comments were somewhat polarised about the PTS balancing their student support workload. Many valued that with the PTS their student support became a formalised part of their role. L:16 remarked:

*Students appreciate having someone to talk to but personally I have not noticed a difference as I believe in an open door policy and have always encouraged students to come for support when they needed.*

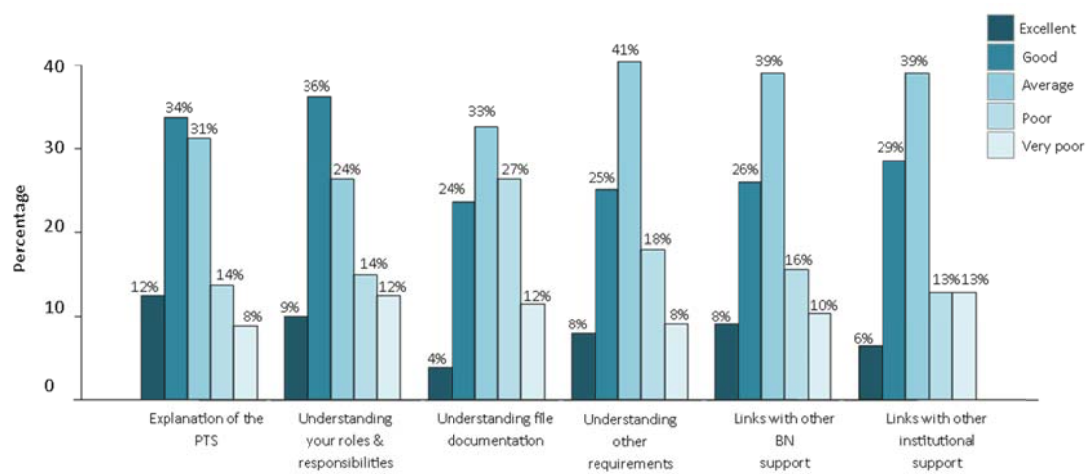
L:10 noted that *“while it is a useful scheme it could be strengthened”* as L:5 found it *“just takes so much time organising”*. The increasing number of students allocated to lecturers has the potential to present a challenge for lecturer availability and accessibility. One lecturer, L:14, was *“not convinced that the amount of time this system requires is matched with the value placed upon it by students”*.

The policy, guidelines and processes may influence students’ and lecturers’ PTS experience and are the focus of sections three, four and five. Questions in section three are directed to

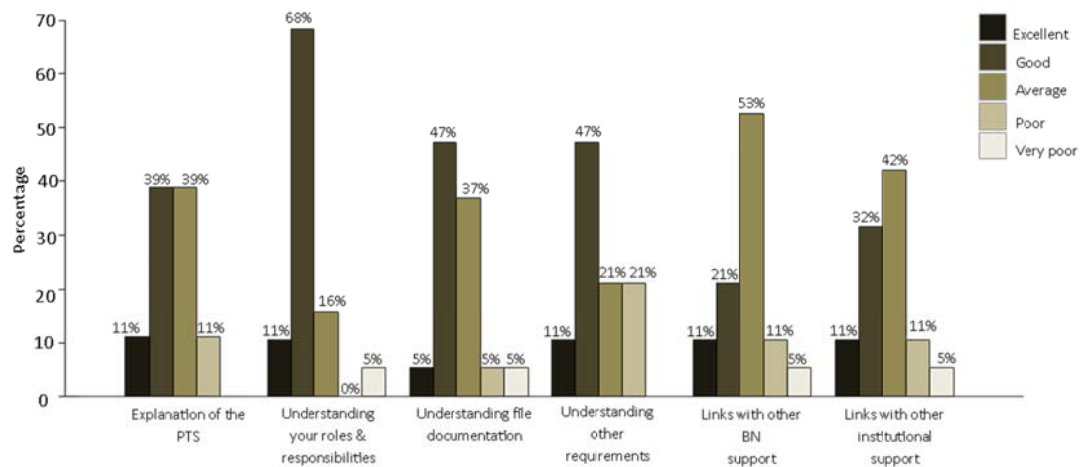
students' and lecturers' awareness of the PTS policy and guidelines. Section four focuses on allocation and communication and section five relates to the specifics of meeting requirements.

### Section Three: Policy and Guidelines

While students had an introduction to the PTS policy and guidelines in their induction week, lecturers are expected to be familiar with the PTS policy and guidelines. This section asked five questions related to the PTS guidelines with responses presented in Figures 4.7 and 4.8.



**Figure 4.7. Students' rating of the personal tutor system guidelines**



**Figure 4.8. Lecturers' rating of the personal tutor system guidelines**

The questions in section three related to students and lecturers knowledge and understanding of the PTS guidelines that included: the PTS explanation; students' and lecturers' roles and responsibilities; documentation for student files; an understanding of PTS requirements such as meetings and confidentiality; links to other support School of Nursing and the institution's centralised services.

The first question asked respondents to rate the PTS guidelines in relation to the information and explanation given about this student support system in the context on the BN. Student and lecturer responses were relatively similar. The explanation of the PTS was rated as excellent or good by around half of students (47%, n=37) and lecturers (50%, n=9) with around a third of students (31%, n=25) and lecturers (38%, n=7) rating this as average. Some students (20%, n=18) considered this poor or very poor and a few lecturers (11%, n=2) considered this poor. This question was not answered by six students and one lecturer.

Additional comments related to the PTS policy and guidelines from eight students (S:27S, 35, S:48, S:56, S:58, S:62, S:68, S:82) indicated their lack of guideline awareness. Students not only commented they were unfamiliar with these and *"don't know the guidelines"* (S:58), or more concerning *"didn't know it existed"* (S 82). S:68 *"wasn't aware there were guidelines [was] unable to answer this section"*. Some students were aware of the guidelines but had limited knowledge. S:27 remarked *"I did read this at one point, but can't really remember the details now"*. Some students recollection of the PTS policy and guidelines, introduction and explanation during year one BN induction was, not unexpectedly, distant. S:62 explained *"this all occurred in first year, so not entirely fresh, may have remembered if it was explained again in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year"*. Students' comments indicate the year one induction appeared to be their only PTS information and explanation given over the three years of study.

Lecturers were introduced to the guidelines when the PTS became part of the BN and these are restated for each cohort of students assigned to lecturers. However, surprisingly not all lecturers were familiar with the policy and guidelines, as one lecturer, had *"never seen a policy on the personal tutor system"* (L:14). Many lecturer comments centred on the need for greater clarity as the *"policy [and] guidelines are not clear generally"* (L:9) and *"... are open to interpretation"* (L:6). Their comments indicated students had issues understanding the PTS and the *"need to change the title of system; it is misleading and students often believe they should be able to receive extra 'tuition' through the system"* (L:14). This was reflected in the

comments from a few lecturers in other sections of the questionnaire as L:1 reported *“the title of ‘personal tutor’ is misleading as it implies learning support. e.g. in relation to assignments”* and has caused misunderstandings of role, responsibilities and subsequent student PTS expectations. Consequently, students and lecturers were asked about the PTS name in phase two, however none reported this was not an issue.

The second question asked respondents to rate the PTS policy and guidelines in relation to understanding their respective roles and responsibilities. Lecturers rated their understanding much higher than students. Understanding of roles and responsibilities was rated as excellent or good by around half of students (44%, n=37) and most lecturers (79%, n=15) with less than a quarter of students (24%, n=21) and some lecturers (16%, n=3) considering this average. More than a quarter of students (26%, n=22) rated this poor or very poor and one lecturer rated this very poor. The question was not answered by six students. All lecturers responded. Lecturers indicated their familiarity with the PTS role and responsibilities. Although in additional comments lecturers reiterated the need for clearer PTS policy and guidelines as *“there appears to be considerable variation in how staff see the role”* (L:14).

Students had an additional question and were asked to rate the PTS policy and guidelines in relation to their understanding the PTS roles and responsibilities of lecturers. Their responses were quite similar to the previous question and were not included in Figure 4.7. Students’ understanding of lecturers’ PTS role and responsibilities was rated as excellent or good by almost half (48%, n=41), average by almost a quarter (24%, n=21) and poor or very poor by some (16%, n=14). Six students did not respond to this question.

Some students commented they were aware of lecturers’ PTS roles and responsibilities that was again somewhat surprising considering their unfamiliarity with the guidelines. As S:84 noted *“my understanding of the role is, someone to talk to with any concerns”*. However S:56 could not recall much about this *“other than being assigned someone to talk to if need be”* and S:59 understood *“personal tutors are mainly for academic help”*. Interestingly S:59 also stated that *“...not all tutors are suited to this varied role. Some are excellent academically, but for personal matters they may not be the right person for the job”*. This view was echoed throughout students’ questionnaire comments and in phase two.

The third question focused on respondents’ understanding of the documentation requirements for student files. The current documentation process and format was developed

soon after the PTS informally commenced and has continued to be used. Documentation was considered important and kept on student files as it may be necessary to refer to for other BN matters such as audits and continuous quality improvement. There were very different responses between students and lecturers in relation to understanding the PTS documentation. It was rated as excellent or good by over a quarter of students (28%, n=22) and over half of lecturers (52%, n=10) and around a third of students (33%, n=26) and lecturers (37%, n=7) rated it as average. PTS documentation was rated as poor or very poor by over a third of students (39%, n=30). Only one lecturer rated PTS documentation as poor and one as very poor. There was no response from eight students; all lecturers responded to this question.

Differences between students' and lecturers' responses to this question seemed to be around students' lack of familiarity with documentation as a PTS requirement. As S:35 stated they *"did not know about guidelines for student files"*. Again this was somewhat of a surprise as students may view their personal files that included PTS documentation at any time and would routinely do so in their third year with curriculum vitae preparation. The question about documentation stimulated a number of additional comments from lecturers who reiterated the need for clarity as L:10 reported *"there could be greater consistency around documentation"*. L:13 was also unclear as to *"what should/should not be recorded on file"* and L:5 remarked that the *"documentation needs to be standardised"*.

The fourth question related to students' and lecturers' understanding of other PTS requirements such as confidentiality. While PTS interactions were confidential, in consultation with students, lecturers may be required to share information, for example to support students' BN progress or for legal reasons (School of Nursing, 2008b). When asked about their understanding of other PTS requirements, a third of students (33%, n=26) and over half of lecturers (58%, n=11) rated this as excellent or good; some students (41%, n=33) and lecturers (21%, n=4) rated it as average. Over a quarter of students (27%, n=21) considered their understanding of other PTS requirements was poor or very poor. A little less than quarter of lecturers (21% n=4) rated this as poor and none rated it as very poor. There was no response from six students to this question and all lecturers responded.

In questions five and six, students and lecturers were asked to rate the PTS links with other support in the School of Nursing and the tertiary institutions centralised services. Interestingly,

students' responses to these two questions were exactly the same. Almost a third (31%, n=27) of students rated their understanding of PTS links with support in the School of Nursing and institutions centralised services as excellent or good and almost a third as average (35%, n=30). Less than a quarter rated it as poor or very poor (23%, n=20). Nine students did not respond to either question.

All lecturers answered questions five and six. In response to question five, just under a third of lecturers (32%, n=6) rated their understanding of PTS links with other support in the School of Nursing as excellent or good, over half (52% n=10) rated it as average and a few (16% n=3) rated it as poor or very poor. Close to half of lecturers rated their understanding of PTS links to the institutions centralised support of the wider institution as excellent or good (42%, n=8) or average (42%, n=8) and again, a few (16% n=3) rated it as poor or very poor. While links with other support in the School of Nursing and the wider institution were generally considered good, L:13 suggested there *"should be stronger links between services"*.

In sections four and five that follow, the focus remains on the PTS guidelines with attention drawn to implementation in the BN. Section four focuses on student PTS allocation and communication as section five focuses on PTS requirements with meetings and availability.

## **Section Four: Allocation, Communication and Time**

The PTS guidelines gave direction to the allocation of students to lecturers along with an intended time allowance for lecturers in their PTS role, the process for changing a PTS lecturer if necessary and use of communication methods. The initial three questions in section four were asked of lecturers as these related to student allocations across the three years of the BN programme, with the average number of PTS meetings and the average time requirements for the role. Students were asked the number of PTS lecturer meetings they had each year during their study. The remainder of questions in section four related to both students and lecturers.

The question about allocations had two parts and linked to the subsequent two questions. In the first part of this question lecturers were asked to indicate the number of PTS students in each year level they were allocated. The number of PTS students allocated to lecturers varied, as over half of lecturers (n=10) were allocated between 23-29 students, eight had between 10-20 students allocated and one lecturer had five students. The mean PTS student number was

19. The mean for each year level was: 6 in year one; 7 in year two; and 6 in year 3. All lecturers responded to this question.

Lecturers found the *“number of students allocated to each lecturer has the potential to become unmanageable”* (L:1). L:11 noted *“I have too many [students] to do the job properly which is disappointing”*. While not asked within the questionnaire, some students also commented on lecturers PTS allocations. S:64 reported *“personal tutors really need smaller caseloads of students, they always seemed to be rushed for time”*. PTS allocations and time has some effect on the students’ PTS experience. S:58 commented their personal tutor was *“easy to approach though and always willing to help”* but was concerned *“knowing that this tutor is very busy [and] not wanting to add to work load”* (S:58). S:63 noted *“the role of my personal tutor is an important one and did not want to pose a burden so accessed any lecturer if mine was unavailable”*. L:10 stated that while the PTS has been part of the BN for over 3 years, it has not been integrated as part of the workload and lecturers have not *“had reduced time in nursing or reduced load with other responsibilities”*.

The PTS guidelines stated *“A [yet to be determined] time allowance will be factored into the workload calculations for each lecturer”* (School of Nursing, 2008, p. 2). At the time of data collection, a time allowance had not been determined for lecturers as part of their workload. The second part of this question asked lecturers to indicate for each year level the average PTS time required for each student during an academic year. Time included all meetings, communication and documentation. This question also asked lecturers to indicate the average number of meetings they had with students in each year level. Some lecturers indicated they were unsure and *“...guessed the answers...”* (L 12). This was anticipated with a recall question and was, in part, the reason for requesting an average indication of time and meetings. Table 4.1. presents the findings from these questions as the mean, along with the range, in time (hours) for lecturers with each year level and the number of meetings for lecturers with each year level. All lecturers responded to this question.

The findings do not offer a full account of the PTS time required as lecturer responses differed. Lecturers’ PTS time and meeting commitments varied with students across the three years of the BN. Lecturers’ PTS availability with the time this role requires when students have complex issues can be difficult to manage, as L:1 stated *“the number of contacts required and time required can vary widely when individual students have complex needs”*.



**Table 4.1. Lecturer time and number of meetings with each student each year**

	Mean time (hours)	Range of times for meeting	Mean number of meetings	Range for number of meetings
Year 1	3 hours	1-4 hours	3 meetings	2-4 meetings
Year 2	2.5 hours	<1-3 hour	2 meetings	1-4 meetings
Year 3	2.5 hours	<1-4 hour	2 meetings	1-4 meetings

Students were also asked how often they met with their PTS lecturer each year. Table 4.2. presents their findings as the mean, along with the range, for students PTS meeting each year. Of the 86 students, 24 did not offer a response for year one, 29 did not offer a response for year two and 36 did not offer a response for third year.

**Table 4.2. Students number of meetings with PTS lecturers each year**

	Mean number of meetings	Range for number of meetings
Year 1	2 meetings	1-4 meetings
Year 2	2 meetings	0-4 meetings
Year 3	2 meetings	0-4 meetings

There are similarities between students' and lecturers' responses in tables 4.1 and 4.2 along with some difference. Most noticeable was the indication that some students had no PTS lecturer meetings in years two and three.

Additional PTS time and meetings were also required. In the next question lecturers are asked the average number of additional meetings and the time these required for each of the three years. Findings are presented in Table 4.2. In working towards a determination of PTS time for lecturers as outlined in the guidelines, the results in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 could be used as a beginning position to develop a template as part of lecturers' planned annual workload.

Lecturers were asked to reflect on the previous academic year and indicate if additional meetings were required with their assigned students. Again, the average number of additional meetings were requested along with the average time these required. The mean number, along with the ranges, of additional meetings in an academic year and the time these required are presented in Table 4.3. The reasons for additional meetings are reported in section five.

Not responding to this question were three lectures for years one and two and five for third year.

**Table 4.3. Lecturer time and number of additional meetings for students each year**

	Mean time (minutes) for each meeting	Range of time (minutes) for each meeting	Mean number of additional meetings	Range for number of additional meetings
Year 1	38 minutes	15-60 minutes	3 meetings	0-5 meetings
Year 2	40 minutes	15-60 minutes	5 meetings	0-6 meetings
Year 3	45 minutes	15-60 minutes	3 meetings	0-3 meetings

Outside planned and additional PTS meetings, lecturers may have times of unavailability due to other work responsibilities, absence due to leave (annual, sick, bereavement) or for other reasons. When PTS lecturers were unavailable, by default students would be directed to their relevant programme leader. Some lecturers would discuss with students alternate support options if needed as S:49 commented their personal tutor *“ensured if they were away we knew who to contact in their absence”*. When absences were planned some lecturers arranged for students to have an interim PTS lecturer. S:26 stated *“my personal tutor arranged cover while on a holiday to ensure I had support while away”*. Students conveyed a sense of being valued when PTS lecturers made support arrangements such as these. S:46 commented *“I like that when my personal tutor went away that she informed me and arranged for someone to fill in for her. Very considerate, I felt valued and important”*.

Students consistently reported on the importance of relationships. Most students found it was *“great to have a personal tutor, you build a rapport with to discuss different issues”* (S:37) as *“they are there for you. Even though I knew I was one of many. When with my personal tutor, I was made to feel the most important one ever”* (S:17). S:35 commented *“I have formed a great relationship with my personal tutor. I could approach with...confidence on any matter...I am very grateful to have her”*. However not all students had a positive relationship as S:13 confirmed

*I do not feel I have a good relationship with the tutor so I do not feel I can trust...with my issues. I have never used the system as I do not feel I’m well supported and I do not feel I am close to my personal tutor. And I don’t feel my tutor has free time for me.*

Some students, including S:56 *“would have liked the opportunity to elect my own tutor so there would be benefit from a relationship”*.

Included in the guidelines was acknowledgement of situations where students and lecturers would request a PTS change. The guidelines allowed for PTS changes. No reason was required. The next question related to changing PTS lecturers as this was the experience of some students (28 %, n=24) and most lecturers (95 %, n=18). Table 4.4. presents the number of changes and the reasons for changing PTS lecturers. Five students did not give a reason.

**Table 4.4. Reasons for change of personal tutor**

	Lecturer resignation	Change in role	Request	Other
Students	10	2	3	2
Lecturers	10	1	5	2

Students shared of different experiences with PTS lecturer changes. S:61 had a change of personal tutor at the end of second year which was a seamless process as *“...my new personal tutor has been marvellous and she has helped me through a very difficult year”*. Some students’ PTS change experiences were difficult as, while they were informed of an imminent personal tutor change, there was no follow-up. S:21 stated *“although I was emailed and told that my original personal tutor was resigning and that I was allocated a new personal tutor, I have had no contact...”*. Similarly, S:47 commented:

*I was never informed of my new personal tutor after my previous tutor resigned and was unable to have references from the previous tutor even though they knew me through all three years. Very disappointing as this was a necessary support.*

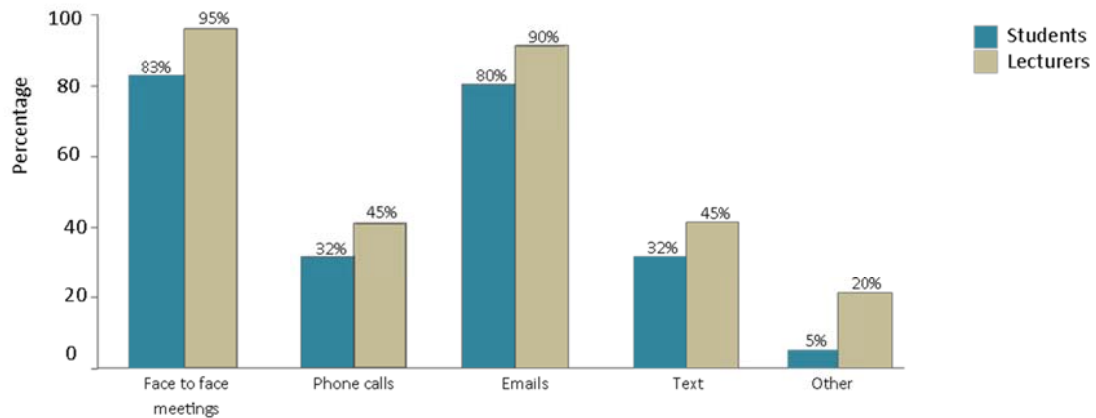
PTS changes also presented a challenge for lecturers as L:10 found *“with changing responsibilities and other staff changing, the personal tutees have regularly and often changed - which is quite problematic”* to develop meaningful relationships as this usually takes time.

Embedding the PTS in the BN programme meant it became a requirement for students and lecturers. There was no provision or opportunity for students to not participate in the PTS. However, there was also no consequence or action taken if students did not participate with the PTS. In chapter five the PTS is identified as a student driven service, students will determine their PTS use. Students and lecturers were asked about the preference of students to participate, or not participate in the PTS. If students indicated a preference to not

participate in the PTS, then a reason for their response was requested. Most students (88%, n=76) indicated their preference to participate in the PTS. Only one student did not respond to this question. The remainder of students (10%, n=9) indicated a preference not to participate in the PTS, with four reasons identified. These reasons included: a lack of interpersonal relationship and rapport with PTS lecturers (S:10, S:56, S:84); dissatisfaction with the process of changing PTS lecturers, for example students were not informed or contacted by new PTS lecturers (S:21, S:44); the inability of the PTS lecturers to support a particular issue (S:21); and finally, some students indicated PTS support was not required (S:22, S:48, S:84).

Lecturers were also asked this question with most responding (68%, n=13) that of their allocated PTS students, a limited number preferred not to participate in the PTS. Lecturers identified two reasons for students' non-participation. Students either had no need to participate in the PTS as they managed the BN programme requirements independently or did not participate without a reason given. As L:10 commented *"rather than students stating they just didn't want to participate - some just didn't turn up to meetings or were slow to respond to e-mails"*. L:14 suggested *"more information needs to be given to students including an official mechanism for opting out"*, however this is currently not part of the PTS guidelines.

The PTS guidelines suggested student and lecturer preferred communication was face-to-face or email. Respondents were asked to identify the methods used for PTS communication. Figure 4.9 presents the range of PTS communication methods used. Students (83%, n=68) and lecturers (95%, n=18) reported the most common communication method was face to face meetings with many students (80%, n=66) and lecturers (90%, n=17) also using e-mail. Less commonly used were telephone calls (landline or mobile) used by nearly a third of students (32%, n=26) and close to half of lecturers (45%, n=7). Text communication responses were the same as telephone calls. Texting was used by nearly a third of students (32%, n=26) and nearly half of lecturers (45%, n=7). Other communication methods reported by students (5%, n=4) and lecturers (20%, n=4) were Facebook or informal chats when passing, in class, or as part of clinical practice experience. Four students and one lecturer did not answer this question. Most students and lecturers indicated use of more than one form of communication.



**Figure 4.9. Personal tutor system communication methods used**

Contact and communication was an important component of to the PTS. S:41 had a *“fantastic personal tutor who made regular contact”* as was the experience for most students. Regularity and frequency of contact was integral to the PTS. Students commented on the value of regular contact as S:6 stated *“I like that she did not hound me to meet up with her - she emailed saying I was achieving and that if I needed her she was there”*. For S:12 their *“... personal tutor did not initiate this contact except the first meeting in the first year”*. An absence of contact and communication often resulted in limited or non-participation. S:72, along with other students, indicated they had no contact or communication with their PTS lecturer throughout the three years and consequently *“completely forgot I had a personal tutor as there was never any attempt of contact from them or myself”*. While this was reported by a few students, it was not possible to determine the number, this was a particularly important finding for the study.

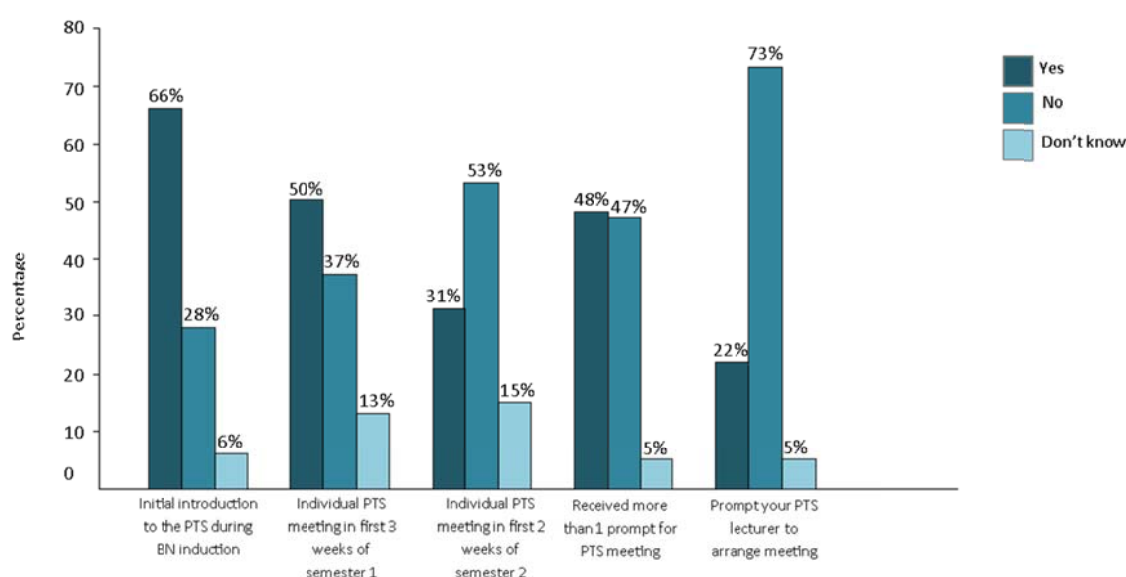
Attention remains on PTS guidelines in the next section. The focus in section five is on the specific requirements of PTS meetings and availability in the programme.

## **Section Five: Meetings Arrangements and Availability**

Section five included detailed questions about meetings and availability across the three years of the BN. As noted in chapter one, the PTS guidelines required lecturers to initiate student contact, attend the BN programme induction week introduction with allocated students when available and arrange two compulsory meetings in year one. The first year one meeting was to be arranged within the first three weeks of BN teaching with the second meeting in the first two of the second semester (School of Nursing, 2008). This first student meeting was to be

one-to-one and thereafter negotiated as they may wish to continue with individual meetings or meet with two or more as part of a group.

The following five questions related to the year one PTS meeting requirements. Student and lecturer responses are presented separately as their response options were different. Students had a single year one experience with the yes, no or don't know responses sought and presented in Figure 4.10. Lecturers worked with multiple student cohorts and a frequency rating scale used to represent their responses and is presented in Figure 4.11.



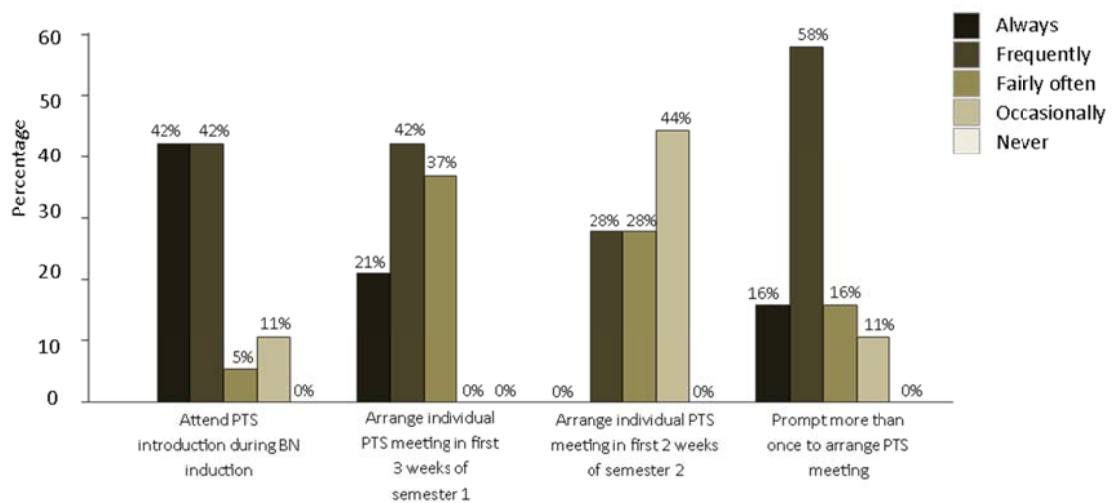
**Figure 4.10. Students' year one personal tutor system meetings**

With reference to Figure 4.10., the first question asked if students had an initial introduction to their PTS lecturer during induction week. Most responded yes (66%, n=57), over a quarter responded no (28% n=24) and a small number (6%, n=5) did not know. The second question asked students about meeting their PTS lecturer within the first three weeks of teaching in the BN. Half responded yes (50% n=43), over a third responded no (37%, n=32) and a number did not know (12% n=11).

The third question asked students if PTS meetings were arranged within two weeks of semester two commencing. Just over a third responded yes (31%, n=27), over half responded no (53% n=46) and a number did not know (15%, n=13). Question four asked if students received more than one prompt from PTS lecturers to arrange year one meetings. Almost half responded yes (48%, n=41), 47% no (n=40) and a small number did not know (5%, n=4). The

next question was directed to students only. When asked if they had to prompt their PTS lecturer to arrange meetings, nearly a quarter of students responded yes (22%, n=19), almost three quarters responded no (73% n= 62) and again a small number did not know (5%, n=4). All students responded to the first three questions; a single student did not respond to questions four and five.

The four lecturer questions related to PTS year one meetings were similar to those asked of students with their responses presented in Figure 4.11. The first question asked how often lecturers were available to meet with allocated students during BN induction. Almost all this was always or frequently (84%, n=16), for one it was fairly often, and for two it was occasionally (11%, n=2). No lecturers responded they were never able to attend.



**Figure 4.11. Lecturers' year one personal tutor system meetings**

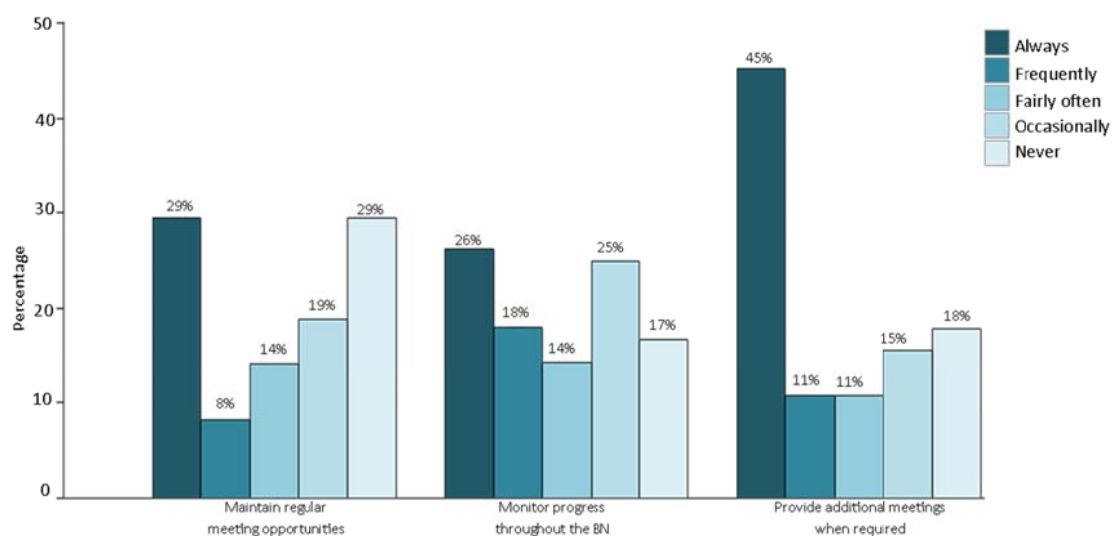
In the second question, lecturers were asked about their ability to arrange the first PTS meeting within the first three weeks of BN teaching. Many lecturers responded always or frequently (63%, n=12) and over a third (37%, n=8) indicated that they managed to arrange the meeting within the first three weeks fairly often with no lecturers responding occasionally or never.

Question three asked lecturers about their ability to arrange the second PTS meeting in the first two weeks of semester two. Responses indicated lecturers' had not been able to do this with all students. More than a quarter of lecturers were able to arrange second semester PTS meeting in the first two weeks either frequently (28%, n=5) or fairly often (28%, n=5).

However, nearly half of lecturers (44%, n=8) managed this occasionally. No lecturers responded that they were never able to do so.

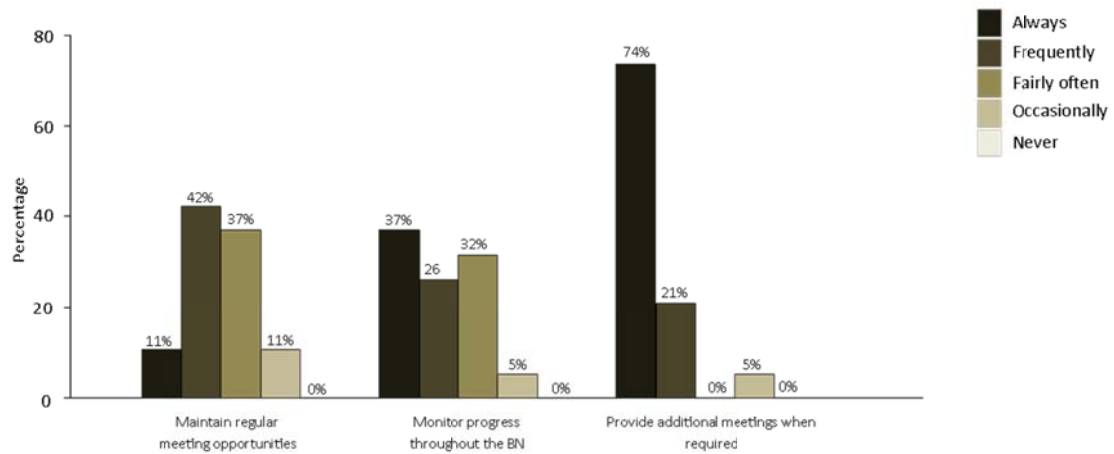
The fourth question asked lecturers about the need to prompt students more than once to arrange the PTS meetings. For most this was always or frequently (74%, n= 14), for a few this was fairly often (16%, n=3) or occasionally (11%, n=2). No lecturers indicated that they had never needed to prompt students more than once. All lecturers responded to all questions with the exception of one lecturer not responding to question three. While there are limitations when considering students and lecturers responses, as this was a single experience for students whereas lecturers' had numerous experiences, there appear to be similarities with year one PTS meeting requirements.

The PTS guidelines required the continuation of regular meetings and contact throughout years two and three of the programme. Lecturers PTS role included the provision of on-going academic and personal support, monitoring of academic progress (theory and clinical) and additional meetings or assistance when requested (School of Nursing, 2008b). The focus of the next three questions for students and lecturers related to these guideline requirements with responses presented in Figures 4.12 and 4.13.



**Figure 4.12. Students' year two and three personal tutor system meetings**





**Figure 4.13. Lecturers' year two and three personal tutor system meetings**

The first question related to students and lecturers maintaining regular meetings, at least once or twice each year, in years two and three of the BN. The responses indicated that regular meetings occurred always or frequently for over a third of students (37%, n=32) and over half of lecturers (53%, n=10). One third of students (33%, n=30) and half of lecturers (50%, n=9) noted that regular meetings occurred fairly often or occasionally. Over a quarter of students (29% n=25) indicated that meetings never occurred in years two and three. No lecturers indicated that meetings never occurred. A single student did not respond to this question; all lecturers responded.

The second question related to monitoring students' academic progress in theoretical and clinical papers. Responses indicated this was always or frequently for many students (43%, n=37) and lecturers (63%, n=12) with over a third of students (38%, n=33) and lecturers (37%, n=7) noting this occurred fairly often or occasionally. Some students (16%, n=14) and no lecturers indicated this never occurred. Two students did not respond; all lecturers offered a response to this question.

Finally, the third question asked respondents about the provision of additional assistance and meetings when required. Students were mixed in their responses while lecturers were highly positive. Over half of students (55%, n=47) and almost all lecturers (91%, n=18) responded always or frequently to requests for additional assistance and meetings. A quarter of students (25%, n=22) responded fairly often or occasionally. No lecturers responded fairly often, and one indicated occasionally, to requests for additional assistance and meetings. While 18%

(n=15) of students responded never to this question, no lecturers responded never. Again, two students did not respond. All lecturers responded to this question.

All PTS meetings beyond induction week were arranged around the BN programme and students and lecturers other commitments. There was no PTS time scheduled or timetabled meetings for students and lecturers. Ensuring time to meet could difficult as S:51 stated a:

*... limitation for me has been finding time to meet, particularly in 3<sup>rd</sup> year as the workload is heavy. This is not through lack of trying on [PTS lecturers] part, I know this person is here for me if I need them or if I have any issues or problems I wouldn't hesitate to go to her.*

The next three questions asked student and lecturers to consider the current PTS meeting arrangements together with alternate options to have PTS time for meetings scheduled within the timetable. The first question asked if continuation with the current approach to PTS meetings was preferred. Most students (70%, n=57) and half of lecturers (50%, n=9) responded favourably. A more neutral response was offered by nearly a quarter of students (22%, n=19) and a third of lecturers (33%, n=6) with a small number of students 6% (n=5) and lecturers (17%, n=3) not in favour of continuing with current meeting arrangements. Five students and one lecturer did not respond.

The second question asked if timetabling regular PTS meetings would be useful. Interestingly, most students (74%, n=61) and more than half of lecturers (53%, n=10) responded favourably. A more neutral response was offered by 19% (n=15) of students and 32% (n=6) of lecturers with 7% (n=6) of students and 16% (n=3) of lecturers stating this was not a favourable option. All lecturers responded but four students did not.

Finally, students and lecturers were asked about timetabling combined meetings with years' one, two and three. Many students (63%, n=51) students and a nearly a third (31%, n=6) of lecturers responded favourably. A more neutral response was offered by nearly a quarter of students (22% n=20) and nearly a third of lecturers (31%, n=6) with some students (15%, n=12) and over a third of lecturers (37%, n=7) indicating no. All lecturers responded to this question; five students did not respond.

Students offered a range of comments related to meeting arrangement options. Many students favoured regular timetabled meetings (S:10, S:18, S:21, S:26, S:31, S:42, S:54) as

currently there are *“no formal timetabled meetings”* (L:6). S:31 stated *“it might be helpful to have arranged meetings and just chat”*, together with S:10 who reported:

*... having a structure [as] to when students and tutors meet might be helpful. Especially in [years] 1-2, to develop a relationship, and as this would help us navigate the system as needed.*

A few students favoured the option of combined meetings with other year groups as S:26 noted *“it may be beneficial to share experiences from nursing year to year as we don’t meet at all really”*. Other students were not in favour of timetabled meetings as S:48 stated *“I think as they are personal tutors, the way they are accessed should be personal”* and this view was also expressed by others as S:82 stated as *“mostly adult students, it’s up to us”*. S:26 also:

*Preferred personal tutor meetings only when I needed extra help or thought it necessary. We are too busy to have meetings if there is no real point in having them.*

When considering the suggestion of group meetings with year one and two student cohorts, S:27 stated *“I wouldn’t be interested”*. The variation in students’ comments identified flexibility for meetings and contact was most important with timetabled PTS time favoured as an addition option.

Contrasting with some students’ comments, lecturers emphasised the importance of consistency with PTS meetings and contact. Lecturers stressed the importance of both proactive and responsive PTS use as L:13:

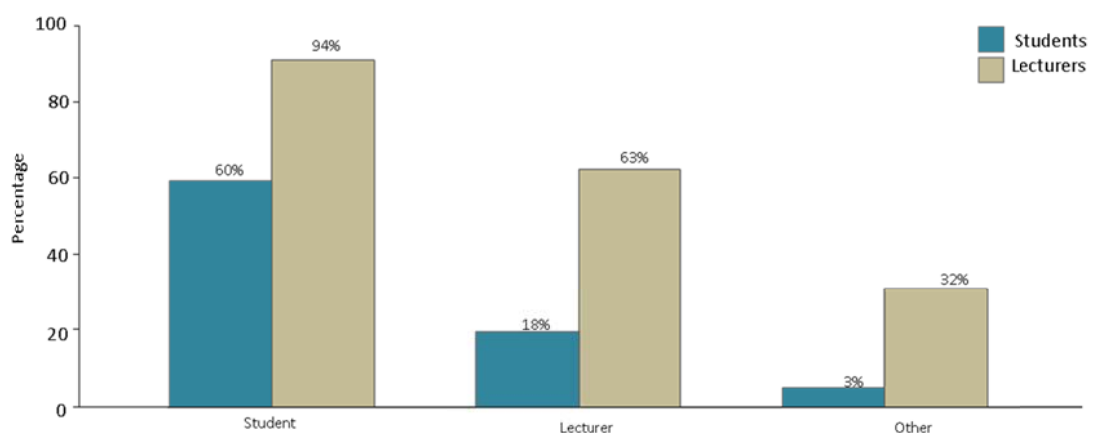
*found some only engage when they get into some difficulty...then disengage...find working in [this] way not conducive to good working/learning for either student /tutor.*

While PTS arrangements were an individual negotiation between students and lecturers, there was also concern and *“frustration that often students with major issues don’t engage”* (L:10). L:3 commented that *“the greatest limitation is that students I would identify as needing the personal tutor support the most are also the non-attendeess”*.

Additional meetings were anticipated as a part of the PTS (refer Table 4.2). It was expected additional meetings would be requested by students or initiated by lecturers when there was an identified need (School of Nursing, 2008). The PTS initially had a process to track student progress through the School of Nursing assessment committee. All results were reviewed by the assessment committee with a process to notify PTS lecturers of any student failure of an assessment or paper (School of Nursing, 2008). This process ceased with changes in the School of Nursing as part of the wider faculty and institutional review (refer chapter 3). Subsequent to the review, student results were tracked using a different procedure and not linked to the PTS.

However, lecturers were required to monitor BN progress for their allocated students', reviewing their success and failure via results in the tertiary institution's central database.

Most students requested additional meetings as reflected in Figure 4.14. Lecturers would initiate additional meetings if aware students were experiencing issues or with academic failure. Respondents who indicated 'other' most often received clinical lecturer referrals when student had issues identified during clinical practice experiences. Over a quarter of students (29%, n=25) and one lecturer did not respond to this question.



**Figure 4.14. Initiation of additional meetings**

Only students were asked the reason for requesting additional meetings. For most, the reason given was personal (44%, n=38) or academic (41%, n=36). For some it was related to clinical (19% n=16) and the remainder indicated other reasons (4%, n=4) such as career guidance. While lecturers find the number of additional meetings “... varies considerably from year to year” (L:1), “the main reasons for additional meetings were either academic guidance or personal problems” (L:8). Additional meetings were more often requested by students and for S:29 “the one time I initiated a meeting with my personal tutor, I found the experience very helpful”. Lecturers also arranged “additional meetings when aware [a] student was having difficulty” (L:10) or L:2 did when “... notified a student was ‘failing’ I followed them up”.

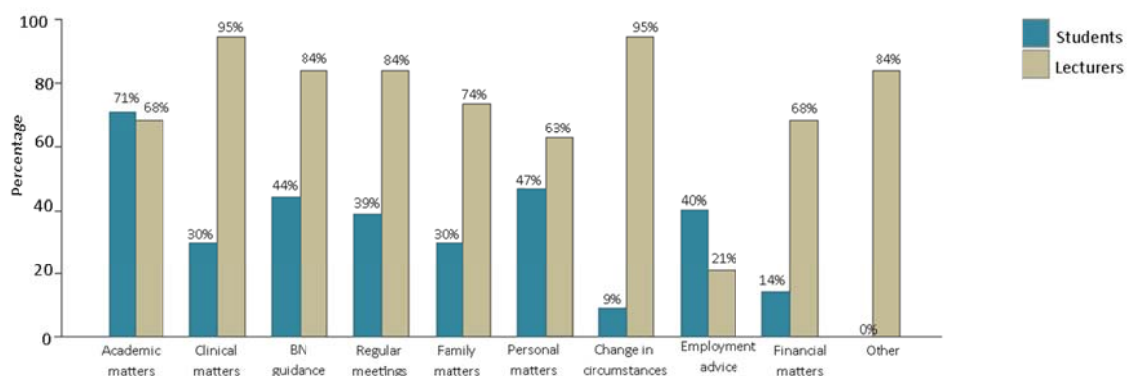
In the next two sections the focus moves from the guidelines to PTS use of support. Alongside the focus includes use of the institution's centralised services and wider support beyond the institution.

## Section Six: Use of the Personal Tutor System

As has been identified, student backgrounds and educational experiences varied and it was expected each student would have different academic and personal support requirements. This necessitated an individualised approach to PTS use (School of Nursing, 2008).

The focus of PTS use and discussions were wide-ranging and are presented in Figure 4.15. Support was important to the PTS experience that for S:29 was *“a valuable resource to have a personal tutor – I am grateful for the extra help given to me when I required it”*. At first S:50, along with other students:

*... felt a bit nervous about opening up to a ‘stranger’, but as our relationship formed, my confidence grew. I always felt supported and knew the personal tutor was only a [phone] call / email away.*



**Figure 4.15. Focus of personal tutor system discussions**

During their study many students had the experience of academic or personal issues with individual support was valued as S:16 stated *“this system allows for individualised management of student progress ... ”* as PTS lecturers *“ ... are experienced to cope with all situations ... it’s good that they know you personally”* (S:31). S:44 commented that:

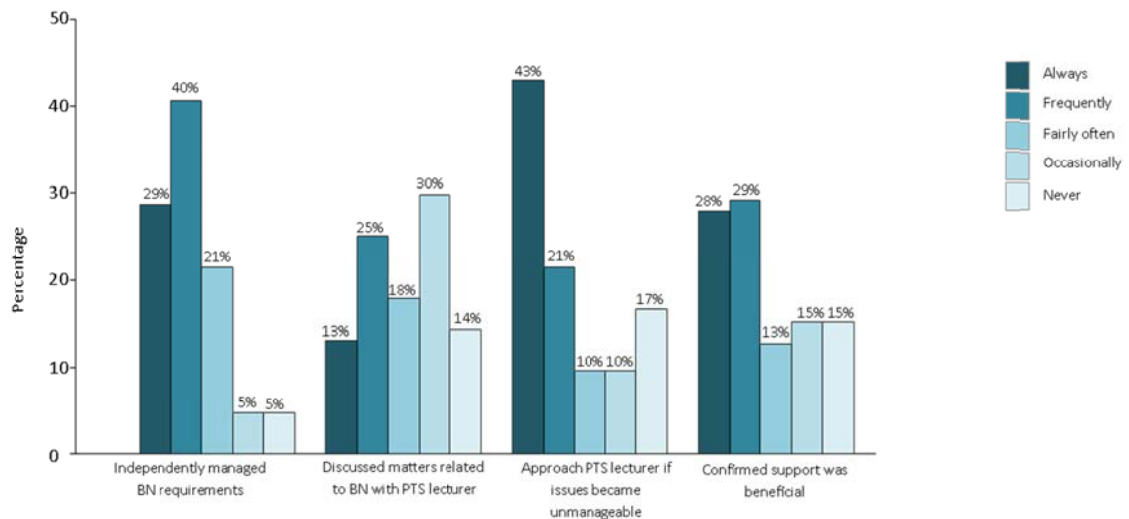
*... some personal trouble that had the potential to impact on my nursing, and with guidance and advice from my PT [personal tutor] I was able to go through proper avenues to continue with BN programme.*

However a small number of students commented their PTS support experience was unfavourable. S:21 stated *“I hardly had any support from my personal tutor and I feel ... we need a lot of support with the amount of work we have”*.

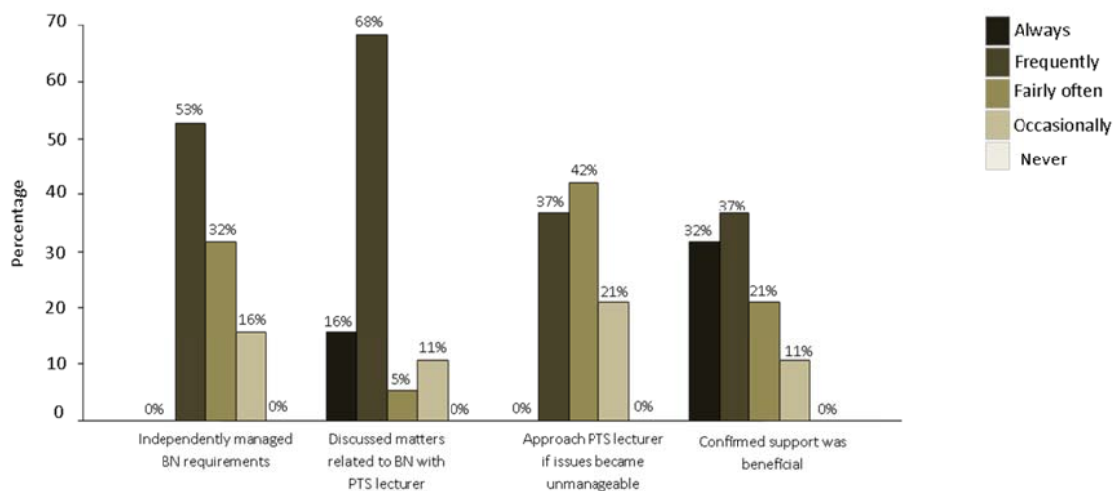
Students and lecturers were asked four questions in relation to PTS interactions and use with their responses presented in Figures 4.16 and 4.17. These four questions are similar for students and lecturers, although framed so students could respond to their individual PTS use and lecturers could respond to their experience with many students. Question one asked if students were able to manage the BN programme requirements independently without PTS lecturer support. Student and lecturer responses to this question differed. Over a quarter of students (28% n=24), but no lecturers, responded that they were always able to manage the requirements. Well over half of (61%, n=52) of students and most lecturers (87%, n=16) responded frequently or fairly often. Few students (5%, n=4) and lecturers (16%, n=3) responded occasionally. An equally limited number of students (5%, n=4) responded never, and no lecturers offered this as a response. All lecturers responded; two students did not respond to this question.

Question two asked if students would discuss matters related to the programme or issues that may impact on the BN with their personal tutor. There was a marked difference between students' and lecturers' responses with little more than a third of students (38%, n=32) but 84% of lecturers (n=16) responding always or frequently. Over a quarter of students (29%, n=40) and less than a quarter of lecturers (20%, n=3) indicated they had discussed matters related to the BN fairly often or occasionally. Around a fifth of students (14%, n=12) responded never, whereas no lecturers answered never. All lecturers responded, and two students did not respond to this question.

The third question asked if students approached their PTS lecturer when issue(s) became unmanageable. Students' and lecturers' responses were again quite different. Nearly half of students (49%, n= 36), but no lecturers, responded always, less than a third of students (31% n=26) but most lecturers (79%, n=15) responded frequently or fairly often. Some students (13%, n=10) and lecturers (21%, n=4) responded occasionally with some students (14%, n=11) and no lecturers responding never. All lecturers offered a response and two students did not.



**Figure 4.16. Student use of the personal tutor system**



**Figure 4.17. Lecturers' experience of students' personal tutor system use**

The fourth question asked students, who used PTS support whether they found it beneficial. Over half of students 57% (n=45) and most lecturers (69% n=14) responded always or frequently. Over a quarter of students (26%, n=22) and nearly a third of lecturers (31%, n=6) responded fairly often or occasionally and again some students (14%, n=12) but no lecturers responded never. All lecturers responded to this question whereas seven students did not respond.

Respondents were also asked, from their respective viewpoints as students and lecturers, if PTS expectations were the same. Most students (87%, n=69) and nearly half of lecturers (42%, n=8) indicated their PTS expectations were the same. Some students (13%, n=10) and over half of lecturers felt their (58%, n=11) PTS expectations differed. Seven students did not respond to this question; all lecturers responded.

Students whose PTS expectations differed from lecturers were asked to specify the reason. Two reasons were given. The first reason, given by five students (S:2, S:5, S:47, S:56, S:80) was differing expectations of availability. S:2 commented their:

*... personal tutor seemed to only be available if matters were urgent. I often would like to have had meetings to discuss my progress and to see if I'm doing ok etc general catch ups would have been beneficial.*

The second reason, from three students (S:52, S:56, S:80) was differing expectations of support as S:60 *"thought they would provide more support"* although what students meant by more support was not specified. Lecturers were not asked a reason for differing expectations. Some lecturers had previously identified the PTS guidelines lacked clarity and this may have contributed to differing expectations.

Additionally, lecturers were asked three questions about their ability to provide support for students. Lecturer responses to all three questions were almost exactly the same. The first two questions asked lecturers to rate their ability to provide support for routine issues such as assessment failure and then for challenging issues that may require time away from the BN. Lecturers appeared confident in their ability to manage both routine and challenging student issues as most (89%, n=17) responded always or frequently; two indicated fairly often; and none indicated occasionally or never. The third question asked if lecturers were able to provide support directly or through referrals for students' identified issues and again most (89%, n=17) selected always or frequently; one indicated fairly often; one responded occasionally; and none indicated never. All lecturers answered all questions. Lecturers' responses indicated overall they were:

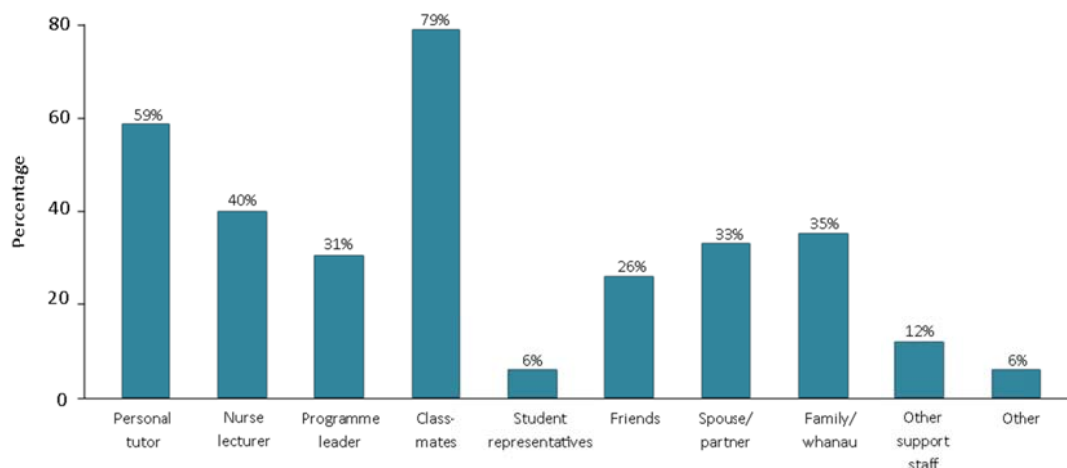
*... able to provide emotional and practical assistance and guidance...involves also writing letters, directing to other resources, discussing options, liaising with other lecturers etc. (L:1).*

The PTS support remains the focus of the following section along with links to centralised services and wider support beyond the organisation.



## Section Seven: Student Support Options

The focus of section seven was the PTS links with other support in the School of Nursing, centralised services and other support students used outside the tertiary intuition. The next question was only asked of students with responses are presented in Figure 4.18. Students were asked to indicate the three most likely people they would discuss BN matters. Most students indicated it would first be their classmates (79%, n=67), followed by their PTS lecturer (59%, n=58) and then any BN lecturer (40%, n=34). Personal tutors were often approached by students to discuss BN matters as S:62 *“found having a personal tutor effective in that I had someone specific to approach with any issues I may have had”*. For S:70 after *“speaking with my personal tutor I was able to be guided to the appropriate services I needed at the time I needed them”*.



**Figure 4.18. Support for Students with BN related matters**

Support extended beyond the PTS as students *“used all [lecturers] for different things”* (S:82).

S:31 would approach the:

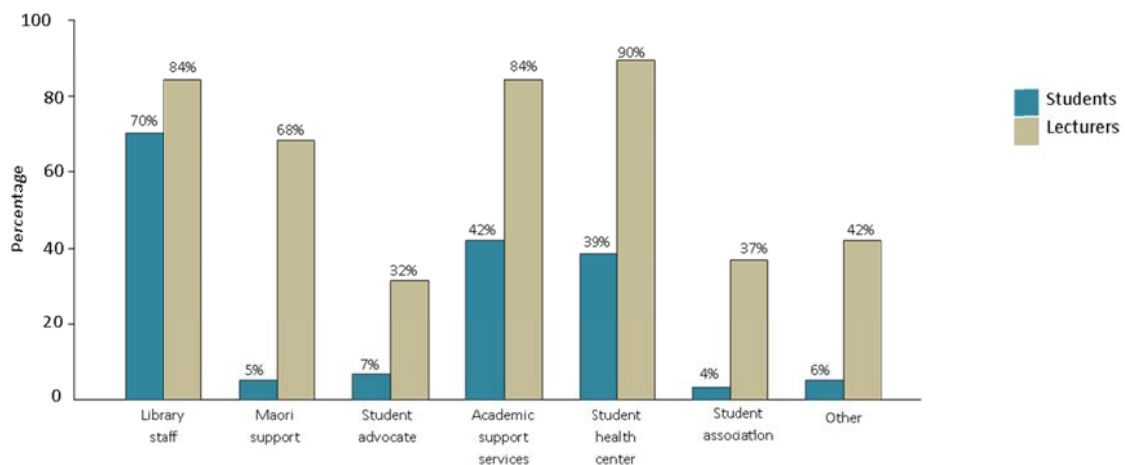
*... tutor best suited to my situation, [for example] tutor delivering paper, or clinical lecturer to discuss personal issues or difficulties I was experiencing. I found that I was able to approach all of the tutor for support and they were willing to help me.*

S:63 stated *“if I had any problems/concerns, any lecturer was helpful so using my personal lecturer very rarely”*. Lecturers indicated they *“can usually make time for...students [who] call into the office”* (L:17). While lecturers managed additional requests for support at times, this

added to an already full workload. Across the three sites many lecturers also found that, irrespective of who the personal tutor was:

*... most students seem to ask the lecturer at hand whenever a question/crisis arises. While a lecturer can refer back to the specific personal [tutor] often the concern needs to be dealt with now (L:2).*

The PTS linked with the wider institution's centralised support services. Lecturers directed students through the PTS as seen in Figure 4.19. Centralised services included the international liaison service as part of student advocacy, and the student health service which was comprised of a doctor, registered nurses and counsellors. The selection of other indicated students had been directed to ESOL and disability support services.



**Figure 4.19. Lecturer referrals to wider institutional centralised services**

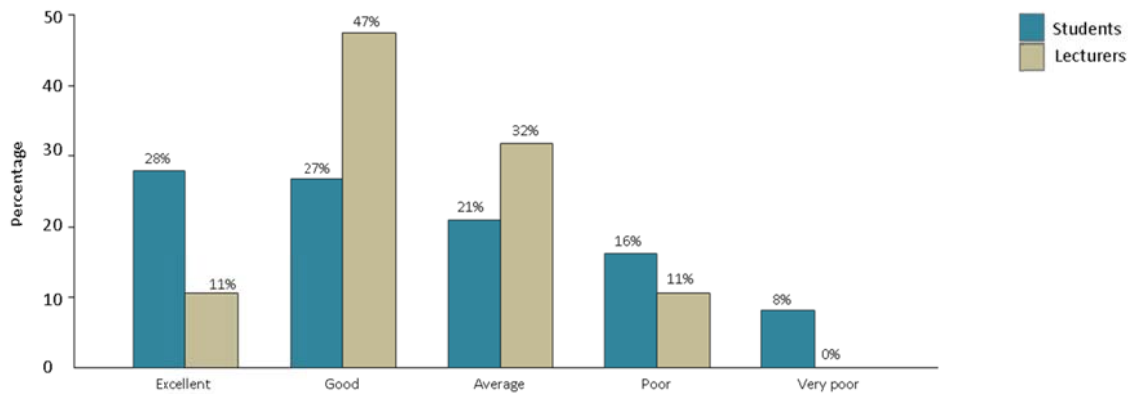
Students did not always require direction to centralised services as many (65%, n=54) independently used the institution's student support. Use of centralised services received mixed responses from students. As S:31 stated *"I would use all the resources available to help me understand assignments and locate the required info. Student support is great"*. However, students' perspectives differed around the use of centralised support with independent achievement a priority for some as S:58 *"wanted to be able to achieve by myself"*. Students also indicated that some services were useful but others were not relevant for their BN related needs.

Availability of wider institutions centralised support also differed across the School of Nursing sites. The smaller sites had limited availability and access to some centralised services including academic support, the student association, international liaison with limited or no student health services. The differences in centralised services across the three sites impacted on the PTS, student expectations and lecturers' support role. Although the PTS was not intended to replace or duplicate centralised services (School of Nursing, 2008), students and lecturers commented at times this became part of the PTS role as these services were limited or not available on some sites.

Students also used support services outside the tertiary institution as indicated by nearly a quarter of students (24%, n=20) and most lecturers (74%, n=14). Support external to the tertiary institution came from family, friends, church and health professionals. L:1 found *"students often identify family support, church involvement, living arrangements during conversations"* and L:10 pointed out *"family & friends exist for most. Formal support is different"*.

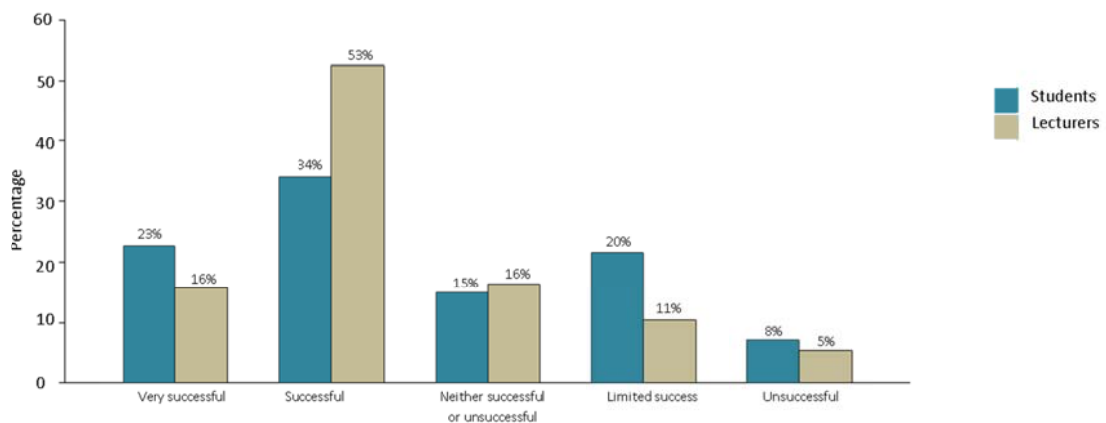
## **Section Eight: Your Overall Experience**

In the final section, students and lecturers were asked to rate their overall experience and success with the PTS. Responses in Figure 4.20. present the overall PTS experience. Students and lecturers rated their PTS experience as excellent and good by more than half of students (55%, n=47) and lecturers (57%, n=11). Nearly a quarter of students (21%, 18) and nearly a third of lecturers (32%, n=6) rated the PTS as average. Some students (16%, n=14) and a few lecturers (11%, n=2) rated their PTS experience as poor with the remainder of students (8%, n=7) and no lecturers rating the system very poor. All students and lecturers responded to this question.



**Figure 4.20. Overall student and lecturer experience with the personal tutor system**

The final question students and lecturers were asked was to rate the overall success of the PTS as a model for student support. Responses are presented in Figure 4.21. Over half of students (57%, n=49) and many lecturers (69%, n=13) rated the PTS as very successful or successful. Some students (15%, 13) and lecturers (16%, n=3) rated the PTS as neither successful nor unsuccessful. Limited success was the rating some students (20%, n=17) and a few lecturers (11%, n=2) with the remainder of students (8%, n=7) and one lecturer rating the PTS as unsuccessful. Again, all students and lecturers responded to this question.



**Figure 4.21. Overall success of the personal tutor system for student support**

The value of the PTS was acknowledged by students and lecturers. Relationships were particularly important for students as S:11 commented *“I think it is a wonderful system... the personal tutor is committed and they have a good relationship with their student”* and S:25:

*found that having one person in particular who knows your background and is aware of your academic abilities is very reassuring and although I have not experienced any major problems during the course I would be confident to go to personal tutor with some.*

The PTS was more relevant for some students as S:57 stated *“I would not be sitting here with my fellow classmates if my personal tutor system did not exist”*. Lecturers echoed this perspective as the PTS often supported *“students to manage their own health whilst juggling home, study and employment to supplement finances – overall stress reduction”* (L:15). The PTS meant there was a *“dedicated person who knows the individual’s background ... increased comfort with sharing personal issues and development of good rapport”* (L:1). Lecturers valued the opportunity to *“follow tutees across the 3 year programme, ability to share in student success, ability to support students to succeed”* (L:9).

The PTS was influenced by time, engagement availability and accessibility of support. Students and lecturers recognised that further development of the PTS was required. S:69 pointed out the PTS is a *“great idea but needs more attention”*, a view reiterated by S:72 who reported the PTS is as *“a great idea, but there needs to be a system to ensure that it is implemented”* just as L:10 stated *“while it is a useful scheme it could be strengthened”*. Other lecturer comments reiterated concerns around the lack of time and the number of allocated students.

Specific suggestions of how to develop the PTS were offered by students and lecturers. S:55 commented *“a more concrete timetable may be beneficial. Two meetings preferable to one”* and S:84 stated *“regular meetings yearly would be good, but when I needed the support it was there”*. L:10 also suggested:

*Students need more information on the scheme & reminded that [it is] useful for reference at the end of programme. Needs simple, consistent documentation. Should be timetabled for meetings in yr 1 to establish the scheme for students. Students need to ‘formally opt out’ rather than not engage.*

Most students and lecturers responses and comments indicated the PTS was valuable and *“... a worthwhile concept but needs refining”* (S:52).

## **Conclusion**

Findings from phase one were presented in this chapter in eight sections that aligned with the questionnaire. These eight sections included: demographic information, the PTS aims; policy and guidelines; communication; meetings; use and support; links to centralised services and other support options; and the overall experience and success within the BN programme. Attention was drawn to findings for each section. Central to the findings of phase one was the need to understand more about the students' and lecturers' PTS experience in the BN. The PTS experience was the focus of the phase two individual interviews and, following analysis, the identified themes are presented in chapter five. After the presentation of themes, chapter five concludes with the synthesis of findings from phases one and two.

## Chapter Five: Phase Two Interview Findings and Integration of Findings

In chapter four the findings from the phase one questionnaires encompassed students' and lecturers' experiences of the PTS in the context of the BN. Across the three School of Nursing sites, 38 participants (28 students and 10 lecturers) were individually interviewed as key stakeholders in the personal tutor system (PTS). Through interview conversations, participants shared their PTS experiences. Three key findings emerged: Building relationships – *"it's all to do with ... the way you relate"* (Maree: L, p. 28); flexible engagement – *"there's no one-[size]-fits-all approach"* (Jane: L, p. 6); and supporting the – *"journey together through the three years"* (Lucy: S, p. 9). These findings do not exist independently. Rather, each exists as an interconnected aspect of a participant's complete experience. However, for the purposes of clarity, findings are presented separately. Embed

Student and lecturer participants talked about a range of experiences when interviewed. Students each referred to their personal PTS experience. Of the 28 students interviewed, 17 had positive experiences, four students spoke of more neutral interactions, four talked about degrees of limitation, and three said their experience had been negative. Conversely, as lecturers are assigned up to 30 students across the three years of the BN each of the 10 lecturers talked about a range of PTS experiences with different students and in different years of the programme. Most were positive although some lecturers spoke of neutral interactions, degrees of limitation, and on occasion negative experiences. Lecturers did not specify numbers of students across the range of experiences discussed.

The final section of this chapter presents the integration of findings from data gathered in both the phase one questionnaires and phase two interviews. Similarities and differences between students' and lecturers' experiences have been considered throughout chapters four and five; these are now examined across the full data set.

### Building Relationships: It's all to do with ... the way you relate

Student and lecturer relationships were recognised as influential in the PTS experience. When students and lecturers discussed their PTS experience all referred directly or indirectly to the relationship. Participants indicated relationships or their absence would make or break their

PTS experience as both students and lecturers acknowledged, *“it will come down to relationship every time”* (Maree: L, p. 28).

Relationships, in the context of the PTS, referred to the interpersonal interaction between students and lecturers, the way each felt about and responded to the other. Interactions had *“everything to do with your interpersonal relationship”* (Maree: L, p. 28). Lecturers explained building relationships was not merely a matter of *“tick the boxes ... [it was] a significant part of what you do”* (Maree, L, p. 25). Interview participants referred to the PTS relationship as a requirement, either explicitly or implicitly, using terms such as rapport, connection and bond. For example, Lucy was one of the 16 students who did not refer to the PTS relationship per se. She spoke about factors that influenced her use of the PTS as *“it’s only as effective as your rapport is with your personal tutor”* (Lucy: S, p. 7). She reiterated later in the interview *“... definitely the personal rapport ... influences how much you use the personal tutor system”* (Lucy: S, p. 14). Christina was one of four lecturers who also did not directly mention the relationship. However, the PTS relationship was no less important to Christina as she described how the PTS:

*... attributes value and worth and meaning [to] students, they’re not just numbers on pages but they are individuals who we want to support to be successful and being successful means such a lot to them in their lives* (L, p. 14).

Building PTS relationships included mutual sharing and the opportunity to discuss with students what *“nursing is and what it is going to mean”* (Jane: L, p 1). The PTS relationship was described as a *“different level of connection”* (Sue: S, p. 4) to that of the traditional student-lecturer relationships. Like Sue, students explained that they thought of their *“personal tutor differently”* (S, p.4) to other lecturers as the PTS changed the focus of the relationship. In the PTS relationship Lucy stated she was *“relieved that I didn’t have to ... impress this person”* (S, p. 18) as you are *“not being scrutinised ... just kind of listened to”* (Lucy: S, p. 18). Lecturers also described *“a different sort of relationship ... at a different kind of level [ as you] learn more about the students ... in a greater variety of ways”* (Jasmine: L, p. 14) with assigned students. The PTS relationship meant lecturers had *“the opportunity to work more closely with the individual student”* (Maree, L: p, 24). Through the PTS, lecturers developed an understanding of students as individuals and their personal circumstances as they came to know of their educational background along with their access to support. When interviewed, Jane contemplated for a moment before she spoke about what the PTS meant for her and then



stated *"it means that you actually get to know the students much better"* (L, p. 4) through the relationship in a way that is not otherwise possible with large student classes and groups.

Most lecturers considered *"the whole concept of the personal tutor"* (Jane: L, p. 1) as valuable. Lydia found:

*It's more of a trusting relationship rather than a teacher [lecturer]-student relationship, somehow there's a change of emphasis with the personal tutor ... you have a different relationship with them [students] you know them in a greater depth* (L, p. 1-2).

Relationships were based on a genuine connection, mutual respect, trust, honesty, and confidentiality. Relationships generally required time and a commitment from students and lecturers to establish mutual respect, trust and a genuine interpersonal connection. Bernadette identified that for students *"it's a really important relationship, one built on respect and trust"* (S, p. 5). Lecturers understood the PTS was about the relationship, as James shared *"it's about taking some sort of ... honesty into the relationship and taking them [students] at their at their word"* (L, p. 16).

Students identified that confidentiality in the PTS relationship was important. Bernadette knew that whatever she said to her personal tutor *"would stay within those four walls"* (S, p. 5). Autumn explained students were aware of *"who we can trust and confide in ... I had someone that, you know, when you said something it was going to stay confidential"* (S, p. 6). Matters related to confidentiality were also highlighted by other students. As Riona stated, while not her personal tutor, she *"avoided one lecturer like the plague because [the lecturer] was known for not being able to keep mum when someone went to them with a problem"* (S, p. 18). As a result, Riona ensured her personal and academic life remained separate. Students required confidence that their PTS lecturer was someone who could be trusted not to reveal details of their academic or personal lives. Lecturers similarly recognised confidentiality was important to build trust within the PTS relationship. Students needed to know *"nothing goes any further"* (Maree: L, p. 22) and would *"most probably [be] why they trust you to come talk about other issues* (James: L, p. 18).

Confidentiality and professional boundaries were somewhat enmeshed and at times could be challenging to manage. Lecturers noted that *"sometimes there's a difference between what the student sees and what the lecturer sees"* (James: L, p. 1) as the PTS relationship role. Building a trusting relationship within the PTS meant at times students may *"unburden"* (June: L, p.16) intensely personal issues that are *"not really the role, but it may be the only safe place they've*

*ever felt, and so you can't just shut them off"* (June: L, p.16). Students were aware that while the PTS relationship maintained confidentiality, if personal information was disclosed where there were safety concerns then PTS lecturers *"may need to act on ... that"* (June: L, p.16). Having centralised services to direct students to was important for confidentiality with personal issues and maintained lecturers professional boundaries. Jane explained:

*... if a student is having personal issues [you] can refer them off to the counselling and it is nothing to do with me and I don't get to know any of that which is as it should be because there have to be professional boundaries as well so we don't want to be stepping over those* (L, p. 4).

Many lecturers identified the PTS involved professional role modelling and setting boundaries in the educational setting. The PTS was unmistakably a professional relationship. As PTS lecturers were also registered nurses, parallels were made to the clinical nursing practice settings with patient-nurse relationships. Jane stated:

*I'm not there to be my student's friend, I'm there to support them and guide them ... I might very much like them but it's a different relationship ... it's probably like the nurse client relationship* (L, p. 7).

Lecturers understood the importance of professional role modelling and boundaries that was part of their PTS relationship responsibility. Maree recognised her PTS student relationships were:

*... so much bigger than just sitting down having meetings ... or writing a few notes, it's about relationship building, and um, I think it models for them what we expect of the nurse-patient relationship* (L, p. 7).

Xavier also acknowledged the importance of the PTS relationship as a professional role modelling responsibility:

*... if we are supposed to ... be producing people who will then go out and care for others I think we need to model that aspect of caring and this is one way of doing it ... through the personal tutor system ...* (L, p. 5).

Students also recognised that professional role modelling was part of their PTS relationship. Bernadette spoke about her personal tutor as a person:

*... who I really admire and I think, you know, if I can take away some of the qualities ... that she has shown as a support person ... and I can adapt them into my own nursing practice I'll be doing, you know, I'll be doing well* (S, p. 6).

Building relationships included formal and informal interactions between students and lecturers. Some students were aware of the importance both formal and informal interactions as:

*... building up a good rapport with your personal tutor and vice versa ... doesn't always mean ... going to them with a problem. It can just be, you know, discussing ... all sorts of things ... in or out of the classroom like because you see [your personal tutor] floating around (Autumn: S, p.6).*

Students recognised the importance of informal aspect of “the relationship thing” (Gina: S, p.12). Gina reflected after her first PTS meeting:

*I didn't think she'd know ... [or] remember who I was, it would just be this is my name on a piece of paper but ... she did remember who I was, did remember my name ... after meeting her that once, she did see me in the [hallway] and say hi, I thought that was really nice (S, p.12).*

Lecturers were very aware of the importance of formal and informal exchanges as both were purposeful. Lecturers focused on their interpersonal PTS interactions through formalised meetings, regular contact and informal, opportunistic moments such as:

*... acknowledging students as you walk ... stopping by to have a quick chat ... just a twenty second chat and calling them by their name in front of their peers makes them feel like they are somebody to us (Christina: L, p. 9).*

It was “... the quality moment, not [always the] quantity of time” (Maree: L, p. 7) that was important to building PTS relationships.

The time and effort required to build PTS relationships varied. Some students and lecturers built PTS relationships over time and for others it was more immediate. Students relationships may be recognised from their first PTS meeting which was Sam's experience. She had:

*A really good relationship with my personal tutor ... you build that bond with your personal tutor straight away [whereas] you build your bond with your lecturers as the years go on (Sam: S, p. 2).*

Other students PTS relationships were built over time as Anita stated:

*It's not like ... the first meeting we had, like, was this big emotional thing. It was ... a, you know, gradually just seeing [your personal tutor] every now and then not even in the meetings it just, yeah, her general wanting to know what I was up to kind of thing (S, p.7).*

While some students reflected that lecturers “do in a way have an obligation” (Lulu: S, p. 12) within their personal tutor role, it “only works ... if there was a relationship ... an

*understanding ... it comes down to personalities ... if you've made a connection then ... you'll use it"* (Lulu: S, p. 12).

Some PTS relationships may require more effort and commitment as students and lecturers understood that *"obviously different personalities worked together differently and ... so that affects it [PTS relationships]"* (Lucy: S, p. 14). Personality differences meant some students and lecturers did not have that initial connection or, didn't, as Ryan stated, *"really click"* (S, p. 19). Personality differences were anticipated as part of the PTS given the number of students and lecturers. Pam explained in her first year she did not consider using the PTS as *"I think I had a personality clash with my personal tutor ... once resolved I found it really useful"* (S, p. 1). Over time Pam built a genuine connection with her lecturer through the PTS relationship. Pam now describes her personal tutor as someone who:

*... comes across really caring like now more so, it's not sort of ... I don't feel like we're meeting with a clipboard as such now ... she seems to want to support me as a person ... I don't just feel like a student anymore I feel like a person and that's great* (S, p. 3).

Leigh also experienced personality differences with her personal tutor. She found her assigned PTS lecturers was not someone she considered approachable. This lack of connection had the potential to lead to personality clashes and discord within the relationship. Leigh explained, from a student's perspective, the PTS was dependent on the assigned lecturer and your *"relationship ... with that person ... the personalities ... within that"* (S, p. 15). Students simply did not approach their personal tutor when there was no sense of connection. Leigh explained that:

*Sometimes you can meet someone and you just think "no that person's not...that's not going to work", other times you meet someone and "yeah that's ok" ... you can form that relationship* (S, p. 14).

Students were quite up-front about there needing to be:

*... some underlying ... connection between the people because otherwise no-one's going to pour their heart out to someone they don't feel comfortable with. No-one's going to come up and sit in a room and go "oh my whole life's falling apart" ... "* (Leigh: S, p.14).

For some students there was no connection with their PTS lecturer due to the underlying personality differences that never resolved. When contacted, Leigh continued to meet with her personal tutor yet *"found that even when we did talk it wasn't ... in any depth it was more just gloss over the time everything's fine and I've done my bit and we're off"* (S, p, 1). Leigh did

not pursue changing her personal tutor as she sought support from other lecturers in the BN programme with whom she had an identified connection.

It seemed inevitable PTS lecturers, with the number of students allocated, would experience personality differences with the occasional clash that may result in relationship discord. Relationships were affected by *“the variety of personalities ... and who we are and where we come from and our background”* (June: L, p. 11). Jasmine shared *“it’s the student personalities that we deal with”* (L, p. 10) that affect the PTS relationship. Lecturers considered the PTS of *“value to both the lecturer and the student”* (Lydia: L, p. 1) and acknowledged the relationship was influenced by how you *“feel about a student”* (Lydia: L, p. 15). Lydia was quite candid when she spoke about the different personality traits of students as she said:

*To be honest ... there’s some students you like, really like, and they’re awesome and there are other students that irritate you and if one of those irritating students is your personal tutee you have to be really careful how you approach and respond to their needs* (L, p. 16).

Lecturers found it easier to be supportive toward students when there is a connection *“which leaves those without a connection in a bit of a hollow space”* (Lydia: L, p. 17). In the majority of circumstances personalities differences were managed by PTS lecturers. Lydia explained:

*You put on your professional face and your professional voice and you guide the best you can ... if it’s getting to a point where your irritation’s showing then you probably need to speak to [someone]* (L, p. 16).

While not common, situations where no resolution was possible meant students may be referred to another lecturer. Walter also recognised *“if we don’t get along well with someone or we’re not connecting with them, we’re quite open to, to changing”* (L, p. 16). Lecturers understood *“you can’t like everyone, you can’t connect with everyone”* (Maree: L, p. 14). The absence of an effective personal tutor relationship may result in students who *“speak with their feet”* (Maree: L, p. 14) having limited or no PTS lecturer interaction. Such circumstances were recognised with the provision for PTS changes outlined in the guidelines.

In the absence of a PTS relationship, students and lecturers interpersonal interactions would revert to a conventional programme association that did not include personal support. Most students stated they were never left without support and *“would go to one of the lecturers that they felt comfortable with if things were bad and they really needed someone ... instead of just floundering”* (Leigh: S, p. 14). Riona stated that:

*I wouldn't talk to anyone that I didn't ... feel a rapport with. We had the option to, or the ability to go, to those tutors who we trusted and had that rapport with and I think natural selection of support is quite important (S, p. 19).*

Students spoke of the need for a recognised relationship to feel comfortable disclosing and discussing academic and personal issues:

*It's important that some sort of relationship is established and everyone's comfortable with it otherwise it [the PTS] won't work at all because people [students] aren't going to confide anything to someone [lecturers] they're not comfortable with (Leigh, L: p. 14).*

Lecturers understood the PTS relationship was about who the “students connect to really. Some will connect to others better than you” (June: L, p. 11). Students who required support approached lecturers with whom there was a recognised connection and an identified relationship.

Building a student and lecturer PTS relationship required use of, and engagement with, the PTS. As noted earlier, Maree stated “it's got everything to do with your interpersonal relationship” (L, p. 15) as students will:

*... look at what it is in you that makes them feel safe, that makes them believe that you're interested and that's, that's a big part. If they think you value them then that's why they come to you (Maree: L, p. 15).*

Students and lecturers were aware of the importance of building relationships. Lecturers were additionally mindful of the impact relationships may have for students in relation to their system engagement, use of available support and the BN experience.

## **Flexible Engagement: There's no-one-size-fits-all approach**

Flexible engagement was important to the PTS experience as students and lecturers negotiated meeting and contact arrangements. Students and lecturers recognised “there's no-one-[size]-fits-all” (Jane: L, p. 5) approach as it needed to remain “really flexible” (Liz: S, p. 16). As identified in chapters one and four, lecturers were required to make contact and arrange the initial PTS meeting following students' first year BN induction. Lecturer engagement was necessary for student use. Students and lecturers valued both semi-structured and unstructured PTS approaches as various options were required. Annie explained “it's the

*flexibility [that] is really good and ...I think from what I understand most of them [lecturers] are fairly flexible yeah” (S, p. 7).*

All 10 lecturers interviewed stated they were engaged with the PTS and used various approaches to encourage students’ use. In the same way relationships required formal and informal interactions, the PTS needed semi-structured and unstructured approaches for meeting and contact arrangements. There was flexibility to negotiate the preferred arrangements. Jane would encourage all allocated:

*... students to meet with me one-on-one ... I explain ... the personal tutor system ... how they can access me and I actually say to them that I am there as much as they need me to be or as little ... so some students I see lots and lots and lots of and some students e-mail me and some students choose not to engage at all (L, p. 2-3).*

Some lecturers were more structured in their PTS engagement with an expectation to “*meet regularly and ... communicate by e-mail*” (Xavier: L, p 18). Jasmine’s approach was to “*keep it uppermost in people’s [students] minds*” (L, p. 19) through regular contact as it was important to “*have engaged at sort of level ... in a greater variety of ways*” (Jasmine: L, p. 22). Other lecturers were unstructured as students determined the regularity of meetings and contact arrangements. With first-year students, June would:

*... make the contact with them [students] ... and [then] they really only come in when they’re really in need in year two and three and some of the students I never see again (L, p. 2).*

Edna also had an unstructured approach as “*after that first initial year one contact I don’t actually formally engage with them again ... unless they want me to ... it’s really quite an informal thing from then onwards*” (L, p. 5). There was no one particular approach to PTS engagement as flexibility was considered most appropriate by students lecturers.

Semi-structured and unstructured PTS approaches were not site specific. However, differences were identified across the three School of Nursing sites. Many students and lecturers on the smaller sites indicated that generally there were less formal arrangements used. This may be related to the smaller sites having more contained campuses along with lower student numbers that allowed for more opportunistic and informal lecturer availability. On the larger site, students and lecturers generally noted there was both formal and informal arrangements to PTS engagement. The larger campus was more expansive and this, together with greater student numbers, did not allow for such opportunistic lecturer availability.

Of the 28 students interviewed, 18 identified they used the PTS, six spoke of limitations and four students did not use the PTS. Regular and consistent lecturer contact was recognised as important for the 18 students engaged with the PTS. Sue spoke of her *“really positive experience”* (Sue: S, p. 1) noting in part this was due her PTS lecturer encouraging engagement along with being *“quite proactive in keeping in touch”* (Sue, S, p. 1). Sue appreciated the proactive approach of her PTS lecturer. She stated:

*... well it is quite easy to I suppose get carried away with what you are doing and wrapped up in your course so if you have got somebody who's going to write to you every now and then and say hey we should catch up when's a good time [then you will]* (Sue: S, p.3).

For some students PTS lecturer encouragement along with regular and consistent contact was their preferred approach for arrangements. Sue's PTS lecturer:

*... wasn't in my face all the time, but enough that if I needed something she would be one of the first people that I would talk to about it. Yeah, [it's] availability and ... just not pushy about things but I felt confident enough that ... she was there if I needed* (S, p.3).

Lecturers and students understood the PTS was a two way process. Outside regular contact it was necessary for students to contact their lecturer and communicate any academic or personal issues. Students engaged with the PTS realised contacting lecturers was also their responsibility. Sue stated that if she:

*... needed anything or if things weren't going so well instead of waiting until things got bad ... it was my responsibility to go to them first so that they could support me through that and kind of advocate* (S: p.1).

Max also spoke of his responsibility to contact PTS lecturers, although along with other students, he somewhat diffidently noted that it did not always do so. At times, contact may be very irregular. Max said that for:

*... anything like that [the PTS], maybe a greater awareness about it [laughs] might be appropriate ... at times, you know ... you just forget that, I mean if you're not utilising your personal tutor or you don't need to see them for anything in particular* (S, p. 4).

Many students recognised that without prompts they could overlook using the PTS that Bernadette reinforced is *“really important to keep reiterating to students that they [personal tutors] are there, what their role is what they can actually do for us”* (S, p. 8).



Some students found limitations with their PTS engagement. While these students “found that it was helpful to know that it was available” (Eustacia: S, p. 1) their PTS use was minimal. Eustacia explained: *“I tend to get on and do things so I didn’t have much interaction with the personal tutor [and PTS] ... unless I thought it was necessary”* (S, p.1). Contact from Eustacia’s PTS lecturer was limited to *“a yearly email just to say I was doing alright and there was no need to meet”* (Eustacia: S, p. 1). Eustacia however, acknowledged the value of annual exchanges with her PTS lecturer in maintaining an overview of her progress as she stated:

*It felt good ... an email that said you know you’re doing really well and you kind of you don’t believe it ... like that compliment on the street it comes out of nowhere ... but it was nice to know that someone was actually watching ... it is quite motivational ... it was good* (Eustacia: S, p. 7).

At the same time Eustacia also identified she had no rapport in her PTS relationship:

*I don’t think that if I walked past my [PTS lecturer] in the corridor they would know who I was ... there’s not that level of recognition so it’s good to know the supports there but it’s not really a you know, a chatting kind of arrangement* (S, p. 3).

PTS contact was maintained at a minimum by some students and lecturers. Although contact was minimal, this regularity was recognised as important. During her interview Eustacia reflected that minimal contact in isolation was not ideal as encouragement and more frequent contact was preferable. While students, including Eustacia, understood personal tutors were not solely responsible for maintaining regular contact, she reflected that PTS engagement:

*... could have been more encouraged ... students don’t tend to make the time unless they have to so unless you say “let’s pick a time and we’ll meet” they won’t ... or I personally wouldn’t* (Eustacia: S, p. 4).

Some other students who had limited PTS engagement were cognisant of the option to approach their personal tutor if required. However, along with Eustacia, many were not inclined to do so. Mabel shared a comparable experience to Eustacia as she also had limited PTS engagement. However, her perspective differed as following:

*... an introductory I’m your personal tutor if you need anything any concerns any problems ... I’m the person to see so that was pretty much it, that’s my experience with the personal tutor system. When I did have any concerns about anything I did go and see [my personal tutor] ... that’s about it really* (Mabel: S, p.1).

Similar to other students, Mabel’s experience of PTS regularity was having the same personal tutor throughout the three years as there were no meetings arranged. Limited contact was preferable for some students (and lecturers) and when Mabel:

*... did come to [her PTS lecturer] with a concern, maybe three weeks later he'd ask me how I was and how I got on with my problem so he'd always follow up, so I guess that made me feel like ... you know he was supporting me and actually cared about, genuinely cared about what was going* (Mabel: S, p. 4).

Mabel, along with other students and some lecturers, did not see the need for a proactive approach with formal meetings as *"there just needs to be reassurance that they are there for you"* (S, p. 16) when needed.

The four students who did not engage with their PTS lecturer as each spoke about a lack of connection with their PTS lecturer. However, not all formally pursued changing tutors as some simply approached other lecturers with whom they identified a connection or used other support systems available that for some were through family and friends. Riona did not engage with the PTS. She recalled being introduced to the PTS during orientation week and *"it sounded all well and good"* (Riona: S, p.1). However, her perspective changed after she spoke with her assigned PTS lecturer. She found her assigned PTS lecturer *"absolutely did my head in and I couldn't cope with him ... because I thought, "oh, if I had a problem I would not go to him"* (Riona: S, p.1). Although Riona never used the PTS, she had a good relationship with her assigned lecturer external to the PTS as:

*It turned out that he was alright in the end, but ...the help that he gave me and the capacity in which he was supportive wasn't in his role as a personal tutor. There was no real personal tutor thing. I don't think I ever met him as a personal tutor* (Riona: S, p.1).

Lola was another student who also never engaged with the PTS. Her first PTS meeting was her last as she stated:

*... quite a lot of time had passed when I had the first approach by my assigned personal tutor ... and ... asked if I was free to find out 'how I was and who I was' and I said actually at the moment I'm not ... that was the first and last time that I was involved in any way with a formalised approach ... as something to do with the personal tutor system* (S, p. 1).

As a mature student, the PTS was not a priority for Lola as initially she did not consider it would be required.

Lecturers found that student engagement with the PTS varied. Walter had a sense of fatalism as stated that *"no matter what you put in, you know a good third [of students] will never engage with their personal tutor"* (L, p. 19). James also identified *"it must be about a third of them [students] don't engage"* (L, p. 3). This contrasted with the number of students, 10%

(n=9), in chapter four who reported their preference to not participate with the PTS. Jasmine did not refer to percentages as she stated *“we don’t actually get to engage with all of them, gladly or sadly”* (L, p. 22). The issue of student engagement with the PTS was part of a broader discussion of how it *“could be done differently or better”* (Jasmine: L, p. 18). Jasmine acknowledged there would probably:

*... always be students who won’t or can’t engage with it [the PTS] and I guess there’s maybe not too much that any of us can do about that except ... taking every opportunity ... to put it out there ...* (L, p. 19).

This perspective was reiterated by Xavier who acknowledged that as some students did not want to engage with the PTS as *“they don’t feel they need it ... that is fine they are adults they can decide ... ”* (L, p. 2). While Xavier acknowledged that not all students wanted to engage with the PTS, he also experienced a certain tension when students responded:

*... to my requests to meet ... from a perfunctory perspective in that they have to rather than want to ... [engage with the PTS] ... they come along and they say very little* (L, p. 2).

Viewed as *“a student driven service”* (Jane: L, p. 4), students would determine use of the PTS. As one student, Lucy, reflected on her PTS engagement she stated it was:

*... only as effective as I wanted it to be, it was dictated by me ... my personal tutor put herself out there you know, ‘do you want to meet up’? I could have said ‘no’. It’s only as effective as basically I determine, what role she’s gonna have ... I determine what she knows about what’s going on. I could just be quite happily be like ‘yeah, passing that’s fine you don’t need to talk to me, I don’t feel the need to [talk]’* (S, p. 7).

Sam shared a similar view as:

*... not everybody’s going to want to engage in it [the PTS] but that’s their choice I think it’s better to have that system available ... so if it’s there and people want to use it and that’s good, if they don’t want to use it then that’s ok too yeah* (S, p. 8).

As found in phase one, lecturers were frustrated and also concerned when students were non-responsive to their attempts at contact without explanation. Similarly in phase two, PTS non-engagement was a frustration and concern for some lecturers. PTS engagement was part of lecturers’ responsibilities, however accomplishing this presented a challenge *“if the students don’t engage or aren’t interested”* (Maree: L, p. 15). Students’ non-engagement may cause lecturers concern, particularly if students were experiencing difficulty with the programme requirements. Students would miss arranged meetings without explanation and were not

responsive to lecturers' communication or attempts to follow-up. Jasmine found it *"a source of constant frustration ... to engage students who can't or don't want to engage ... [as] often [they were] the struggling students"* (L, p. 18). Lecturers identified some students that would benefit most from the PTS were the ones who disengaged. Some lecturers felt that student engagement was an indication of *"how effective you are by how many and how often your students come back to you"* (Jane: L, p. 4). Lecturers could, as Christina stated:

*feel like you're a bit of a failure as a personal tutor that you haven't managed to engage with the student whereas in fact it's probably that they are choosing not to engage with you* (L, p. 14).

While students could choose not to use the PTS, lecturers' engagement remained an ongoing responsibility. Christina spoke about the students who engaged with the PTS, stating *"obviously the ones who I see more often ... I have a better understanding"* (L: p. 1) and was able to readily support in response to issues that may arise. PTS engagement also supported students with their academic and personal development through the BN. Students not using the PTS could seek to re-establish engagement at any time although may present difficulties for students as lecturers as had limited or no knowledge and understanding of them and their support needs.

## **Supporting the Journey: Together through the three years**

Support was recognised as influential to the PTS experience. The need for support was recognised as motivation for PTS use. Students and lecturers alike acknowledged that the BN was more than an educational programme or professional qualification; it was a three-year journey of personal and academic discovery that inevitably included *"speed wobbles"* (Jane: L, p. 8) and *"bumps"* (Maree: L, p. 27). Lecturers found part of their PTS lecturer role was helping students *"explore who they are and what they bring and where they can go"* (James: L, p. 6) in their transition through the BN programme as they discovered and learnt *"things about ... their personal selves and evolve into their professional self"* (Xavier: L, p. 5). Students *"certainly grow, they change"* (June: L, p. 7) during their three years of study, which June understood was due mostly to the programme. Students *"become quite different to who they were when they first start in year one"* (June: L, p.7). For some students this was an easier process than for others. Together with other lecturers, since beginning her personal tutor support role, Jane, identified the value of getting to know students:

*... you sort of walk beside them and see the journey they're on and some of them have a much harder journey than others and you really do admire them and yeah just the change in them what you see is incredible (L, p. 3).*

Completion of the BN meant students had managed the requisite academic and clinical programme requirements, while managing their lives outside of study. Consequently, support needs differed for each individual. Support, in respect to *"what works"* (June: L, p. 14), was individualised as *"you don't know until you do it what is quite going to work but different people [students] need different things"* (Jane: L, p. 5). Students experienced different challenges during the three years that may have been: minor or major; internal or external to the BN programme; and degree related or personal.

The wobbles or bumps that resulted in students seeking PTS support covered the complete spectrum of their study and personal life. Academic programme requirements that resulted in students seeking PTS support included: assessments (assignments and exams, deadlines and extensions) and failure (academic or clinical). Clinical programme requirements also meant students sought PTS support for a wide-range of issues. This included intense clinical experiences such as the death of a patient; routine to complex health issues for example common seasonal viruses and regional epidemics; and managing moderate to extreme situations for instance dealing with intentional and unintentional injury. Students had the challenge of balancing their lives alongside the BN programmes academic and clinical requirements. Personal issues discussed by participants related directly to students or indirectly with significant others (children, partners, family). Students' personal issues included: relationships (beginning and ending); pregnancy; birth; minor and major health issues (physical or psychological); diagnosis of disability, chronic or terminal illness; accidents; bereavement; and legal matters. Also mentioned were: financial constraints; job loss; accommodation changes; and transport issues. Support requirements were dependent on students' educational backgrounds, their available support resources (personal, external), levels of resilience and life experience.

Participants commented that it was important not to underestimate the need for support to complete the BN programme together with the level of endurance and resilience required. Students and lecturers both spoke of the extraordinary determination some students demonstrated once in the programme as they continued studying while managing extreme circumstances, personal crises and sometimes tragedy. Some students spoke of others in their

cohort whose personal circumstances were unable to withstand the pressures of the BN programme. Consequently, these students were no longer in the programme. Students also spoke of their own personal circumstances, and managing challenges that required compromise and sacrifice for them and their families. The PTS became *“a way of ... sharing that journey with them ... it gives the student the ... support within the school without having to tell their story multiple times”* (James: L, p. 1). In the PTS support role, Jane along with other lecturers noticed:

*Most students tend to have at least one wobble through their time ... some have lots of wobbles but as their personal tutor ... they can come to me and tell me what's happening ... so that they don't have to tell their story to everybody in the team and they can keep their privacy and ... we can amend things to fit in with what is happening* (L, p. 1).

Some students and lecturers found PTS support assisted with the required endurance to manage the issues and challenges throughout the programme. Resilience and endurance was invaluable across the three years of the BN as some students:

*... get to a point where they just want to give up and sometimes that is emotionally based and sometimes you just have to say to them hang in there just give it a little bit longer see how you feel next week* (Xavier: L, p. 11).

These points were described by Jane as *“speed wobbles”* (L, p. 8):

*... where everything goes wrong and everything is up in the air and if we don't capture the students at that moment that's when they exit the programme because it is just too hard and so they leave* (L, p. 8).

The PTS support role involved guidance and direction for students facing a range of challenges. The nature of a students' need(s) remained unknown until support was sought from their PTS lecturer. There were anticipated issues for students with their study that were uncomplicated and easily resolved. These issues were straightforward as support options were readily accessible through direction to existing resources or centralised services. However Xavier likened PTS support to *“an emergency department ... as there is no limit to the issues that can present”* (Xavier: L, p. 8) as students walk in the door. Lecturers appreciated that students:

*... have very complex lives and some of them have lived a lifetime already and produced other lives, so yeah, so you can't say in the personal tutor system these are the types of problems you might face* (Xavier: L, p. 8).

The difference PTS support has made to students completing or withdrawing from the programme was acknowledged by students and lecturers. Many of the students interviewed spoke of their experience, or that of others in their cohort, who had approached *“their personal tutors and said ‘it’s just too hard’ and they just got talked through and ... that’s what it needs to be there for”* (Anita: S, p. 15). Liz was *“very grateful, really grateful cos’ I don’t think I could have gotten through the three years without it [PTS support]”* (S, p. 14). Annie recognised:

*... if we need any support whether it be academic or personal ... they are there for us to help us guide us send us to the right place if they can’t help us themselves* (S, p. 1).

Lecturers also commented that PTS support had been *“immensely important to the students”* (Jane: L, p. 5) and that the system had played a role in retaining students who might otherwise have left the programme. Jane spoke about particular experiences with *“two of my students who have been ready to leave the programme and because of intervention [PTS support] with me they have been able to continue”* (L, p. 5). Continuation in the BN *“is important to the institution as well as those students”* (Jane: L, p. 8) and while exiting the programme may have implications for the educational institution and for students, it *“means they’re losing their dream”* (Jane: L, p. 8). Xavier also spoke about students’ experience of:

*... highs and lows throughout the course of their programme ... [and those who] have benefited from support, just from having support from somebody ... it has kept them in the programme* (L, p. 11).

Around a third of students used personal tutor support first and foremost. Sue found the BN was so specialised *“it was easier to stay within the School of Nursing ... other people might not get what you are trying to do ...”* (Sue: S, p. 4). Along with Sue, students who used some of the centralised services found they did not always *“fit in as well with nursing”* (Sue: S, p.3) and used their *“personal tutor more than anything”* (Sue: S, p.3).

Bernadette described how, from a student’s perspective, PTS support had been key to her remaining in the programme. In her first year, Bernadette was diagnosed with a major health issue and *“needed to know that I was well supported because there was a time in year one where I thought ... I may not be able to continue”* (S, p. 1). The complexity and ongoing nature of her health issue meant she required support from a more senior lecturer in the School of Nursing. The first personal tutor assigned to Bernadette was not able to offer the necessary support so she changed to work with another lecturer to complete her BN. The lecturer who became Bernadette’s personal tutor *“definitely has been a huge, huge inspiration ... and was*

*there for me, ... I was well supported*" (S, p. 9). Bernadette attributes her BN completion to the support received from her PTS lecturer. She believes that it is *"really important to have your personal tutor ... when I graduate she's, you know, a big reason as to why I'm where I will be because of that support"* (Bernadette: S, p. 8).

In her second year, Gina had some personal issues that she was unable to resolve on her own. She described these as *"disastrous"* (S, p.1). Gina approached her PTS lecturer for support, and discovered that her personal tutor actually had expertise with that particular issue. She was relieved after meeting with her PTS lecturer as it *"took a bit of the pressure off as well as directing in the right way to sort of sort things out, so that was really good"* (Gina: S, p.1). Gina acknowledged that without PTS support in her second year *"I think I probably would have failed"* (S, p.1).

Whilst Bernadette and Gina both described major life issues, many students also used the PTS when they experienced stress that resulted from the accumulation of minor intersecting issues. PTS support was useful in addressing these issues and was the reason Lulu approached her personal tutor. She was relieved to have her experience of cumulative stress acknowledged. Lulu appreciated that her lecturer understood *"where I was coming from ... and just offered suggestions that might help ... "* (S, p. 4). Lulu had high expectations of herself both academically and personally and her personal tutor suggested that she may find it useful to review these. She found *"it was good to hear that from somebody ... I sort of took that on board ... just relaxing a little bit on what I expected of myself ... got me through"* (Lulu: S, p.4).

In their PTS support role, lecturers often found reflection or debriefing with students was required. Lucy, and other students used PTS support to *"manage ... priorities and come out with a bit more of a plan"* (S, p. 18). She felt reassured as PTS lecturer support was likened to reflection and debriefing in clinical nursing practice. Lucy found *"that was really important ... [reflecting with] someone who gets ... nursing"* (S, p. 18) as you can speak with family or friends however *"to debrief to someone who ... understands the programme and what the requirements are [was] very helpful"* (S, p. 18).

The nature of the support relationship was acknowledged as varied and comprehensive. Students acknowledged PTS support was not *"someone knocking on my door and being ... big brother"* (Anita: S, p. 15). There was no expectation that lecturers were *"there to kind of hold your hand and do everything for you ... [rather lecturers] support the fact that you are an adult,*



*you are studying a degree*” (Anita: S, p. 15). Students valued having a “go to” person (Max: S, p. 2) with whom they could talk, while lecturers commented that *“sometimes it is not clear what they [students] want ... they just want to talk”* (Xavier: L, p. 9). For students *“that really is the beauty of it [personal tutor support] ... they can be an outlet”* (Anita: S, p. 15).

Students were aware that some personal incidents might impact on their ability to register as a nurse at the completion of the programme<sup>6</sup>. Anita shared a situation where she found herself in *“a good little bit of trouble”* (S, p. 5) and required advice as to her options. She approached her personal tutor who listened and offered appropriate direction. Anita explained *“it was that safety, knowing that I could go to her ... [for] help ... she gave me the tools and the direction of where to go to do it”* (S, p. 5). Anita was reassured *“that my personal little stuff-up wouldn’t actually really totally ... ruin my career before it even started so that that was really good”* (S, p. 5). The PTS meant students had access to someone familiar. Lecturers remained non-judgmental, using appropriate discretion with students who felt vulnerable due to the sensitivity of their issues. The importance of remaining open-minded maintaining non-judgemental relationship in the PTS support role was pointed out as:

*The challenge one has [is] to be very open to the nature of the problems that might come up in a conversation with a student and not appear fazed by that yeah because sometimes they are quite revealing with their problems* (Xavier: L, p. 8).

Nearly all students interviewed valued the PTS as having the *“backing of support if required”* (Eustacia: S, p. 2). The knowledge that PTS support was accessible was important. However, not all students had a positive experience with PTS support. As noted earlier, Lola had not engaged with the PTS. Lola for the most part managed to balance BN requirements with her personal life. However, there was a time she needed support with a BN related issue and found *“it wasn’t a situation that I was comfortable going to my particular ... assigned personal tutor for help because she was the problem”* (S, p. 3). While the support may be sought from other lecturers, this presented a problem as nature of Lola’s issue required a *“higher up authority”* (S, p. 3) as she negotiated an appeal process. For Lola *“it really ah knocked me sideways, it was very unexpected”* (S, p. 3). Lola became emotional as she spoke about her

---

<sup>6</sup> NCNZ has responsibility to ensure students are ‘fit to practise’ as a registered nurse. All BN students apply to NCNZ for entry to the national register once successful completion of their programme and state final examination. Before being accepted to the NCNZ national register students are required to have referee and a police checks and if any issues or legal proceedings bring into question students ‘fitness to practise’, their application may be denied. <http://www.nursingcouncil.org.nz/Employers/Fitness-to-practice>

experience. She stated that *“when I reached out for it [PTS support] there was nobody there to guide me ... I felt ... very vulnerable ... and not in control of that situation”* (Lola: S, p. 3). Another two students had similar experiences where issues involved their PTS lecturer.

The experience of Lola and the other two students contrasted with that of most others interviewed however highlighted a limitation of PTS support. There is potential for a PTS lecturer to be the cause of, or central to, a student’s issue. Interestingly, while Lola and another student, Danni shared their intense experiences, they were not critical of PTS. Danni’s explained *“my friend [who] had the same personal tutor and found her really good”* (S, 1.). Lola and Danni offered suggestions to change and strengthen PTS support in the BN programme. Both suggested changing personal tutors needed to be an easier process along with the back-up of an alternative support person. Lola and Danni independently suggested this could be achieved by appointing a PTS co-ordinator for students to contact as a neutral liaison person. Lecturers could also benefit from a PTS co-ordinator as a resource with some of the complex student matters.

Lecturers also found that when PTS issues arose that were beyond their ability to manage, there was no identified personnel to approach for direction or guidance. Xavier stated he did not *“really know...who is the person responsible for the system”* (p. 3). Other lecturers were also confused with where to go for support in their PTS role when required. Lecturers also suggested the need for a PTS co-ordinator. Someone in a PTS co-ordination role would offer direction and ensure consistency with information given for both students and lecturers.

An interesting observation that emerged from the lecturers’ interviews was that offering support to all students included supporting those who were unable to complete or may have been unsuccessful in progressing through the programme. Enabling students to leave the programme was part of PTS support, with the option open to return to the BN or other education programme. As lecturers, Maree explained:

*We need to support them [students] ... to be successful in whatever is the most important ... for them ... and if that means enabling them to leave ... that’s what you do ... or more hopefully enabling them to stay, but sometimes it’s that you have to enable them to move [on]* (L, p. 27).

Exiting the programme was necessary for some students. As part of the personal tutor role, lecturers found themselves providing students with strategies to manage this *“bump in the*

*road and beyond ... there are many crossroads and many more opportunities and the door's not shut to them"* (Maree: L, p. 27).

The PTS support journey was not only a chronological one marked by events as students progressed through the BN. It was also, for many, a journey of the academic and personal development. Students and lecturers could and would share any concerns or issues within the PTS support relationship along with the acknowledgement of successes and achievements. Lecturers spoke about being available and accessible for students:

*... both when things aren't going well but also to celebrate their [students'] success, I love it if they ... see me ... [or] e-mail saying how well they are doing and they just want to share it and to just be able to affirm what they are doing is great* (Jane: L, p. 1).

Knowing students and being familiar with their academic achievements and personal circumstances allowed lecturers to suggest relevant scholarships. Lecturers came to know students well who engaged with and had been supported through the PTS. Some students and lecturers interviewed spoke of students' success with scholarship applications. This offered insight into their academic and personal lives. Sue spoke about her scholarship application experience:

*My personal tutor put me up for formal recognition ... stuff which was really awesome ... I got a scholarship and it was financial reward ... more than the reward of getting the scholarship ... to know that, you know they thought that I was good enough ... that someone thought that I could do that ... was really good ... so that was supportive* (S, p. 7).

Scholarships mitigate some of the financial burden that comes with being a student, and also became a personal affirmation from their PTS lecturer.

The PTS role not only allowed lecturers to support students through the programme, it also permitted the opportunity to maximise students' potential as *"sometimes you need to ... chip off some of the hard stuff and shine up some of the other"* (Maree: L, p. 19). Maree laughed as she likened working with some students to M&Ms [chocolate sweets]:

*... hard candy on the outside but inside ... just all chocolate and gooey ... it's about actually getting to the heart of them [students] and just when you find the essence of the person [student] that you are personal tutor for then you start ... the real work* (L, p. 19).

She also observed that the PTS offers the occasion for lecturers to capitalise on their student support role as you are:

*... not always looking at the face value, because sometimes what ... someone presents to you isn't the real them ... if you trust them over the time ... and keep on maintaining belief in them, building a relationship with them at an appropriate level, they will just come out and oh blow you away with what they can be and who they can be (Maree: L, p. 24).*

Along with other lecturers, Maree acknowledged:

*... sometimes it's hard work along the way, but well worth it in the end ... it's a progressive thing, it's not something that happens overnight but it will happen ... [as] then you get a star at the end of the day, well nursing does, the profession does (L, p. 19).*

Exchanges between students and lecturers were often able to be more robust. The PTS was an opportunity for forthright student-lecturer conversations. Edna identified that lecturers can be clearer with students if there is an issue or when they have been unsuccessful. In the conversation lecturers would often openly acknowledge their failure and then discuss what needed to happen next. Lecturers found students were responsive when you were direct in what you said *"yes you've failed but we want you to succeed and in order for you to succeed we need you to redo this"* (Edna: L, p. 15). Lecturers recognise the *"conversations that could be really quite uncomfortable and could be quite ... negative"* (Edna: L, p. 15) can be very positive as students respond to feedback that supports their progress and ongoing development.

Lecturers spoke about the influence of the PTS on student support and their role since it had become part of the BN. Prior to the PTS the student support relationship was ad hoc, *"you just engage with anybody and everybody [students] ... as you saw a need"* (James: L, p. 12). This approach to support meant all lecturers were conceivably responsible for all students. Edna explained the advantage of the PTS for lecturers was that *"it makes you a bit responsible for those [allocated] students ... rather than ... the whole lot of you [lecturers] having to watch the whole lot [of students]"* (L, p. 11). James found the PTS *"a great vehicle for that"* (L, p. 6). Lecturers appreciated the PTS meant there was a formalised student support role with an allocated number of students.

The PTS support minimised the potential for students to *"fall through the net, the net or the gaps because we've not been paying attention"* (Maree: L, p. 8). The PTS role meant lecturers

monitored students as an additional support in the *“early detection of sliding off really”* (Lydia: L, p.20). Lecturers acknowledgement of *“individual student support is really important”* (Christina: L, p. 14) and has been a positive influence for most since the PTS was embedded in the BN programme. Students are *“not sliding through the gaps so much now ... ”* (L, p. 13) as those with problems are *“picked up earlier”* (L, p. 14) and followed up:

*... whether that means that students exit the programme more effectively or whether that means that students are able to stay in the programme [to] succeed more effectively* (Christina: L, p. 14).

Lecturers identified fewer students appeared to *“fall through the gaps ‘cause there’s less gaps”* (Jasmine: L, p. 14) with embedded PTS support. While it was a reliable way to have *“someone that’s there and keeping an eye on [students]”* (Anita: S, p. 15) there was no certainty as James had a student:

*... who has left the programme ... and unfortunately ... that was a person who chose to engage and then just life got on top and ... she said ‘oh I’ve actually withdrawn’ ... when contacted* (L, p. 11).

Support responsibilities were managed in the context of lecturers’ other scheduled work. Planned PTS meetings were manageable, at times, unscheduled student support requests presented a challenge.

Lecturers acknowledged that, as a personal tutor, *“it can be hard given the numbers [of allocated students] that we have to actually do a good job”* (James: L, p. 1). With lecturers other responsibilities, Jane explained:

*... you sometimes feel like you are rushing them because you are seeing them at lunchtime and you are actually teaching after lunch and the student might be telling you something really significant, I don’t want to be clock watching ... thinking that I hope this student hurries up and goes because I’ve got to get to class* (L, p. 8).

Time and accessibility were sometimes difficult as student support needs were greater than was manageable for lecturers’ with their other BN responsibilities. Student support could be time-intense and impact on lecturers’ other responsibilities. Lecturers discussed some complex and involved PTS experiences that were time- consuming. Christina, along with other lecturers did not know how their PTS support role with students was factored into workloads as. :

*... some of them [students were] certainly time consuming ... meanwhile you’re marking and your other things get left to be taken home ... cause I didn’t have time to do everything* (L, p. 11).

The PTS support role required:

*... more support and acknowledgement from the management level ... it doesn't seem that the PT [personal tutor] role fits in well with our workload it's not visible ... there are certain students that can take significant amounts of time* (Jane: L, p. 6).

Planning for the PTS was *"not capturing the amount of input that goes through to ... support a person"* (Christina: L, p. 5). Ensuring support for students' issues may involve a lot of *"tooing and froing ... [as] a situation could involve four or five meetings between multiple people for a successful outcome"* (Christina: L, p. 5). Jane discussed that lecturers found the PTS support role was:

*... not recognised by management, I don't think they realise how much time it can take up, how many lunch times you miss, how big some of the issues that we end up talking about* (L, p. 5).

Whilst the PTS focused support on students in the BN, as identified in phase one, the purpose of this support role and the guidelines lacked clarity for both students and lecturers. Student support *"even from the get go there was no explanation as to their roles and responsibilities"* (Max, S: p. 4). The purpose and boundaries of the PTS as a system of support needed clarification for many students and lecturers. *"We sort of didn't know what they were there for what we can ask of them"* (Pam: S, p. 9). James explained when:

*You're talking about the purpose of it [the PTS] ... I don't think it's widely understood, by myself as well [as students] ... what actually our roles or expectations are* (L, p. 3).

Following the embedding of the PTS in the BN, lecturers were not given *"much direction at all about what we're really supposed to be doing as personal tutors or the boundaries"* (Christina: L, p. 9) and they found it difficult at times to know where the support and the role began and ended. As a teaching and learning strategy, lecturers had assumed this additional support role with limited direction. In their PTS role *"informally as lecturers we do support each other but ... more could be done from a management level"* (Jane: L, p. 5). There had been no professional development associated with this new support role. As a support system there was a *"need to clarify the role"* (Edna: L, p. 11) more especially for new lecturers and students as part of their induction.

The PTS was not intended to replace or replicate other centralised services available at the tertiary institution. At times lecturers would direct students to the different centralised services if the student was not already using this support. Lecturers would *"look at the wider support ... within the institution"* (James: L, p. 22) and direct students to use the relevant support service that may be beneficial. The centralised *"support ... team are very good, and*

once again, it's about that relationship, they [students] won't go there if, if they don't feel that the staff there are interested or invested in them" (Maree: L, p. 14). Lecturers identified centralised services were "a really good fit between them [as] an extending arm" (Edna: L, p. 14) to support the PTS and the School of Nursing. Jasmine explained:

*The personal tutor system ... might be their [students'] first ... support ... [and it] provides the link to one or a number of those other [centralised] supports for the students ... [as] all the supports work really nicely together like they're all important pieces in the jigsaw (L, p. 14).*

Walter stated "some people [students] are just not used to asking for support ... and once they [students] do they, they realise it's not so intimidating" (L, p. 28). Reminders and encouragement were necessary to support some students to "engage with those [centralised] supports [as] unless you're actually saying, "this is what's there for you, why don't you go and access it, it's free you know" (Edna: L, p. 14) they may be hesitant.

On occasion, students required support beyond the PTS, School of Nursing and tertiary institution. Some lecturers were aware of and suggested community services to students. However, not all lecturers were familiar with the potential community support options. Edna noted that lecturers:

*... mostly understand what support systems there are out there, but it might be worth revisiting what support systems you can refer students to and what's out there (Edna, p. 16).*

Lydia found the usefulness of her lecturer knowledge related to community support services, observing that, when student support issues were "outside the role" (L, p 22), and tertiary institution's services, her previous "work in this community ... [meant that] I know where the resources are" (L, p.22). With students' more complex or involved issues that required external community services some lecturers would "discuss that with another more senior person ... with the permission of the student of course" (Xavier: L, p. 8).

During the course of phase two interviews it became apparent students and lecturers appreciated their perspective had been sought as part of this PTS research. The PTS was considered a "really good concept" (Leigh, S: p. 3) by all who were interviewed although it needed "some tweaking" (Leigh, S: p. 3). Interviews proved to be unexpectedly cathartic for some as they shared their PTS experience. Lucy stated, "this has been helpful to talk about 'cos I didn't realise there was a lot to talk about with it actually" (S: p. 22). Student and lecturer interview findings generated a greater understanding of factors that influenced the PTS

experience. The findings of relationships, engagement and support emerged from student and lecturer interviews. Noticeable within these findings was the variation in PTS experiences. The integration of research findings across phase one and two is presented in the final section of this chapter.

## **Integration of Findings: Putting it all together**

The research findings were presented separately - those from the questionnaires in chapter four and interviews in chapter five. Both provided an understanding of the PTS, more particularly in recognising factors that influence students' and lecturers' experience. The final presentation of findings expands on this understanding of the PTS experience through the integration of findings across phase one and two. Integration generates greater confidence in findings as these come from more than one source of data. Through integration a richer and more complete student and lecturer PTS experience is realised. The integration of phase one and two findings are presented in response to the research questions of this study.

### **What factors influence students' and lecturers' experience of the personal tutor system?**

#### **1. What were students' and lecturers' experience of the PTS?**

Across phase one and two students' and lecturers' PTS experiences varied from positive to neutral, with a few participants reporting limited to negative experiences. Most students and lecturers indicated their PTS experience was positive. In phase one and two students and lecturers PTS experience was found at times to be the difference between continuing or exiting the BN programme. The PTS meant there was a go-to person for students. While some used the PTS only in response to issues others used a proactive approach to support their development. The PTS meant there was someone with whom they could reflect that knew the requirements of the programme and understood the nursing context. However for some this was neutral and others spoke of 'degrees of limitation'. For a few students and lecturers their PTS experience was negative as difficulties resulted in a breakdown of support. For the small number of students and lecturers in phase one and two that experienced PTS support issues, they were unclear with whom and how to seek resolution, offering the suggestion that co-ordination would be helpful. Some other PTS changes were suggested, which informs the discussion in chapter six and the final recommendations presented in chapter seven. Students



and lecturers acknowledged the considerable potential of the PTS that was unrelated to variances in their PTS experience.

## **2. What factors enable or impede students' and lecturers' involvement with the PTS?**

In the two phases of this study students and lecturers established building relationships were central to the PTS experience. Students drew attention to the PTS relationship in phase one through their additional comments, whilst lecturers offered little account of relationships in their written commentary as these related more to student interactions through PTS engagement. This changed in phase two as both students and lecturers identified the importance of the relationship development. The PTS relationship was a genuine interpersonal connection for most, however, for a few these were more perfunctory interactions. The PTS relationship was recognised as an influential factor for students' and lecturers' PTS experience.

In the data from phase one and two students and lecturers emphasised the importance of flexibility for PTS arrangements with meetings and contact. Phase one questionnaires focused on understanding PTS use in relation to meetings and contact as these arrangements were negotiated between each student and lecturer. Students' questionnaire responses and written commentary indicated varied and flexible approaches to use while lecturers focused on the requirement for PTS engagement. In phase two, flexible PTS engagement arrangements were found to be important for both students and lecturers. Arrangements varied from semi-structured through to unstructured. In effect there was no preferred option for use. Students and lecturers favoured a range of PTS approaches. Flexible PTS use was an influential factor to the PTS experience.

Non-engagement particularly attracted lecturers attention in both phases. As a BN requirement the PTS was to involve all students and lecturers as non-engagement was not an option. However, students openly reported their non-use of the PTS in both their questionnaire responses and interviews. In both phases a few students reported that the PTS was not considered a necessary part of the programme for them but recognised it was valuable for others. Lecturers reported they all engaged with the PTS in their questionnaire responses and interview discussions and were concerned with students' non-engagement, more so for those recognised as needing additional support. However, a small number of students identified that was not their experience, as PTS lecturer contact was limited to once or twice throughout their three-year programme and a few did not recall any form of PTS

contact with their allocated lecturer. PTS engagement and non-engagement were factors influential to PTS experience.

In both phases students and lecturers recognised the inevitability of issues with what has been termed 'speed wobbles' and 'bumps', at some-time during their study. Students and lecturers reported on the value and effectiveness of PTS support within the programme. In both phases most students reported a sense of relief that PTS lecturers had the assigned role of responsibility for individual support. To have an allocated PTS lecturer, with knowledge of BN requirements and nursing, generated confidence for students in the programme. Responsive support for particular situations featured more prominently than developmental support that included student-lecturer reflection. Whilst the PTS was not intended to be exclusively responsive, some students' and lecturers' in phase one and two reported this as their preference. The responsive approach was appropriate for those who favoured a more unstructured PTS approach. A small number of participants reported PTS support was unnecessary and a few students thought PTS support was ineffective. Overall, embedded PTS support was an influential factor for the PTS experience.

Through the phases students and lecturers reported personal tutors had varied abilities in their support role. Whilst lecturers may be viewed as effective in their academic and clinical role this did not necessarily translate to their PTS support role with two key reasons identified. First, across the phases lecturers reported that they received little information, except for the brief guidelines, to help them with this new support role. No provision had been made for professional development with skills to manage this sometimes difficult role. Second, whilst lecturers' phase one responses indicated most believed in their ability to manage the support requirements of the PTS role, students' responses were more varied. In phase two interviews this position changed as both students and lecturers reported personal tutors differed in their motivation and commitment to the PTS support role. Some PTS lecturers were deemed excellent while others were considered poor. Interestingly, and only evident in phase two, students allocated to the same PTS lecturers reported opposing views on their ability to provide support. This may correspond with the personality differences that were also evident in phase two and important to the PTS. The perception of PTS quality was a factor influential to PTS experience.

The PTS was regarded as important for student support in the BN. However a workload time allocation for lecturers undertaking PTS roles was not implemented within the programme.

The lack of PTS time was an issue reported across the phases with two main reasons identified. First, the PTS lecturers' support role was intended to include a time allocation, but this had not been actioned by management in the programme. This influenced PTS lecturers' abilities to attend to their role and responsibilities. On occasion, the lack of time had an effect on lecturers' relationship approachability, flexibility with availability and accessibility for support. Second, as part of the BN programme, the PTS had time scheduled once in three years (during year one induction week). Students' and lecturers' questionnaire responses and interview discussions found the PTS was an institutional expectation of individuals rather than a planned and resourced part of the BN programme. Many participants identified competition for time was a constant challenge, more particularly at busy times during the academic year. As a result most students and lecturers in phase one and many in phase two reported that PTS inclusion in the timetable was a favoured option. Time was an influential factor for the PTS experience.

### **3. To what extent do the PTS guidelines and processes facilitate or obstruct the students' and lecturers' experience?**

The PTS guidelines were to provide students and lecturers with information on their role and responsibilities for a mutual understanding and shared expectations. The PTS had six aims that were outlined in the guidelines with no purpose stated. However, lecturers and, to some extent, students reported the PTS guidelines lacked clarity. Students reported in both phases that they had limited knowledge or awareness of the guidelines. Students who were aware of the guidelines could not recall information on particular aspects such as year one meetings and did not know where or how to access these. In phases one and two PTS guideline clarity was not the issue so much as most students were too unfamiliar with these. Most lecturers in both phases were familiar with the PTS guidelines. Some knew where to access these, however almost all found them unclear. Students' lack of awareness and lecturers' lack of clarity led to different interpretations of the guidelines and of the PTS role. Consequently, the inconsistent PTS application resulted in differing expectations that, on occasion, led to confusion about what students and lecturers anticipated in relation to support. It was not surprising that students and some lecturers appeared somewhat unclear about the boundaries of the role and the unstated purpose of the PTS. Collectively it was reported the PTS guidelines required further clarification and improved access. The PTS guidelines was an factor influential to PTS experience.

#### **4. To what extent has the PTS facilitated students' and lecturers' knowledge and use of centralised services and support external to the institution?**

In both phases most students and lecturers understood the PTS offered support that linked to the tertiary institution's centralised services. Lecturers' PTS role involved providing students with information about, and direction to, centralised support services. Some lecturers were more knowledgeable about and directive in their guidance to both the programme's support and institution's centralised services. Others were less knowledgeable, uncertain about information or direction to centralised services. Students reported that when they were informed about or directed to the range of centralised services, they did not always act on this. Questionnaire responses and more-so interview discussions clarified that some students did not utilise centralised services. While the reason for this was less clear in phase one, in phase two some students found centralised services were not as effective as the PTS for BN support. Knowledge of the tertiary institutions' centralised services was an influential factor to PTS experience.

At times students' required support with more complex issues that were beyond the PTS and tertiary institution. Less so in phase one and more in phase two, lecturers discussed seeking support for student issues through community services external to the tertiary institution. Again some lecturers had more knowledge of the community services available and access for students, while others had limited or no information of such options. In phase two lecturers would often consult with others before suggesting and directing students to community services. Although not necessarily a responsibility of the PTS role this did not make it any less relevant for PTS lecturers when students presented with more complex issues. Knowledge of external support and community services was an influential factor to PTS experience.

## **Conclusion**

Findings from the phase one questionnaires that focused on the PTS guidelines were presented in chapter four and the phase two semi-structured interviews were presented in this chapter with three key findings emerging. This chapter presented these three key interview findings: building relationships, flexible engagement and supporting the journey. These interconnected findings are factors that influence students' and lecturers' PTS experience. Noticeable within these themes are the variations of PTS experiences. The integration of findings across phases one and two completed this chapter. The integration of findings between lecturers and students and across phases one and two identified the factors

that influenced PTS experience in response to the research question. These are presented as four major influential factors that that form the discussion in chapter six.

## **Chapter Six: Major Factors Influencing the Personal Tutor System Experience**

Central to the discussion in this chapter are the four major factors that influenced students' and lecturers' experience of the personal tutor system (PTS). These influential factors emerged from the phase one and two key findings and synthesis. The four factors were: relationships were essential to the PTS experience; flexibility was integral to PTS engagement; embedded support enhanced the PTS experience; issues related to implementation were important to the PTS experience. Again, these factors are recognised as interconnected as each forms part of students' and lecturers' entire PTS experience. However, again, for the purpose of clarity, these are presented separately in the discussion and associated with PTS literature, although there is some integration.

### **Relationships were Essential to the Personal Tutor System Experience**

Relationships, the interpersonal interactions between students and lecturers, not only influenced but was essential to the PTS experience. As evident in chapter five, participants found the PTS was all about the relationship. Phillips (1994) similarly recognised the relationship "to be the key factor in the success of the personal tutor system" (p. 217). The PTS studies of Dobinson-Harrington (2006) and Hamshire et al. (2012) focused on the PTS role that was reported as important to the relationship and effective support. However, the studies of Gidman et al. (2000) and Rhodes and Jinks (2005), that also focused on the PTS role, did not recognise the centrality of relationships in their discussion. Andrews, Clark, and Thomas (2012) argued of the importance to develop PTS lecturer relationships that continued throughout students' enrolment in their programme that Watts (2011a) additionally reported needed to be structured within the programme. Continuing relationships had not previously been part of this particular BN. Through the PTS, students and lecturers now had the opportunity to develop a relationship that continued throughout the programme. This study found that many student and lecturer PTS relationships were meaningful interpersonal connections.

Building relationships brought a sense of connection for students with their assigned lecturer that was key to the success of the PTS. Student and lecturer PTS relationships, as meaningful, genuine interpersonal connections, were founded on mutual respect, honesty and trust within

appropriate professional boundaries. Dobinson-Harrington (2006), Phillips (1994) and Por and Barriball (2008) also found these were important qualities required to establish PTS relationships. Koskinen and Tossavainen (2003) and Neary (2000) suggested friendship was an attribute that contributed to the PTS relationship, however Gardner and Lane (2010) and Phillips (1994) recognised the appropriateness of PTS lecturers being friendly, but cautioned against unnecessary familiarity. While some students and a few lecturers in my study programme described their PTS relationship as a friendship, most reported being friendly was an expectation, but understood the PTS relationship was not a friendship.

The PTS relationship was important for the role that encompassed both academic and personal support. Students were more likely to approach PTS lecturers with whom there was a sense of connection. Stephen et al.'s (2008) research also found relationship connections were preeminent in the provision of a "balanced mix of personal and academic support" (p. 453). Through the relationship, PTS lecturers could acknowledge and respond to academic and personal issues that may affect students' progress in the programme, while understanding that details of PTS meetings and correspondence within professional boundaries, remained confidential.

Not all students embraced the opportunity to develop PTS relationships nor was it their preference to have this level of interpersonal interaction with lecturers in the programme. A small number of students favoured the more traditional student and lecturer relationship, whereby academic and pastoral or personal issues remained mutually exclusive. Those students expressed concerns related to confidentiality. Taylor (2002) reported that even with assurances of confidentiality, students were uncomfortable about the possibility of information being disclosed. Cottrell et al. (1994) and Sayer et al. (2002) also found that for a few students confidentiality concerns became a barrier to relationship development and consequently PTS engagement with support in the programme. It was necessary to clarify the professional bounds of confidentiality within the PTS relationship. Phillips (1994) identified the importance of achieving the appropriate balance of "social distance" (p. 218) and "right to privacy" (p. 218) within the PTS relationship. Such a balance required individual negotiation between the student and lecturer.

A sense of commitment was required for students and lecturers to develop a genuine connection, trust and an understanding of one another. However, students' and lecturers' motivation to prioritise the PTS relationship may fluctuate among their other respective work

and study schedules. Not all students and lecturers were prepared for the requirements of PTS relationships, as some appeared indifferent toward the commitment required. Sayer et al. (2002) found a perceived lack of PTS commitment may result in an absence of a meaningful connection in the relationship. To be more than ticking-a-box activity, the PTS required the development of a genuine connection for students with lecturers. As seen in chapter five, without the development of PTS relationships and a genuine interpersonal connection, interactions may become perfunctory exchanges in the execution of the role. Students were reluctant to approach their allocated PTS lecturer when there was no sense of connection in the relationship.

The PTS was as a very different student-lecturer relationship than traditional interpersonal interactions. For some lecturers the transition to the PTS relationship was not always seamless. Essentially the quality of the PTS relationship was most important in the interpersonal interactions with students. Gibbons, Dempster, and Moutray (2008) also explained the importance of quality in PTS relationships as students in their study perceived effective lecturers were approachable and gave their undivided attention when with students. Those considered less effective were distant and unapproachable (Gibbons et al., 2008). In my study most PTS lecturers were effective in attending to the requirements of the PTS as an integral part of their role, while a few had difficulty conveying the necessary quality in their interpersonal connection as the PTS appeared to be a more peripheral aspect of their responsibilities. Lecturers may be approachable in their traditional academic relationship; however, this did not always convert to the PTS role that centred on a different relationship. Students and lecturers alike acknowledged that some lecturers were considered better than others in their PTS role, due to their interpersonal connections, approachability and their individual personalities.

Student and lecturer personalities were important to relationships PTS. Individual personality characteristics and qualities affected interpersonal interactions. Different personality types were not taken into account when allocating students with lecturers. Beyond the general categories identified in chapter four, random PTS allocation was the default. Dobinson-Harrington's (2006) PTS also used random allocation that students referred to as "luck of the draw" (p. 40). However when dissimilar student and lecturer personalities were brought together in the PTS, clashes could result that, if unresolved, could lead to a breakdown of the relationship. Owen (2002) identified problems of compatibility although she did not mention personalities or relationships. Other studies discussed personalities but only in relation to the



PTS lecturer role, not relationships. While Por and Barriball (2008), Hughes (2004) Quinn and Hughes (2007), and Phillips (1994) recognised that lecturers' personalities may impact on their approach to the PTS role, these researchers did not discuss the impact different personalities may have on the PTS relationship. However, in the previous chapter students and lecturers reported personalities were very important to the PTS relationship. At times, different personalities were too incompatible for the development of a genuine connection.

To manage the possible difficulties created by incompatible personalities, the guidelines outlined the provision for changing PTS lecturers with no reason required. However, many students and lecturers appeared reluctant to initiate a change of personal tutor. Students in particular appeared uncomfortable prompting a change. Every member of the academic staff taught each student at some point during their studies. Students held a common belief that instigating a change of PTS lecturer may have consequences for their academic progress. Changing allocated PTS lecturers was discussed in only a few studies. Sosabowski et al. (2003) explained that students in their programme had the option to change PTS lecturers "without fear of any negative consequences or repercussions" (p. 103). Owen (2002) briefly mentioned that students may formally or informally change PTS lecturers when compatibility problems arose and this did not present a problem. In contrast to Owen (2002), Sosabowski et al. (2003) and my study found some students were concerned that prompting a personal tutor change may offend lecturers and possibly have consequences for the student at some time during their studies.

In this study and reported by Sosabowski et al. (2003) PTS lecturers expressed unreserved acceptance of a students' right to change their PTS lecturer. For the most part, lecturers in this PTS were unlikely to consider that personality differences necessitated a change of personal tutor and would seek some form of resolution. There was an expectation that lecturers, as registered nurses, were familiar with strategies to work with different patient personalities and used these skills to support their ongoing PTS relationship with students. Other PTS studies in nursing education also found lecturers drew on their nursing skills of developing relationships within their PTS student support role (Litchfield, 2001; Watts, 2011a). Notwithstanding, lecturers occasionally had to instigate a negotiated change of personal tutor with the student.

Personal tutors changed for other reasons. In chapter four it was reported PTS lecturers changed most often due to resignations. Some students and lecturers indicated these changes

were disruptive, especially for those who had established PTS relationships. While other PTS studies do not refer to the potential impact of such changes for students and lecturers, in this study PTS lecturer changes were problematic at times. The change process was not always managed well with lapses in timely information and communication. At times students were unaware PTS lecturers had changed until they sought support for an issue. Change for lecturers can result in an influx of additional PTS students, creating additional pressure particularly at busy time of the year. Change could provoke stress for students and lecturers. While Stephen et al. (2008) also found PTS lecturers became stressed when overwhelmed, this was not discussed in relation to PTS changes. Irrespective of the reason for PTS lecturer changes, the process requires reliable coordination and communication to assist students and lecturers in developing their new PTS relationships.

The PTS relationship offered the potential for a genuine connection within the programme as students from varied backgrounds developed confidence in their identity as successful learners through knowledge acquisition (Lago & Shipton, 1994). Thomas (2015) referred to the sense of connection as belonging. Connectedness or belonging was important to the PTS relationship that for some extended to the BN, School of Nursing and tertiary institution. Reported in other PTS studies (Por & Barriball, 2008; Stephen et al., 2008; Thomas, 2015) and evident in this inquiry, relationship development was essential for a positive PTS experience for students and lecturers. Lecturers were especially aware of the importance of relationship development, together with flexible engagement and individual support for students.

### **Flexibility was Integral to the Personal Tutor System Experience**

Influential to students' and lecturers' PTS experience was flexibility. For the PTS to be responsive to students as individuals, flexibility was required. There was no prescribed approach and flexible arrangements with meetings and contact were encouraged in the PTS guidelines (School of Nursing, 2008b). Findings in other studies supported this view. Gidman et al. (2000) explained flexibility was important as no single approach would be appropriate for all individuals or situations that Sosabowski et al. (2003) also reported the PTS "one-size-fits-all model does not fit all" (p. 103). The PTS used flexible arrangements for meetings and contacts that ranged from semi-structured through to unstructured.

Flexible PTS arrangements were consistent with the student-centred philosophy of the BN programme that focused on students as individuals. Being student-centred meant students' individual experiences were the foundation for their teaching and learning. As the programme progressed, students were encouraged to develop independence and self-motivation skills with a view toward lifelong learning (School of Nursing, 2008a; L. Young & Paterson, 2007). In this study, both students and lecturers reported that flexibility was integral for PTS engagement as it promoted overt consideration for students as individuals.

Lecturers' used the term engagement to describe arrangements for meetings and contact while students simply referred to PTS use. Negotiated PTS arrangements also included regularity, frequency and consistency. The term engagement was also used in other studies (Bassett et al., 2014; Cottrell et al., 1994) and was interchangeable with other terms such as PTS encounters (Dobinson-Harrington, 2006) and PTS participation (Stephen et al., 2008). However, PTS use or the arrangements for meetings, contact and communication was directly referred to in most studies (Watts, 2011a).

Student diversity influenced PTS engagement as individuals differed greatly in their readiness for the requirements of BN study at the commencement of the programme. Other PTS studies also highlight the influence of student diversity that was, in part, the motive for a flexible PTS approach being adopted (Sosabowski et al., 2003). In this BN programme and the programme of Sosabowski et al. (2003) PTS flexibility acknowledges individual differences and allows an appreciation of each student with needs that will change over the three years of the programme.

Although the PTS was to be flexible and individualised, the guidelines included specific requirements, particularly in year one. The importance of PTS engagement in year one was emphasised in both my study and others studies (Andrews et al., 2012; Evans, 2012; Litchfield, 2001). Some students found beginning their three-year BN programme was both exhilarating and intense. In the midst of their first week, a programme induction, students received initial PTS information accompanied by time scheduled for an introductory meeting with their assigned PTS lecturer. As described in chapter five, some students reported they did not immediately realise the importance of the PTS as they received a large amount of new information during induction week. Lecturers were to be available to attend the introductory PTS meeting during induction week that presented an opportunity to emphasise students' PTS engagement. Andrews et al. (2012) and Evans (2012) discuss the importance of early PTS

engagement that can also serve to reinforce and clarify programme information. Early PTS engagement was also identified as necessary in this study, as some simply never engaged with the PTS. While lecturers' attendance at the induction week PTS meeting was encouraged, as identified in chapter four, only half were regularly available to attend and meet with students. This was in part due to other programme responsibilities. Andrews et al. (2012) and Evans (2012) outline different initiatives to improve PTS lecturer contact from the beginning of the programme. Andrews et al. (2012) discussed pre-entry induction initiatives using a combination of both web-based and face-to-face PTS contact; for Evans (2012) PTS introductions were planned as part of the programme's first day which was scheduled when lecturers had no other commitments. Ensuring PTS lecturers were available to meet students during induction week needed to become a primary programme consideration in this BN programme.

Hixenbaugh, Pearson, and Williams (2006) and Watt (2011a) endorse compulsory year one engagement. In Hixenbaugh et al.'s (2006) inquiry students suggested the PTS needed to become a compulsory part of year one with meetings part of the programme. Watts (2011a) discussed year one students' preference for a structured PTS approach with meetings and contact a requirement of the first paper completed in the programme. Watts (2011a) structured approach necessitates additional PTS lecturers resourcing with the responsibility for teaching and assessments (Watts, 2011a). However, not all students and lecturers in my study agreed with compulsory year one PTS contact, meetings and engagement. Some considered compulsory PTS year one requirements unnecessary and inappropriate. Indeed, compulsory PTS engagement may be inconsistent with the student-centred philosophy of this BN.

While the guidelines used the term compulsory for initial PTS contact and year one meetings, there was no direct consequence when meetings were not arranged. As described in chapters four and five, many participants found the compulsory requirements of year one were not fulfilled for different reasons. Other PTS studies into programmes that had minimum meeting requirements also reported that many factors contributed to variations in the observance of these commitments (Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006). Nevertheless, ensuring an initial PTS meeting occurred meant students were then in a position to consider the potential benefits, or not, of the PTS for them. Arguably, students in this BN programme need to engage with the PTS in order make an informed decision. Strong encouragement for PTS engagement is desirable. Ultimately, however, this inquiry found students determine PTS use that is appropriate in a student-centred programme.

Use of the PTS was flexible and varied as meeting and contact arrangements ranged from semi-structured through to unstructured. PTS engagement included options for arranged face-to-face meetings, e-mail contact and opportunistic chats together with different preferences for frequency and regularity. Braine and Parnell (2011) also found some students desired more PTS lecturer contact time while others preferred less together with formal and informal PTS engagement variations. However, as discussed in my study PTS participation required a negotiated agreement between students and lecturers. Other studies reported regularity of engagement with PTS lecturers was important as Hamshire et al. (2013) found regularity supported positive student outcomes and Cottrell et al. (1994) explained the “frequency of meetings seemed less important than their regularity and therefore predictability” (p. 549). Sosabowski et al. (2003) explained that, notwithstanding the frequency or regularity for meetings and contact, the priority was the agreed arrangement as this was responsive to the individual student’s needs. Conversely, Earwaker (1992), Laylock (2009) and Watts (2011a) argued rather than agreed arrangements, a structured PTS approach that provided organised meetings as part of the educational programme for the duration of the students studies was required.

In contrast to the structured approaches of Earwaker (1992), Laylock (2009) and Watts (2011a), and with the exception of the induction week, in this BN programme all meetings and contact were arranged outside of the programme’s scheduled teaching and learning activities. Similar to Sosabowski et al. (2003) the frequency and regularity of meetings and contact was negotiated and agreed with students and organised around participants’ other programme (academic and clinical) requirements. Semi-structured PTS engagement comprised of regular arrangements meetings and contact. This most often consisted of one to three meetings each semester in combination with one to four e-mail contacts. Most students and lecturers favoured extending the semi-structured approach to have PTS time as part of the programme timetable. Unlike Watts (2011a), the suggestion of PTS timetabling was not associated with a paper or course work. The suggestion to have the PTS timetabled as part of the programme was to increase students’ and lecturers’ PTS availability and extend flexibility.

Alongside, semi-structured PTS use students and lecturers also considered unstructured or informal approaches integral to their experience. Informal PTS engagement included interactions such as opportunistic meetings, and conversations in the classroom, the corridor or during clinical practice placements. Acknowledgement of students, using their names and asking about the specifics of their personal lives was extremely important. Some students were

much more receptive to an informal approach rather than formal pre-arranged meetings. Informal engagement was particularly beneficial as students found this PTS approach was individualised and responsive to their preferences and needs. In an unstructured approach, some students and lecturers may negotiate to use the PTS on an as-needed basis and would only approach one another when there was an identified need. Negotiation was required for a shared understanding of such PTS flexibility (Stephen et al., 2008; Wooton, 2006). Wooton (2006) explained the importance of a shared and flexible agenda that needs to be relevant to students' needs. In chapter five some students and lecturers participants discussed their actively, unstructured PTS use while others were uncomfortable with what Stephen et al. (2008) described as a *laissez-faire* approach. Informal PTS engagement is not explicit in PTS literature although, it appears implicit through lecturers having regular PTS time available for students to arrive for unscheduled meetings.

While PTS approaches ranged from semi-structured to unstructured, participants identified the need for students to have an option of non-participation. This was important for students who preferred not to engage with the PTS. An non-participation option was not available and students would quite simply not respond to or engage with their PTS lecturer. Taylor (2002) discovered students would "tend to vote with their feet" (p. 598) when they did not wish to use the PTS. In chapter four 10% (n=9) students indicated a preference to not participate in the PTS and a few lecturers in chapter five reported around a third of students did not engage. Formalising PTS engagement choices, including the option to not participate would be responsive to all individual preferences and uphold the BN philosophy of student-centeredness. Inclusion of a non-participation option was important to recognising individual preferences in a programme that is student-centred.

In the absence of a non-participation option, students not engaging with the PTS was disconcerting for some lecturers who considered their responsibilities continued irrespective of their engagement or non-engagement. After attempting to initiate contact, some lecturers persisted in their efforts to engage while others would leave the onus of responsibility with students. Non-participation concerns lessened when students were successful in progressing through the programme, but heightened if there were issues, such as failed assessments and papers. Dobinson-Harrington (2006) argued for placing more responsibility on students, an approach that Sosabowski et al. (2003) agreed with as they explained lecturers can be discouraged and frustrated when students continually fail to attend prearranged meetings. Some lecturers in my study similarly placed the responsibility for engagement on students who

were non-responsive to their attempts make contact. Lecturers reported that no matter what engagement strategies were used, there will always be students who do not use the PTS. As the PTS was ostensibly a student driven service, it is reasonable to have students determine their engagement or non-engagement irrespective of how beneficial lecturers may consider this may be for them. This reinforces the need for students to have the option of PTS non-participation.

As described in chapters four and five, lecturers reported being flexible in their contact with students. However, this contrasted with some students' PTS experience. A small number of students had one encounter or less with their PTS lecturer. They experienced protracted delays with lecturers' availability and found they were more directive about PTS engagement. Students interpreted this as lecturers' non-engagement. Stephen et al. (2008) found some lecturers did not prioritise the PTS part of their academic role, remaining "ambiguous about the ways they felt they should make themselves available to students" (p. 457). When students in the study of Stephen et al. (2008) and in this study had a sense of being deterred by their PTS lecturer, they would seek other lecturers who were readily available. This view is supported by other studies. Dobinson-Harrington (2006) also found that students' and lecturers' motivation and commitment had an effect on PTS encounters and engagement. Some lecturers, in the studies of Dobinson-Harrington (2006) and Stephen et al. (2008), and in this study regarded the PTS as an integral part of their role while for others it was considered a more peripheral aspect of their responsibilities. Some lecturers found it was difficult to maintain a consistent expression of dedication to their PTS role as at times this was disrupted with the challenges of managing and balancing BN requirements with their other programme responsibilities.

Students and lecturers PTS engagement was important from week one. In the context of this PTS there was a clearly expressed need for flexibility that was integral, necessary and determined by the individual student. Use of the PTS necessitated an agreed process for PTS meetings and contact. This included a range of PTS approaches from structured to unstructured with an option to not.

## **Embedded Support Enhanced the Personal Tutor System Experience**

Students need support at some time during their studies. Embedded support was a factor that influenced the PTS experience of students and lecturers. Knowing that support was readily accessible in the programme was reassuring. In turn, this enhanced students' PTS experience. According to Purnell et al. (2014) and Thomas (2015) programme support was an important part of tertiary education. Wheeler and Birtle (1993) stated, "the purpose of having a personal tutoring system is primarily to provide an anchor on which the support system of the university rests. The personal tutor is needed by all students, including those who enjoy a relatively straight-forward [experience]" (p.3). Some students were relieved PTS lecturers were assigned an individual support role. Many lecturers felt privileged to have a connection to students' lives through the PTS support relationship. For some students, PTS lecturers' knowledge of both BN requirements and nursing generated a sense of confidence in managing their programme.

Students, as unique individuals, had distinct responses to the challenges of the BN programme. Owen (2002) and Wheeler and Birtle (1993) found student support needs are as individualised as experiences that may be positive for one student can be negative for another. Programme challenges may either stimulate students to advance in the programme or inhibit their progress. Students' support needs varied from simple to complex and fluctuated over the duration of their programme. Sosabowski et al. (2003) found that the "level of support and attention one student finds reassuring and comforting may be seen as intrusive, claustrophobic and cloying by another" (p.106). Similarly, students and lecturers in my study reported individual support was an important consideration in the programme. Just as the catalysts for student support needs differed so did the level and type of support required.

Some students had limited need of PTS support as their previous tertiary experience enabled a smooth transition into academic life while others required considerable support in an unfamiliar tertiary environment. Students for whom the BN was their first experience of academic life, or were first in their family to enrol in a degree may have additional challenges of beginning undergraduate study with limited or no outside academic support (Tinto, 2014). The PTS offered all students embedded support, readily accessible in the programme. The PTS meant students no longer had to revisit their personal story when support was required; rather, they had access to a familiar PTS lecturer as their first point of contact for support (School of Nursing, 2008b). This is similar to the findings reported in other studies (Owen,



2002; Wheeler & Birtle, 1993). Lecturers in their PTS capacity have knowledge of students and their background, and an understanding of options that may support potential resolution of problems.

The School of Nursing (2008a) affirmed students in the nursing degree have additional complexities to manage, as together with the challenges of academic papers, there is the requirement to undertake clinical practice papers. Hamshire et al. (2012) discuss the importance of recognising that the educational experience of many health professional programmes is dissimilar to other tertiary degrees. The health professional degree Hamshire et al. (2012) refer to includes theoretical and clinical learning with PTS lecturers needing to be mindful of this for students in their programme. Additionally, Watts (2011a) explained that “[students] strive to incorporate the competing demands of their private worlds and the worlds of higher education and clinical practice” (p. 215). Similarly, student participants in my research found study inevitably had an effect on their personal life. There were disruptions to family, relationships, personal obligations, living arrangements, financial circumstances, and employment. Students were constantly working to minimise the impact of academic requirements on their personal lives, along with curtailing the effect personal issues may have on their study. Any additional, unexpected situation, either academic or personal, could change a student’s capacity to manage with a subsequent need for support. Many students found PTS support made a difference to managing the expected and unexpected issues of the programme and their personal lives through the three years.

Programme requirements and personal matters became unmanageable for students when these either suddenly collided or accumulated over time. There were obvious sudden, major issues such as assessment or paper failure and changes of personal circumstance such as those identified in chapter five. Major issues may have implications for students and lead them to question their ability to continue in the programme. Less obvious, yet no less important, was the accumulation of minor issues such as multiple assessment deadlines overlapping, disruption of travel to regional clinical placements, financial constraints, and seasonal illnesses. Cumulatively, these may become a major issue for students. Whether major or an accumulation of minor issues, the result may be students experience stress, to the point of feeling overwhelmed. Students’ stress may be reduced by the presence of the PTS in the programme (Owen, 2002; Wheeler & Birtle, 1993). Students were more likely to access support from someone known, such as their assigned PTS lecturer (Owen, 2002). Some

students reported that although the PTS may not alter the challenge of their circumstance, accessible support embedded in the programme improved their management of the situation.

Most student participants who experienced events that affected their BN study found support was accessible through the PTS. The PTS meant students were not alone in dealing with challenging situations. For some, PTS support was key to remaining in the programme. Glogowska et al. (2007) also reported accessible PTS support with a known lecturer was central for some students' programme continuation. As a first point of access to support, students in Glogowska et al. (2007) and this BN were less likely to go beyond the programme or approach to someone unknown. Glogowska et al. (2007) explained the importance of PTS support from someone known to students, that for one involved referrals to centralised support services while for another it was the assurance of knowing that they were "not the only person experiencing problems" (p. 72). Similar to Glogowska et al. (2007) most student participants reported support was more accessible when approaching their PTS lecturer, who was known to them and also knew them. Despite this, circumstances for some students meant withdrawing from the programme was necessary. Here, lecturers found PTS support assisted and directed students through this difficult time.

In their PTS role, lecturers became the go-to person for students in the programme with whom they could candidly discuss challenges, explore potential options, and seek direction. While responsive support was most common, PTS lecturers also worked proactively with students to support their individual development. Watts (2011a) reported supporting students to realise their potential through the PTS was central to the role. Neary (2000), Phillips (1994) and Quinn and Hughes (2007) all discuss how the PTS helps students gain the reflective skills critical for student development. Schon (1995) explained that PTS reflection can occur during or after an experience, and Quinn and Hughes (2007) used a facilitative model to achieve this. As discussed in chapter five, a small number of students found the process of reflection on their programme with PTS lecturers incredibly supportive. Supporting students to reflect requires particular skills in which a few PTS lecturers appeared proficient. Students' potential can be supported through reflection, but such knowledge, skills and experience cannot be a presumed. For reflection to become part of the PTS role requires consideration as lecturers need professional development in the necessary skills.

Students' readiness for development may vary over the duration of their studies. Dobinson-Harrington (2006) found students may not always embrace support for their development

which required PTS lecturers to be prudent in their student support role. Students, no matter how capable, may lack the confidence or inclination for their ongoing development. Phillips (1994) outlines the strong position of PTS lecturers' to support students experiencing a sense of uncertainty. At times in this BN programme, students' intense and demanding academic and clinical experiences may cause them to re-evaluate previously held beliefs. Although in the immediacy of the moment, other lecturers or preceptors were accessible to students, the role of PTS lecturers was to offer consistent and ongoing support.

The provision of student support was an important part of PTS lecturers' roles, as to direction to centralised support services. The PTS was not intended as a substitute for, or replication of, existing support in the programme or tertiary institution (School of Nursing, 2008b). Sosabowski et al. (2003) found PTS lecturers fulfilled an important resource role for students offering programme information and guidance, and often as an initial contact for the institution's range of centralised support services. However, Stephen et al. (2008) noted that knowledge of programme support and centralised services could not be presumed as lecturers were not always aware of the available support. In my study experienced lecturers had more knowledge of the programme and institution to advise and refer students, whereas less experienced lecturers had limited knowledge and were more tentative in their advice or delayed student referrals to centralised support services. Referral of students to the centralised services when needed was important as it not only ensured they were informed about the available support but also maintained important boundaries for lecturers in their PTS support role. Alongside the guidelines, a PTS support directory would be useful for both students and lecturers. This may assist PTS lecturers with more effective referrals for students as part of their role.

Students directed to, or aware of, centralised services did not always access these when difficulties arose. Bowden (2008) explained that students may be reluctant to present problems to the institution's centralised support staff for different reasons. Sometimes students minimised their problems, were uncomfortable with the process, or concerned that too many people may know of their problems (Bowden, 2008, p. 55). In the same way, students in my study reported that being informed of resources, programme support or centralised services did not always result in their use of these. However, unlike Bowden (2008), students in this study reported their reluctance was due to the perception of limitations with support from centralised services. Some BN issues were very different to those experienced by students in other programmes. For issues unique to the BN students considered it more

appropriate to access support through their PTS lecturer and other programme-based support. Lecturers in their PTS role knew the student, were familiar with programme related issues and were in a strong position to explore potential options to support some form of resolution.

The PTS role could never offer complete support for all issues. Students experience issues that can be complex and involved, requiring support beyond the PTS, School of Nursing and institution's centralised services. When such issues presented, the student's attention was drawn to the options of wider community support services. However, the PTS guidelines only provided information on the programme and institutional support services. There was no direction for access to wider community support services. The PTS literature does not include discussion of lecturers directing students to community services although it may be relevant to note there is reference to extensive and comprehensive centralised services beyond that available in this BN programme and at this tertiary institution (Thomas & Hixenbaugh, 2006). Lecturers did not have clear boundaries related to community support options. As registered nurses, PTS lecturers may know of appropriate community services to support students, or they might consult with others in the BN who have particular expertise. At times, programme leaders were consulted if students needed community support. The option of using wider community support services needed to be considered judiciously. A few lecturers had stated the appropriateness of liaising with someone before discussing options with students and suggested a PTS co-ordination role. Laylock (2009) recommended a PTS co-ordination role to act as a "triage" (p. 37) point for students and lecturers in managing complex situations. Students and lecturers in my study suggested a similar role would be useful with difficult and complicated situations.

As with engagement, students found their need for support varied. Again, there were differences between individuals and across the three years of the programme. Embedding the PTS in the programme promoted both proactive and responsive support for students. Lecturers' depth of knowledge about students as individuals encouraged developing independence through problem solving with consideration for their transition to lifelong learning. The PTS enhanced students' and lecturers' support experience with more consistent knowledge of programme support and centralised services.

## **Issues Related to Implementation were Important to the PTS Experience**

The PTS experience for both students and lecturers was influenced by issues related to the PTS implementation. The PTS, as a new teaching and learning strategy within the programme, required planning and resourcing for implementation. In the BN curriculum, reference to the PTS policy was brief and broad with the PTS guidelines offering direction for students and lecturers although these were found to be unclear. Students and lecturers reported that the PTS required a shared understanding to minimise the possibility of interpretations that may hinder use. The PTS required the resource of lecturers' time and a planned approach to professional development, which necessitated support from managers and the wider institution. However neither resourcing nor planning for lecturers' PTS role occurred. Resourcing was an issue evident in the literature as Phillips (1994) explained planning and resourcing were necessary for implementation together with a common understanding of the PTS. Lago and Shipton (1994) also emphasised the importance of PTS resourcing that requires a commitment from programme managers. Issues with the implementation of new initiatives are not unexpected and were apparent with the PTS.

The PTS guidelines provided information and direction for students' and lecturers' use of the PTS. This included an overview of expectations for the PTS student and lecturer roles. As has been discussed, the guidelines included clear requirements for year one meetings and an understanding that ongoing arrangements were negotiated between students and lecturers in years two and three. Aspects that were less clear related to the PTS roles. Many students and several lecturers did not clearly understand the expectations and boundaries of their respective PTS roles. Students' lack of clarity related to their unfamiliarity with the PTS guidelines. Conversely, most lecturers were familiar with the PTS guidelines however they reported the PTS guidelines lacked clarity and detail, which led to different PTS applications. Interpretation of the PTS role was also evident in the studies of Por and Barriball (2008) and Charnock (1993) who reported PTS lecturers have individual perceptions of PTS lecturer responsibilities. Rhodes and Jinks (2005) identified similar issues and aimed to support lecturers in their role through developing comprehensive PTS guidelines for practice. While the guidelines in this BN programme provided some direction, there were ambiguities as lecturers reasoned their way through integrating this new role, and its unfolding complexities, with their other responsibilities. As Rhodes and Jinks (2005) discussed comprehensive PTS guidelines accessible for students and lecturers that included detail about the PTS role, responsibilities

and boundaries, would be valuable and increase the likelihood of consistency in understanding and use.

More comprehensive practice guidelines would be useful in maintaining PTS boundaries that were not always clear. Phillips (1994) and Neary (2000) discussed the importance of BN lecturers ensuring appropriate support boundaries in their PTS role. There were times PTS lecturers offered counsel by way of advice and guidance. However, as Phillips (1994) described in chapter two and Neary (2000) correspondingly highlights “counselling per se” (p. 470) needed to be approached cautiously. Watts (2011a) reported lecturers, as registered nurses, were challenged with boundaries that may be somewhat blurred when supporting students experiencing issues. Lecturers in this research and in Watts’ (2011a) study at times drew on their clinical practice experience and skills as a registered nurse within the student support role. There was potential for PTS lecturers to “identify as nurses in the world of higher education” (p. 217). As the complexities of the PTS role unfolded, clarifying the professional bounds in the guidelines was an important and somewhat pressing requirement.

Together with the importance of role boundaries, and as discussed earlier, the PTS required a shared understanding as at times students and lecturers had different PTS support expectations which could become an issue if not managed. The importance of managing expectations was also evident in the studies of Bowden (2008) and Dobinson-Harrington (2006). Dobinson-Harrington (2006) reported that students may expect support to involve direct intervention whereas PTS lecturers were clear that support, offered through advice, guidance or referrals, would assist students to manage their situation. Bowden (2008) found lecturers may become frustrated when students appeared unrealistic, and viewed personal tutors as a “safety net” (p. 54) when experiencing difficulties. Other PTS studies also emphasised the importance of managing support expectations (Stephen et al., 2008). Sosabowski et al. (2003) suggested one solution for lecturers was to “under-promise and then over-deliver rather than over-promise and then under-deliver” (p. 108). Although the solution suggested by Sosabowski et al. (2003) was not considered in this BN programme, clarification of PTS expectations in the guidelines was important. As stated, students and lecturers would benefit from PTS role clarification within the guidelines. Other aspects such as PTS support expectations would also be less confusing with clearer explanations. It was important to mitigate the potential for ongoing confusion and misinterpretation. Linking support documents in the School of Nursing and tertiary institutional offers additional clarity necessary for students and lecturers with simplified access through electronic access.

Lecturers' roles expanded to include formalised student support as a planned and balanced allocation of responsibility in the BN. An intention of the PTS was that lecturers' student support workloads were equitable. Most lecturers acknowledged that the PTS brought greater satisfaction to their role with a relatively even distribution of student support responsibilities. However, there was no additional resourcing allocated to the PTS role. As noted in chapter four, the PTS guidelines included a yet to be determined allocation of time for their expanded student support role. That allocation has yet to occur. Other studies found a similar situation. Lago and Shipton (1994) reported PTS implementation did not always include a commitment to resourcing lecturers' time in their student support role. On the other hand, Lea and Farbus (2000) found that while PTS time was allocated, this could be insufficient to adequately attend to the required support workload. They argued that PTS lecturers' capacity to provide and respond to students' support was a resourcing requirement (Lea & Farbus, 2000). According to Laylock (2009) resourcing was an important priority that required PTS lecturers to have "a time allowance formula ... based on the number of tutees and a time allowance ... to carry out the role" (p. 29). In my study lecturers required a workload allocation of time to attend to their expanded student support role. Using Laylock's (2009) formula and the PTS time in hours presented in chapter four, may be a template for lecturers to have a relatively accurate minimum time allowance for their PTS role with student allocations across the three years.

While the PTS was seen as an important for student support, it did not appear to be a primary concern in the School of Nursing as it remained the responsibility of students and lecturers to arrange meetings, contact and support outside of programme time. Rather than being a planned and resourced part of the BN programme, the PTS was a requirement placed on students and lecturers as individuals. Wooton (2006) also found that the planned provision and implementation of the PTS were secondary within their programme. Wooton (2006) and Lago and Shipton (1994) argue the PTS requires a primary rather than a secondary commitment from programme managers and the institution for resourcing that includes time for students and lecturers to manage their PTS responsibilities. In addition Lago and Shipton (1994) suggested reviewing requirements in relation to appropriate ways programmes and institutions implement and resource teaching and learning strategies that includes the PTS. Allocating time for the PTS in the programme conveys an organisational commitment to student support. In my study, having PTS time for students and lecturers would create an opportunity to connect and attend to arrangements as part of their academic programme.

Lecturers had no PTS workload allocation and found it challenging to manage their PTS responsibilities at times. While some lecturers' minimum PTS requirements for regular meetings, communication, monitoring, documentation, and to an extent support, was considered manageable others found it was unmanageable. It was unexpected issues that created challenges for most, more so at busy times of the year. Student-initiated PTS requests often required urgent attention and, depending on the sensitivity of the issue, a heightened need for discretion. Attempting to find time to attend to students' urgent issues was difficult as lecturers had competing work demands. Lecturers were aware of the importance of not appearing rushed or giving the impression of clock watching when meeting with students. This challenge was not exclusive to this BN programme. Dobinson-Harrington (2006), Rhodes and Jinks (2005) and Litchfield (2001) also found that time requirements for managing PTS responsibilities were not acknowledged within their programmes. Phillips (1994) reported that although time may be allocated, it was not always adequate, and lecturers found that in order to ensure PTS availability for students it was necessary for work to be taken home, which encroached on their personal time. Studies are replete with references to the amount of time required to adequately address PTS requirements and associated responsibilities (Phillips, 1994; Sayer et al., 2002; Taylor, 2002). Tensions arise when programme and institution requirements do not allow time for PTS lecturers to attend to their student support responsibilities as part of their role (Por, 2008).

Time influenced the PTS experience for both students and lecturers. Competition for time was a matter some lecturers struggled with alongside their other responsibilities just as students had to contend with competing commitments between programme requirements and their personal lives. Stephen et al. (2008) reported that PTS lecturers "even with the best of intentions" (p. 457) may become overwhelmed with the competition for their time with other responsibilities. Students were cognisant of this. Students appropriately focused on their academic and personal matters first in the context of their often complex lives. Although lecturers were required to attend to students, there were also other programme responsibilities that were concomitantly managed with their PTS role alongside organisational expectations. Por and Barriball (2008) also found that time and workload were important organisational constraints that may affect PTS effectiveness. Similar reports came from students and lecturers in my study. On occasion, lecturers' experience of limited time and competing work demands presented an issue for maintaining motivation and an approachable demeanour. Sensitive to this, students were reluctant to approach their personal tutor who appeared too busy and were uncomfortable imposing on their time.



Evident in the studies of Sayer et al., (2002) and Taylor (2002) were issues related to lecturers' approachability, availability and accessibility. Taylor (2002) found that students would engage with lecturers who were "approachable and accessible" (p. 598) and who would "make time available" (p. 598). When PTS lecturers were unavailable or students were dissatisfied with responsiveness, other lecturers were approached. A related issue outlined in other PTS studies was that lecturers who were unable or unwilling to fulfil their PTS role added to the workload of their colleagues (Stephen et al., 2008). In my study a few lecturers also reported that supporting students for whom they did not have PTS responsibility was, at times, an additional burden yet they felt bound to provide support when needed. During particularly busy times, some lecturers found these additional responsibilities intense and demanding. Students regularly sought support from lecturers who were available and accessible when their PTS lecturers were not. This had the potential to compromise the PTS aim of equity in lecturers' support roles.

Lecturer accessibility and absence was a somewhat perplexing matter. The PTS guidelines direct students to their PTS lecturer as the first point of contact for any matter. If, as anticipated, students developed a relationship with their allocated lecturer when issues arose and their personal tutor was absent, this could present difficulties. Over the three-year period covered by this research, there were times when a personal tutor was absent. This was a situation recognised in the study of Hixenbaugh et al. (2006) who suggested this issue could be addressed with interim cover during the absence of a PTS lecturer for one week or more. A few lecturers within this BN programme planned for extended absences by directing students to contact a nominated interim personal tutor, but most frequently, the programme leader became the default person. Interestingly, students had mixed responses to their PTS lecturer's accessibility and absence. For some students this created a level of discomfort whereas others were less concerned or indifferent. Some students did not hold strong views that responsibility for support was exclusive to their PTS lecturer. Depending on the issue, some students regularly sought support from lecturers who were immediately accessible, particularly if the focus was related to the general programme. Together with PTS lecturers, many student participants stated the support from all lecturers was a strength of the BN programme.

On occasion, the responsibilities of lecturers and the PTS overlapped to create conflict. It was usually possible to mediate these issues, but a few situations resulted in conflict for students and lecturers. Dobinson-Harrington (2006) also found that the roles of lecturer and personal

tutor may conflict, giving the example of disciplinary matters. While disciplinary matters were separate from lecturers' PTS responsibilities in this BN programme, other conflict situations drew attention. An example of a conflict situation was a student seeking to review a failed assessment for which their PTS lecturer was the paper co-ordinator. Provision for conflict issues was broadly outlined in the PTS guidelines with the statement that students and lecturers could always approach the Head of School (School of Nursing, 2008b), in this instance, to adjudicate a conflict resolution. Although resolution may be possible, the ripple effect of conflict could irrevocably change the PTS relationship. For a few participants, this conflict resulted in a level of distance and breakdown of the PTS relationship and support. Interestingly, even when students' and lecturers' experience was unfavourable, participants remained positive about the potential value of the PTS. Some students and lecturers suggested having a process that was less formal and more accessible to resolve issues before they escalated to conflict. The appointment of a PTS co-ordinator could assist in such circumstances. Someone in a PTS co-ordination role would act as a neutral liaison person with some of the more complex issues.

Another issue related to PTS implementation was the quality and consistency of PTS lecturers. While all lecturers in this study were personal tutors, it was found in chapters four and five that not all were suited to this student support role. Even though PTS lecturers were also registered nurses, this did not qualify them to manage the very different PTS relationships, together with the breadth and complexity of student support situations as part of their PTS role. The issue of PTS quality was also reported in the studies of Gibbons, Dempster, and Moutray (2008), Hixenbaugh et al. (2006) and Laylock (2009). In the nursing programme of Gibbons et al. (2008) "students were allocated a personal tutor who is a designated source of support for the duration of their studies, but there were inconsistencies in the quality of such support" (p. 285). Students in the study of Gibbons et al. (2008) identified it was not time but the quality of lecturers' interactions that was important, although converse to this position the study of Hixenbaugh et al. (2006) found that time was a factor, along with lecturers' quality. Similarly, in my study, participants reported concerns with PTS support inconsistencies. As mentioned, lecturers were unquestionably supportive of students in their traditional role. However, as personal tutors, they were required to employ different support skills. PTS implementation had not included consideration for lecturers' skill development associated with this support role.

The final issue discussed is PTS professional development as part of the lecturer's teaching and learning role. When new initiatives or innovations were included in the BN programme, professional development was provided. Nevertheless, the PTS was implemented without professional development for lecturers in their new academic and personal support role. In the intervening years, lecturer participants reported there had been no professional development associated with the PTS role or responsibilities. While some lecturers effortlessly managed their PTS role, others had difficulty. This is also evident in the PTS literature. Stephen et al. (2008) found some lecturers adapted to the PTS role while others struggled with the responsibilities. Stephen et al. (2008) reported some lecturers "need greater support in their personal tutoring role ... [with] how to develop personal tutoring practice" (p. 458). Laylock (2009) and Wooton (2006) likewise report on the necessity to support PTS lecturers in their professional practice development. Similarly, students and lecturers in my study acknowledged that some lecturers had professional strengths in the student support role while others grappled with moving from the traditional academic role to the expectations and requirements of the PTS. Although some lecturers have drawn on their skills as a registered nurse in their PTS role, they also need professional development with their student support responsibilities. Lecturers require support to manage the potential complexities of their PTS role. Together with assistance for queries and issues mentioned earlier in this chapter, the appointment of a PTS co-ordinator could facilitate and support the requisite professional development required for lecturers to manage the PTS role.

## **Conclusion**

Four major factors that influenced the PTS experience for students and lecturers emerged from the findings in this study. As stated earlier, the PTS was more than a teaching and learning strategy for student support in the BN. The PTS was an opportunity for a genuine connection in students' and lecturers' interpersonal interactions. Students and lecturers recognised the importance of developing a PTS relationship that continued throughout degree. A flexible approach to PTS arrangements, in particular to meetings and contact, was seen as integral. Flexibility aligned with the student-centred learning philosophy in this BN. The PTS provided embedded support accessible for students with academic or personal situations that may have affected their BN programme. Issues related to PTS implementation within the BN such as with the changing roles, requisite responsibilities, and time commitments required consideration. Most students and lecturers also felt their PTS experience positively influenced the BN experience although implementation needed to be managed.

Almost all students and lecturers valued their PTS experience. Participants in this study identified factors that influenced their PTS experience, positively and negatively. These factors have led to recommendations for ongoing development in the BN. These recommendations are outlined in the following chapter along with suggestions for future research, and the limitations of this study. Finally, the context of support in nursing will draw this evaluation study to a conclusion.

## **Chapter Seven: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion**

This mixed method evaluation originated from the need to understand factors that influence the personal tutor system (PTS) experience, an innovation in student support embedded in a BN curriculum that was new to the programme and nurse education in New Zealand. Described as a teaching and learning strategy, the PTS offered both responsive support for students experiencing issues that may impact on their BN and proactive support to develop and maximise their potential throughout the undergraduate programme. This study found students and lecturers valued the PTS as part of the BN programme. However, as with any new initiative there were some challenges experienced with PTS implementation.

This final chapter begins with a summary of the research. The influencing factors discussed in chapter six led to five key recommendations for PTS development. Limitations of the study are presented along with suggestions for future PTS research. A focus on the broader context of student support in nursing education brings this study to a conclusion with a final personal comment that completes this thesis.

### **Summary of the Thesis**

The broader context of student support in tertiary education, New Zealand and nursing was explored in chapter one with consideration of the relevance of this for the study. Over 20 years ago, the much cited Earwaker (1992) identified the importance of student support for tertiary institutions in the context of increasing numbers and student diversity along with the fiscal pressures and constraints in the tertiary education environment. Not much has changed in the subsequent decades except to intensify these challenges for students and lecturers in tertiary education. As an integral part of tertiary institution, student support is offered through a variety of models, systems and approaches. The PTS is one student support model that has been part of many nursing programmes within the United Kingdom tertiary education sector. This model was embedded in a BN programme within a School of Nursing in New Zealand.

The PTS literature review completed in chapter two was notable for two reasons. It revealed the paucity of existing research, and highlighted the requirement for further PTS studies, in particular, evaluation. In response to the literature review and formulation of the research

question that sought to understand factors that influenced students' and lecturers' PTS experience, a mixed method evaluation design was chosen for this study. Design selection and justification were discussed in chapter three along with an explanation of the research process. Sequential data collection comprised of two phases with the first informing the second. Following the dissemination of phase one questionnaires and a preliminary analysis of data, topic questions were developed to guide the phase two semi-structured interviews.

Findings presented in chapters four and five included the integration of phase one and two findings as the end of chapter five. Similarities emerged in the findings from students' and lecturers' with differences also evident in the range of experiences, from positive to negative. Notwithstanding the experience variation, there was almost complete support from students and lecturers for the PTS within the BN. Most students and lecturers gained a sense of enrichment through the PTS in this BN programme which was inherent throughout the discussion associated with the major factors influential to PTS experience.

Four factors influential to the PTS experience were discussed in chapter six: relationship development; flexible use; embedded support; and issues with PTS implementation. Building relationships was central to the PTS. Both students and lecturers found the PTS was more than simply having student support within the programme, it was about the meaningful connection experienced in their interpersonal interactions. Developing a genuine interpersonal connection was essential for the students' and lecturers' PTS participation and use of support.

The next two influential factors focused on the student as an individual, which aligned with the curriculum philosophy of student-centeredness. Students who commenced the BN programme did so from a variety of educational and personal backgrounds and consequently had different PTS requirements. Flexibility with PTS use was a second influential factor that was integral to individualising meeting and contact arrangements for students.

Just as students had individual requirements for PTS use their support needs were also individualised. Embedded support was the third major factor influential to the PTS. Students' support needs varied throughout the programme. Most students preferred to access support within the BN programme for academic development and personal issues. When support was required, students indicated a greater willingness to approach lecturers known to them, rather than someone unfamiliar. Support was more effective when lecturers knew students through

their PTS role, understanding them as individuals. Most students and lecturers reported that embedded support enhanced their PTS experience.

The fourth major factor that influenced the PTS concerned implementation. Many students and lecturers discussed the positive influence of the PTS on the BN programme. Perhaps not unsurprising, it was found the PTS enriched their BN experience as a teaching and learning strategy. Although the PTS was valued by both students and lecturers there were also challenges experienced with PTS operationalisation. Lecturers' changing roles were not fully considered in the process of PTS implementation. Students and lecturers acknowledged there was, at times, competition between PTS time and students' and lecturers' other responsibilities. Issues related to PTS implementation influenced students' and lecturers' experience and had the potential to impact on PTS relationships, flexible use and support.

Students and lecturers acknowledged the importance of the PTS as part of the BN programme. The findings and subsequent discussion of major factors influential to their experience resulted in five recommendations. These recommendations focus on developing the PTS within the BN programme for students and lecturers.

## **Research Recommendations**

### ***A personal tutor system co-ordination role be established***

The first recommendation is that a proportional PTS co-ordination role be established. This recommendation is drawn from the PTS challenges students and lecturers experienced. Findings from both phases one and two identified challenges related to the lack of PTS co-ordination, organisation and direction. The PTS co-ordinator would become the PTS resource person for students and lecturers. This co-ordination role would ensure visibility for the PTS in the BN programme and the coordinator would be available to discuss any related queries or issues. Having a lecturer with designated responsibility for PTS co-ordination would mean consistency with advice and guidance for complex situations when required. The PTS co-ordinator would: be the default contact person when PTS lecturers were unavailable; liaise with programme leaders across the three sites with new student inductions; develop processes for allocations that link students and lecturers; and be involved in the orientation for

new staff to their PTS support role. The PTS co-ordinator would also represent the School of Nursing and Faculty on relevant committees related to student support.

The PTS co-ordinator would have responsibility for: developing the PTS guidelines; developing PTS support resources; overseeing PTS allocations; undertaking relevant related research and scholarly activities; organising professional PTS development for lecturers; working with lecturers in the BN and staff from the centralised services to develop interventions plans for struggling students; managing the process for PTS lecturer changes; organising relevant PTS material such as information in packs for prospective students to be used at open days, evenings; and providing timely reminders to encourage students' and lecturers' PTS use throughout the academic year.

This PTS co-ordination role is not resource neutral. It would necessitate funding the designated proportion of a full-time equivalent lecturer's role as well as an appropriate level of financial reimbursement for academic staff undertaking additional responsibilities. The decision about the proportion of a full-time equivalent lecturers' role would need to be considered by the managers in the School of Nursing as this is beyond the scope of findings for this study. The PTS coordinator would require support for their professional development in this role and some administrative assistance.

### ***PTS guidelines be revised***

The second recommendation is that the PTS guidelines be revised. The PTS guidelines have remained unchanged since the PTS was embedded in the BN programme. At that time the PTS guidelines were incomplete and they remain unfinished. This study identified the guidelines do not have a purpose expressed and lecturers' PTS role required clarification of the responsibilities, expectations, and boundaries. The guidelines also refer to out-dated processes and positions superseded in the restructure of the School of Nursing, Faculty and tertiary institution. Students and lecturers in this research reported that some PTS processes were not effective, such as changing personal tutors, and also recognised that other options were required, for instance an option for students' non-participation with the PTS. It is recommended that separate student and lecturer guidelines be developed, as each have different requirements for PTS use, and these be readily accessible through electronic access.



It is recommended that the PTS guidelines be revised to include a detailed overview of lecturers' PTS role with reference to responsibilities, clarification of expectations and boundaries. The guidelines need to maintain: the compulsory requirement for lecturers to initiate student contact and arrange the first meeting; flexible arrangements for meetings and contact that are negotiated with students; and confidentiality except where safety or legal concerns are identified. It is recommended the PTS guideline review include an option for students' non-participation after their initial personal tutor meeting and provision to re-engage through contacting the PTS co-ordinator. It is also recommended that while the PTS and guidelines include support for student development together with responsive support, this developmental focus be further emphasised. Processes for the PTS need to be developed, reviewed and updated for inclusion in the guidelines. A process is required for early problem identification and monitoring of students' progress, such as paper co-ordinators or clinical preceptors notifying PTS lecturers of students' failure. The process of changing PTS lecturers needs to be reviewed, streamlined and linked to the PTS co-ordinator. The PTS guidelines need updating to include the PTS co-ordinator role. Guideline information for PTS lecturers to include: liaison with the PTS co-ordinator for any issue, challenge or complex situation; utilising the PTS co-ordinator when students require a support plan; notifying the PTS co-ordinator of resignations, position change and extended absence; direction for consulting with the PTS co-ordinator when accessing community services. It is recommended that the revised PTS guidelines have a student version developed that only includes information relevant to them.

It is recommended that the PTS co-ordinator manage the revision of the guidelines. The PTS guideline revision process would require representation from BN students and lecturers across the three School of Nursing sites, and include consultation with centralised staff and senior management. Once the guideline review is complete, the PTS co-ordinator would have continuing responsibility for the guidelines with regular reviews ensuring students and lecturers have knowledge of and access to these through the relevant database. The PTS guidelines offer a broad overview and need to be supported with more specific information. This leads to the next recommendation.

### ***Support resources be developed for PTS***

The third recommendation is that PTS support resources be linked to PTS guidelines. Support resource of a centralised services directory for students and lecturers should be electronically linked to PTS guidelines for ease of access across the sites. Although students independently

used centralised support services, these were also an important to the PTS as lecturers advised students to use particular services when needed. While many lecturers made use of support centralised services, not all were sure of what these services were, or how students accessed them. In addition, and not part of this study, it is unclear how familiar centralised support staff were with PTS support for BN students. Ensuring cohesion of PTS support requires links to the tertiary institution's centralised services. It is recommended that the PTS co-coordinator coordinate liaison between PTS lecturers and support staff in the centralised services to highlight available support relevant for BN students.

At times, students' needs were complex and extended beyond the support available through the PTS, BN or tertiary institution. Some lecturers found support for students through community services. Knowledge of community services and how students may access these can be outside the scope of the PTS lecturers' role. It is recommended that consultation with the PTS co-ordinator be part of the process when considering use of community services for students. Again it is recommended lecturers have electronic links to relevant community services' directories for the three sites. This resource is to be used judiciously in consultation with the PTS co-ordinator.

#### ***Personal tutor system time be allocated as part of the BN context***

The fourth recommendation is that PTS time becomes explicit in this BN. The first part of this recommendation focuses on students' introduction to the PTS during induction week. While currently encouraged, from this study it is recommended that students meet with lecturers during induction to ensure students have an introduction to their allocated lecturer. Students commence the BN programme with a weeklong induction to the institution and programme during which a mass of new information is imparted, including the PTS. In the midst of this intense week students may not realise the relevance of the PTS as part of the BN programme. Although time is scheduled for students to have an introductory meeting with their assigned personal tutors, lecturers reported that only half were regularly available to attend due in part to competing responsibilities. The recommendation is that lecturers be available to attend the induction week PTS introduction. Although it may be difficult, it needs to become a priority.

The second part of this recommendation is that students have PTS time scheduled in their programme. Paradoxically while the PTS remains an important part of student support in the context of this BN curriculum, students' and lecturers' responsibility for meetings and contact

was arranged outside of the programme. Beyond the initial introduction during induction week, the PTS was not timetabled as part of the programme. All students and lecturers are part of the academic programme which creates an important opportunity to encourage PTS participation. Scheduling time would make the PTS commitment explicit in the BN programme. However, individual students would still use this time as best suited them. The inclusion of PTS time: encourages the development of student and lecturer PTS relationships; expands PTS flexibility; and promotes use of embedded support. While there are those who may choose not to participate with the PTS, it becomes difficult to overlook when it is part of the programme's scheduled timetable. Scheduled time would allow attention to remain on the PTS in the programme throughout the three years.

### ***Lecturers' PTS role be resourced***

The fifth recommendation has three aspects for resourcing lecturers' PTS role. It is recommended that PTS lecturers be: recognised for their student support role in the School of Nursing; allocated time for their role; and given professional development related to their role. It is recommended that the School of Nursing and tertiary institution consider appropriate recognition, including excellence, for PTS lecturers in their student support role. Most lecturers valued the PTS as it brought satisfaction with the formalisation of their student support role however, it remains implicit in their role and the programme. The PTS is less visible compared to other teaching and learning strategies and higher profile activities such as research that may attract professional recognition and financial reward. Although the PTS remains less visible, it is not less important and requires appropriate recognition. Other studies also identified the PTS can have less presence in programmes and, for lecturers, no recognition in their workload or professional development. It is recommended in this study that lecturers receive recognition of PTS time in their workload and requisite support through professional development. It is suggested processes be developed that recognise and acknowledge the importance of the PTS role as a student support. It is recommended that lecturers' PTS role is included in the job descriptions and becomes part of the regular BN programme evaluations.

It is recommended lecturers have time allocated as part of their annual workload for their PTS role and responsibilities. Time as part of PTS lecturers workload allocation needs to be addressed by managers in the School of Nursing. The decision about the proportion of a full-time equivalent lecturers' role will need to be considered and decided by the managers in the

School of Nursing as again this was outside the scope of study. It is suggested that the hours participants in this study reported they spent on PTS responsibilities be considered as a possible time allocation. This aligns with other PTS calculations used for lecturers workload. This PTS time allows for the minimum requirement for lecturers' PTS responsibilities such as meetings, contact, communication, documentation, and some additional support when required. This time allocation is not, nor can it be, intended as a complete account of PTS time requirements. There will always be annual periods of fluctuation and individual student and lecturer variations as students have differing support needs that extend from simple to complex. However, through use of a workload calculation, lecturers would have a recognised minimum PTS time allocation. It is recognised this recommendation has resource implications for the School of Nursing and tertiary institution. As part of lecturers' PTS time it is recommended that regular, scheduled PTS office hours are available. This allows for greater PTS flexibility and reinforces a commitment to embedded support. Students would know when lecturers are available to arrange a meeting or drop-in on an ad-hoc basis.

It is recommended that professional development be organised for PTS lecturers. Professional development is a requirement for teaching and learning strategies in the BN programme, more particularly with new initiatives, so lecturers are supported to develop the requisite skills necessary for their role. To date, professional development for lecturers in their PTS student support role has not eventuated. Lecturers have been reliant on their previously acquired knowledge and skills including those as a registered nurse. However, the School of Nursing has responsibility for PTS role and lecturers professional development. It is recommended that at one of the annual professional development days in the School of Nursing the attention be on the PTS. Professional development would focus on skills required for personal tutors to be effective in their role. It is also recommended the PTS become a regular feature of professional development days.

## **Issues and Limitations**

There were some issues that arose during the course of this study. The first was from the phase one questionnaires. The PTS questionnaire validated by Cottrell et al. (1994) and Malik (2000) was unavailable. The questionnaire used for this research was based on their previous tool and modified for this study. Although the modified questionnaires were piloted, some questions were not as successful as anticipated in gathering particular data. The

reinterpretation of questions by a few students and lecturers meant analysis proved difficult. Decisions around lecturer and student questionnaire similarities and differences did not always work well. Some questions in both questionnaires offered less relevant information while other questions that would have been useful in both, were only included in one. Further, some questions might have elicited better data had they used a rating scale for satisfaction or agreement.

The next issue related to the time-bound nature of research within an academic year, in particular for third year students. While the timing of the questionnaire resolved potential ethical issues such as coercion, third year students were near the end of their programme. This meant there was finite time to complete data collection and analysis. This was compounded by programme changes that resulted in unexpected delays with phase one data collection. Another issue was the difference in numbers of student and lecturer participants. As stated in chapter one this meant the student experience was, to some extent, foregrounded in this research.

Discussed in chapter three was the limitation of stakeholder involvement in this evaluation. This became an issue for this study when Ministry of Education changes affecting tertiary sector funding resulted in a review and restructure of the Faculty and School of Nursing. Priorities in the School of Nursing changed, positions were disestablished and staff moved on, all of which impacted on this research. As a result, this study had less active stakeholder involvement than is desirable in evaluation research. However, during this study it has been evident that the School of Nursing is willing to consider the recommendations that arise.

In chapter one the requirement for student support in tertiary education was discussed as a responsibility of all staff (Kuh, 2008; Prebble et al., 2005; Tinto, 2014). However, institutions can expect female staff to provide more of the student support, particularly pastoral care. In nursing this is identified as the emotional labour of women (D. Smith & Garteig, 2003; P. Smith, 1991{Smith, 2001 #354; P. Smith & Allan, 2010; P. Smith & Gray, 2001). While beyond the scope of this research, not recognising this emotional labour is a limitation of the study. As the Nursing Council of New Zealand (2013) identifies nursing as a predominantly female profession there is an opportunity to explore this and it is included as a suggestion for future research.

This study evaluated the PTS, as a particular model of student support embedded in this BN programme, and did not intend to extrapolate beyond this research context. Evaluations are often context specific and this was the stated purpose with this study. There was no intention for the application of findings beyond the PTS in context of this BN. However, it was expected this study would contribute to the existing PTS literature and may have relevance for to other nursing and educational contexts. Insights gained from this study may inform PTS models in other programmes.

With reference to the research design and process, the findings of this evaluation were not generalised outside of this programme. In particular the small student and lecturer numbers involved in this study made this untenable. Generalisable and transferable research findings would require a design modification, replication in more BN programmes with larger participant numbers over a longer timeframe and was beyond the scope of this research. However, the possibility of future generalisable and transferable research is discussed as a recommendation for future research.

## **Future Research**

This mixed method evaluation contributes to the existing body of PTS literature, for which there was an identified paucity. Through this study, the current knowledge and understanding of the PTS continues to expand. The research focus on factors influential to the PTS experience of students and lecturers in this BN, and at the completion of this study there are unanswered questions. Some questions emerged from discussions with students and lecturers and others surfaced following the data analysis. It may be useful to consider research that examines the identified differences between students and lecturers across the three sites. This research required students and lecturers to recall their experience over the last three years; future research could involve students within years one, two and three of the programme within an academic year. Additionally, future research may also extend over a longer period of time such as with one cohort of students throughout the three years of their BN enrolment. The aims of the PTS include student retention and success. While not included in this study the question of student retention and success in relation to the PTS could be considered in future research. Future studies may draw particular attention to the PTS experience of students struggling with the BN programme requirements and who have been unsuccessful in an academic year, or who exit the BN.

There were other related aspects of the PTS support not explored in this study that include: measuring the cost and financial benefit for the BN programme and tertiary institution; emotional labour of women in tertiary education, in particular in nursing; perspectives of centralised services; perspectives of management. It is recommended these are considered in future research. A PTS evaluation that addresses these would allow for a more comprehensive study.

As the PTS was new to this BN and New Zealand, this presented a limited participant group of students and lecturers. Future collaborative research may be possible with other Schools of Nursing, albeit internationally through United Kingdom tertiary institutions. Collaborative research brings the possibility of larger student numbers with evaluative study designs that could generate generalizable results as well those relevant to particular programmes.

## **Conclusion**

Nursing upholds that education is a transition for students in their development as future professionals (Darbyshire, 1993; Peters, 2000). Enrolment in the three year BN programme begins an inevitable process of change as new knowledge builds on that which is already known. As Huyton (2011) found change will be easier for some students than others as they experience academic and personal challenges. Nursing students also have additional demands as part of their study. Students must balance the management of the academic programme with the clinical requirements in the context of their personal lives. Kevern and Webb (2004) reported that students' lives following their programme enrolment became a "constant juggling act" (p. 301) of managing the "cumulative, competing pressures" (p. 301) of study, families, relationships and finances.

The concept of student support is well understood within Nursing and BN programmes as different models, systems and approaches are used. Educational theories are important to consider, together with the underpinning philosophy, as these direct decisions related to student support within BN programmes. Support systems are increasingly embedded within nursing programmes and link with the institutions' centralised services. Lecturers offer this programme support that may be: an option when needed (Sword, Byrne, Drummond-Young, Harmer, & Rush, 2002), available in the first year (Colalillo, 2007), have a defined timeframe

(Koskinen & Tossavainen, 2003), or focus on a particular programme requirement such as clinical practice or cultural mentoring (Lilley, 2006; Mills, Francis, & Bonner, 2005; Neary, 2000).

Student support helps with the integration of students' new knowledge and skills for the development of their nursing practice. Cognisant of this, lecturer support within the BN programme assists as a process of personal and professional reflection and development. Support systems such as the PTS allow lecturers to acknowledge students' individual needs that will inevitably change over the three years of the BN programme.

In the BN programme, support becomes an anchor and a point of contact for students within the tertiary institution (Lago & Shipton, 1994; Wheeler & Birtle, 1993). The PTS is more than a teaching and learning strategy as lecturers' recognise that their support role brings a genuine connection for students within the programme and the institution. When support is absent, lecturers' teaching and learning responsibilities may be reduced to imparting information through a series of instructional techniques (Darbyshire, 1993). Support within education engenders a sense of belonging that is important for students' connection to their programme and tertiary institution (Thomas, 2015).

Lecturers are responsive to the context of tertiary education and institutions as part of their teaching and learning role. Support within the BN programme includes lecturers' engagement with lifelong learning. The PTS strengthens lecturers' opportunities to enhance students' teaching and learning experiences and their potential for achievement. Through the individualised focus of the PTS, lecturers' formalised support role conveys mutual respect and trust. Lecturers' teaching and learning responsibilities, encompassing student support within the BN programme, role models nursing for students and translates to their practice as a registered nurse. Students not only learn about nursing but also learn to become a nurse.

Student support is an important part of nursing programmes in New Zealand. It is integral to realising the teaching and learning responsibilities of lecturers in programmes and tertiary institutions for the increasingly diverse student cohorts. Omeri, Malcolm, Ahern, and Wellington (2003) identify student diversity in BN programmes will strengthen the responsiveness of New Zealand's future nursing workforce as the population grows in multicultural diversity and health complexity. The Nursing Council of New Zealand (2011) acknowledges and promotes students diversity in BN programmes, which aligns with the



Ministry of Education (2014) tertiary education strategy. As lecturers need to commit to their support responsibilities for the benefit of students this also necessitates the commitment of tertiary institutions and Schools of Nursing. Support remains an important part of BN programmes for this generation of nurses and for those in the future.

Support is important as part of an academic programme and the education experience (Thomas, 2015). It is understood within BN programmes that education occurs throughout life according to readiness and maturation (Bastable, 2014; L. Young & Paterson, 2007). The PTS support students receive can enhance their ability to reflect, and think critically, both personally and about the programme, as their knowledge and understanding continues to develop (NACADA, 2006). Support through the PTS is intended as both proactive, to maximise students' potential toward completion of their programme, and responsive, for those experiencing issues that are part of study. Support is important for students who are focused on education as a journey to somewhere, rather than just in an end in itself (Thomas, 2015).

## **Final Personal Statement**

Undertaking this study has given me a greater understanding of student support and the PTS. One of the outcomes of this research journey relates not the design, process or research question, but to my professional development and personal growth over the course of this study. It has been necessary to reflect on myself, my student support role and my researcher role. Reflection has meant both stepping into and away from myself, and in the process, I have gained new perspectives. Although this process has been difficult at times, it has been intensely satisfying.

This study has given me new insights into my practice, partly through the PTS evaluation but also through the experiences shared by students and lecturers. The participation of students and lecturers in this PTS research confirmed the importance of student support. This study has assisted in defining and redefining student support and the importance of the PTS for both students and lecturers in the context of this BN programme.

## References

- Andrews, J., Clark, R., & Thomas, L. (2012) *Compendium of effective practice in higher education retention and success*. Birmingham, England: Aston University.
- Attwood, R. (2009, 05 July). The personal touch. *Times Higher Education*, 32-37.
- Bamberger, M., Rugh, J., & Mabry, L. (2012). *RealWorld evaluation: Working under budget, time, data, and political constraints* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bassett, J., Gallagher, E., & Price, L. (2014). Personal tutors' responses to a structured system of personal development planning: A focus on 'feedback'. *Journal for Education in the Built Environment*, 9(1), 20-34.
- Bastable, S. B. (Ed.) (2014). *Nurse as educator: Principles of teaching and learning for nursing practice* (4 ed.). Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning.
- Bazely, P. (2010). Computer-assisted integration of mixed methods data sources and analysis. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioural research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Benner, P. (1984). *From novice to expert: Excellence and power in clinical nursing practice*. Menlo Park, CA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bowden, J. (2008). Why do nursing students who consider leaving stay on their courses? *Nurse Researcher*, 15(3), 45-58.
- Braine, M. E., & Parnell, J. (2011). Exploring student's perceptions and experience of personal tutors. *Nurse Education Today*, 31(8), 904-910.
- Bramley, W. (1977). *Personal tutoring in higher education*. Guildford Society for Research into Higher Education.
- Burnard, P. (1991). A method of analysing interview transcripts in qualitative research. *Nurse Education Today*, 11(6), 461-466.
- Burnard, P., Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Analysing and presenting qualitative data. *British Dental Journal*, 204(4), 429 - 432.
- Carrotte, A. C. (2007). *The role of the personal tutor in a general further education college*. (Doctor of Education), University of South Hampton, Southampton. Retrieved from <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?did=3&uin=uk.bl.ethos.489942>
- Charnock, A. (1993). The personal tutor: A teacher's view. *Nursing Standard*, 7(30), 28-31.

- Cohen, D., & Crabtree, B. (2006). Qualitative Research Guidelines Project. Retrieved from <http://www.qualres.org/HomeLinc-3684.html>
- Colalillo, G. (2007). Mentoring as a retention strategy in a diverse, multicultural, urban associate degree nursing program. *Teaching and Learning in Nursing, 2*(2), 28-33.
- Cornwall, A., & Jewkes, R. (1995). What is participatory research? *Social Science & Medicine, 41*(11), 1667-1776.
- Cottrell, D. J., McCrorie, P., & Perrin, F. (1994). The personal tutor system: An evaluation. *Medical Education, 28*(6), 544-549.
- Cramp, A. (2011). Developing first-year engagement with written feedback. *Active Learning in Higher Education, 12*(2), 113-124.
- Cresswell, J. W. (2011). Controversies in mixed method research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Los Angeles, CA Sage
- Cronbach, L. J., & Shapiro, K. (1982). *Designing evaluations of educational and social programs*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research : Meaning and perspective in the research process*. St Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin.
- Darbyshire, P. (1993). In defence of pedagogy: A critique of the notion of andragogy. *Nurse Education Today, 13*(5), 8.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Dobinson-Harrington, A. (2006). Personal tutor encounters: Understanding the experience. *Nursing Standard, 20*(50), 35-42.
- Earwaker, J. (1992). *Helping and supporting students*. Buckingham, UK: Society for Research into Higher Education.
- Evans, J. (2012). Personal tutor support from the start reduces student attrition. *Nursing Standard, 27*(2), 6.
- Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (2009). *How to design and evaluate research in education* (6 ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

- Gardner, L. D., & Lane, H. (2010). Exploring the personal tutor student relationship: An autoethnographic approach. *Journal of Psychiatric & Mental Health Nursing*, 17(4), 342-347.
- Gibbons, C., Dempster, M., & Moutray, M. (2008). Stress and eustress in nursing students. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 61(3), 282-290.
- Gidman, J. (2001). The role of the personal tutor: A literature review. *Nurse Education Today*, 21(5), 359-365.
- Gidman, J., Humphreys, A., & Andrews, M. (2000). The role of the personal tutor in the academic context. *Nurse Education Today*, 20(5), 401-407.
- Gilchrist, K., & Rector, C. (2007). Can you keep them? Strategies to attract and retain nursing students from diverse populations: Best practices in nursing education. *Journal of Transcultural Nursing*, 18(3), 277-285.
- Gillespie, B. (2003). History of academic advising. Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources website: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/History-of-academic-advising.aspx#sthash.mQRExjTh.dpuf>
- Glogowska, M., Young, P., & Lockyer, L. (2007). Should I go or should I stay? A study of factors influencing students' decisions on early leaving. *Active Learning in Higher Education: The Journal of the Institute for Learning and Teaching*, 8(1), 63-77.
- Glossop, C. (2001). Student nurse attrition from pre-registration courses: Investigating methodological issues. *Nurse Education Today*, 21(3), 170-180.
- Glossop, C. (2002). Student nurse attrition: Use of an exit-interview procedure to determine students' leaving reasons. *Nurse Education Today*, 22(5), 375-386.
- Gordon, V. N., & Habley, W. R. (2000). *Academic advising: A comprehensive handbook* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Grant, A. (2006). Personal tutoring: A system in crisis? In L. Thomas & P. Hixenbaugh (Eds.), *Personal tutoring in higher education* (pp. 11-20). London, UK: Institute of Education Press.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (Eds.). (2002). *Handbook of interview research: Context & method*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Haitana, J., & Bland, M. (2011). Building relationships: The key to preceptoring nursing students. *Nursing Praxis in New Zealand*, 27(1), 4-11.
- Hamshire, C., Willgoss, T., & Wibberley, C. (2012). Mind the gaps - Health Professions students' views of support systems. *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning*, 14(1), 108-127.

- Hamshire, C., Willgoss, T. G., & Wibberley, C. (2012a). What are reasonable expectations? Healthcare student perceptions of their programmes in the North West of England. *Nurse Education Today*, 33(2), 173-179.
- Harrington, A. (2004). *The personal tutor and tutees' encounters of the personal tutor role - their lived experiences*. (Doctor of Philosophy), Brunel University, London.
- Higher Education Academy. (2015). Personal tutors, 1. Retrieved from <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/enhancement/definitions/personal-tutors>
- Hixenbaugh, P., Pearson, C., & Williams, D. (2006). Students perspectives on personal tutoring: what do students want? In L. Thomas & P. Hixenbaugh (Eds.), *Personal tutoring in higher education* (pp. 45-58). London, UK: Institute of Education Press.
- Hughes, S. J. (2004). The mentoring role of the personal tutor in the Fitness for practice' curriculum: An all Wales approach. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 4(4), 271-278.
- Huyton, J. L. (2011). *Behind closed doors : Discovering and articulating the essence of the personal tutor's practice*. (Doctor of Education), University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh. Retrieved from <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?did=4&uin=uk.bl.ethos.563658#sthash.PUe2AUQj.dpuf>
- International Council of Nurses. (2015). *The International Council of Nurses definition of nursing*. Geneva International Council of Nurses Retrieved from <http://www.icn.ch/definition.htm>.
- Jeffreys, M. R. (2007). Tracking students through program entry, progression, graduation, and licensure: Assessing undergraduate nursing student retention and success. *Nurse Education Today*, 27(5), 406-419.
- Johnson, B., & Turner, L. A. (2003). Data collection strategies in mixed method research. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research* (pp. 297-320). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Johnston, B., McLean, L., & Lang, P. (1998). Quality assessment, student need, and pastoral care at the University of Strathclyde. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 16(2), 36-44.
- Kay, L. (2011). The role of the personal tutor. *Practising Midwife*, 14(8), 36-38.
- Kevern, J., & Webb, C. (2004). Mature women's experiences of preregistration nurse education. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 45(3), 297-306.
- Koskinen, L., & Tossavainen, K. (2003). Relationships with undergraduate nursing exchange students "a tutor perspective". *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 41(5), 499-508.

- KPMG Consulting. (2001). *Strategic review of undergraduate nursing education*. Retrieved from Wellington, New Zealand:
- Kuh, G. D. (Ed.) (2008). *Advising for student success* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., & Whitt, E. J. (2005). *Assessing conditions to enhance educational effectiveness : The inventory for student engagement and success*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lago, C., & Shipton, G. (1994). *Personal tutoring in action: A handbook for staff who work with and support students*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield University Counselling Service.
- Last, L., & Fulbrook, P. (2003). Why do student nurses leave? Suggestions from a Delphi Study. *Nurse Education Today*, 23(6), 449-458.
- Laylock, M. (2009) Personal tutoring in higher education - Where now and where next? , *SEDA Special: Vol. 25. A literature review and recommendations*. Woburn House, UK: SEDA.
- Lea, S. J., & Farbus, L. (2000). Student support: educational necessity or mawkish indulgence? *Psychology Teaching Review*, 9(1), 16-25.
- Lilley, S. (2006). *Experiences of mentoring in primary health care settings: Registered nurses' and students' perspectives*. (Master of Health Science), University of Otago, Dunedin.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. London, UK: Sage.
- Litchfield, J. (2001). Supporting nursing students who fail: A review of lecturers' practice. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 1(3), 142-148.
- Mabry, L. (2010). Critical social theory evaluation: Slaying the dragon (Article). Available from EBSCOhost eh. (10976736). Retrieved Fall2010, from John Wiley & Sons, Inc. <http://ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=53508107&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Malik, S. (2000). Students, tutors and relationships: The ingredients of a successful student support scheme. *Medical Education*, 34(8), 635-641.
- Marr, L., & Aynsley-Smith, S. (2006). Putting students first: Developing accessible and integrated support. In L. Thomas & P. Hixenbaugh (Eds.), *Personal tutoring in higher education* (pp. 73-82). London, UK: Institute of Education Press.
- Miller, W. R. (2010). Qualitative research findings as evidence utility in nursing practice. *Clinical Nurse Specialist*, 24(4), 191-193.
- Mills, J., Francis, K., & Bonner, A. (2005). Mentoring, clinical supervision and preceptoring: Clarifying the conceptual definitions for Australian rural nurses. A review of the literature. *Rural and Remote Health*, 5, 1-10.

- Ministry of Education. (2003). *Student support in New Zealand: Discussion document*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=cat00245a&AN=massey.b1764257&site=eds-live&scope=site>.
- Ministry of Education. (2014). *Tertiary education strategy 2014-2019*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.
- Ministry of Health. (1998). *Report of the Ministerial Taskforce on Nursing*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.
- Monroe, L., & Horm, D. M. (2012). Using a logic model to evaluate undergraduate instruction in a laboratory preschool. *Early Education and Development*, 23(2), 227-241.
- Moriarty, A. (2009). *The development, implementation and evaluation of personal tutor guidelines in a pre-registration nursing curriculum*. (Doctorate in Education), University of Huddersfield, Huddersfield. Retrieved from <http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?did=1&uin=uk.bl.ethos.525783#sthash.3fiflIJc.dpuf>
- Morse, J. M. (2003). Principles of mixed methods and multimethod research design. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research* (pp. 189-208). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Morse, J. M., & Niehaus, L. (2009). *Mixed method design: Principles and procedures*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press
- Muir, H. (2008). Science rules ok. *New Scientist*, 198 (2657), 40-44.
- NACADA. (2006). NACADA concept of academic advising. Retrieved 12 July 2015, from NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web Site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Concept-of-Academic-Advising-a598.aspx>
- Neary, M. (2000). Supporting students' learning and professional development through the process of continuous assessment and mentorship. *Nursing Education Today*, 2000(20), 463-474.
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (2013). *Code of practice (revised): Guidelines for the pastoral care of international students: Tertiary*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority. (n.d.). History of NCEA. Retrieved 22 August 2015, from NZQA <http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea/understanding-ncea/history-of-ncea/>
- Newton, A., & Smith, L. N. (1998). Practice placement supervision: The role of the personal tutor. *Nurse Education Today*, 18(6), 496-504.

- Nursing and Midwifery Council United Kingdom. (2015). When studying to be a nurse or midwife. Retrieved from <http://www.nmc.org.uk/education/becoming-a-nurse-or-midwife/when-studying-to-be-a-nurse-or-midwife/>
- Nursing Council of New Zealand. (2011). *Guidelines for cultural safety, the Treaty of Waitangi and Maori health in nursing education and practice*. Wellington, New Zealand: Author.
- Nursing Council of New Zealand. (2013). *The future nursing workforce: Supply projections 2010-2035*. Retrieved from Wellington, New Zealand: file:///C:/Users/Kath/Downloads/The%20Future%20Nursing%20Workforce%20supply%20projections%202010-2035%20(2).pdf
- Nursing Council of New Zealand. (2014). *Handbook for nursing departments offering programmes leading to registration as an enrolled nurse or a registered nurse*. Wellington, New Zealand: Nursing Council of New Zealand.
- O'Cathain. (2010). Assessing the quality of mixed methods research: toward a comprehensive framework. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research* (2nd ed., pp. 531-558). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Omeri, A., Malcolm, P., Ahern, M., & Wellington, B. (2003). Meeting the challenges of cultural diversity in the academic setting. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 3(1), 5-22.
- Onwuegbuzie, A., & Leech, N. L. (2005). On becoming a pragmatic researcher: The importance of combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(5), 375-387.
- Onwuegbuzie, A., & Combs, J. (2010). Emergent data analysis techniques in mixed methods research: A synthesis. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioural research* (2nd ed., pp. 397-430). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Onwuegbuzie, A., & Johnson, R. (2006). The validity issue in mixed research. *Research in the Schools*, 13(1), 48-63.
- Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). *Questionnaire design, interviewing and attitude measurement*. London, UK: Cassell.
- Owen, M. (2002). Sometimes you feel you're in niche time: The personal tutor system, a case study. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 3(1), 7-23.
- Patton, M. Q. (2008). *Utilization-focused evaluation* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Patton, M. Q. (2012). *Essentials of utilization-focused evaluation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice* (4 ed.). Los Angeles, CA: Sage.



- Peters, M. (2000). Does constructivist epistemology have a place in nurse education? *Journal of Nursing Education*, 39(4), 166-172.
- Phillips, R. (1994). Providing student support systems in project 2000 nurse education programmes - the personal tutor role of nurse teachers. *Nurse Education Today*, 14(3), 216-222.
- Plano Clark, V. L., & Creswell, J. W. (Eds.). (2008). *The mixed methods reader*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2006). *Essentials of nursing research* (6th ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins.
- Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2012). *Nursing research: Generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice* (9 ed.). Philadelphia, PA Wolters Kluwer Health/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Por, J. (2008). The use of soft system methodology (SSM) in a serviced-focussed study on the personal tutor's role. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 8(5), 335-342.
- Por, J., & Barriball, L. (2008). The personal tutor's role in pre-registration nursing education. *British Journal of Nursing*, 17(2), 99-103.
- Prebble, T., Hargraves, H., Leach, L., Naidoo, K., Suddaby, G., & Zepke, Z. (2005). *Impact of student support services and academic development programmes on student outcomes in undergraduate tertiary study: A synthesis of the research*. Ministry of Education Retrieved from [http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/tertiary\\_education/5519](http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/tertiary_education/5519).
- Punch, K. F. (2006). *Developing effective research proposals* (2nd ed.). London, UK Sage Publications.
- Purnell, R., Rodriguez-Kiino, D., & Schiorring, E. (2014). *Student support (re)defined: Literature review brief: What we know about student support*. Retrieved from Sacramento, CA:
- Quinn, F. M., & Hughes, S. J. (2007). *Quinn's principles and practice of nurse education* (5th ed.). Cheltenham, UK: Nelson Thornes.
- Raisbeck, E. (2012). Improved personal tutor contact with students is complete sense. *Nursing Standard*, 27(3), 31-32.
- Rallis, S., & Rossman, G. (2003). Mixed methods in evaluation contexts: A pragmatic framework. In C. Teddlie & A. Tashakkori (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ramsden, I. M. (2002). *Cultural safety and nursing education in Aotearoa and Te Waipounamu*. (Phd), University of Victoria Wellington, New Zealand.

- Rhodes, S., & Jinks, A. (2005). Personal tutors' views of their role with pre-registration nursing students: An exploratory study. *Nurse Education Today*, 25(5), 390-397.
- Richards, L., & Morse, J. M. (2013). *Readme first for a user's guide to qualitative methods*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- Richardson, R. (1998). The role of personal tutor in nurse education: Towards an understanding of practice in a college of nursing and midwifery at a particular point in time. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 27(3), 614-621.
- Ross, J., Head, K., King, L., Perry, P. M., & Smith, S. (2014). The personal development tutor role: An exploration of student and lecturer experiences and perceptions of that relationship. *Nurse Education Today*, 34(9), 1207-1213.
- Rossi, P. H., Lipsey, M. W., & Freeman, H. E. (2004). *Evaluation: A systematic approach* (7th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Sayer, M. M., Colvin, B. T., & Wood, D. F. (2002). The pastoral pool: An evaluation of a new system of pastoral care provision. *Medical Education*, 36(7), 651-658.
- Schneider, Z., Whitehead, D., LoBiondo-Wood, G., & Harber, J. (Eds.). (2013). *Nursing and midwifery research: Methods and appraisal for evidence-based practice* (4 ed.). Chatswood: Elsevier Australia.
- School of Nursing. (2008a). *Bachelor of Nursing 2009*. Author. Palmerston North, New Zealand.
- School of Nursing. (2008b). *Personal Tutor Guidelines*. Author. Palmerston North, New Zealand.
- Shaffer, L. S. (2014). Academic Advising. In P. J. Hartung, M. L. Savickas, & W. B. Walsh (Eds.), *APA Handbook of Career Intervention* (Vol. 2, pp. 85-98). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Shaw, I. F., Greene, J. C., & Mark, M. M. (Eds.). (2006). *The sage handbook of evaluation*. London, UK: Sage Publications.
- Simpson, O. (2006). Rescuing the personal tutor: Lessons in costs and benefits. In L. Thomas & P. Hixenbaugh (Eds.), *Personal Tutoring in Higher Education* (pp. 33-44). London, UK: Institute of Education Press.
- Smith, D., & Garteig, L. (2003). Using a Linked Learning Activity to Foster Nursing Students' Professional Growth. *Educational Innovations*, 42(5), 3.
- Smith, P. (1991). The nursing process: raising the profile of emotional care in nurse training. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 16(1), 74-81 78p. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.1991.tb01500.x

- Smith, P., & Allan, T. H. (2010). 'We should be able to bear our patients in our teaching in some way': Theoretical perspectives on how nurse teachers manage their emotions to negotiate the split between education and caring practice. *Nurse Education Today*, 30(3), 218-223 216p. doi:10.1016/j.nedt.2009.12.015
- Smith, P., & Gray, B. (2001). Reassessing the concept of emotional labour in student nurse education: role of link lecturers and mentors in a time of change. *Nurse Education Today*, 21(3), 230-237 238p.
- Sosabowski, M., Bratt, A., Herson, K., Olivier, G., Sawers, R., Taylor, S., . . . Denyer, S. (2003). Enhancing quality in the M.Pharm degree programme: Optimisation of the personal tutor system. *Pharmacy Education*, 3(2), 103-108.
- Stanley, N., & Manthorpe, J. (1999). Comfort in that personal touch. *Times Higher Education Supplement*(1406), 36-37.
- Stephen, D. E., O'Connell, P., & Hall, M. (2008). 'Going the extra mile', 'fire-fighting', or laissez-faire? Re-evaluating personal tutoring relationships within mass higher education. *Teaching In Higher Education*, 13(4), 449-460.
- Stewart, J. (2010). Academic advising in Canada -Is the Canadian advising system really different from the American advising system? Retrieved 12 July 2015, from NACADA Retrieved from NACADA Clearinghouse of Academic Advising Resources Web site: <http://www.nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Clearinghouse/View-Articles/Advising-in-Canada.aspx>
- Stufflebeam, D. L. (2001). *Evaluation models*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Sword, W., Byrne, C., Drummond-Young, M., Harmer, M., & Rush, J. (2002). Nursing alumni as student mentors: Nurturing professional growth. *Nurse Education Today*, 22(5), 427-432.
- Tashakkori, A., & Creswell, J. W. (2007). The New Era of Mixed Methods. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(1), 3-7.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (Eds.). (2003). *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioural research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (Eds.). (2010). *Sage handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioral research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Taylor, D. (2002). A problem shared. *Medical Education*, 36(7), 598-599.
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2011). Mixed methods research: Contemporary issues in an emerging field. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (Vol. 4, pp. 285-300). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2012). Common 'core' characteristics of mixed methods research: A review of critical issues and call for greater convergence. *American Behavioral Scientist*(6), 774 –788.
- Thomas, L. (2012). What works? Facilitating an effective transition into higher education. *Widening Participation & Lifelong Learning*, 14, 4-24.
- Thomas, L. (2015). *What works? Facilitating an effective transition into and through higher education*. Paper presented at the Gearing Up for Transitions 2015, University of Edinburgh.
- Thomas, L., & Hixenbaugh, P. (Eds.). (2006). *Personal tutoring in higher education* London, UK: Institute of Education Press.
- Tierney, W. G., & Dilley, P. (2002). Interviewing in education. In J. F. Gubrium & J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research: Context & method* (pp. 453-472). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *The Review of Higher Education*, 21(2), 10.
- Tinto, V. (2014). *Access without support is not opportunity* (10415726). Retrieved from Selmer, TN:  
<http://ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ehh&AN=95062540&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Warren, D. (2002). Curriculum design in a context of widening participation in higher education. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education: An International Journal of Theory, Research and Practice*, 1(1), 85-99.
- Waters, A. (2008). Nursing student attrition is costing taxpayers £99 million a year. *Nursing Standard*, 22(31), 12-15.
- Watts, T. E. (2011a). Supporting undergraduate nursing students through structured personal tutoring: Some reflections. *Nurse Education Today*, 31(2), 214-218.
- Weiss, C. H. (1998). *Evaluation: Methods for studying programs and policies* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.
- Wheeler, S., & Birtle, J. (1993). *A handbook for personal tutors*. Bristol, UK: Taylor and Francis.
- Wisker, G., Exley, K., Antoniou, M., & Ridley, P. (2008). *Working one-to-one with students: Supervising, coaching, mentoring, and personal tutoring*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Wooton, S. (2006). Changing practice in tutorial provision within post-compulsory education In L. Thomas & P. Hixenbaugh (Eds.), *Personal tutoring in higher education* (pp. 115-126). London, UK: Institute of Education Press.

- Young, L., & Paterson, B. (Eds.). (2007). *Teaching nursing: Develoing a student-centred learning environment*. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.
- Young, P., Glogowska, M., & Lockyer, L. (2007). Conceptions of early leaving: A comparison of the views of teaching staff and students. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 8(3), 275-287.
- Zepke, N., Leach, L., & Prebble, T. (2006). Being learner centred: One way to improve student retention? *Studies in Higher Education*, 31(5), 587-600.

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A: Approval of letter from Massey University Human Ethics Committee .....	179
Appendix B: Letter of approval from Research Committee.....	180
Appendix C: Letter of access to Faculty Dean .....	181
Appendix D: Student Questionnaire .....	182
Appendix E: Lecturer Questionnaire .....	190
Appendix F: Information Sheet One .....	198
Appendix G: Information Sheet Two.....	199
Appendix H: Consent Form .....	200
Appendix I: Question Topic Guide .....	201
Appendix J: Transcript Authority to Release Form .....	203
Appendix K: Confidentiality Agreement.....	204
Appendix L: Thank You Letters.....	205

## Appendix A: Approval of letter from Massey University Human Ethics Committee



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

7 April 2011

Kathryn Hoare

Dear Kathryn

**Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 10/73**  
**Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system**

Thank you for your letter dated 28 March 2011.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Acting Chair  
Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B

cc Dr Linda Leach  
School of Educational Studies  
PN900

Dr Caitlin Pausé  
School of Arts, Development & Health Education  
PN900

Prof Howard Lee, HoS  
School of Educational Studies  
PN900

Dr Kama Weir, HoS  
School of Arts, Development & Health Education  
PN900

Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray  
Graduate School of Education  
PN900

Te Kunenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

Massey University Human Ethics Committee  
Accredited by the Health Research Council  
Research Ethics Office, Massey University, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand  
T +64 6 350 5573 +64 6 350 5575 F +64 6 350 5622  
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz animalethics@massey.ac.nz gtc@massey.ac.nz  
www.massey.ac.nz

**Appendix B:** Letter of approval from Research Committee

29 June 2011

Kath Hoare

Private Bag  
**PALMERSTON NORTH**

Dear Kath

RE: *'Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system'*.

I have the pleasure to inform you that your Research Application has been approved.

We wish you all the best with your research studies, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me anytime.

Yours sincerely



Research Administrator



## Appendix C: Letter of access to Faculty Dean



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
TE KUPENGA O TE MATAURANGA

### Research Study – 'Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system'

Dear [Faculty Dean of Health and Science]

As you know I am currently a Doctor of Education (EdD) student with the College of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North and in 2011 I intend to undertake the research project as part of this degree. The proposed study is an evaluation of the personal tutor student support system which is a part to this Bachelor of Nursing (BN) programme in the School of Nursing at [name of Tertiary Institution].

Ethics approval for this study has been received from the following:

- The Human Ethics Committee of Massey University
- The Research Committee of [name of Tertiary Institution]

I am writing to ask if I may have permission to complete the proposed study in the School of Nursing at [name of Tertiary Institution]. Permission is sought to approach and invite all third year students in the Bachelor of Nursing and lecturers who are personal tutors to participate in this research. This will involve access to names of the intended research population on the 3 School of Nursing sites. Further, I request permission to access Moodle™ and Question Mark™ at [name of Tertiary Institution] to support participant communication, data analysis and sharing the research summary.

The contribution of students and lecturers will enable a greater understanding of the personal tutor system as part of the BN. There are 2 parts to this research: a phase 1 questionnaire and phase 2 individual interviews. Participation will be outside of work and study time. This research invites critical evaluation of the personal tutor system with the expectation that strengths and limitations will be identified. The findings present an opportunity to develop recommendations for programme enhancement.

Those who will have access to the research material are bound by confidentiality and include: myself, a research associates, transcribers and my academic supervisors Dr Linda Leach and Dr Cat Pausé at Massey University of Palmerston North College of Education.

As a part-time student, the study is expected to be completed in 2012. At this time, a bound copy of the research thesis will be provided to the [name of Tertiary Institution] library, the School of Nursing will be provided with a summary of the findings and if you wish, I will provide you with a copy of this summary.

While [name of Tertiary Institution] and the School of Nursing will not be named in any written documentation relating to this study, it may be identified as the personal tutor system is uncommon in NZ Nursing and there are a limited number of multisite BN programmes. Publications may include evaluative critique of participants' (strengths and limitations), dissemination of findings, research discussion and recommendations.

I would like to meet and discuss my request with you. The meeting arrangements will be made with your personal assistant. If you wish to have any information about this study, please do not hesitate to contact me directly. My contact details are included below.

Yours sincerely

Kath Hoare MA, BN, RN

Senior Lecturer

E-mail: k.hoare@[name of Tertiary Institution].ac.nz

[number of Tertiary Institution]. ext 70414

Mobile: [REDACTED]

Te Kūnenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

School of Educational Studies  
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9099 F +64 6 351 3385 www.massey.ac.nz

## Appendix D: Student Questionnaire

	<b>Student Questionnaire</b>

	<b>Personal Tutor: Evaluation of a student support system</b>

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It is designed to help gain a greater understanding of the value of the Personal Tutor System as part of the Bachelor of Nursing (BN) programme in the School of Nursing. Your contribution will enable the development of recommendations for future programme enhancement. The study results will be accessible on the [name of Tertiary Institution] Moodle site with preliminary findings expected to be available in late 2011 and the final research summary in late 2012.

<b>Instructions</b>
---------------------

**This questionnaire will take about 15-20 minutes to complete.**

**Please attempt to complete all questions.**

**However, you may decline to answer any question(s).**

**To complete the questionnaire please:**

- Place a tick in the circle that indicates your response.
- Fill in a specific response where requested.
- If you change your answer, place a cross through the incorrect answer and then tick your final response.
- Please indicate if you do not know the answer.
- There is space at the end of most sections for you to provide additional comments.

**Please complete by 5pm on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 2011.**

**Once completed, please return to the secure box here, the one located in the library or send to [named] research assistant using the stamped self-addressed envelope provided.**

--

### 1. Demographic Information

1. On which [name of Tertiary Institution] site are you studying for your BN programme?

- ☐ [named site] ☐ [named site] ☐ [named site]

2. Please indicate your age (years) when you commenced the BN programme from the options below:

- ☐ 19 years or under ☐ Between 20-24 years ☐ Between 25-29 years ☐ Between 30-34 years  
☐ Between 35-39 years ☐ Between 40-44 years ☐ 45 years or over

3. Please indicate if you have been enrolled in a tertiary education programme before you commenced the BN at [named education institute]?

- ☐ Yes, please specify if the programme had a student support system and if so, include details of the support offered:  
e.g informal support, formal meetings, self-referral etc  
☐ No

4. Please indicate your highest level of academic achievement when you commenced the BN programme:

e.g. School (NCEA 1, 2 or 3; School Cert, U.E.), Certificate, Diploma, Degree etc.

5. Were you aware of the Personal Tutor system before you enrolled in the BN?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

6. If you answered Yes to question 5 above, when were you first made aware of the Personal Tutor system? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Information evening ☐ Open Day ☐ Enrolment information ☐ Other, please specify:

### 2. Personal Tutor System

7. The Personal Tutor System has been part of your BN programme and has 6 aims that broadly relate to the following questions. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.

How would you rate the Personal Tutor system in relation to the:	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Influence on your BN student experience?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effectiveness as an approach to support you as a BN student?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Development of rapport with lecturers?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The early recognition of any problems?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reason you may choose the BN programme at [name of Tertiary Institution]?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

### 3. Personal Tutor System Policy and Guidelines

8. The Personal Tutor System role is outlined in the policy and guidelines. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.

How would you rate the Personal Tutor System policy and guidelines in relation to:	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
The explanation given for this student support system as part of your BN programme?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding your <i>Student</i> role and responsibilities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding the role and responsibilities of your <i>Personal Tutor</i> ? e.g. academic and pastoral support, monitoring progress etc.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding the required documentation for your student file?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding other requirements of this system? e.g. meetings, confidentiality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Links with other support in the School of Nursing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Links with other [named education institute] support?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

### 4. Personal Tutor System Meetings and Communication

9. Please indicate the communication method(s) used with your Personal Tutor.

Face to face      Phone      Email      Text      Other-please identify:  
☐      ☐      ☐      ☐

10. Reflect on the engagement with your Personal Tutor throughout the BN programme. Please indicate how often you have met or had contact with your Personal Tutor in each academic year.

	Meetings	Phone calls	E-mails	Texts	Other - identify type: e.g. chat when passing
Year 1					
Year 2					
Year 3					

11. Did you ever have a change of Personal Tutor(s)?

- ☐ Yes, please state reason(s) if known:  
 e.g. Lecturer resignation, request  
☐ No

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

## 5. Personal Tutor System Guidelines and Meetings

**12. The Personal Tutor System guidelines require 2 meetings in Year 1. After orientation week, your Personal Tutor contacts you to arrange an individual meeting in the first 3 weeks of the BN and arranges your second meeting, individual or group, in the first 2 weeks of semester 2. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.**

In year 1, did you:	Yes	No	Don't Know
Have an initial introduction to your Personal Tutor during your BN orientation week?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have an individual meeting with your Personal Tutor within the first 3 weeks of the BN?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet with your Personal Tutor (individual or group) in the first 2 weeks of semester 2?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Receive more than one prompt from your Personal Tutor to arrange meetings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have to prompt your Personal Tutor to arrange meetings?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**13. Did you prefer not to participate in this Student Support System?**

- ☐ Yes, please specify reason:
- ☐ No

**14. Consider the Personal Tutor System guidelines for Year 1 outlined above. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.**

In year 1, do you believe it would be useful to:	Yes	No	Don't Know
Continue with the current approach to engage with your Personal Tutor outlined above?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have the initial contact with your Personal Tutor made by you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have Personal Tutor meetings as optional rather than required?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have the option to not participate in this student support system?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**15. The Personal Tutor System guidelines require continuing with regular meetings/contact throughout the BN to provide on-going academic/pastoral support, monitor progress and additional assistance when needed. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.**

In Year 2 and 3, was your Personal Tutor able to:	Always	Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Never
Maintain regular meeting opportunities (at least 1-2 times each year)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitor your progress throughout the BN?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide additional assistance/meetings when requested?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**16. Did you ever experience difficulty arranging to meet with your Personal Tutor?**

- ☐ Yes, please specify reason if known:
- ☐ No

17. If *additional* meeting(s) were needed, who initiated these? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ You ☐ Personal Tutor ☐ Other- please specify:  
e.g. suggested by lecturer/student

18. If *additional* meeting(s) were needed, what was the reason(s)? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Academic ☐ Clinical ☐ Personal ☐ Other- please specify:

19. Personal Tutor meetings are currently arranged (individual or group) around other commitments for lecturers and yourself. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.

Do you believe it would be useful to:	Always	Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Never
Continue with the current approach to arrange Personal Tutor meetings (individual/group)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timetable regular Personal Tutor meetings (individual/group), at least 1-2 times each year?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timetable regular Personal Tutor meetings to combine Year's 1, 2 and 3, at least 1-2 times each year?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

#### 6. Use of the Personal Tutor System

20. Consider how you have engaged with your Personal Tutor. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.

Did you:	Always	Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Never
Independently manage the BN programme requirements without requiring Personal Tutor support?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regularly discuss any matters (academic/clinical/personal) with your Personal Tutor that relate to your BN programme?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Find your Personal Tutor was able to support with the matter(s) discussed? e.g. suggest options, refer to assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Consider approaching your Personal Tutor if an issue(s) became unmanageable?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Implement the suggested support for the issue(s)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convey support was beneficial to your Personal Tutor?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. Did you find your expectations ever differed from those of your Personal Tutor?

- ☐ Yes, please specify reason:  
  
☐ No



**22. Please indicate the focus of your Personal Tutor discussions. Where there are specific examples included, please circle the one(s) that are relevant for you and include any not identified in the 'other' option. Please select all that apply.**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Academic Matters<br>e.g. academic skills, assessments,<br>issue with lecturer, success/failure. | <input type="radio"/> Clinical Matters<br>e.g. new skills, shift work, coping with<br>birth/death, interpersonal conflict,<br>travel. | <input type="radio"/> BN Guidance<br>e.g. stress, coping with BN, policy<br>information, issues with student,<br>transition placement options. |
| <input type="radio"/> Regular Meetings<br>e.g. catch-up, progress etc.  | <input type="radio"/> Family/Whanau Matters<br>e.g. spouse, partner, children, etc.   | <input type="radio"/> Personal Matters<br>e.g. health, bereavement,<br>relationships, accommodation.   |
| <input type="radio"/> Change in Circumstances<br>e.g. pregnancy, consider withdrawal<br>from BN paper/programme etc.  | <input type="radio"/> Career/Employment Advice<br>e.g. CV, referee request, NETP<br>programme application.                            | <input type="radio"/> Financial Matters<br>e.g. scholarship application,<br>hardship grants.   |
| <input type="radio"/> Other(s)- please specify:   |   |  |

**23. Please provide a *brief* example(s) from your experience(s) that best represents the strength and/or limitation of this student support system:**

**Please include any additional comments relating to this section:**

#### 7. Personal Tutor System and Student Support Options

**24. Who would you be most likely to discuss a matter that relates to your BN programme? Please select up to 3 of the options below that are most relevant for you and include any not identified in the 'other' option.**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Personal Tutor            | <input type="radio"/> Any Nurse Lecturer available              | <input type="radio"/> Programme Leader                                      |
| <input type="radio"/> Classmates                | <input type="radio"/> Student Representative                    | <input type="radio"/> Friends   |
| <input type="radio"/> Spouse/Partner            | <input type="radio"/> Family/Whanau<br>e.g. Parent, Sibling etc | <input type="radio"/> Other [name of Tertiary<br>Institution] Support Staff |
| <input type="radio"/> Other(s)- please specify: |   |   |

**25. The Personal Tutor System links with other student support available at [name of Tertiary Institution]. Please indicate if you were referred to any of the support options below by your Personal Tutor. Where there are specific examples included, please circle the one(s) that are relevant for you and include any not identified in the 'other' option. Please select all that apply.**

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Library Staff  | <input type="radio"/> Maori Support<br>e.g. Whanau room etc.                           | <input type="radio"/> International Liaison |
| <input type="radio"/> Academic Support Services<br>e.g. Academic/Computer support staff. | <input type="radio"/> Student Health Centre<br>e.g. Nurse, Doctor, Student Counsellor. | <input type="radio"/> Student Association   |
| <input type="radio"/> Other(s)- please specify:<br>e.g. Chaplin etc.                     |  |   |

26. Did you use the [name of Tertiary Institution] student support identified in question 25 above without prompting from your Personal Tutor?

- ☐ Yes, please identify:  
☐ No

27. Did you use other support(s) outside of [name of Tertiary Institution]?

- ☐ Yes, please identify:  
e.g. health professionals, partner, church, friends, family etc  
☐ No

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

#### 8. Your Overall Experience of the Personal Tutor System

28. How would you rate your overall experience with the Personal Tutor Student Support System?

Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

29. How would you rate the overall success of the Personal Tutor system as an approach to student support in the BN programme at [name of Tertiary Institution]?

Very Successful	Successful	Neither Successful or Unsuccessful	Limited Success	Unsuccessful
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please include any additional comments relating to this section (NB further comments may be included over the page):

#### 9. Interview

If you indicate you are willing to participate in phase two of this study, the individual interview, please include your name below. Your questionnaire responses remain strictly confidential and you will be contacted within two weeks.

Name:

(Print)

Thank you for your valued contribution in completing this questionnaire by 5pm on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 2011. Please return your completed questionnaire to the secure box here, the one located in the library or send using the stamped self-addressed envelope.



Additional Comments

Please include any additional comments relating to this questionnaire:

## Appendix E: Lecturer Questionnaire

	<b>Lecturer Questionnaire</b>

	<b>Personal Tutor: Evaluation of a student support system</b>
<p>Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. It is designed to help gain a greater understanding of the value of the Personal Tutor System as part of the Bachelor of Nursing (BN) programme in the School of Nursing. Your contribution will enable the development of recommendations for future programme enhancement. The study results will be accessible on the [name of Tertiary Institution] Moodle site with preliminary findings expected in late 2011 and the final research summary in late 2012.</p>	

### Instructions

This questionnaire will take about 15-20 minutes to complete.

Please complete all questions.

You may decline to answer any question(s).

The demographic information will be separated from your questionnaire to assure anonymity.

To complete the questionnaire please:

- Place a tick in the circle that indicates your response.
- Fill in a specific response where requested.
- If you change your answer, place a cross through the incorrect answer and then tick your final response.
- Please indicate if you do not know the answer.
- There is space at the end of most sections for you to provide additional comments.

Please complete now or by the 25<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

Once completed, please place in the secure box located in your staff studio or send to [named] research assistant using the stamped self-addressed envelope provided.

### 1. Your Demographic Details

1. How many years have you been a lecturer at this educational institute?

- ☐ 0-4 years      ☐ 5-9 years      ☐ 10-15 years      ☐ 16 years or longer

2. What is your current lecturer designation?

- ☐ Lecturer      ☐ Senior lecturer      ☐ Other – please identify

3. On which [name of Tertiary Institution] site are you employed?

- ☐ [named site]      ☐ [named site]      ☐ [named site]

4. Please indicate your sex:

- ☐ Female      ☐ Male

5. How many years have you been a Registered Nurse?

- ☐ Less than 4 years      ☐ 5-9 years      ☐ 10-15 years      ☐ 16 years or longer

6. How many years have you been a Personal Tutor?

- ☐ Less than 1 year      ☐ 1-2 years      ☐ 3-4 years

7. Have you ever worked in an undergraduate BN programme other than [name of Tertiary Institution]?

- ☐ Yes - please specify if the BN programme had a student support system and if so, your involvement:  
  
☐ No

## 2. Personal Tutor System

8. The Personal Tutor Student Support System has been part of the BN for 4 years and has 6 aims to which the following questions broadly relate to aspects these. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.

How would you rate the Personal Tutor System in relation to the:	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
Influence on the BN student experience?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effectiveness as an approach to student support?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Development of rapport with students?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Early recognition of student problems?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Balancing student support role for lecturers in the BN?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reason a student may choose the BN programme at [name of Tertiary Institution]?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

## 3. Personal Tutor System Policy and Guidelines

9. The Personal Tutor System policy and guidelines outline your role. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.

How would you rate the Personal Tutor System policy and guidelines in relation to:	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
The explanation of this student support system in the BN programme?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding your Personal Tutor role and responsibilities? e.g. academic and pastoral support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding the student file documentation required?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Understanding others requirements of this role? e.g. meetings, confidentiality.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Links with other support and policies in the School of Nursing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Links with other [name of Tertiary Institution] support policies and services?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

#### 4. Personal Tutor System Allocation, Meetings and Communication

##### 10. For each year level in the BN, please indicate:

	The number of Personal Tutee allocated to you in each Year level of the BN programme	On average, how much time was required for each students during an academic year. NB Include time for documentation, meeting(s) and contact.
Year 1 Students		
Year 2 Students		
Year 3 Students		

##### 11. On average, please indicate how often you meet/contact each Personal Tutee during an academic year?

	Meetings	Phone calls	E-mails	Texts	Other-please identify: e.g. chat when passing
Year 1 Students					
Year 2 Students					
Year 3 Students					

##### 12. Did you ever have a change of Personal Tutee(s)?

- ☐ Yes, please state reason(s) if known:  
e.g. staff resignation, student request
- ☐ No

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

#### 5. Personal Tutor System Guidelines and Meetings

13. The Personal Tutor System guidelines require 2 meetings in Year 1. After your orientation week introduction, the first meeting (individual) is arranged in the first 3 weeks of the BN and the second meeting (individual or group) in the first 2 weeks of semester 2. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.

With Personal Tutees in Year 1, were you able to:	Always	Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Never
Attend the initial introduction during their BN orientation week?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet individually within the first 3 weeks of the BN?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meet (individual or group) within 2 weeks of semester 2 commencing?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Arrange to meet after more than one prompt?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

##### 14. Did you have student(s) who preferred not to participate in this Student Support System?

- ☐ Yes -please state number of students:  
-please state reason(s) if known:
- ☐ No

**15. The Personal Tutor System guidelines require you to continue with regular meetings throughout the BN to provide on-going academic/pastoral support, monitor progress and additional assistance when needed. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.**

With your Personal Tutees in Year 2 and 3, were you able to:	Always	Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Never
Maintain regular meeting opportunities (at least 1-2 times each year)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Monitor progress throughout the BN?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide additional meetings when requested?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**16. You currently arrange to meet Personal Tutees' (individual or group) around other commitments for students and yourself. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.**

Would it be useful to:	Always	Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Never
Continue with the current approach to Personal Tutee meetings (individual/group)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timetable regular Personal Tutee meetings (individual/group), at least 1-2 times each year?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timetable regular Personal Tutee meetings to combine Year's 1, 2 and 3, at least 1-2 times each year?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**17. Reflecting on your role as a Personal Tutor in 2010, please indicate if *additional meeting(s)* were requested, the approximate number and the average time required.**

	Number (approx.) of additional meeting(s).	Average time required for <i>each additional meeting</i> .
Year 1 Students		
Year 2 Students		
Year 3 Students		

**18. If *additional meeting(s)* were required, who initiated these? Select all that apply.**

- ☐ You
 ☐ Personal Tutee
 ☐ Other- please specify:  
 e.g. lecturer referral

**Please include any additional comments relating to this section:**

#### 6. Use of the Personal Tutor System

**19. When responding to Personal Tutees, please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.**

Were you able to provide Personal Tutees with:	Always	Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Never
Support for issue(s) routinely experienced in the BN programme? e.g. seasonal illness.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support for challenging issue(s) experienced? e.g. personal issue that required with time away from BN.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Direction/referral to available support with identified issue(s)?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**20. Consider your interaction with Personal Tutees. Please select the one response that is most relevant for you for each question.**

Did you find Personal Tutees:	Always	Frequently	Fairly Often	Occasionally	Never
Independently managed the BN programme requirements?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expectations ever differed from your outlined Personal Tutor role and responsibilities e.g. include essay review etc?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discussed any issues (academic/clinical/personal) that may impact on their BN programme?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Only approached you to discuss issues if they became unmanageable?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confirmed support was beneficial?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**21. Please indicate the focus of discussions with Personal Tutees. Where there are specific examples included, please circle and include any not identified. Please select all that apply.**

<input type="radio"/> Academic Matters e.g. academic skills, assessments, other lecturers, success/failure.	<input type="radio"/> Clinical Matters e.g. new skills, shift work, coping with birth/death, interpersonal conflict, travel.	<input type="radio"/> BN Guidance e.g. stress, coping with BN, policy information, issues with student, transition placement options.
<input type="radio"/> Regular Meetings e.g. catch-up, progress etc.	<input type="radio"/> Family/Whanau Matters e.g. spouse, partner, children, etc.	<input type="radio"/> Personal Matters e.g. health, bereavement, relationships, accommodation
<input type="radio"/> Change in Circumstances e.g. pregnancy, consider withdrawal from BN paper/programme etc.	<input type="radio"/> Career/Employment Advice e.g. CV, referee request, NETP programme application.	<input type="radio"/> Financial Matters e.g. scholarship application, hardship grants.
<input type="radio"/> Other (s)– please specify:		

**22. Please provide a *brief* example(s) from your Personal Tutor System experience(s) that best represents the strength and/or limitation of this system of student support:**

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

### 7. Personal Tutor System and Student Support Options

23. The Personal Tutor System links with other support available at [name of Tertiary Institution]. Please indicate if you have referred Personal Tutees to any of the services below. Where there are specific examples included, please circle and include any not identified. Please select all that apply.

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Library Staff   | <input type="radio"/> Maori Support<br>e.g. Whanau room.                               | <input type="radio"/> International Liaison |
| <input type="radio"/> Academic Support Services<br>e.g. academic staff, computer staff. | <input type="radio"/> Student Health Centre<br>e.g. Nurse, Doctor, Student Counsellor. | <input type="radio"/> Student Association   |
| <input type="radio"/> Other(s)- please specify:<br>e.g. Chaplin etc.                    |  |   |

24. Students may use other support. Are you aware of personal tutees using support(s) outside of [name of Tertiary Institution]?

- ☐ Yes, please identify:  
e.g. health professionals, partner, church, friends, family etc
- ☐ No

Please include any additional comments relating to this section:

### 8. Your Overall Experience

25. How would you rate *your* overall experience with the Personal Tutor Student System?

Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

26. How would you rate the overall success of the Personal Tutor System as an approach to student support in the BN programme at [name of Tertiary Institution]?

Very Successful	Successful	Neither Successful or Unsuccessful	Limited Success	Not successful
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please include any additional comments relating to this section (NB further comments may be included over the page):

### 9. Interview

If you wish to participate in phase two of this study, the individual interview, please include your name below. Your questionnaire responses remain strictly confidential and you will be contacted within two weeks.

Name:

(Print)

Thank you for your valued contribution in completing this questionnaire, now or by the 25<sup>th</sup> July 2011. Please place in the secure box here, the one located in your staff studio or send using the stamped self-addressed envelope provided.



Additional Comment

Please include any additional comments relating to this questionnaire:

## Appendix F: Information Sheet One



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA  
Information Sheet 1

**Research Study – 'Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system'**

My name is Kath Hoare and I am a Doctor of Education (EdD) student at the College of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North. I am also a registered nurse and a senior lecturer in the School of Nursing at the [name of Tertiary Institution].

I am currently undertaking a study, the purpose of which is to evaluate the personal tutor student support system which is a unique part of the Bachelor of Nursing (BN) programme in the School of Nursing at [name of Tertiary Institution].

The study includes two phases of data collection. These are:

1. Questionnaire
2. Individual interviews

You are invited to participate in the phase 1 questionnaire. Your contribution will enable a greater understanding of the personal tutor student support system as part of the BN programme. This anonymous questionnaire has been designed to understand your experience of the personal tutor system. There are 8 sections and you may decline to answer any question(s) or section(s). Completion of this questionnaire implies your consent.

You are also invited to participate in the second phase of this research, an individual interview, with your interest indicated by completing the final section of the questionnaire and included your personal details. If you are willing to be interviewed, your confidentiality will be maintained.

Please return the completed questionnaire to the sealed container now, or at the [named location] or send using the stamped self addressed envelope provided. All completed questionnaires returned will go in the draw for a prize.

At the end of 2011, the preliminary data findings will be available via [name of Tertiary Institution] Moodle site with the final summary accessible in late 2012. Additionally a hard copy summary will be available on request to any participant. While [name of Tertiary Institution] and the School of Nursing will not be named in any written documentation relating to this study, it may be identified as the personal tutor system is uncommon in NZ Nursing programmes and there are a limited number of multisite Schools of Nursing. Thank you for taking the time to respond as your understanding is valuable.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 10/73. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz).

This project has also been reviewed and approved by the [name of Tertiary Institution] Research Committee and the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Science, [name of Executive Dean].

If you have any questions about this project you may discuss it with me or my supervisors:

Primary Supervisor: Dr. Linda Leach

Work: 06 3569099 ext: 8831

E-mail: [L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz](mailto:L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz)

Secondary Supervisor: Dr. Cat Pause.

Work: 06 3569099 ext: 8618

E-mail: [C.Pause@massey.ac.nz](mailto:C.Pause@massey.ac.nz)

As I am a part time doctoral student, it is expected that the study will be completed at the end of 2012. If you want any more information about the study please contact me:

Work : [number of Tertiary Institution]. ext 70414

: [number of Tertiary Institution]. ext 70414

Mobile: [REDACTED]

E-mail: [REDACTED]

Kath Hoare (EdD student)

Te Kunenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

School of Educational Studies  
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9099 F +64 6 351 3385 [www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)

## Appendix G: Information Sheet Two



MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

### Information Sheet 2

#### Research Study – 'Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system'

Let me reintroduce myself, my name is Kath Hoare and I am a Doctor of Education (EdD) student at the College of Education, Massey University, Palmerston North. As you know I am a registered nurse and senior lecturer in the School of Nursing at [name of Tertiary Institution]. I am currently undertaking a study, the purpose of which is to evaluate the personal tutor student support system which is a unique part of the Bachelor of Nursing (BN) programme in the School of Nursing at [name of Tertiary Institution].

You have agreed to participate in phase 2 interviews having completed the final section of the phase 1 questionnaire. Your continued contribution to this study will enable a greater depth and understanding of the personal tutor student support system as part of the BN programme. Prior to your interview, I will explain what is involved and ask you to sign a consent form confirming you understand and agree to participate in this study. Your confidentiality is maintained with written documentation using a chosen pseudonym. Light refreshments will be offered during your interview and you will be reimbursed for any costs i.e. transport, parking or communication.

This interview will take place at an agreed time and location, taking about 30 minutes and not expected to last longer than one hour. During the interview I will audio record your comments. You may decline to answer any question of part thereof during this time. The recorded interview will be converted into a written transcript. This will be available for you to review as you may add, delete or clarify any parts of the discussion. If you wish, you may also have a copy of the audiotape and transcript.

There is the possibility of a small follow-up interview to cover aspects missed or clarify comments. This may be by phone, e-mail, video link or interview, taking around 10-15 minutes and no longer than about 30 minutes. Again, a copy of this will be given to you to review and modify with a copy available if you wish.

You may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time, until the beginning of the data analysis. All audiotapes, transcripts and data remain entirely confidential and are securely stored and destroyed after 5 years. The preliminary findings and final summary are accessible on the [name of Tertiary Institution] moodle site. If you wish, a copy of the research summary will be sent to you. Again, while [name of Tertiary Institution] and the School of Nursing will not be named in any written documentation relating to this study, it may be identified as the personal tutor system is uncommon in NZ Nursing programmes and there are a limited number of multisite Schools of Nursing. Thank you for participating in this interview, sharing your experience is valuable.

You are aware this project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 10/73. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Karl Pajo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 04 801 5799 x 6929, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz).

This project has also been reviewed and approved by the [name of Tertiary Institution] Research Committee and the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Science, [name of Executive Dean].

If you have any questions about this project you may discuss it with me or my supervisors:

Primary Supervisor: Dr. Linda Leach

Work: 06 3569099 ext: 8831

E-mail: [L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz](mailto:L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz)

Secondary Supervisor: Dr. Cat Pause.

Work: 06 3569099 ext: 8618

E-mail: [C.Pause@massey.ac.nz](mailto:C.Pause@massey.ac.nz)

As I am a part time doctoral student, it is expected that the study will be completed in 2012. At this time, should you wish, I will provide you with a summary of my findings.

Work : [number of Tertiary Institution]. ext 70414  
: [number of Tertiary Institution]. ext 70414

Mobile: 02102876673  
E-mail: [k.hoare@\[name of Tertiary Institution\].ac.nz](mailto:k.hoare@[name of Tertiary Institution].ac.nz)

Kath Hoare (EdD student)

Te Kunenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

School of Educational Studies  
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9099 F +64 6 351 3385 [www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

Participant Consent Form - Individual

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Full Name - printed

## Appendix I: Question Topic Guide

### Student: semi-structured interview question guide.

The semi-structured interview begins with a broad open ended question. Some further questions will be asked relating to your experience. These are guided by your experience, preliminary analysis of questionnaire and data that comes from other interviews.

#### Included is a broad range of questions that may be used:

- Tell me about your experience with the Personal Tutor System (PTS) as a student.

*Possible Prompts:* What do you understand to be the purpose of the PTS?

What does being a student using/not using the PTS involve for you?

How have you been supported by your PTS lecturer?

What prompted you to use PTS lecturer support?

How did you know that your PTS lecturer understood your [concerns/matters/issues]?

How did you know when PTS lecturer support was effective in response to your [concerns/matters/issues]?

How did you acknowledge your PTS lecturer support?

How have you used the PTS with other BN programme support? Centralised support services at [name of Tertiary Institution]?

What do you think influences the PTS?

What do you think the strengths/limitations of the PTS?

How did you feel when you recognised the support offered made a difference [from your PTS lecturer]?

How did you feel when your PTS lecturer acknowledged your efforts/progress?

How did you feel about the PTS as an approach to student support? BN programme support? Wider [name of Tertiary Institution] support?

- Do you have any particular experience(s) you wish to share?
- What suggestions do you have for the PTS? PTS lecturer role?
- Is there anything further you would like to add?

**Lecturer: semi-structured interview question guide.**

The semi-structured interview begins with a broad open ended question. Some further questions will be asked relating to your experience. These are guided by your experience, preliminary analysis of questionnaire and data that comes from other interviews.

**Included is a broad range of questions that may be used:**

- Tell me about your experience with the Personal Tutor System (PTS) as a lecturer.

Possible Prompts: What do you understand to be the purpose of the Personal Tutor system?

What does being a PTS lecturer involve for you?

How have you supported students?

How did you know that you understood student [concerns/matters/issues]?

What prompted your student responses?

How did you know when support was effective in response with student [concerns matters/issues]?

How did students respond to your acknowledgement of their efforts?

How have you used the PTS with other BN programme support? Centralised support services at [name of Tertiary Institution]?

What do you think are the strengths/limitations of the PTS? PTS role?

How have you been supported in your PTS role?

What do you think influences your PTS role?

How did you feel when you/others recognised the support offered made a difference [for students]?

How did you feel about your PTS student support role?

How did you feel about the PTS as an approach to student support?

- Do you have any particular experience(s) you wish to share?
- What suggestions do you have for the personal tutor system?
- Is there anything further you would like to add?

## Appendix J: Transcript Authority to Release Form



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

**Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system**

### **Authority for Release of Transcripts**

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Full Name - printed**

Te Kunenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

School of Educational Studies  
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9099 F +64 6 351 3385 [www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)

**Appendix K: Confidentiality Agreement**



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

**Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system.**

**Confidentiality Agreement**

I ..... (Full Name - printed)


agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system.

I will not retain or copy any information involving the project. Further, I understand this is a binding agreement both now and in the future.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix L: Thank You Letters

  
**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

9 December 2011

Kath Hoare  
College of Education,  
Massey University, Palmerston North

Name of Student  
Bachelor of Nursing Programme  
Name of Tertiary Institution  
City

Dear [Name of Student]

**Research Study – ‘Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system’**

Thank you for your contribution to the evaluation of Personal Tutor student support system research. Your shared experience has offered a valuable perspective.

I would also take this opportunity to congratulate you on your successful completion of the Bachelor of Nursing programme and state final examination. I wish you well and every continued success in your future as a Registered Nurse.

Have a happy and safe holiday season.

Yours sincerely

Kath Hoare  
Doctor of Education (EdD) student

Te Kunenga  
ki Pūrehuroa

School of Educational Studies  
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand T +64 6 356 9099 F +64 6 351 3385 [www.massey.ac.nz](http://www.massey.ac.nz)



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION  
TE KUPENGA O TE MĀTAURANGA

9 December 2011

Kath Hoare  
College of Education,  
Massey University, Palmerston North

Name [Name of Lecturer]  
Bachelor of Nursing Programme  
Name of Tertiary Institution  
City

Dear [Name of Lecturer],

**Research Study – ‘Personal tutor: The evaluation of a student support system’**

Thank you for your contribution to the evaluation of Personal Tutor student support system research. Your shared experience has offered a valuable perspective.

I hope you have a happy and safe holiday season.

Yours sincerely

Kath Hoare  
Doctor of Education (EdD) student