

Editorial

Creating Conditions for Advising to Matter

This second edition of Waypoint offers contributions that we think are particularly timely given the evolving landscape of higher education and the increasing diversity of the student population. Across the articles, the authors encourage us to consider beyond the advising conversation itself and consider a broader question: what conditions enable academic advising and personal tutoring to make a meaningful difference? With this question in mind, the discussions and insights presented take us through the interconnected aspects of effective advising, from the institution to the system, from the practitioner to the conversation, and ultimately to the student. Collectively, they highlight that impactful advising and whether it matters is not the result of a single interaction, but rather the product of a thoughtful, carefully crafted system that supports student success.

In the opinion piece that opens this second edition, [‘The Hidden Curriculum of Time and Space: Why Belonging Is Designed Before It Is Felt’](#), Colum Cronin begins by challenging us to recognise that belonging is shaped before an advising conversation even takes place and cannot be assumed to be simply ‘felt’ by the student. This piece asks the reader to consider the influence of the hidden curriculum on student-perceived belonging. Decisions about time, space, timetabling and transition in particular influence students’ opportunities for connection and communicate powerful messages about whether they matter. Colum leaves us with the challenge of making time and room for belonging to occur by protecting the conditions from which it can emerge.

Rachel Maxwell and colleagues, in their article [‘A Data-People-Theory Approach to Enhancing Student Advising: Findings from a Multi-institution Project’](#), sought to explore how universities might better understand their approach to advising through a model that captured academic advising systems. Their resulting data-people-theory model offers a framework for institutions to examine their existing provision of student advising and to understand its relationship to students’ perceptions of mattering and success. Importantly, they argue the data-people-theory model offers a valuable lens for institutions to articulate their approach to student advising, providing meaningful points of comparison across the sector. With student success at its core, the narrative that scaffolds the model argues that accessibility of support for students needs to increase and be more intentionally woven within the everyday life of the student academic experience.

Rebecca Upsher and colleagues bring us from the broader spectrum of the institution and its systems to the people working within them. In their article [‘The Experiences and Challenges of Personal Tutors in Higher Education: A Qualitative Study’](#), we are asked to consider what the system looks and feels like to the people delivering advising. Their research into the lived experiences of personal tutors highlights that the relational labour

undertaken by personal tutors, alongside role ambiguity, competing demands, and fragmented support, often leads to tutoring being overlooked as a significant form of emotional and organisational labour. This important piece reminds us that such institutional attention towards advising, as noted in Rachel Maxwell and colleagues' article, is warranted if institutions are to strengthen personal tutoring. Aspirations for advising ultimately depend upon institutional structures that enable people to turn them into practice.

Nicola Clarke, in her opinion piece [‘Embedding Reflective Dialogue in Personal Tutor Conversations’](#), takes us inside the advising relationship itself to consider what helps make the advising experience meaningful to the student. To explore this, Nicola focuses on the student experience of mattering to the institution and the advisor through the relational quality of the student-advisor connection. She argues that reflective dialogue can create conversations in which students feel heard and understood while developing greater self-awareness. However, she calls us to action by asking us to engage in our own reflective practice. Nicola advises us that meaningful reflection requires something of tutors too: a willingness to develop and model their own reflective practice.

In our final article [‘What Students’ Use of AI Reveals about Academic Advising and Judgement’](#), Joanne Irving-Walton asks us to consider how that reflective space is changing as students increasingly use generative AI to rehearse ideas, navigate uncertainty and support their thinking, not just to produce outputs. Joanne presents a practice-based framework for our consideration with four overlapping modes of student AI use. It is this framework, aligned to established functions within advising, that she argues personal tutor conversations can evolve. This requires moving beyond the conventional tutor-student interaction towards an environment in which students also use generative AI to test ideas, navigate uncertainty, and support their thinking with the judgement, confidence, and boundaries needed to navigate both human- and AI-supported learning.

Taken together, these five articles ask us to consider how we create conditions for advising to matter. They move us from institutional design, through advising systems and the experiences of tutors, to the reflective conversations through which students develop confidence and judgement. They remind us that impactful advising is not created by any single intervention. It emerges when structures, people and relationships align to create the conditions in which students can belong, reflect and exercise agency.

We are also delighted to welcome Nicola Clarke as one of the editors of Waypoint. Nicola has recently joined the Waypoint Editorial team and is looking forward to being part of the process that has the privilege of supporting authors through their publishing journey. She is a mental health nurse and has over 23 years' experience as a nurse academic in higher education, personal academic tutoring and academic skills advisor, teaching on undergraduate and postgraduate courses. Having had leadership roles in academic advising, Nicola is currently the academic lead for Learning and Teaching within the department of Mental Health and Learning Disability Nursing at Birmingham City University. Her greatest area of interest is helping anyone become the best version of themselves through reflection and reflective practice. Therefore, being part of a reflective journal of student advising is an exciting opportunity to contribute to a community committed to

advancing advising practice and the student experience through research, dialogue, and shared learning.

About the Editors

Nicola Clarke is an Associate Professor in Reflective Academic Practice and a registered mental health nurse within the School of Nursing and Midwifery, and an Academic Lead in Learning and Teaching for the Department of Mental Health and Learning Disabilities at Birmingham City University. Nicola has over two decades of learning and teaching experience within a higher education institute. Nicola teaches reflection, reflective practice, academic skills and early in her academic career taught mental health nursing. Nicola has significant responsibility for Recognition of Prior Learning and Continuing Professional Development advice. Nicola has authored two student text books, a number of articles and has presented at international conferences on reflection. She is an avid country music fan, has one amazing daughter and loves cats.

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David Grey is the Chief Executive of UK Advising and Tutoring (UKAT), a UK higher education membership association focused on ensuring that every HE student experiences effective personal tutoring, which personalises their learning and enables them to flourish. David has over 25 years of experience as a Computer Science academic, personal tutor, and educational developer, with a leadership focus on learning and teaching, as well as the student experience and personal tutoring. He works closely with higher education providers to revise and enhance personal tutoring provision and publishes regularly in the field. He is an AHE Senior Fellow and UKAT Recognised Leader in Advising.

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Oscar van den Wijngaard is a senior educational developer at EDLAB, the Centre for Teaching and Learning of Maastricht University. Before joining EDLAB in 2017, he coordinated the academic advising programme at the University College of Maastricht University for many years, where he also taught courses in history, philosophy and academic skills. In his current role, he co-coordinated the development of an institution-wide vision and strategy for student guidance at Maastricht University. Since 2008, he has had leadership roles in several organisations on academic advising within the Netherlands and abroad. Oscar currently serves as a member of the UKAT Board of Trustees.

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