Tutor guidelines
How to make your life easier and have fun while being a tutor

Author:

Dr. Ir. Kostas Nizamis

Minor Coordinator

Department of Design,

Production and Management

k.nizamis@utwente.nl

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Contents

Preface

The current document aims to serve as a crude guideline/troubleshooter for first time tutors of the HTHT minor From Idea to Prototype, and other modules as well. It is mostly based on personal experiences of the author and expert opinions on tutoring by people from the Centre of Expertise in Learning and Teaching (CELT)of the University of Twente . This guideline is by no means a "must do" kind of document. Every tutor has and needs to have a personal tutoring style. The only purpose of this document is to give you some insight of the way tutoring was done in previous years and hopefully make your life easier and help you guide the students to a great assignment! Moreover this document is not a stand-alone. It accompanies the document regarding minor organization and project explanation. These documents shall be provided from the minor coordinator each year. The present document does not take into account the recent application of Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) and the differences between traditional tutoring and CBL tutors. However, there is some overlap between the two.

Why should I be a tutor?

My personal opinion is that for PhD candidates, Post-docs, and new assistant professors being a tutor can be a great opportunity to develop important skills for their future in academia. Teamwork, project management, supervision of students, steering a group into a successful result and learn how to be a good advisor are only some of the skills you can develop or sharpen while being a tutor! Frankly in some cases you do not have much of a choice! In order to assist with teaching we are all to some extent obliged to be tutors at some point! Why then, not have some fun during this process? Last but not least you will be among many students. This is a great fishing pond for future bachelor/master assignments!

1 Interaction with the Group

1.1 First Meeting

The first meeting is the basis for future cooperation. It is very important for the tutor to realize the importance of this first interaction. Believe it or not, this will shape all the dynamics between you and your students for the duration of the tutoring period!

The first meeting sets the tone. It is hard to change approach during the process.

A few quick tips for the first meeting:

Specific

- Ask them to introduce themselves

- Introduce yourself

- Explain how you work

- Exchange mutual expectations. What do you expect from the group? What do they expect from each other and from you?

- Make clear that your role is not to hunt them down, but they should take advantage of you

- Assess their ambition level (what are they aiming for?)

- Ask them to provide feedback, which will be appreciated Click to get to section: Feedback

- Ask them how they feel about the project and how do they imagine it would be

- Define roles together with the group (communicator, spy, secretary etc.)Click to get to section: Teamwork

- Expectation of each member (something they can do themselves in order to collaborate optimally)

- Make a plan and a clear setup for communication between you and them

- Schedule meetings Click to get to section: Planning

  General

- Promote team-building activities

- Let them get a taste of success as motivation

- Help them understand why this project is important for them

- Talk to them as professionals that are invited to solve a real problem

1.2 What to (not) do as a tutor

There are a lot of different opinions on how the good tutor should be. In the end, the type of tutor you are, depends on your personality and experiences. This section aims to provide some guidelines based on the opinions of expert tutors,the authors experience, and the students' opinions.

1.2.1 The profile of the good tutor

- Keeps the learning objectives in mind

- States clear expectations

- Gives the students the right amount of structure and support

- Gives clear and useful feedback

- Is involved, but within boundaries (try not to grade yourself in the end of the module!)

- Is **NOT** responsible for the final result

- Knows how to listen and ask questions

1.2.2 Do's & Dont's

Do's

- Stimulate ownership (of the project) and a student driven attitude.

- Try to speak the right language based on their study programme

- Encourage students to teach each other

- Create references/bridges between new knowledge and their existing knowledge

- Ask students to collaborate and not only cooperate. This way they will learn instead of repeating what they already know!

- Stimulate students to be responsible for their teamwork and take imitative only when something does not go well.Keep an open ear and know about the balance in the team

- Make clear to them that this is an ill-defined problem (so the teacher/tutor does not know the answer)

- Not only application of knowledge, but creation of new knowledge and skills

- Make clear what they expect from you and what you expect from them

- Guard the process: as a tutor you probably have knowledge about project management and processes. Try using it!

- Don't use your expertise and knowledge for imposing your ideas on the group but try to learn or pretend you do. Focus on listening and asking questions rather than on sharing your thoughts!

- Push boundaries

- Make clear that stupid questions are only those not asked

- Inspire them to identify and combine their qualities

- If you give some spirit into the process it is certain that you will also have a lot of fun and may even learn something!

Don'ts

- Demotivate students by giving them too much negative feedback (keep it balanced and constructive)!

- Solve their problem

- Exceed your role

- Work for them (but work with them!)

- Cancel appointments with them, without serious reason.

- Forget to appear in a scheduled meeting and being tardy in general

1.2.3 Based on Experts opinion

Do's	Dont's
Put students to work.	Do NOT solve the problem for them.
Steer your students to the right people (design experts, programmers, etc.).	Do NOT try to be all these experts yourself.
Keep your mouth shut more often; observe first.	Do NOT feel too responsible for the end result.
Encourage students to come up with original solutions.	Do NOT push through your own favourite ideas.

1.2.4 Based on personal experience

Do's	Dont's
Be there for them.	Do NOT offer solutions.
Ask them to assess your performance at the end.	Do NOT manipulate them.
Give them responsibilities.	Do NOT patronize them.
Treat them as professionals	Do NOT ignore them.

1.2.5 Based on Students opinion

Do's	Dont's
Maintain structure and overview.	Do NOT push through your own ideas.
Extensive professional knowledge .	Do NOT focus too much on your own subject area.
Pull students out of their tunnel vision .	Do NOT adopt a passive attitude.
Ask critical questions	Do NOT show that you are uninterested to their struggles(even if you are!).
Communicate clearly.	Do NOT be insufficiently informed about the project assignment.
Be involved!.	Do NOT be indifferent.

1.3 What NOT to BE as a tutor

As a tutor some times (especially when you are too much involved with your group), you might find it difficult to not be everything for them. Nevertheless a good tutor should know up to what extend his/her responsibilities are.

Do NOT try to be:

- Study advisor

- Examination board

- Student psychologist

- Student counsellor

- Central Student Administration

As a tutor you are not alone!
Refer often to the:

- Tutor/Minor Coordinator

- Study Advisor

- More experienced tutors/colleagues

1.4 Hints & Tips

1.4.1 Report Writing

Writing the report might be the easier part of the whole assignment (if it's handled properly of course). Nevertheless, is very important and often neglected or postponed in favour of other activities. If you do not want your students to be stressed at the end, make clear the importance of careful planning. The most optimal scenario is that the group writes the report in parallel to the assignment and asks you for feedback every time a section is finished.

1.4.2 Teamwork

Teamwork is extremely important. There are several approaches a tutor can adopt in order to ensure good teamwork. To help you with the process you can use the Belbin test[**?**, **?**]. This includes assessing teamwork and assign distinct roles based on the skills of each member of the team. It is highly advised that the students find their own place in their team and that they try to assign roles to each member. The group is responsible to make sure that there are no problems/frictions between the members of the team and also try to ensure that all the members contribute equally. The tutor's responsibility is to stimulate the team to take action, when there is a problem.

Some high-level roles that have to be defined during the first meeting are those of the: **Communicator** (The person whose responsibility is to communicate with the tutor on behalf of the whole team)
Secretary (The person who will keep the minutes of each meeting and will be responsible to share with the tutor)
Collaborator (A group member that will try to create and maintain relations with other groups in order to promote collaborations between them)
Try to stimulate them to explicitly address the following:

- Setting Expectations

- Project Management

- Giving & Receiving Feedback

- Teamwork Traps

- Communication

1.4.3 Motivation

In order to motivate your group, **YOU** need to be motivated first! Enthusiasm can get you a long way and trust me it is contagious! Students feel your enthusiasm and the are motivated by it.

Another way to motivate your students is to show them that this project is important also for you even if it is not. Don't appear bored or annoyed in your meetings with them! Some groups in previous years felt demotivated because their tutor's did not care enough. These students really depend on you and deserve someone committed to their learning needs the project. "Treat other people the way you would like to be treated".

Asking them to show you some results each week will also keep them engaged and motivated. They will try to impress you every week, thus they will push themselves more!

One last point. Based on student feedback, it is extremely demotivating if you do not show up in the scheduled meetings without previous notice. They - in most cases - really value their meetings with you. Be there or reschedule on time!

1.4.4 Feedback

This goes in two ways! As a tutor you can be a complaint buffer. You are the bridge between student and the coordinator. It is important to ask the students to provide feedback on the organization of the minor. In turn you can report this to the minor coordinator and help improving the minor.

Also do not forget to ask them to evaluate you. I usually ask them to write a one-page feedback report on my performance as a tutor! Using this feedback we can improve/adapt our own tutor skills!

1.4.5 Planning

Plan your meetings with the group in advance for the whole duration of the project. This will be beneficial both for you and for them! Usually 20-30 minutes a week are enough for discussing their progress.

Ask them to make their own 10 week planning with clear goals for every week! Do not forget to include report writing in this planning! Every time you have a meeting you can check the accomplishment of the weekly goals.

1.4.6 Agenda

As a personal approach, I always ask my groups to provide me with an agenda for our meeting a day before the meeting. This can help the tutor prepare and will keep the students focused on formulating their problems/issues.

1.4.7 Minutes

I ask my groups to write down the minutes of our meetings. This helps us to keep track of our decision making!

1.4.8 File Sharing

This is mainly up to you. Most of the students use Google Drive, Teams, Surfdrive, or OneDrive for sharing files. It is important to agree on that in the first meeting. This way you can have access in all their files and give them feedback quickly when needed.

2 Cases

This section is about some cases of students and groups you might come across during the course of this project.

2.1 Case 1: Internationalization

University of Twente has a high focus on internationalization. Moreover, High-Tech Human-Touch (HTHT) minors are also offered to international students. Although it is very rare for problems to appear due to nationalities it remains a possibility. Stereotypes (see Figure **??**) exist everywhere and sometimes get in the way. If this happens to you try to treat in a humorous way and try to not justify and draw attention towards cultural differences. In case this becomes a real problem you can refer to the minor coordinator.

Stereotypes in Europe:

According to Spain   According to France   According to Germany

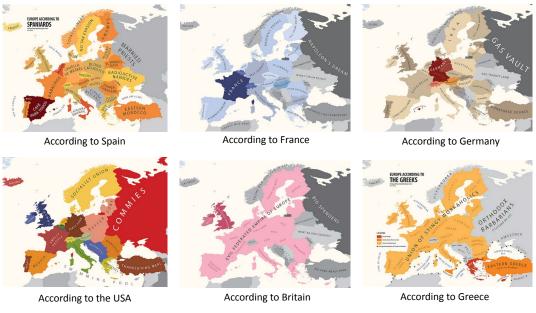According to the USA   According to Britain   According to Greece

Figure 1: Stereotypes in Europe

2.2   Case 2: Free-Riders

Free riders are students who, while being part of a team, profit from the input and energy of their fellow students without making an (equal) contribution themselves in return. It is quite often to meet this case.

Types of free riders:

- The unmotivated student

- The student who performs poorly / below average

- The student with 'special circumstances'

- The student with a different ambition level

Only the first category are 'real' free riders, but the other categories are also perceived as free riders by their team mates.

Try to act on such situations instead of thinking it will solve itself. Be careful on keeping the balances and try to stay impartial. Try to assess the real situation during a group meeting and make clear that it is their problem if they cannot work together. If the problem persists and there is an option to kick the person out of the group you should do that. But before kicking someone out you can try the following:

- First talk about the problem and come to some new and clear agreements - If it doesn't work there can be a last warning - Then the person can be kicked out If there is no other way around you take it up to the minor coordinator. if the group starts complaining at the end of the project, then it is their fault mainly. **Just make clear to them from the beginning, that they should treat problems when those appear!** Make any expectations explicit (i.e. do you go for a 10 or . . . ?). This way, the group formulates its own social contract.

See also subsection Teamwork

2.3   Case 3: Demotivated Group

In many cases you might encounter a demotivated group. This is not a very often phenomenon but in case you experience it refer to subsection Motivation

2.4   Case 4: Arrogant Group

From time to time there is a group that believes they can do everything on their own without any assistance or feedback from the tutor. Do not feel bad if that happens. It is their choice and they will have to face it's consequences alone. If a group makes it clear to you that they do not need you, feel free to enjoy your free time without any remorse. Please inform the minor coordinator in case you have such a group.

2.5   Case 5: Stressed Group

Stressed groups are usually groups lacking concrete planning or the ability to follow one. It happens some times that the stressed group is the evolution of the arrogant group. To avoid a stressed group read carefully subsection Planning

3 Support

In the process of this project there are many other authorities that can assist you in your endeavour as a tutor. If needed you can refer to this page:

Who?	What for?	Where?
Tutor	Supervisor for a subject/project	*If applicable:* Within the own institute
Teacher-mentor	1st point of contact; conducts interviews with the students about their study plans, study progress, and students can refer to him/her with questions about or problems with their study programme and studying in general.	*If applicable:* Within the own institute
Programme director	In case of serious complaints about the tuition or how it is organised or if students have wishes regarding adjustments to be made, you can refer to the programme director. It is often recommended to first talk to the board of your student association or the education coordinator.	Within the own institute
Examination board	If the student wishes to deviate from the regular curriculum and/or the rules set by the institute, he/she must submit an application to the examination board. For example: approval for exemptions, free minor/programme, etc.	Within the own institute
Bachelor / Education coordinator	Supports the programme director and is responsible for the organisational, procedural and substantive coordination of the degree programmes. If a student has complaints about the degree programme, about certain subjects or feels treated unfairly, he/she can refer to this person.	Within the own institute
Study adviser	With the study adviser students can talk about experiences with the degree programme, complaints, doubts about their choice of degree programme, study planning, study problems and delays, obtaining support in graduating, exemptions and about education and examination regulations. The study adviser can give advice or refer students to other support bodies within or outside the university.	Within the own institute
Internship coordinator	The internship coordinator provides support in finding a fitting work placement and organising an internship.	Within the own institute
Faculty internationalisation coordinator	Students can refer to this coordinator for specific information about study programmes or internships abroad.	Within the own institute
Student counsellor	The student counsellors can be referred to for, for example: - Dutch student grants - financial assistance by the UT - a change of subject - transfer problems HBO/WO; apart from personal problems - appeal procedures - studying abroad - disability and study - entrance examinations (*colloquium doctum*)	Rode Balie Bastille 1st floor
Student psychologists	Any students who need to talk about, for example, their study programme or choice of study, or because they experience personal problems, e.g. in their relationship with their parents, friends or fellow students, can refer to the student psychologists. They offer among other things:	Rode Balie, Vrijhof

4 Conclusion

Some things in this document are advises, some are alternatives, and some are rules. No matter what you choose to follow and what not, one thing is necessary. **Have a clear tutoring style and be devoted to it from day one to the last day!**. It is important to appear reliable and not confuse the students. Be patient, be yourself and try to improve in areas you thing you need improvement. Have a nice trip! This minor is a minor we are proud of! Let's keep it that way and offer our students our best. In our effort to improve **your** feedback is very valuable. Please if you have time contact me with things you believe can be improved or changed in this document. This way we can reshape these guidelines and keep this document dynamic. Thank you!

Acknowledgements