

# **The SESAME Tutor Guide**

**For tutors on the  
WISE programme**

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## Introduction

*'To teach is to learn twice'* Ancient Chinese proverb

This guide is intended to help people tutoring on *SESAME* modules understand the *SESAME* programme and what is expected of them and their students.

We have tried to make this guide as helpful and as practical as possible. It is not intended to teach you how to do your job as a tutor – that must be a combination of your individual experience and the arrangements you agree with each student. It is intended simply as a guide, particularly for tutors who may be new to distance learning and/or to *SESAME*.

Please read the Tutor Guide in conjunction with the Study Guide that accompanies the study materials.

## The SESAME programme

*'What's in a name?'* William Shakespeare

SESAME (Small Enterprise Sensitive Accessible Management Education) is a distance learning management education programme developed through a partnership between Anglia Polytechnic University (APU), the National Extension College (NEC) and the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI). All the study materials have been developed by Pilgrim Projects Limited, itself a family-run SME.

SESAME is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) Objective 3 to help individuals develop the skills needed in an increasingly competitive global marketplace and to 'encourage entrepreneurship and adaptability in the workplace'.

SESAME aims to develop the business and entrepreneurial skills of owner-managers and SME employees across the manufacturing, commercial and service sectors. It provides a comprehensive and co-ordinated course of study for individuals in small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) who wish to benefit from relevant management education by distance learning. The distance learning approach is particularly suitable for smaller businesses that find it difficult to release precious staff for training.

SESAME recognises that SMEs face barriers to employee development in terms of cost and the perceived relevance of training provision to the needs of the business. This perception is not entirely misplaced. Conventional management education is often delivered at an inappropriate level and using inappropriate language, obstructing the 'need to know' that drives demand from SMEs.

SESAME seeks to make provision more accessible, affordable and relevant to small firms. It is a Work Based Learning (WBL) programme, enabling students to learn within the context, ethos and limitations of their own workplace.

WISE is one of the newest modules in the SESAME programme. Existing modules are:

- Financial Management
- Workforce Development
- Marketing
- Business Law
- Entrepreneurship and competitiveness
- Micro Learning Organisations

## General principles: good distance education tuition and the SESAME programme

As a SESAME tutor you will be part of a student-led exchange. Your teaching starts with the student's learning needs: it is individual tuition in the form of a dialogue between a single student and you.

Each student will present you with a particular challenge, and the dialogue may focus on the understanding of the module, or on the skills required to demonstrate that understanding.

You may find that:

- some students need help with the presentation of their work before you can tackle their knowledge of the module
- some students need help to *understand* the concepts involved rather than simply reiterating them
- some students need help to relate their work experience to the module.

### ***The importance of feedback***

Teaching and learning on the SESAME programme stress that learning is an active process. Students learn best when they plan what they are going to do, do it, and then receive feedback on that work. This feedback then helps improve their understanding of what has been done, and provides the basis for improvement.

**Reflection** What do you know?

Think of something you have learned – it could be almost anything. How did you learn it?  
How did you know when you had learned it?

You might have thought of, for example, learning to drive a car, learning to bake a cake, learning to swim. Before you were a confident driver/baker/swimmer, someone probably helped you along the way by pointing out what you were doing wrong and, hopefully, how you could do it better.

The modules have been designed to provide students with as many active – and reflective – learning experiences as possible. Many of these activities take the form of checklists to help students relate what they are learning to their work. Encourage your students to undertake these activities and to acknowledge and value their achievements. Feedback, where it is

appropriate, is provided on these non-assessed activities in the study materials but discussion of activities may be the basis of some contact points.

On the SESAME programme providing feedback is a key aspect of your role as a tutor. You are **not** simply correcting students' work. The SESAME assessment strategy is described both in the Study Guide and at the end of this Tutor Guide.

Briefly, there are three formative assessments and one summative assessment. The value of feedback is considerably reduced if it takes a long time to reach students. We expect a maximum of ten days turnaround time between the receipt of your students' assignments and your marking and returning them to your students. Please bear this in mind and be sure to allow yourself time to provide adequate feedback to your SESAME students.

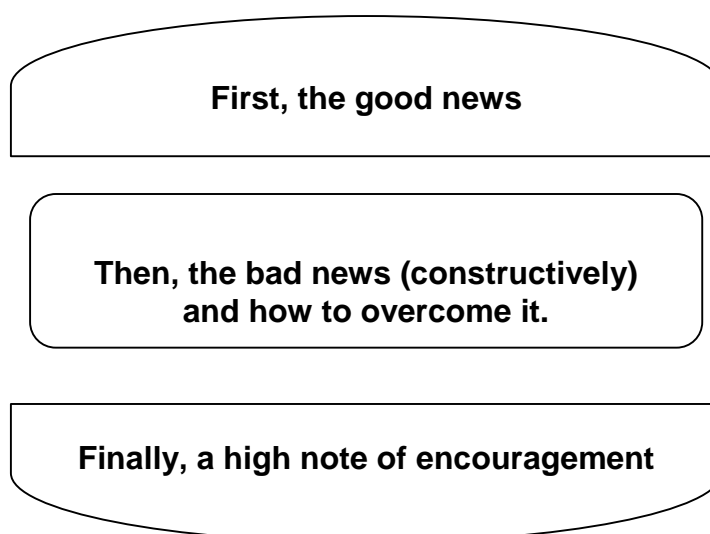
So, it is clear that successful distance tuition relies on good feedback. Giving good feedback is a skill. It can be learned and honed.

### ***Providing constructive criticism***

Constructive criticism helps the student to learn and improve. You must, however, consider a student's feelings, particularly when making adverse points, and use appropriate skills.

The Open University calls one successful strategy the 'feedback sandwich'. The tutor begins with good and positive points, then addresses failings and omissions and ends on a positive and encouraging note.

#### **The feedback sandwich - go large on it!**



### **The good news: what and why?**

Students need to know what they have done right, or well. They need to know this so that they will keep doing it, (and it will also make them feel good about themselves and their work). Sometimes they do not know why their work was good or right. They may have done well by accident – so they need to know what it was they did right.

Good news needs to be clear, specific, personalised and honest.

### **The bad news: what and why?**

Students need to know what they have done wrong and how to do better.

*‘Unhelpful comments include: “could have done better”, “disappointing”, and “not up to your standards”. We need to know **where** we went wrong, not just **that** we went wrong.’*

In numerical subjects, specific feedback on wrong answers might:

- prevent the learner repeating the specific error
- identify the misunderstanding which led to the error
- aid the development of a new and correct understanding.

In disciplines where answers are considered ‘good’ or ‘bad’ rather than ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, feedback on poor answers might illuminate:

- why their approach or answer was inappropriate
- a preferred approach
- why a preferred approach is preferred.

Bad news needs to be specific, constructive, kind and honest.

### **A note of encouragement**

End feedback on a high note and offer encouragement. Treat your students’ work with respect and acknowledge their time and effort. Put yourself into the student’s position and ask yourself what sort of feedback you would respond to best. It is often worth asking students what kind of feedback they would find most helpful. One student may want you to correct his spelling mistakes, while another will want you to concentrate only on her presentation of the relevant issues....

In the end, you will have to use your judgement to decide on the appropriate balance, but it is good to be aware of what students think they need.

When giving written feedback remember that copious red ink does not invite a positive response or create a useful dialogue, but don't forget that too few comments can give the impression that you haven't read the assignment carefully.

#### Reflection Giving good food back

Think of the last time you were disappointed by the food in a restaurant. Did you offer any feedback? How would you have provided feedback on the meal using the feedback sandwich method?

You might thank the waiter for bringing your food so promptly before pointing out that you ordered the salmon and not the duck. You could then reassure him of the kitchen's ability to rectify the mistake in a short time

#### ***Putting yourself in the student's shoes***

A general guiding principle which we have found helpful in all distance education is to treat students' work with respect and to acknowledge the time and effort invested in it. Think yourself into the position of your students and ask how you would feel if you were their situation. Studying is likely to be only one of many conflicting demands on SESAME students. Busy working adults may have no post-school study experience and may have employment or family pressures tied up with their studying. This may help you understand why some students become confused and encounter difficulties.

It is particularly important for SESAME students to plan and manage their work and study time carefully, efficiently and effectively.

#### Reflection Standing in someone else's shoes

If you have studied as an adult, you may have a good idea of some of the difficulties your students face. Try to recall some of the conflicting demands on your time and how you felt.

The Study Guide contains some examples on page 16 of typical problems faced by adult learners.



## The role of the SESAME tutor

On the SESAME programme tutors are faced with maintaining a balance between

- the academic and pastoral needs of the students on the programme
- the administrative structures of the programme (which are largely the result of the ESF funding rules)
- the need to maintain a separation between potential commercial and professional interests in the students' problems.

This can be a difficult balancing act!

### ***Core duties***

The SESAME programme allows students to acquire and develop knowledge in their workplace using the methodologies of distance education. Your role is to support and increase students' learning and development by:

- providing appropriate, effective and regular feedback to learners
- proactive contact with students using phone, fax and e mail to ensure that student learning difficulties are resolved. – there should be four tutor-initiated contact points: around the times of the assignments and an initial contact
- assisting students to relate their studies to their work and their work to their studies
- providing prompt feedback on your students formative assignments. (submission dates are to be agreed with your student, but there are guidelines in both the Study Guide and the students' Study Planner)
- marking the summative assessment and reporting on each student's achievements
- keeping accurate records on each of your students, including the date and time of each contact, and a summary of the exchange and agreed actions (tutor and student) which will follow from it.

In most distance education the tutor is freed from the responsibility of generating the course materials. It is the same with the SESAME programme. As a SESAME tutor you can concentrate your attention on learning and teaching, without the distraction of having to create a whole set of course materials. (You will, of course, receive the study materials the

students use.) This is why we stress that your central task is to foster your students' learning – and that all your student contact should have this one aim in view.

We assume, therefore, that you are broadly in sympathy with the SESAME approach.

#### Reflection Are you sitting comfortably?

From what you know of the SESAME programme so far, do you feel comfortable with its intentions and underlying values? Do you think you will be able to convey your endorsement of its approach to your students?

If you are uncertain about any aspect of the programme, please don't hesitate to contact either the SESAME administrator at APU, or one of the tutors who has offered to support you (please see later in this guide).

To undermine the course to your students, and thus their confidence in the programme, would be regarded as a serious disciplinary matter.

### **Great expectations**

*'There is nothing so finely perceived and so finely felt, as injustice.'* Charles Dickens

#### **What is expected of you**

The tutor contract letter outlines the expected times per student for various activities over the length of the programme, such as the amount of time spent giving feedback on assignments. These represent the minimum expected and are assumptions based on previous presentations of the programme. There will be considerable variation from student to student. Not all students will do all the assignments and contact time will vary. If you have a query about any aspect of your role, then please do not hesitate to contact the SESAME programme team at APU.

Tutors must be contactable throughout the period of the module presentation. However, leave of up to two consecutive weeks may be planned into your students' learning agreements, provided that this leave does not occur at the induction or summative assessment points in the programme.

Please let the SESAME administrator know as soon as possible if:

- your contact details change
- a student's contact details change

- a student's employment details change (this may affect their eligibility for the programme)
- a student has withdrawn or is likely to withdraw from the programme.

### **What can students expect?**

In a successful relationship with your student, you must meet their expectations, and they must meet yours. The exchange must be seen and felt to be fair and equal. In order to meet these expectations, you must know first of all what they are, and then how they may have been formed. The expectations of the student will have been shaped by several things including the marketing literature for the programme, the programme guide, and the study materials.

Having joined the programme, students receive the study materials, consisting of the main module and the Study Guide. The Study Guide is intended to illuminate their path through the programme. On page 26 of the Study Guide, students are encouraged to think about what they expect of a tutor and to incorporate these ideas into the learning contract.

#### **Reflection** What is this I see before me?

Read through the Study Guide. Make a note of anything that strikes you, or any questions that you may have.

You should now have a better understanding of the programme, and the students' expectations of you and the programme. We hope that any outstanding issues will be resolved in the rest of this Tutor Guide. If there are still things about which you are uncertain, contact the SESAME administration team at APU, who will be able to help.

Let's move on to look at perhaps the most critical formative point in your relationship with a student – 'first contact'.

### **What can you expect?**

In addition to the following, you will have a particular set of expectations which you must make clear to your students. At the very least, you can expect the following:

- courtesy and respect at all times
- commitment to the programme
- reasonable contact at mutually convenient times
- assignments handed in at agreed times.

## **First contact**

*'Well begun is half done.'* Proverb

Contact your students in the first week of the programme. Students expect this and will contact the SESAME programme administration team if this does not happen. You then agree with each student how often, how and when contact will take place. This will be recorded in the Learning Agreement. Contact will be both tutor-led (initial contact and assessment points) and student led (i.e. student initiates contact with the tutor). Students should feel able to contact you when they need to and we rely on your professional judgement about when and how often this takes place. You are expected to be in regular contact; if no contact occurs within the agreed times, you should follow this up by trying to contact the student.

When you make the first calls to your SESAME students they will not know you, and you will not know them or their characters, aims, expectations and work or personal situations. They will be expecting you to call, but will not know exactly when.

### Reflection – Cold calling

Think back to the last time that a double-glazing or life insurance salesperson phoned you unexpectedly. How did you feel about being phoned out of the blue by someone you did not know? How could you ensure that your first call to a SESAME student doesn't generate the same initial reaction?

If first contact is well planned and follows on from a good introductory letter or email, then it can be informative and revealing. An introductory letter should set up a time for the first call so there is no need for the student to be unsure about this initial contact. If it is inconvenient for the student to be contacted by you, encourage him or her to contact you. Many tutors include a brief biography of their career, so that students have a better sense of who you are.

The introductory letter can also encourage students to be proactive; this can also help to instil a sense of ownership in the student. Because the SESAME programme is essentially free to students, they have little to lose financially from failing to complete the programme. Promoting a sense of ownership and responsibility for participation in the programme is likely to encourage commitment and completion.

The aim of this first phone contact is to:

- put students at ease.

- get to know the student
- ensure the students understand what the programme requires of them and you
- establish your pattern of contact.
- agree next contact – which will be about the learning plan and thus what they need to think about before this.

The first contact call needs to establish the ground rules between you and the student that will provide a common understanding of how and when future contact will happen and how it will be managed. As such, you need to be aware of the things that both parties will want to get from that first call *before* you make it.

### **Some things to be aware of**

There are a few things of which you should be particularly aware before making the first contact:

- SESAME students may never have done a distance learning course.
- They may have no educational experience at this level.
- Their weekly staff meeting may be on a Thursday (for example).
- If a student works in an open-plan office, he or she may need to take your calls away from his or her normal workspace, in order to get some privacy.

#### **Reflection I've got a little list**

Think about your objectives in making the first call to a SESAME student. You may find it helpful to make a list of the things that you would like to establish in the first contact.

Now put yourself in the student's shoes. What might a SESAME student want to establish in first contact?

Here are some first contact hints and tips from other SESAME tutors – you may want to add your own.

- Stay in control – of the time and the case.
- Take notes during the phone call.
- Plan each and every interaction – if you are unsure, delay.
- Arrange a convenient time for all of the early calls.

- Ask about the student's job title and job specification or duties.
- Find out about the size of their company and the nature of its business.
- Arrange a good point of contact – if not in the office then at home, so that the student feels at ease.
- Ask if the student has completed any previous SESAME modules. You may be able to offer comparisons with these units. If not, then a new student may need a lot of hand-holding.
- Establish 'rules of engagement' – e.g. no calls after 21:00.
- Offer contact details.
- It is helpful if you send each student a short biography outlining your background and experience relevant to the programme.
- As SESAME is about problem-based learning, encourage the student to choose a problem to solve at work.
- Prompt them about forms (the matched-funding form will be the most likely to concern them) but balance the need to do this with the need to help the student settle in.
- Make sure that students know that they don't have to make excuses or pretend to be out if they are too busy to talk to you when you call.
- Be clear about any follow-up action and the next contact.
- Contact can be via phone, email, fax or letter. All tutors on the programme must be on email. Choose and agree a form that is suitable for both you and the student and appropriate for the communication.
- Encourage students to be pro-active in phoning you, at mutually convenient times, of course.

### **Students' responses to first contact**

The responses of students to a first call can vary widely. Here are some examples of responses that have been experienced by tutors on the SESAME module.

- a) The student thanks you for your call, checks details of your contact number and says that he will call you if he needs help. He is quite clear that he does not want regular contacts.

- b) The student launches into a list of personal problems and illnesses that will soon be out of the way so that she can start on SESAME. The call takes a long time, without much discussion of business or education.
- c) The student says that he is too busy to begin the course now, but expects to catch up.
- d) The student complains about the forms and administration involved with the course.
- e) The student complains about the materials, and says that they were not written by anyone who knew about running a small business like hers.
- f) You explain how the module works, but the student replies that she did another SESAME module and the tutor set things up quite differently.

### Reflection What next?

What would you do in such situations?

Well, here are a few suggestions....

- a) Don't take it personally – you probably won't ever find out what's going on. Around assignment times, you might telephone or write to offer help. Remember that these students are usually mature enough to have their own agendas, which might be quite different from what you are expecting.
- b) This situation is very difficult to deal with. Some tutors are more willing and able than others to provide counselling and support, but it's not really what SESAME is about. You can try asking the student to prepare some work related to the course, so you can focus on that in your next contact, rather than parts of her life that are really none of your business.
- c) This might be the case, but don't count on it. This response is extremely common, and tutors find that a gentle push is required to help the student begin to build SESAME into what is probably an already overcrowded life. You can also point out that it isn't necessary to do the whole course, or the assignments, but it is still worth working through certain parts of the material. Try to get them to work out the problem that SESAME is intended to help with and sell it that way.
- d) You can't do much but sympathise and point out that by filling in the forms they are getting a course paid for by the EC, and that such forms have been introduced to stop scams and frauds. This tends to be a background mumble, and if the rest of it is

going well, nothing bad happens. If the relationship is going well, you can tell students that these forms trigger your pay.

- e) Complaints about the materials are rare. It may be that the student is quite right, and shouldn't be doing this programme. Such students need more basic, operational help. Encourage the student to identify a problem with the business, and see if SESAME would help. Tutors facing this situation should note that the student is likely to leave early on.
- f) This happens because there are small differences between modules in the way the assignments work, and the way that individual tutors like to do things. There is considerable latitude for you to agree variations with the student if they would be helpful, although the final project report is governed by APU regulations.

### ***Regular contact***

*'What outcries pluck me from my naked bed?'* Thomas Kyd

Your experience of tutoring on the SESAME programme will not be the same as 'regular' supervising experience you have had on taught programmes in universities, or even on more traditional distance learning programmes.

Tutorial contact routines and times will vary from student to student according to their needs, situation and experience. A productive and stress-free regime will be easier to establish if you can:

- arrange a time and day for regular contact
- agree a limit to the length of the contact
- agree on whether you or the student will make the regular calls
- exchange email addresses if necessary
- set boundaries on contact times.

It is essential that you keep accurate and up-to date logs of your contact with students as these logs will inform tutor pay.

The role of the tutor on this programme will be something closer to a *mentor* role. Don't forget that in their own areas of work, whether hairdressing, preaching, electronics or used-car dealing, the students will be the experts in their fields. You will tutor them in applying the learning from the module to their business.



## Real-life experiences

Tutors' experience of regular contact can vary greatly from module to module, and student to student. Here are some tutors' experiences of regular contact calls:

- a) You can hear your student in the background telling the admin assistant, 'If that's my tutor tell him I'm busy and don't put him through'.
- b) The first few weeks go well – until the first assignment is due. Suddenly, the student doesn't answer your calls and doesn't return messages.
- c) A student sends you a business plan - perhaps based on SESAME work – that he or she intend to take to a bank manager, and asks for your valued advice.
- d) You realise that one of your students is a direct competitor of a firm that you carry out consultancy work for – independently of SESAME.
- e) After a while, the student seems to focus more of the shortcomings of one of her colleagues, rather than the problem that the module is supposed to be concerned with.
- f) A student telephones to say that the solution to the problem he was working with has been so successful that he no longer has the time to complete the programme, but thanks anyway.
- g) The further the course goes on, on the more it becomes clear that the problems faced by the student are not really problems that your particular module deals with.
- h) The first assignment arrives with a wide ranging set of problems described and a plan to sort them all out. It looks good but is, of course, completely impractical.

### Reflection What now?

What would you do to address each of these situations?

Well – you're not the first (or the last) to be faced with such problems, so here are some suggestions from previous tutors:

- a) The tutor concerned had built up a good relationship with the student, but was curious and so insisted on being put through. It turned out the student had not completed the assignment or returned the forms, and didn't want to admit it. Some tutors make it clear in the first contact that it's ok for a student to be 'too busy' to take a call, and make arrangements to speak at a more convenient time. It is also ok

to be relaxed about assignment deadlines – except for the final report – as long as the right thinking is going on.

- b) Students who disappear around the time of the first assignment are quite common, particularly if the student's previous educational background is not strong. A SESAME manager may be perfectly competent in explaining what they want and think on the telephone, but may find it difficult to write or explain using more technical language. You cannot do anything unless you establish contact; again a carefully worded letter of encouragement may help.
- c) This is outside your role as a SESAME tutor. If you do advise on the business plan, then you will be acting as an individual and if it goes wrong, APU does not carry legal insurance cover to look after you. That said, some tutors have offered comments on such things without mishap, but made it clear that they were not offering business advice in any professional capacity. There are no examples of SESAME work turning into a consultancy relationship.
- d) There is a potential conflict of interest. In the one case where this has happened, the student was offered another tutor, but she declined thinking that the conflict of interest was not of any particular concern.
- e) There is no reason why this situation cannot be considered as a constraint on the business, but it should not be regarded as a main SESAME problem. If a student does refer to colleagues in a disparaging way in an assignment, it is important that the work is returned to a home address – there has been a problem caused by a student's colleague reading about himself in a SESAME assignment.
- f) Congratulations, you have helped someone. The NEC might want to use the example as a case study in their publicity. Unfortunately, you won't get any more money for tutoring them, unless they make their decisions in the final week.
- g) This situation is best avoided by setting the problem as early as possible, but it has happened, often where a professional (accountant or personnel officer for example) insists on redefining everything in terms of what they can already do. If you cannot deflect them, they are likely to get a weak mark in the final project report, although that does not mean that the course has been a waste of time for them. Sometimes, it may be advisable for the student to change modules, but this won't be appreciated if the student already has professional qualifications in that subject area.

- h) SESAME isn't about producing fantasies or encouraging fashionable 'guru' solutions. You need to encourage the student to reduce the scope of the problem and focus on what he or she is going to do, and why. You may not always be successful.

### ***Setting boundaries***

*'The line must be drawn here!'* Captain Jean-Luc Picard

One of your first aims as a SESAME tutor is to establish the form of, and limits to, your tutorial contact and involvement with the student.

Students are more likely to succeed if an appropriate relationship exists with their tutor – if an inappropriate (or no) relationship develops, students are more likely to fail.

You are expected to be professional and supportive, but you are not expected to be a counsellor/therapist to your students, nor are you expected to be an unpaid consultant to them. It also goes without saying that your relationship with students should not extend beyond the bounds of propriety.

## Administration

As a tutor, you will not be expected to have an appreciable administrative role but there are few tasks you will be required to carry out.

### ***SESAME and the ESF***

We have touched on one unique facet of the tutorial role in the SESAME programme: the need to chase students for forms. From the relationship-building point of view this is unfortunate.

As you know, the SESAME programme is funded by The European Social Fund and is a matched funding programme. So, while SESAME has no direct cost to the beneficiaries, matched funding means:

- students and their employers must contribute equivalently – student work time.
- if students do not complete their studies, there is a pro-rata reduction in the grant from the European Social Fund – consequently, we may not cover the production (writing and developing), or presentation (tutoring) costs of the programme.

These two factors have informed the way the Sesame programme is presented.

Try not to stress the issues of form filling and return too heavily in the first contact, as it can sour things. The forms that a SESAME student has to fill in are listed in Appendix C. Don't allow form filling to become an issue that gets in the way of the tutor-student relationship. Refer the student to the SESAME administrator at APU.

### ***Keeping a log***

You will have to keep a record, or **log**, of your student contacts. A standard form is included at the end of the Tutor Guide, but you may like to devise your own simple form with your name and the student's name, together with the title of the module. Leave plenty of room for a note of contact dates and times and a summary of the conversations you have had.

It is essential that you keep such a form. Not only will this assist us in analysing the programme but, more importantly, it will help you recall previous conversations with a student and will help build up an understanding of each of your students learning needs. Moreover, should a student withdraw from the programme it will ensure that we have the last point of tutor activity from which to pay you. Your student contact forms are to be returned to APU at the end of the programme.

***The beneficiary returns (student timesheets)***

In order for us to draw down money from the earmarked ESF funds we have to demonstrate that the employers are releasing their employees and thus enabling them to study.

We have designed a form to be completed by SESAME students and their employers. You have no role in collecting or processing the form – however it would be helpful if you would remind students during your contact with them to return the Sesame Participant Timesheet. The Study Guide contains instructions as to how to complete the form.

This form is directly relevant to all of us because if we don't have it – even if you and we have done our work – APU does not get paid. Don't worry, however, APU have guaranteed to pay you until we inform you that a student is no longer on the programme.

## Assessment

In developing the SESAME programme, we have acknowledged that the ability to reflect on practice is one of the hallmarks of professionalism. The SESAME programme encourages students to become reflective practitioners. While it can be difficult to quantify this skill, you can play an important role in helping students develop reflective thinking. In your contacts with students and through your questioning, you can guide students through the stages of reflection and encourage them to think about their experiences in such a way as to encourage changes in approach or behaviour.

Because of the wide spread of experience and qualifications of the students on the SESAME programme, and the disparate nature of their work environment (and, hence, what WBL means to them), assessment on the SESAME programme is deliberately designed to be flexible and inclusive. This means that different students may submit work for credit in different ways.

Each SESAME module is accredited by Anglia Polytechnic University and carries 20 credits at Level 1 (the definition of Level 1 is included in Appendix A). The diploma of Credit in Small Business Management has been developed especially for the SESAME programme and requires 60 credits. If students wish to gain credit for their work on the programme and/or to gain the Diploma, they must complete the final assignment, that is, the project report, and receive a satisfactory pass mark.

The assessment has three layers.

### ***Generic level descriptors***

The first layer of assessment to be applied is the set of generic level descriptors for Level 1. These are the same for all modules, and are included in Appendix A. The descriptors indicate the appropriate level of understanding and help to establish the level at which students should pitch their assignments.

### ***Specific learning outcomes***

The descriptors in the first layer temper interpretation of the specific learning outcomes for each programme of study. These are set out at the beginning of each module.

### ***The grading scheme***

The third layer is the *grading scheme*, also in the Study Guide. For this presentation of SESAME, the standard APU grading scheme will be used. This is as follows and on page 29 of the Study Guide.

70 – 100	First class
60-69	Upper Second
50 – 59	Lower Second
40 – 49	Third
0 – 39	Fail

These three layers are applied to the various elements of the assessment process.

### ***The elements of the assessment process***

#### **The learning plan**

Students are expected to agree with you a learning plan. Although this will be largely determined by the time-scale of the programme, it does give students some opportunity to take control of their learning. Primarily it should encourage them, with your help, to plan and structure their work.

#### **The learning journal**

The learning journal is intended to:

- be a generic assessment tool, achieving parity across all modules
- be formative in nature
- reinforce the notion of work-based learning and to bridge the divide between work and academic study
- encourage learners to keep track of ideas, thoughts, problems, questions, etc. and to take new learning into the workplace
- minimise extra work, i.e. to form a basis for the (summative) project report, rather like early drafts of a research report
- promote reflection, both personal and professional
- form the basis of discussions with their tutor

#### **Parts of the learning Journal**

The parts of the Learning Journal are as follows:

1. Identify a problem or issue and justify reasons for its choice.

2. Identify the skills, knowledge and tools necessary for solving the problem.
3. Present proposals, solutions and recommendations.

### **How it works**

The parts of the Learning Journal reflect the three parts of the project report (a cross between a research report and a business report).

Learners should make entries regularly, but at least after study sessions, and particularly if/when they have applied something new in the workplace.

Entries should include any points students particularly want to discuss with tutors.

- Submissions should form the basis of weighty discussions about how the learning journal work will be carried forward to the project report.

### **Possible problems/challenges**

- The idea of using a Learning Journal might be too open, i.e. not specific enough.
- There may be difficulties assessing the formative submissions (assignments). It is difficult to give concrete advice as it is likely there will be great diversity. You will not be required to grade these formative assignments but your comments and feedback should indicate how well they are dealing with the particular focus of that assignment – i.e. identify a problem; identify the skills, knowledge and tools necessary for solving the problem; and present proposals, solutions and recommendations.
- It is not always clear how to help learners make the best use of the Learning Journal, especially for the project report.

We hope you will discuss with your fellow tutors the issues that arise in terms of your own module. You will be given the email addresses of your fellow tutors to assist this process.

### **The project report**

The project report is the vehicle by which students will pull together their work on the programme. It is structured in a relatively conventional fashion suitable for a research or business report, viz.

- 1 Identify a problem or issue and justify reasons for its choice.
- 2 Identify the skills, knowledge and tools necessary for solving the problem.
- 3 Present proposals, solutions and recommendations.



Students' work in the learning journal should form the bulk of the content of the report. If they have worked thoughtfully (and with appropriate guidance), they should have to hand the information they need, examples of application and references to theory.

### **Presentation**

The project report should be presented formally, i.e. polished in terms of writing style, appearance, grammar, punctuation, structure, in much the same way as a business report would be presented. Wherever possible, assignments should be word-processed. However, if this is impossible for a student, then legible, hand-written work will be accepted. The project should be a maximum of 4,500 words in length. This does not include appendices, which are not assessable. There is no minimum length. Students should include a word count on their assignments.

SESAME students may, with prior permission from their tutor, agreed in writing and copied to APU, have an extension of two weeks on the submission of the final project. There can be no deferred submission after this date, which differs from standard APU procedures.

The student's original thinking about application of new learning in the workplace and, particularly, proposals and recommendations for improvements, is of paramount importance here, and indicates the ability (or otherwise) to meet the criteria for assessment both in academic terms and in terms of workplace learning.

### ***Handling assignments***

Assignments are not compulsory, but for students to achieve APU recognition of twenty academic points for the module, then they need to submit a final summative assignment that is up to the required standard. It's a good idea to discuss the assignments early on in the programme with each student and get some idea of which assignments the student intends to submit.

Formative assignments do not need to be graded as these do not count towards formal assessment. However, some tutors and students may prefer to grade assignments to give students an indication of the standard of work they are achieving. The final summative assignment should be graded according to the marking scheme for the module. It is likely that this marking scheme will be devised at the tutor training day we hope to hold in January, 2003.

**Dates**

Suggested dates for submission of assignments are indicated in the Study Planner. Specific dates for the formative assignments should be agreed between tutor and student. However, the deadline for the summative assignment should be adhered to as far as possible. If a student does require an extension, this should be agreed with the tutor in writing in advance and notified to APU. Extensions should be no more than two weeks, lest the student fall further behind. Extensions for the final project should be confirmed in writing to the student and APU.

**Format**

Assignments should be word-processed as far as possible. However, if this is impossible for a student, then *legible* handwritten work is acceptable.

**Length**

The final summative assignment should be a maximum of 4,500 words in length. This does not include appendices, which are non-assessable.

**Routing**

Students should always send assignments directly to the tutor. The assignment should be accompanied by a completed assignment submission form and tutor feedback form. The student should keep a copy of the assignment. The tutor should return the assignment with the completed forms to the SESAME administration team at APU within ten days of receipt. Tutors should keep a copy of the tutor feedback form in case the original is lost in the post.

**Feedback**

Assignment feedback should be both verbal and written. Tutors should ensure that constructive, written feedback is provided for the student for all assignments.

**Confidentiality**

All assignments and information to which a tutor has access during the course of the programme should be treated as strictly confidential. Assignments may contain sensitive and high-level information particular to the student's company and the disclosure of this information to a third party would be considered as a serious matter.

## Marking schemes

On the SESAME programme the marking scheme is only relevant to the project report, as the optional assignments are not graded.

SESAME marking schemes are jointly developed by the tutors at the tutor training days. These provide a framework within which a tutor can work. However, as is always the case with WBL, every assignment will be different, and tutors may need to tailor the framework to students' individual responses. Do not be afraid to do this, as no-one is going to over-ride your professional judgement. Not every learning outcome will be addressed by all students' projects. Negotiate a weighting with the student if necessary, or encourage the student to include a brief rationale for including or excluding sections of the course or particular learning outcomes.

This specific marking scheme is, in effect, the framework, or base layer, upon which the three layers of assessment above are applied.

The final level of the assessment task for the tutor is the application of their academic and professional judgement within each domain of the marking scheme, to arrive at a grade or mark for each.

In line with university regulations, the standard APU grading scheme is used for SESAME.

<p><b>First class</b>  <b>70-100</b></p>	<p>Should be <i>distinctive</i>. Excellent identification of the problem; use of appropriate range of sources; sophisticated data collection and interpretation. Evidence of further reading and excellent presentation of findings. Applies theory and concepts and demonstrates excellent evaluation skills.</p>
<p><b>Upper second</b>  <b>60-69</b></p>	<p>Generally an above average response, with all areas dealt with at least adequately, or a few gaps which are acknowledged. May be a mixture of excellent and adequate.</p>
<p><b>Lower second</b>  <b>50-59</b></p>	<p>Much of the work is adequate, or at least attempted, with some gaps. Limited application of reading/theory, and limited use of sources and data. Many combinations of mixes possible here – good problem specification but little reflection. Weak analysis, good demonstration of skills.</p>

<b>Third</b>  <b>40-49</b>	This work is weak in most respects. There will be no evidence of a clear grasp of the key concepts, or of the skills and knowledge needed to solve the problem. Data will be poorly developed or inappropriate and findings will be presented in an unclear or unsystematic manner. Little evidence of critical evaluation.
<b>Fail</b>  <b>0 -39</b>	Students showing a clear fail are those deemed to have demonstrated that they largely failed to understand the material, failed to demonstrate skills and competence, and did not apply theory to practice (or whatever key criteria are under discussion) <i>to such an extent that the student would be recommended to work through the entire module again.</i>  [Note that this is a University regulation, but at present we do not have a mechanism in place to allow this to happen for the SESAME programme!]

### ***Example marking schemes***

The existing marking schemes devised by SESAME tutors are given in Appendix B. Some of the modules may not be running in the current scheme, but their marking schemes are included in order to give a broad picture of the process and basis upon which tutors arrive at a marking scheme for a module.

Broadly, the marking schemes cover:

- identification and definition of the problem
- selection of methodology/techniques
- quality of application, evaluation and conclusions
- demonstration of personal learning, reflection and creativity.

The marking schemes for the original four SESAME modules are included on the next page.

### Marking scheme summary of the four original SESAME modules with four different weightings

	E&C	IT	FM	WD
Problem definition	25	25	25	10
Observation/selection of techniques/methodology	25	25	30	25
Application, evaluation	40	40	25	35
Reflection/conclusions	10	10	20	20
Personal learning				10

The four sets of weightings reflect the ways in which the different groups of tutors view their modules.

Tutors can use their own discretion within the ranges summarised above to facilitate a fair mark for each student, given the fact that each assignment is in effect individually proposed, and therefore each will have a different focus, with different emphasis on each segment.

In order to make our feedback system watertight, tutors should include a miniature grid as above (customised if required) so that the assessment board can see where the marks for each student were won and lost. As each student is effectively the world expert on his/her company's problem at the time and the tutor is his/her expert advisor, no one will challenge your particular mark analysis, as long as it is explicit.

## **Finding support**

You are more likely to offer a good service to your students if you also feel supported in your role. This Tutor Guide is intended to provide some support as well as serving as a resource to which you can refer whenever you need to do so.

### ***Support from APU***

If you are in any doubt about any aspect of the programme, particularly those relating to administrative issues, please contact Andrew Brady, the WISE programme manager at APU. If he can't help you, he will be able to point you in the direction of someone who can. Here are his details:

Andrew Brady

ESF Unit

First Floor, Ashby House

Bishop Hall Lane

Chelmsford , Essex CM1 1SQ

Tel: 01245-493131 (ext 4857)

Mobile: 07957 722794

E-Mail: [apb1@apollo.apu.ac.uk](mailto:apb1@apollo.apu.ac.uk)

### ***Support from your fellow tutors***

Your fellow tutors on the SESAME programme may have a lot, a little or no experience of tutoring on a distance learning programme. However, you all have skills and knowledge which will help you on the programme. Please try to support and learn from one another wherever possible. If it seems appropriate, it may be possible to set up an online support group although this has not been an unmitigated success in the past.

### ***Support from more experienced SESAME tutors***

Three tutors who have been involved with the SESAME programme since it began have kindly offered to be available to offer support and answer questions, particularly in the early days. You will be given the contact details of one of these people so that you can get in touch if you feel concerned about any particular aspect of tutoring at a distance or about the SESAME programme in particular.

You may like to regard this person as your own tutor mentor. However, please bear in mind that these people have offered their time and the benefit of their experience voluntarily. They will be happy to help you if they can, but their time is also valuable and so it is important not to take advantage of their good will.

***Other sources of help***

Pilgrim Projects is a small business offering educational consultancy and developing open and distance learning materials. We have been involved with SESAME from its inception and may be able to help you with miscellaneous questions, particularly if they relate to the development of the materials or to setting up an online support group for tutors. We are also always open to suggestions of ways in which we might improve the materials.

Please contact

Pip Hardy     [pip@pilgrimprojects.co.uk](mailto:pip@pilgrimprojects.co.uk)     Tony Sumner.   [tony@pilgrimprojects.co.uk](mailto:tony@pilgrimprojects.co.uk)

Pilgrim Projects Limited

91 Waterbeach Road

Landbeach

Cambridge CB4 8EA

[www.pilgrimprojects.co.uk](http://www.pilgrimprojects.co.uk)

***Finally***

We hope you have found this Tutor Guide helpful and that it will be a useful reference.

Good luck in your work with students on the SESAME programme – we hope it will be a stimulating and rewarding experience.

## Appendix A Level 1 definition

### ***Development of knowledge and understanding (subject specific)***

These will be largely subject specific and defined by increasing levels of autonomy and responsibility expected of the learner.

The Learner:

- has a given factual and/or conceptual knowledge base with emphasis on the nature of the field of study and appropriate terminology
- can demonstrate awareness of ethical issues in current areas of study and is able to discuss these in relation to personal beliefs and values

### ***Cognitive/intellectual skills (generic)***

The Learner:

- can analyse with guidance using given classifications/principles
- can collect and categorise ideas and information in a predictable and standard format
- can evaluate the reliability of data using defined techniques and/or tutor guidance
- can apply given tools/methods accurately and carefully to a well-defined problem and begin to appreciate the complexity of the issues

### ***Key/transferable skills (generic)***

The Learner:

- can work effectively with others as a member of a team and meet obligations to others (for example, tutors, peers, and colleagues)
- can work within an appropriate ethos and can use and access a range of learning resources can evaluate own strengths and weakness within criteria largely set by others
- can manage information, collect appropriate data from a range of sources and undertake simple research tasks with external guidance
- can take responsibility for own learning with appropriate support
- can communicate effectively in a format appropriate to the discipline(s) and report practical procedures in a clear and concise manner



- can apply given tools/methods accurately and carefully to a well defined problem and begins to appreciate the complexity of the issues

***Practical skills (subject specific)***

These will be largely subject-specific and defined by increasing levels of autonomy and responsibility expected of the learner. The learner will also be expected to demonstrate the application of ethical understanding to specific contexts.

The Learner:

- can operate in predictable, defined contexts requiring use of a specified range of standard techniques
- is able to act with limited autonomy, under direction or supervision, within defined guidelines

Some or all of the following skills will be identified by subject specialists:

- |  |                             |                            |
|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| a) Investigative skills/methods of enquiry | d) Content/textual analysis | g) Professional skills     |
| b) Laboratory skills/fieldcraft            | e) Performance skills       | h) Spatial awareness       |
| c) Data and information processing/IT      | f) Product development      | i) Management of resources |

## Appendix B Marking schemes

### Information Technology Skills marking scheme

Learning outcome	%	Marking	
		Low	Average High
The problem	25	Broad scope Irrelevant Wrong module Simplistic Lack of understanding and analysis Unfocussed	Focussed Demonstration of selective process Relevance of company – why/how Relevance and suitability to module context Role/relationship of student to issue Lateral thinking and creativity
Reflection/observation (technique selection)	25	Little/no connection between problem and material	Linking problem to the material Mapping/integration Why it is relevant
Analysis/application	40	Misinterpretation of theory – wrong tools Naivety as to their own ability/interpretation of problem Nil – problem considered complete Uncritical of solution/management	Apply relevant techniques to solve problem Recognise their ability to solve problem relevant to their position in company What still remains to be done? Critical reflections on / limitations of solutions and decisions
Conclusions	10		Summarising personal learning and decisions made Recommendations and action taken

### Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness marking scheme

Learning outcome	%
Reflection on problem	25
Selection of techniques	25
Application	40
Reflection	10

### Financial Management marking scheme

Learning outcome	%	Specific topic	Notes
Reflection, definition of problem	25	To improve the long-term financial prospects of the SME and present findings in acceptable report format	Strategic planning. Budget processes and techniques. Performance assessment.
Choice of appropriate techniques	30	Students have clearly identified the appropriate accounting techniques to apply (above)	
Application of techniques	25	Students have computed and presented correctly their findings	
Reflection	20	Students present valid and coherent conclusions and offer workable recommendations	

### Workforce Development marking scheme

Learning outcome	%
Introduction	10
Defining the problem	
Reflection/observation	25
Analysis/application	35
Conclusions and recommendations	20
Personal learning	10

## Appendix C SESAME forms

SESAME students have a variety of forms to fill in when they join, pursue, or leave the programme. You will be sent copies of all of the forms used on the programme, which are listed below.

- Matched funding hourly rate of pay form
- ESF data Protection Form
- ESF non-completion form
- Beneficiary record sheet (timesheet)
- Assignment submission form
- Tutor feedback form (available electronically).