



Post school closure: what to expect and TSP study skills resources

PhD tutor briefing document

What to expect?

On 23rd March 2020, schools across the UK began to close to curb the spread of Covid-19. By the time pupils return in August and September, they will have missed anywhere between 3 and 4 months of traditional schooling which amounts to approximately 40% of the school year. When you begin your placement, particularly in the Autumn term, you may find that pupils are not at the same level you would normally expect or be as ready to learn. This could be due to various factors:

The 'Covid Slide'

In a normal academic year, a phenomenon known as 'The Summer Slide' sees pupils return from summer break often having lost a proportion of the knowledge and academic skills obtained in the previous school year. This is after 6-7 weeks of holiday and not the 23 week school closure they have experienced and so concerns have been raised over how ready pupils will be to learn when they return and how much of last year's work will have to be repeated.

Varying Experiences of School Closure

While we have all had to make changes to our lifestyles based on government restrictions and the impact of the pandemic, not everyone will have had the same experiences of lockdown as their peers. Whilst many pupils will have not had significant additional issues, some will have lost loved ones or have experienced the worry around people they care about being hospitalised. Some of the pupils' parents may have been put on furlough or may have lost their jobs entirely. This uncertainty will have put major strains on their home lives and may mean they have things on their mind other than school.

Mental Health Challenges

Heightened anxiety or feelings of isolation may have exasperated pre-existing mental health issues in the young people in your group or will have deeply affected those who were not previously identified as having troubles. Many people are fearful of being in crowded areas or socialising with people outside their immediate household and so they could be apprehensive about being back at school. For pupils who missed exams, the uncertainty of how their results will be considered in the future will also be causing them concern.

How to support your pupils

We may not be able to change what is going on outside the classroom but we can ensure pupils participate in a programme which challenges them and helps them realise their potential, leaving them proud of their achievements.

Make sure you know what is essential to cover in each tutorial so that if it takes pupils a bit longer to grasp concepts then you can take your time to ensure they have a full understanding before you move on. Having a range of activities to support pupil learning, particularly in your early tutorials, will also help pupils engage with the topic as well as feel more comfortable in the tutorial environment.

The best thing you can do is to be patient and understanding with the scholars in your group and report any concerns you have quickly. Remember, we are always here to support you and provide advice so if you need to, contact your Programme Officer who will be happy to help you come to a solution.

Study skills resources

As you may have noticed, this year's handbook template includes study skills resources. We have included these to support PhD tutors to cover key academic skills that pupils are likely to need on The Scholars Programme (**please note:** these are not included in Key Stage 2 and 3 pre-designed programmes, but resources are available). You can access supporting powerpoint resources here:

- Key Stage 2 and 3
- Key Stage 4

As a tutor, you are welcome to decide how best to use these. For example, you may already cover these skills in your usual course delivery or find some of the skills are less relevant to cover separately than other. To help you some guidance is given below:

- The powerpoint slides are designed to introduce pupils to the skill and the study skills appendices will summarise this information and allow pupils to access it throughout the course.
- These have been designed so that you can integrate them into your existing tutorials, and you should feel that you can adapt these strategies to the specific content of your course. For example, to develop research skills, when you approach a source or reading you will be using in a tutorial, you can ask pupils to first evaluate the source for its utility and effectiveness or ask pupils to identify the information they would need to do this. If you are asking pupils to evaluate a source or data set, you could use the relevant appendix to support pupils' initial reading and include further questions to guide pupils towards the key takeaways from that source to your tutorial. Similarly, to build pupils' referencing skills you could ask them to write a reference for a source that you have already included in your handbook.
- The final slide of each powerpoint provides some more specific suggestions about the activities you may do with pupils to incorporate the skill into your existing tutorial plans and to help build these skills in pupils. Additionally, some of the powerpoint slides have a brief comment in the notes section under the slides to help you consider key messages you may want to share with pupils.

- You could also incorporate a brief study skills showcase into your tutorial that introduces pupils to the skill using the powerpoint and asks them to apply it to something in the tutorial. This may work best for tutors delivering the programme virtually. As learning fatigue is reached more quickly in virtual learning, a study skills showcase will allow pupils to “change gears” and approach the tutorial topic from a new perspective.
- For those delivering tutorials virtually, feedback will now be given in written format, rather in a one-to-one format. As such, we have prepared a specific study skills session that explores effective essay writing for tutorial 6. Again, you should feel free to adapt this and incorporate other strategies you may wish to. By tutorial 6, pupils will have written a draft of some or all of their final assignment, so this session could be used to help pupils self-evaluate their draft in the context of your feedback to help them determine what changes they wish to make before submitting the final assignment. Tutors delivering sessions in person, you may wish to incorporate some of this information into tutorial 5 to get pupils thinking about the components of an effective essay.