



Personalised Support Resource Pack



Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Contents

1	INTRODUCTION.....	1
2	WHAT IS PERSONALISED SUPPORT	2
3	PERSONALISED SUPPORT AGENT RECRUITMENT POSTING	3
3.1	ROLE DESCRIPTION:	3
3.2	PROFILE AND SKILLS.....	3
3.3	FUNCTIONS	4
4	COMPARISON OF COURSE STAFF ROLES	4
5	INTERVENTIONS & EMAIL TEMPLATES	5
5.1	INTERVENTIONS TARGETING COURSE COMPLETION	5
5.1.1	<i>Intervention 1:</i>	5
5.1.2	<i>Intervention 2:</i>	6
5.1.3	<i>Intervention 3:</i>	6
5.1.4	<i>Intervention 4:</i>	7
5.2	INTERVENTION TARGETING COURSE START	7
5.2.1	<i>Intervention 5:</i>	7
6	FURTHER RESOURCES	8

1 INTRODUCTION

The Personalised Support Resource Pack offers a selection of resources that can be used to implement a personalised support offer as part of a scalable online course. The Pack is a supplement to the report “[Implementing Personalised Support on Scalable Online Courses](#)” which should be consulted first in order to understand the rationale for using personalised support and the results of testing personalised support on 4 online courses across 10 European countries as part of the [TeachUP project](#).

The resources found in this Pack are adapted versions of resources used during the implementation of the personalised support offer on the four scalable online courses offered as part of the TeachUP project.

The Pack is targeted towards organisations offering online courses for teachers or student teachers who want to implement a personalised support offer so as to improve participation and completion rates.

The Pack first introduces the concept of personalised support and then offers the following resources:

- Comparison of course staff roles – this comparison offers an overview of the different support roles present in the TeachUP courses and should allow an organisation to understand if and how the personalised support offer could or could not be integrated into an existing support infrastructure.

- A suggested recruitment posting for support agents – this can be used by an organisation to determine if relevant human resources are already available or if additional resources need to be recruited.
- Recommended interventions – the interventions outline when personalised support agents should reach out to relevant course participants.
- Email templates – the templates offer an organisation a basis from which to develop their own communications with targeted participants.
- Videos on self-regulated learning competence – these videos can be used by personalised support agents to help the participants succeed on a course.

2 WHAT IS PERSONALISED SUPPORT

The aim of personalised support on scalable online courses is to support those participants most in need and with a higher chance of dropping out – so as to increase participation and completion rates of the courses. However, as the support is to be offered in a scalable environment and the process of offering personalised support is a time-consuming activity, it can only be offered in a very targeted fashion rather than as a general offer to all course participants. Accordingly, participant profiles and platform data about course progression are used to identify those considered most in need and therefore eligible for the personalised support. The following image illustrates this approach:



1. Learner profile data is gathered through a survey. Progress data is gathered via the course platform. 2. The data is used to determine those most likely to drop out. These participants are proactively contacted with an offer of support. 3. The result is personalised, pro-active support to participants that allows for a certain degree of scaling up.

A key element of this approach is that the support takes into account the learner's context and offers guidance relevant to that context. Context refers here both to the progression of the learner on the course as well as their previous experience, professional profile and skills. This is unlike the support offered by a course moderator who would usually provide general advice applicable to all course participants regardless of their individual background and situation.

The personalised support can be organised around a concept of interventions consisting of triggers and actions. Triggers determine which course participants are eligible for the

personalised support, for example a lack of online learning experience. Each trigger has an associated action which can address the specific characteristics of the trigger, for example an email highlighting resources that can help to succeed in online learning and an offer for a 1:1 video call to conduct a “walk-through” of the course interface. Actions are adapted for each participant taking into account their profile, for example by adding references to the participant’s profile into the email and by highlighting in the video call content on the course which might be of particular relevance to the participant. Triggers and actions are determined by the aim of an intervention which focusses on either getting participants to start a course, complete a course, or improve their satisfaction with a course.

Actions are implemented by personalised support agents or by other staff with dedicated skills and time available. Support agents conduct spot checks at specific times before and during each course to see which participants are eligible for the support offer.

3 PERSONALISED SUPPORT AGENT RECRUITMENT POSTING

The following text is an example posting from the recruitment of TeachUP personalised support agents. It should offer organisations interested in implementing personalised support a better idea of the kind of profile required for the implementation. Based on this, a decision can be taken if the tasks can be done by an existing course team or if additional staff needs to be recruited. If additional staff is needed the recruitment posting can be used as a template.

3.1 ROLE DESCRIPTION:

Personalised support agents will offer online support sessions to selected participants of online courses. Personalised Support Agents will provide guidance and feedback on questions linked to the online course topics, technical issues and general course organization. Furthermore, Personalised Support Agents will support students online learning capacity by offering guidance on how to succeed in an online course. Personalised Support Agents will work alongside a course moderator who is responsible for generating engagement in the course community and addressing the course community as a whole. This is in contrast to Personalised Support Agents who provide personalized support to selected individuals. Due to the nature of the work, Personalised Support Agents will have to be flexible in their availability to interact with their participants, including work during evenings and weekends.

3.2 PROFILE AND SKILLS

Applicants to the position of online Personalised Support Agents should have:

- A recognized teaching qualification
- At least 5 years of working as a qualified teacher
- Demonstrated experience of working and learning online
- Good online communication skills

- Patience, empathy, and interest for working learners from a wide variety of backgrounds and skill-sets
- Ability to quickly learn how to use new online tools
- Ability to pay close attention to detail
- Ability to work occasionally during evenings and weekends

Desirable:

- An understanding of self-regulated learning competence
- An understanding of effective online learning strategies
- Demonstrated experience of moderating or delivering an online course

3.3 FUNCTIONS

Typical tasks include:

- Organising 1:1 sessions with participants
- Running a video call with a participants
- Providing feedback to a piece of work of a participant
- Using survey results and learning analytics to understand the background and needs of a participant

4 COMPARISON OF COURSE STAFF ROLES

The following table clarifies the differences between typical course staff roles like a helpdesk, moderator, and instructor and the new role of personalised support agent. As suggested above, this does not mean that personalised support cannot be offered by existing course staff. Most of the skills required by personalised support agents are likely to be already available via existing course staff.

Normal Helpdesk	Course Moderator	Course Instructor	Personalised Support Agent
Main Aim			
Helps respond to individual participants questions	Develops an active learning community where participants support and learn from each other	Develops and presents the main course content. Supports course moderation with content-focussed interventions.	<i>Proactively helps individual participants benefit from the course</i>
Target Audience			

All course participants	All course participants	All course participants	<i>Specific participants likely to drop-out</i>
Example Task			
Responds to a question from participant with generic response	Encourages participant engagement and discussion	Runs an “office hour” synchronous session with participants where they answer questions of participants.	<i>Reaches out to participants with personalised guidance and support offer, taking into account participants’ profile and progress</i>

5 INTERVENTIONS & EMAIL TEMPLATES

The following interventions & email templates offer examples of the triggers, actions, and messages that personalised support agents can use. The examples stem from those interventions which proved to have an impact in the TeachUP experiment. Of course all triggers, actions, and messages should be customised taking into account the situation of the course provider, including the technical capacity, the available data, the target audience, as well as the communication channels and style in use on a course. The interventions have been written as instructions for the personalised support agents.

5.1 INTERVENTIONS TARGETING COURSE COMPLETION

5.1.1 Intervention 1:

Trigger : This intervention should be triggered if data indicates the participant has low levels in at least 2 of the following indicators:

- belief about effectiveness at online learning,
- expectations of likelihood to take online courses in the future,
- Education level lower than Masters

Action: Support agent sends a general but personal message to the participant offering support of any kind at any point during the course. If the participant responds with a request of support at any point during the course, research the background and progress of the participant through the results of the participant survey and the course data. You can mention the information you have proactively to the tutee in any follow-up but please be clear and transparent about where you have this information from. Your goal is to provide the best possible support to the participant in the context of the participant’s request. The format and nature of the support will depend on your professional judgement.

Timing: A check who qualifies for this intervention is done at the beginning of module 1. Emails are sent out at the latest two days after the course has launched.

Email Template:

Subject: [Course Name] - offer of personalised support

Dear [participant name],

My name is [support agent name] and I am a support agent on the [course name]. I work at [organisation name] as a [job name] and I have a background in [background info] with experience of [experience info] You can find more information about my professional background at [profile URL].

On this course I am available to offer personalised support in order to help you benefit as best as possible from the course. If you have any questions or would like to discuss any activities or topics on the course, please feel free to reach out to me at any point during the course. I can offer support via email, via an online call, or via any other communication channel of your preference.

It would be a pleasure to be able to work with you on this course. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Many thanks. Kind regards,

[Support agent name]

5.1.2 Intervention 2:

Trigger : This intervention should be triggered if data indicates low competence in at least 2 of the following self-regulated learning components (for more details on the measurement of self-regulated learning competence see the TeachUP reports available at: <http://teachup.eun.org/outputs>):

- Goal setting
- Task strategies (includes time management)
- Strategic planning
- Help seeking
- Self-Evaluation
- Elaboration

Action: Same as for Intervention 1

Timing: Same as for Intervention 1

Email Template: Same as for Intervention 1

5.1.3 Intervention 3:

Trigger : This intervention should be triggered if data indicates low experience of online learning environments or reports low ability and confidence with online learning technologies

Action: Same as for Intervention 1

Timing: Same as for Intervention 1

Email Template: Same as for Intervention 1

5.1.4 Intervention 4:

A fourth intervention targeting course completion was used with some effect in the TeachUP experiment which was based on a weighted mix variables. However, the exact weighting of this mix of variables was deemed to be too specific to the TeachUP course setup and also had different explanatory power across the TeachUP courses, to allow for a general recommendation of reuse. Nevertheless, course providers can consider the following variables as possible predictors of lower completion around which further interventions can be constructed:

Variables:

- Teaching a non-STEM subject
- Having a low English proficiency
- Having an education below master's level
- Being aged above 50 years
- Being female
- Having a low intrinsic motivation
- Having completed less than three online courses in the last 3 years

5.2 INTERVENTION TARGETING COURSE START

5.2.1 Intervention 5:

Trigger : This intervention should be triggered if the participant has not started the course 6 days after module launch.

Action: Support agent sends out a personal message reminding of the importance to stay on track and encouraging the participant to keep going as well as offering advice on how to plan their learning time and self-motivate. Using research into the participant's profile and progress the message should be personalised along the lines suggested in the email template below.

Timing: A check who qualifies for this intervention needs to be done on day 6 after each module launch. The checks for modules 2 and 3 will exclude those participants who never started the preceding module. For example, if a participant has never started module 2, he/she will not receive a reminder in module 3 as a reminder should have already been sent at the end of module 2.

Email Template:

Subject: Do you need help to start the [Course Name] ?

Dear [participant name],

My name is [support agent name] and I am a support agent on the [course name] on which you have enrolled. During the course I will reach out to some course participants in order to offer my personalised support. I can offer such support dependent on your answers to the

survey you completed when you enrolled for the first time to course as well as your progress on the course.

For example, I have noticed that you have not yet started the course and just briefly wanted to check with you if you need some specific assistance to get started . The course only takes around 3 hours per week to complete so it is not too late for you to still join us. I also recommend you to take a quick look at the following videos which give you a better idea of what we cover on the course and how useful it could be for you:

[Add course resources that could be highlighted]

From your answers to the survey I can see that you [enter personal background information and/or information about their experience level] and it is understandable that it can be difficult to keep on track with an online course. However, I strongly encourage you not to give up. Remember, if you would like to receive a course certificate it is essential you complete the entire course before the final deadline of [enter course final deadline].

If you are not proceeding because of a certain issue you are facing, please check the course FAQ or directly with your course peers on social media or the forum. You'll be surprised how helpful people can be and you might even be able to buddy up with someone who can motivate you to move through the entire course. Of course, you can also check with me.

I would also recommend to you to make yourself appointments in your calendar which you dedicate to working on the course. You can find a course timeline in the course introduction section, why not add the dates to your calendar and set up reminders on your mobile phone.

I hope this email has motivated you to start with the course.

If you have any specific questions I am happy to help out.

Best wishes,

[Support Agent Name]

6 FURTHER RESOURCES

For more information about personalised support in scalable online courses for teachers and more general recommendations on how to replicate the increases in participation and completion in online courses observed as a result of the personalised support, see the following reports available via the TeachUP website:

- [Implementing Personalised Support in Scalable Online Courses](#)
- [TeachUP Evaluation Report](#)
- [Self-Regulated Learning Online Report](#)
- [How to Improve Completion and Assessment in Scalable Online Courses for Teachers](#)

For practical details and resources on developing self-regulated learning online competence see the short video series on **“How to succeed on an online course – 6 strategies for self-regulated learning”**

produced as part of the TeachUP project and available on the TeachUP website: <http://teachup.eun.org/outputs>. Organisations interested in implementing personalised support can use these videos to offer them as valuable resources which the support agents can use to support the participants they have contact with or to train personalised support agents on the topic of self-regulated learning.

For further questions or to get in contact with the TeachUP team contact us at academy@eun.org