Specialist Mentors and Specialist Study Skills Tutors – what’s the difference?

**Specialist Mentors**
Support students who are experiencing difficulties with studies due to mental health conditions, ADHD and/or autism

- Procrastination
- Perfectionism
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Mental health experiences impacting your studies
- Self-esteem and image

**Specialist Study Skills Tutors**
Support students who are experiencing difficulties with studies due to specific learning differences (SpLDs), ADHD and/or autism

- Time management
- Organisation
- Setting achievable goals
- Confidence and academic self-esteem
- Communication concerns
- The learning process
- Discovering how you learn best
- Academic reading and writing
- Assignment structuring
- Research skills
- Memory strategies
The Disabled Students’ Allowance (DSA) sometimes funds both specialist mentors and specialist study skills tutors.

This funding will be mentioned in the DSA letter that confirms your funding under the section “Non-Medical Helper Allowance”.

The initials ‘NMH’ are often used to describe all Non-Medical Helper workers who, funded by the DSA, support students.

Additionally, UCL funds support for disabled students who cannot get the DSA.
Emily Smith, one of our specialist mentors, says:

"I describe mentoring as a safe, empathic and respectful space for students to discuss their mental health condition and how it impacts their studies."

"I work in a person-centred approach, which varies from student to student and usually encompasses a mixture of emotional and practical support."

"Mentoring creates an opportunity to discuss any stressors and triggers that can affect a person's studies and explore creative and practical solutions to support a student to manage their mental health."

"We can discuss learning styles, study planning and strategies. Whilst I am not a study tutor as such, I can act as a sounding board for written work and revision."

Typical issues that I work with might be around:

- Managing anxiety/depression
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Memory strategies
- Organisation skills
- Recognising increasing stress
- Self esteem
- Setting achievable goals
- Supporting independence
- Social skills

- Avoidance/procrastination
- Communication skills
- Concentration
- Confidence
- Coping with change
- Daily tasks and life skills
- Essay planning
- General health and wellbeing
- Low motivation
Typical issues that tutors work with might be around:

Sentence and paragraph structure, use of grammar, spelling strategies, punctuation

Proofreading strategies: referencing correctly and avoid plagiarism (however, this is not a proofreading service)

Reading strategies for comprehension and fluency

Essay writing skills: unravelling the essay question, planning, organisation, structure, flow of argument

Memory techniques (mind mapping, multisensory input of information, etc.)

Note-taking skills

Time management skills for both oral and written examinations

Revision skills and strategies for examinations

Planning and organisation of content for presentations

Reflection on learning and strategies that are effective when assimilating information

Research skills (using the internet, library, academic journals, etc.)

Appropriate writing styles (academic, reflective, report writing, etc.)

Presentation skills

Monica Pellegrini, one of our specialist study skills tutors, says:

"Our tutors work within the framework of the Association of Dyslexia Specialists in Higher Education (ADSHE). This framework underpins specialist 1:1 study skills support for neurodivergent learners. The specialist skills study tutors explore and develop strategies with students."
Lucy Smith, the Specific Learning Difference Coordinator and one of the specialist study skills tutors, adds:

“ADSHE 7-principles® underpin the specialist 1:1 support offered for neurodivergent learners. These principles include:"

**Metacognition**: thinking about thinking and finding out your learning strengths

**Motivation**: working with you on why you’re studying and what you need you to do pass

**Overlearning**: neurodivergent students often need additional repetition of tasks to remember them

**Modelling**: showing you different ways of approaching study

**Little & often**: breaking down big tasks into manageable chunks, repetition also

**Multisensory**: if we use more than one sense to learn (e.g. see and hear something) we create stronger pathways to that memory

**Relevance**: working with you on tasks you need to complete rather than just showing you examples