

ISC15D030

Title: *Reading List policy*
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Issue

This paper makes the case for a University wide policy mandating the provision of Reading Lists to the library, with academic use of the Talis Aspire software as a clear preference, given its potential to act as a 'one stop shop' for reading list submission and for providing a consistent, high quality user experience for students.

Recommendation

The recipients are asked to endorse the policy.

Resource Implications

None.

Risk Implications

Modules that do not provide appropriate reading lists in a timely manner may not be perceived positively by students. If academics do not provide reading lists there is a risk that the student experience will be undermined and there will be inconsistency between disciplines.

Equality and Diversity

Equality and diversity issues are considered for all aspects of Library services. Online Reading Lists are covered by an Equality Impact Assessment.

Timing of decisions

It would be helpful to have this policy agreed immediately so that it will apply to reading lists submitted for the 2016/17 academic year, a process which has already begun.

Further Information

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Background

The policy has been discussed at TPPG in both April and May 2016 and also considered by ISSC and the Library Forum.

Discussion

Reading lists are vital to the effective provision of learning resources to support teaching at UEA. They enable students to locate the reading to support their learning and, if provided in a timely manner, help the library to ensure that sufficient books, e-books and e-journals are available in a timely fashion.

The Talis Aspire Online Reading List system was introduced as a University-wide system in 2015 to enhance the provision of reading lists, with functionality that provides flexibility and interaction beyond a static list of references and which enables direct access to online materials. The system can also provision learning analytics that will allow lecturers to directly assess the effectiveness of their resources. It has been well received by many students and academics and is also in use at over 60 other UK HE sites.

Reading List policy

The Library has for years relied on goodwill and best practice to gain copies of reading lists. When implementing the Talis Aspire system in 2015, the Library found it only had access to lists from around a third of the 2,000+ taught modules at UEA. This policy seeks to change that situation so that all reading lists are received by the Library.

The policy only requires provision of each reading list to the library *in any format*, although it would be beneficial to the student experience to provide it in Talis.

The Talis reading list software

The benefits of using the Talis online software, rather than simply providing lists in PDF and Word format, are:

1. To ensure a consistency of approach in terms of presenting student readings, helping to ensure a high standard of reading list presentation for all modules where reading lists are relevant
2. To minimise the barriers to students accessing their core readings, perhaps even contributing to student retention
3. To create a context for students to engage more deeply with their core readings and encourage further breadth of reading¹
4. To ensure that the Library has the information to purchase adequate copies of books in time to support academic teaching and student learning
5. To ensure copyright compliance for any articles and scanned chapters embedded in Blackboard courses
6. To provide a one-stop-shop for academic reading list submission²

We think that in the broader national context and in light of UEA's likely aspirations around the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), there is a strong argument to be made for mandating the use of the Talis software

¹ There is evidence of this from academic staff feedback noted in the minutes of the January Library Forum paragraph 5.5: "Library Forum members shared some of their experiences that the provision of core reading has allowed more time for students to engage with further reading. It was also stated that the provision of core reading resulted in students being better prepared for seminars."

² Each year, academics are required to submit an initial reading list (Required Key Reading) as Section 6 of the UEA Module Outline template. If academics choose to use the Talis Aspire software to create or update these reading lists, this will act as a 'one stop shop' for reading list submission. In such cases, in Section 6 academics may simply provide a link to the online list. Any subsequent updates to the reading list, as long as they are carried out using the Talis Aspire software, will automatically be flagged with the Library so they can swiftly purchase any additional readings. LTS is currently reviewing the module and course update processes and further recommendations may be made as part of that process.

as well. The technical paper underpinning the TEF outlines how the Learning Environment will be measured. In assessing...

"...the effectiveness of resources designed to support students' learning and aid the development of independent study and research skills...panel members will be looking for evidence that resources (both physical and virtual ...) are effective in supporting students' learning"³

As the TEF progresses, UEA will be aligned for comparison alongside other institutions that already have more extensive coverage on Talis in terms of reading lists and other learning materials, many of whom have been using Talis Aspire for many more years than UEA. So we believe the TEF will provide an additional set of drivers for ensuring the consistent and effective provision of learning resources to support teaching and learning.

The Talis software also sits well with the UEA Plan 2016-20 which provides a clear statement regarding the expansion of online provision of learning materials:

"We will continue to expand the range of online provision across all faculties and encourage the integration of online or blended modules across all our taught programmes, with online resources available to support all modules."⁴

Academic feedback as part of the consultation on this policy has been variable. On one side of the argument, academics have been very positive about the benefits of using the Talis software, especially for courses with large cohorts:

HIS: *"The Reading List for my HIS module worked brilliantly. I had no complaints about accessing reading for the first time in 21 years teaching here".*

MAED: *"think Reading Online is a great initiative that is greatly helping students locate material confidently, and no complaints have been received this year that students couldn't find the reading material"*

ENV: *"Didn't [need to] include the reading list in module handbook – "it was much easier to do my handbook as I didn't have the reading in it." Described having the list as "a weight off my mind."*

Some academics have also recognised that effective provision of online resources can support student engagement and encourage preparation in the context of active and flipped pedagogies.

On the other side of the argument, there are academics who think that mandating the use of the Talis software would be a step too far at this stage, as there are sometimes pedagogic reasons why using the Talis software would not be appropriate. For example, concern was expressed that providing direct links to the full text articles might impede the development of students' literature search skills or proficiency in looking for case studies or carrying out literature reviews. In several disciplines, search is a key skill for their professional development under the subject benchmark guidelines. The Library believes that in such cases this could be mitigated by providing reading lists *for core texts only* with academics encouraging wider reading beyond the reading lists. However the feedback has been taken into account and so the policy does not mandate the use of the Talis system at this stage.

³ Teaching Excellence Framework: Technical Consultation for Year Two, May 2016, p. 15, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/523340/bis-16-262-teaching-excellence-framework-techcon.pdf [Accessed 07/06/16].

⁴ UEA Plan Objective 5.2 <https://portal.uea.ac.uk/arm/the-uea-plan> [Accessed 07/06/16].

Reading List Policy

UEA aims to provide a Blackboard (VLE) course and access to reading lists for all UEA taught modules. Talis Aspire is UEA's preferred tool for providing reading lists via Blackboard. Blackboard and Talis Aspire work together to provide online access to digital reading and scanned content derived from library collections.

The policy requires all reading lists, regardless of format, to be submitted to the Library. Additionally it is preferable for reading lists to be provided in an online format and ideally using the Talis Aspire software.

1.1 All reading lists, regardless of the format in which they are held, should be submitted to the Library

- To ensure adequate print and digital materials to support students, all undergraduate and taught postgraduate reading lists, regardless of the format in which the reading lists are held, should be submitted to the Library.
- Updated lists should be submitted to the Library each time the module is taught.

1.2 The preferred route for reading list submission is via the Talis Aspire reading list and digital content software

- To ensure a consistency of approach in terms of presenting student readings, helping to ensure a high standard of reading list presentation for all modules where reading lists are relevant
- To minimise the barriers to students accessing their core readings
- To create a context for students to engage more deeply with their core readings and encourage further breadth of reading
- To ensure that the Library has the information to purchase adequate copies of books in time to support academic teaching and student learning
- To ensure copyright compliance for any articles and scanned chapters embedded in Blackboard courses
- To provide a 'one stop shop' for academic reading list submission⁵

1.3 The alternative route for reading list submission is to send lists in Word or PDF format⁶ to lib.reading@uea.ac.uk

- To ensure that the Library has an opportunity to assess, and where relevant purchase, all reading list materials to ensure a consistent student experience across all modules
- To ensure that library provision for all modules is kept up-to-date and adequate copies purchased

⁵ Each year, academics are required to submit an initial reading list (Required Key Reading) as Section 6 of the UEA Module Outline template. If academics choose to use the Talis Aspire software to create or update these reading lists, this will act as a 'one stop shop' for reading list submission. In such cases, in Section 6 academics may simply provide a link to the online list. Any subsequent updates to the reading list, as long as they are carried out using the Talis Aspire software, will automatically be flagged with the Library so they can swiftly purchase any additional readings.

⁶ If this manual route is chosen, this will not provide a 'one stop shop' and it will still be necessary for academics to complete Section 6 of the UEA Module Outline template as well as sending their lists to the Library. Also, any subsequent updates will also need to be sent in to the Library as they occur. This manual process inevitably takes longer for the Library to process and for any additional readings to be purchased providing a less consistent experience for students.