

**Learning Enhancement Team,  
Dean of Students' Office UEA**

**Report 2012/13**

## **About the Learning Enhancement Team**

The Learning Enhancement Team (LET) works with students at various points of transition and development in their academic studies. Our aim is to empower students to become more independent and effective learners. Our tutors provide expert guidance in three key areas:

- study skills
- academic writing, including use of English
- the mathematical and statistical elements of courses.

We offer free and confidential advice to all students registered on UEA courses. This includes specialist expertise in supporting international students. We are available during term time and all holiday periods when the University is open.

The Learning Enhancement Team is currently:

Dr Jeremy Schildt, Head of the Learning Enhancement Team (1fte)

Dr Robert Jenkins, Learning Enhancement Tutor for Mathematics & Statistics (0.9fte)

Dr Gordon Collins, Learning Enhancement Tutor for Mathematics & Statistics (0.2fte)\*

Chris Bishop, Learning Enhancement Tutor (1fte)

Zoe Jones, Learning Enhancement Tutor (0.6fte)

Dr Nicholas Wright, Learning Enhancement Tutor (0.2fte fixed term)\*

Sarah Aikman, Administrative Assistant (1fte)

*\*Appointed in the academic year 2013/14*

Sessional tutors (part-time temporary staff): Dr Luciana Davila-Smith, Dr Judith Stewart and Jacqueline Wild.

Contact us

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Web: [www.uea.ac.uk/dos/let](http://www.uea.ac.uk/dos/let)



## **About the report**

This report covers usage and activity over the period 1<sup>st</sup> September 2012 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013. For comparison it also draws on data from previous reporting periods, covering the academic years 2009/10 to 2011/12.

The report sets out our contribution to the University's commitment to enhancing the student learning experience and improving student retention and success. In doing so, it highlights a number of issues relating to learning and teaching at UEA. The findings are organised into sections that reflect the key strands of the service we provide.

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## **Overview**

- Learning Enhancement Tutors saw 14% of UEA's postgraduate students and 9% of UEA's undergraduate students in appointments and workshops in 2012/13.
- The demand for individual tutorial appointments continued to rise.
- A growing number of students appear to be seeking tutorial support early in the academic year.
- The provision of workshops and self-study resources continued to expand.

## Drop-ins and tutorials

*'Without a doubt the maths tutorials have helped me to pass the mathematics module in semester 1. I am very grateful for the help I have received.'*  
BSC Computing Science student

A key aspect of our service is one-to-one and small group appointments. These include drop-in hours, during which students can find out more about our service and how we may be able to help them. Individual and small group tutorials offer more in-depth, personal support in developing specific academic skills. Further details can be found at [www.uea.ac.uk/dos/let/tutorials](http://www.uea.ac.uk/dos/let/tutorials).

Table 1 charts the considerable year-on-year rise in demand for appointments with a Learning Enhancement Tutor since September 2008.

Year	Number of appointments* (Sessional tutor appointments) <sup>†</sup>	Number of individuals seen	FTE (Permanent tutors)	Number of appointments per full-time tutor
2008/9	970 (0)	346	2.5	388
2009/10	1517 (66)	523	2.82	514
2010/11	2229 (513)	640	3.17 <sup>1</sup>	541
2011/12	2477 (712)	668	3.5	504
2012/13	2260 (496)	721	3.5	504

**Table 1:** LET appointments 2008/9 to 2012/13.

\* Total number of appointments delivered.

<sup>†</sup> Total number of appointments delivered by sessional tutors.

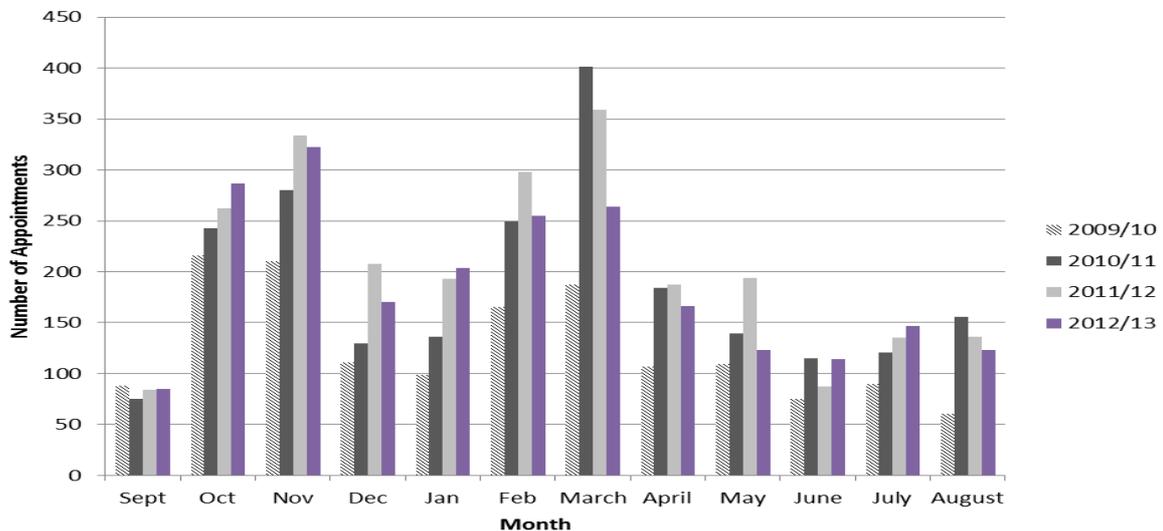
In 2012/13 the number of individuals seen in appointments increased by 7% on the previous year. This has been achieved by reducing the mean number of appointments per student (from 3.7 in 2011/12 to 3.1 in 2012/13) through a focus on building confidence and supporting independent learning. This approach has also informed the further expansion of our workshop programme and the development of more sophisticated self-help resources.

Demand for appointments continues to extend right across the academic year, including over the summer vacation (see Figure 1, below). In 2012/13 67% of our appointments were delivered in the period October-March and 33% during April-September. There appears to be a general increase in the numbers of students

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<sup>1</sup> The post of Head of Team was vacant between December 2010 and March 2011.

seeking help early in the academic year i.e. between October and January (a trend which appears to have continued in autumn 2013). However, this has led to increased waiting times for tutorial appointments especially during the autumn semester.

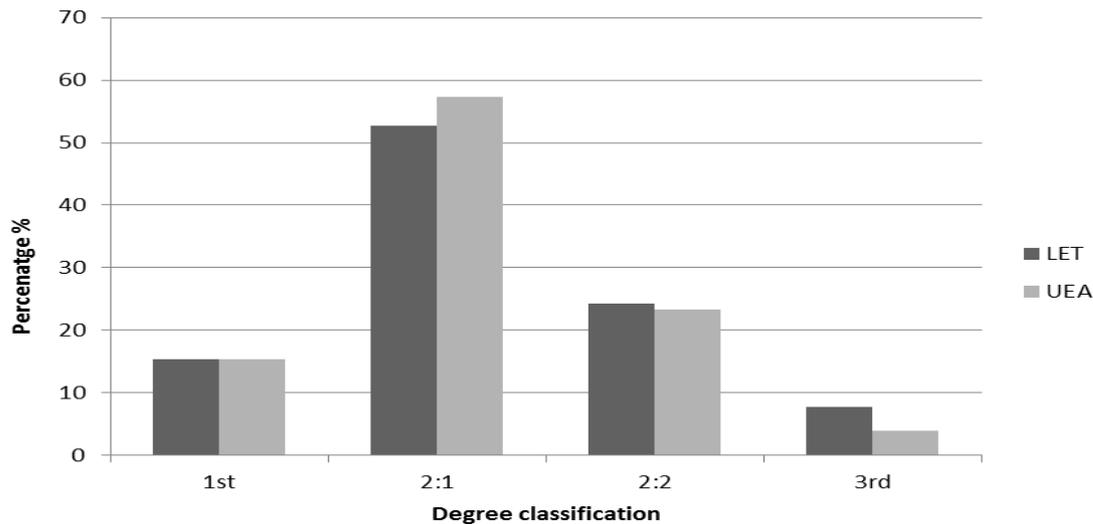


**Figure 1:** Number of LET appointments by month 2009/10 to 2012/13.

### Who is attending LET drop-ins and tutorials?

In 2012/13 we provided appointments to students from all four UEA faculties and every School, from Foundation Year to postgraduate researchers, part- and full-time, home and international students. Particular points of interest include:

- (i) More than two-thirds (68%) of the undergraduate students who had an appointment with a Learning Enhancement Tutor between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013 went on to achieve a First or Upper Second Class degree classification (see Figure 2 below). This clearly demonstrates that students at all levels of ability seek our guidance and is suggestive of the importance of individual tutorial support for improving degree outcomes (something that is supported by student feedback following tutorial appointments).



**Figure 2:** Final degree classifications 2008/9 to 2012/13.<sup>2</sup>

- (ii) Compared with the UEA population we continue to see
- a disproportionately high number of international students (27% compared with 21% across UEA). We currently have 1.8 FTE tutors who, while offering appointments for all UEA students, have particular expertise in supporting students who are non-native speakers and/ or have little experience of UK academic conventions and expectations.
  - a disproportionately high number of postgraduate students (35% compared with 27% across UEA).
  - a relatively low proportion of men and those aged 17-21 years (27% and 30% respectively, compared with 42% and 64%<sup>3</sup> across UEA). This mirrors help-seeking behaviour across other specialist areas in the Dean of Students' Office and sector-wide. Encouraging these students to engage with support services could have a significant impact on student retention. Interestingly, when we look at student attendance at appointments *and* workshops, attendance by men and those aged 17-21 increases to 36% and 47% respectively. This underscores the importance of continuing to expand workshop activity and self-help resources.

(iii) There is noticeable variation in use by Schools of Studies. For instance, we saw a high frequency of use by students from AHP, DEV and NSC in 2012/13 and a

<sup>2</sup> The figures for LET show the degree classifications (as a percentage) achieved by the undergraduate students who accessed our service between 1<sup>st</sup> September 2008 and 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013 (the figures exclude MBBS students). The UEA figures show the degree classifications (as a percentage) achieved by all undergraduate students in these years.

<sup>3</sup> This figure is based on UEA data from 2011/12.

low frequency of use by students from LAW, LDC and HIS. A number of factors may be involved here including the delivery of LET workshops (which can lead to demand for tutorial appointments), difficulties students may have with particular modules or aspects of their programme of study, and the availability of academic writing tutorials from Royal Literary Fellows (who tend to mostly see students from the Faculty of Humanities). We continue to work with Module Convenors, Teaching Directors, Heads of Schools and Faculty Associate Deans where appropriate to address this.

### **What are we working with students on?**

It is well known that students can experience transition and development difficulties in respect of their study skills, academic writing and, when relevant, mathematics. For many students, being able to access an appointment or series of appointments with a Learning Enhancement Tutor is critical to their ability to manage this transition and to succeed in their studies.

In 2012/13 65% of appointments addressed study skills and academic writing, 29% mathematics and statistics, and 6% 'other' (including general academic advice on, for example, course choice and PhD research).

- (i) **Mathematics & statistics** 75% of the appointments in these areas were delivered between October and March (this is also the period when all workshops in these areas were delivered). In 2012/13:
- 21% of appointments addressed the concepts and calculations of statistics.
  - 19% of appointments addressed basic numerical skills covering sub-GCSE content (a rise of 4% from 2011/12).
  - 23% of appointments addressed topics in algebra at a level roughly equivalent to GCSE.
  - 38% of appointments dealt with calculus and higher topics in mathematics.

Difficulties with numeracy and low-level algebra are now widespread among students in BIO, EDU, ENV, NBS, NSC and PHA.

- (ii) **Study skills and academic writing** 55% of the appointments in these areas were delivered between October and March. In 2012/13:
- 40% of appointments focused on aspects of planning and drafting written texts.
  - 30% of appointments addressed writing style and grammar. Here, guidance was given on English language and on academic style to both native and non-native speakers.

- 17% of appointments addressed study skills such as reading and note-taking, presenting, time management and revision and exam technique.
  - 10% of appointments helped students to address feedback and prepare for resubmission.
  - 2% of appointments dealt with referencing and plagiarism.
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## Workshops

*'This has been the best PPD program workshop I have attended at UEA so far ... It was an intellectually stimulating session. I really learnt a lot about not only how to critically evaluate literature but also the way I perceive things in general.'*

PGR student Faculty of Medicine & Health Sciences

The Learning Enhancement Team works in close collaboration with Library Services, Faculties and Schools of Studies to deliver a full, varied and expanding programme of workshops for UG, PGT and PGR students.

In 2012/13 workshops represented 45% of our engagement with students. In that year we delivered over 350 hours of workshops and recorded over 3,000 attendances from students across all four UEA Faculties. A large part of our workshop activity involved the development of tailored sessions to support particular degree courses or modules in 18 Schools of Studies. In order to manage this demand we invite workshop requests annually between May and July for the following academic year.

- (i) **Mathematics** In 2012/13 there were nearly 1400 attendances at over 100 workshops embedded in particular programmes and modules in BIO, CHE, DEV, ECO, ENV, NBS, NSC and PHA for Foundation Year and Undergraduate students.
- (ii) **Study skills and academic writing** In addition to tailored sessions we continued to develop our central programme in collaboration with the Information Skills Librarian (see [www.uea.ac.uk/dos/let/workshops](http://www.uea.ac.uk/dos/let/workshops)) and to extend our contributions to Faculty Personal and Professional Development programmes for postgraduate research students. The focus of our workshops for PGR students has been on helping international students make the transition into UK academic culture and English academic writing. New sessions on managing the PhD and writing research proposals were developed in 2012/13 in collaboration with Associate Deans for PGR and colleagues in REN and Careers.
- (iii) **The English Language Support Programme (ELSP)** is designed to help students with English as an Additional Language to continue to develop the

English skills necessary for successful academic study. This support is delivered by means of classes *integrated* with particular courses in Schools of Studies, and a *generic* University-wide programme. The ELSP is overseen by the Dean of Students' Office and delivered by INTO UEA. In light of declining attendance at generic classes we will be reviewing this element of the programme in 2014.

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## Study Guides and other resources

The Learning Enhancement Team produces a wide range of self-help resources covering many aspects of study skills, academic writing, mathematics and statistics. These resources are available in a variety of ways, for instance via QR codes, Prezi, YouTube, our website ([http://www.uea.ac.uk/services/students/let/study\\_resources](http://www.uea.ac.uk/services/students/let/study_resources)) and in hard copy from the Dean of Students' Office.

- (i) **Study Guides** More than 8,500 paper copies of our study guides were taken by students in this reporting period (approximately 6,700 addressing aspects of study skills and academic writing, and 1,900 on topics in mathematics and statistics). Since 2013/14 a document containing the full list of hyperlinks to the guides has been circulated to Heads of Schools and Senior Advisors in the autumn and spring semesters. The document 'LET Study Guides' is intended to make it easier for staff to cut and paste links into the feedback they provide to students.
- (ii) **Interactive mind maps** The Learning Enhancement Tutors for Mathematics and Statistics have continued to make use of the online presentation tool Prezi to build interactive web based mind maps for topic areas in mathematics, including numeracy, algebra, calculus and trigonometry (see for instance <http://prezi.com/5lfjbku5i3xx/steps-into-numeracy-mind-map/>). Students have responded very positively to the mind maps which have received over 4,500 views and contain study guides, webcasts, worksheets, model answers and factsheets. These resources make use of hyperlinks and QR codes to enhance interconnectivity and accessibility.

The development of self-help resources is an increasingly important aspect of our provision, helping us to meet growing demand for academic support. Such resources give students choice over when, where and how they learn and can help them to assess their own development. Self-help resources also offer a way of extending support to students intercalating and those students studying away from the University for research, placement, work or personal reasons.

## Other activities

- **UEA Teaching Fellowship 2012/13 'Setting up writers' groups for postgraduate research students'** A project led by Jeremy Schildt and Lydia Pell (Mental Health Co-ordinator, Dean of Students' Office) to help PGR students find dedicated time and space for writing. Full details at [http://www.uea.ac.uk/services/students/let/writers\\_groups](http://www.uea.ac.uk/services/students/let/writers_groups).
- **Staff development workshops** Chris Bishop and Zoe Jones delivered workshops on 'Teaching International Students' and (new for 2013/14) 'Academic Writing for Research Staff where English is not their first language' as part of the CSED programme.
- **Learning & Teaching Day 2013** The Team delivered an interactive session on 'Helping students to become independent learners' and Chris Bishop delivered a session on 'Rethinking seminars for International Students'.
- **Work experience in the communication of mathematics** In July 2013 we appointed a current UEA undergraduate student as our fourth work experience post holder. This annual position is a 24 week paid placement with LET in the communication of mathematics. The first 12 weeks entail project work focused on developing paper and web-based support materials. The second 12 week period overlaps with the autumn semester and involves the post holder working with LET tutors to help deliver workshops and tutorials. Working with the post holders has helped to increase our understanding of the student perspective. The post holders have found the experience hugely worthwhile: *'I have gained invaluable insight into how people learn and study mathematics. This has only fed my ambition to become a teacher.'*
- Robert Jenkins received a second **UEA Excellence in Teaching Award**. The award recognises excellence and innovation in learning and teaching and was awarded for his work during the academic year 2012/13.
- **HEA STEM Annual Learning and Teaching Conference 2013** Robert Jenkins co-delivered a paper on 'Interactive Mind-Maps as a Tool for Teaching and Learning' with academic staff from UEA's School of Pharmacy.
- **English, Communication and Culture (LCS)** Chris Bishop continues to convene this 20 credit module for students on the MA in Communication and Language Studies. An important aim of the module is to familiarise students with the conventions of English academic life and the environment of the university.

## Future developments

- In 2012/13 Learning Enhancement Tutors saw 11% of the UEA student population in appointments and workshops (14% of UEA's PG students and 9% of UEA's UG students). Demand for targeted academic support from Learning Enhancement Tutors continues to rise. We are endeavouring to meet this demand under current resourcing by expanding our workshop programme and developing more sophisticated self-help resources. However, it is clear that students greatly value individual tutorial appointments as a way of developing the skills, attitudes and confidence necessary to succeed in their studies. This must remain a core part of our provision if we are to continue to help the University to achieve both high retention rates and good honours.
- Substantial impact could be made on student retention and achievement by addressing at a more strategic level the numeracy and English language support in place for students registered on UEA courses. In 2012/13 we worked closely with staff in the School of Nursing Sciences to develop a model of in-School numeracy support for their new undergraduate students. This involved reviewing admissions assessment, providing staff training and specialised numeracy resources, and developing a programme of tailored workshops. We are keen to work with other Schools of Studies to review support in these areas.
- Over half of workshop requests from Schools of Studies for 2012/13 were for delivery between October and December. Research into student transition to HE highlights the extent to which students are continuing to adjust to the expectations of HE well beyond their first semester. In addition, creating opportunities for students to reflect on their experience of semester 1 is an essential part of helping them to get most value from assessment and feedback. It is important, therefore, that we work closely with Schools to ensure that workshop delivery is appropriately timed to support this developmental process.

Jeremy Schildt (Head of the Learning Enhancement Team) January 2014.