LTC09D018

Learning Enhancement and Disability Support

Dean of Students' Office

Report for 2008-2009

1. Introduction

This report outlines the provision of the Learning Enhancement Team and the Disability Support Team. It describes the year's activities, identifies issues arising from the Teams' perspectives on the wider learning experience of UEA's students, and sets out their aims for the academic year 2009-2010.

2. The Learning Enhancement Service

In 2008-2009, the **Learning Enhancement Team** (LET) consisted of the full-time Co-ordinator (Dr Helen Webster), the Tutor for Mathematics, Statistics and Science (Dr Robert Jenkins, 0.9 FTE) and the Tutor for International Students (Dr Anna Magyar, 0.6 FTE). To meet increasing demand on the service, a small pool of sessional Tutors was recruited, and began offering tutorials and workshops in August 2009. The work of the LET Tutors is supported by a part-time administrative assistant (Ruth Carney until August 2009 and Sarah Aikman currently).

The Learning Enhancement Tutors offer 50 minute, individual tutorials to students, deliver workshops based in individual Schools and centrally, maintain and develop a range of paper- and web-based resources on various aspects of study skills, and co-ordinate activities, such as plagiarism awareness and peer mentoring, across the university.

Two developments have enabled the Team to work more effectively. A new extension to the Dean of Students' Office now houses most of the Learning Enhancement and Disability Support Team members, and has promoted collaboration and provided an area in which our resources can be coherently displayed. The introduction in the summer vacation 2009 of a new appointments-making system that also acts as a database will aid more detailed analysis of service use, as well as more efficient use of time. For example, the new software will enable us to effectively monitor service use by students, especially those who habitually miss appointments, or book more than they are entitled to.

2.1 Provision Offered

Booked appointments in DOS
Individual tutorials continue to form the majority of the LET Tutors' provision. In 2008-2009, the Learning Enhancement Tutors offered 918 hours of tutorials in total, an increase of 77 on last year's total of 841 (figure 1). Tutorials are very much in demand, and at peak times, students struggle to get timely appointments. Consultations (20 minute initial appointments to diagnose issues and offer brief advice), self-help resources, and referral where appropriate, have worked well to bridge this gap, and in some cases, have been sufficient in themselves to meet the need. Drop-ins for quick, 10-minute questions are offered every day, although students often do not accurately self-refer to drop-ins, bringing complex issues or large amounts of work. Although drop-ins continue to be problematic, we feel that it is still valuable to offer sessions for which no appointment is necessary for quick questions and emergencies. We continue to offer tutorials by email for those students who are on placement and cannot attend appointments at the university. Although guidance by email is usually limited to comments on emailed drafts of work, it is nonetheless an important element of the accessibility of our provision. We also encourage students to contact us by email for quick questions as an alternative to drop-ins, and we post summaries of these interactions online as FAQs for other students' benefit.

Missed appointments continue to be a problem (94 tutorials were not attended), so we monitor students who repeatedly miss appointments. To discourage dependency and enable access to more students, we set a nominal maximum of four tutorials per term. Last year, 516 students accessed the service for booked appointments.
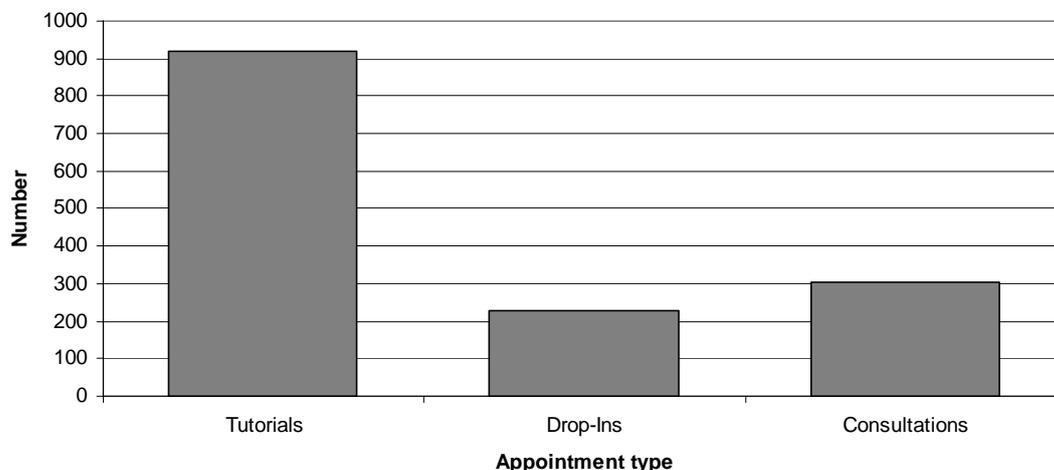

Fig. 1: Number of individual appointments provided by the LET Team, 2008/9

Workshops
As links with Schools have been established and have grown, the demand for workshops has increased. This is particularly the case at the beginning of the year, and throughout the first semester. Workshop requests tend to be one of a number of types:

- Induction lectures or talks. These are usually requested for first year cohorts during the first early weeks of the academic year. Some are intended simply to introduce the service to students for future information. These are a useful part of induction, although we feel that further reminders and referrals

throughout the academic year are required. Many students do not seem to perceive the need for advice on their study skills at this early point in their course. Once they are engaged with their academic work, and have perhaps submitted some assignments with feedback, they are better able to recognise the role that study skills development can play in fulfilling their potential and easing transition points throughout their course. However, by this point, which may well be in their second or third years, they have often forgotten about the introductory talk.

- Some requests for induction sessions include the brief to teach the students about 'study skills'. In practice, it is difficult to give useful instruction in the broad and varied field of good academic practice in an hour's session, especially early in the year when it has as yet no grounding in the students' experience. These sessions are more appropriately used for awareness-raising, discussing the transition to Higher Education and signposting sources of guidance as above. It is often useful to follow these sessions up with further reminders, referrals and further workshops specifically targeted at the issues relevant at particular points in the course, such as the first essay, dissertations, or exams.

- Other workshops are delivered as part of a series. Some of these are embedded in Schools' courses, and others are parallel or additional to core teaching. Several Schools include one or more sessions from the Learning Enhancement Team as part of their own study skills modules. This has been effective in reducing the number of students approaching the service for individual tutorials, although we are always happy to offer these if needed. Workshop series which 'scaffold' the student through the first assignment are an effective model which we would like to expand, given sufficient resources. An example is the series delivered to first year Social Work students, with a series of four workshops in the first semester, targeted at stages in their first assignment: (reading, researching, writing and referencing), and followed up by a second semester session on using feedback.

- A looser model is that of isolated but specific workshops targeted at specific points in the academic year. We have offered sessions on dissertations, vivas, exams, essays, plagiarism and academic writing, and feel that such sessions, linked to particular significant assignments, work well if delivered in close collaboration with the lecturers to discuss the precise nature of the assignment. Sessions on dissertations tend to be best divided into two: 'research questions, planning and literature review' followed by 'academic writing and structure' when the projects are more advanced. Many issues are too complex to be dealt with satisfactorily in a single session, especially those working with the challenges faced by international students.
- Mathematics and Statistics workshops usually take the form of a series of workshops. These may deal with issues on an ad hoc basis, but a more successful model is that in which each week deals with a specific named topic, in parallel with those covered in the School's teaching. Workshops were offered to BIO, DEV, ENV AND PHA. 'Emergency' sessions were offered to Foundation Year Science students in response to acute need.

We currently collaborate with Schools across the University to offer workshops, and informal feedback on these from both students and staff has been positive. The number of Schools for whom we offer workshops increases each year, and we are keen to make new links with Schools who do not as yet work with us. We find that

closer involvement with Schools means that we can offer more targeted guidance to individual students, as we are more familiar with the course structure and assessment formats.

Although workshop provision is often best delivered as subject-specific sessions, embedded in courses, we have also provided some sessions centrally. These have included workshops for international PGR students on making the transition to UK academic culture and English academic writing (in collaboration with the Transitions programme in CSED), and sessions in conjunction with the Counselling service on Procrastination. These may be extended next year to other generic issues. We have also run an induction day for Mature Students, introducing them to the range of services provided at UEA but also offering them an opportunity to explore the challenges of returning to study and the skills and strengths they bring.

2.2 Access and managing demand

An ongoing issue this year has been managing the demand on the service for tutorials and School workshops. We have undertaken a number of measures to ensure that students nevertheless have equal access to our provision.

We have collaborated with a number of Schools to set up peer mentoring systems. Training was offered by Learning Enhancement Tutors in conjunction with lecturers to ensure that the mentors were clear about their role and how to perform it, and the LET Tutors offered ongoing supervision sessions.

Two writing mentoring programmes for international Masters students were set up, one in October set up in collaboration with academic staff in DEV and funded by the School. It involved 6 tutors, reduced to 4 in the second semester. A second programme was set up in March, funded centrally and involving PGR mentors from CMP, ECO, EDU, NBS, and LAW. The programme started with a two day training workshop for the PGR mentors followed by fortnightly supervision sessions. This work is recognised as contributing to PGR students' skills portfolio. The DEV mentoring programme is currently being evaluated as part of a teaching fellowship award. A further programme was set up in conjunction with MTH (a School to whom the LET tutor for Mathematics and Statistics does not offer any provision, as it would amount to subject teaching). Peer guiding was used in one first year undergraduate module 1C14 'Analysis and Algebra' with specific aims to enhance the quality of the student learning and teaching experience, particularly for the first year students and support the success and progression of all the students involved in the pilot. Eighteen 3rd and 4th year MTH students volunteered to be peer guiding facilitators. Nine groups of first year students (totalling 87 students) were each assigned to a pair of facilitators. As a result of the pilot the average first year UG module coursework mark rose to 68.25 compared to 58.51 previous year. MTH are continuing the scheme this year funding it themselves.

Anecdotal evidence from student feedback and from all the mentors involved in both programmes indicates that this approach has much potential to supplement contact time with Faculty, provide reassurance to students, the opportunity for peer learning and an alternative space for disciplinary discussion. The mentors have emphasized the benefits to them in terms of developing mentoring/teaching skills and improving their own writing. The Learning Enhancement service feels that there are clear advantages to this system both in terms of demand for our services, but also for the students, who benefit from accessible, subject-led guidance and the mentors, who

gain valuable skills, experience and insight into their subject. We hope to continue and expand this model of working in other Schools.

We have also successfully recruited a small number of sessional Tutors, on whom we can draw at periods of greatest demand in the academic year. They began offering tutorials in August 2009, to help meet the need for tutorials and workshops at the beginning of the academic year. It had been hoped that the sessional Tutors would have been in post earlier, but difficulties in securing funding and post release meant that they took up post only at the end of the academic year. We are confident that they will be valued members of the Team who will continue to carry out our high standards in supporting students, and will enhance our ability to provide timely, accessible support. We will monitor use of the sessional Tutors to ascertain budget requirements for future years.

2.3 Resource development

An additional approach to managing demand on the service and ensuring wide accessibility is the development of self-help resources. We continue to add to our range of study guides. These short leaflets, available both in DOS and online, provide basic guidance as a starting point for students. The range is based on a series from Leicester University, which we have adapted and added to. New study guides this year included *Using the Internet for research*, *Secondary referencing, Essay presentation*, *Improving your memory* and *What to do when exams go badly*, as well as a number of revision and exams-related help-sheets. Many of these arose from student queries, and we would be happy to act on suggestions from lecturers or to adapt the guides to suit subject-specific requirements. The study guides offer a valuable self-help opportunity for students, but may also be used to complement materials in induction, School handbooks and teaching (and some Schools already use them in this way), or to enhance individual feedback.

We have investigated greater use of the web as a means of providing initial guidance. We intend to reorganise the LET website into study 'areas', each containing guidance and resources on a particular academic skill, such as Essay Writing, Organising your Work, or Mathematics and Statistics. This work was begun last summer with the creation of the Plagiarism Awareness site, and was continued this year with an Exams and Revision site. This was publicised by emails to students and advisers, and promotional bookmarks. This development proved very successful, and was of particular importance given the late timing of the Easter vacation this year. Students returned to the university to begin exams straight away, having conducted the majority of their revision during the vacation away from UEA. Students were able to access guidance remotely in a timely way. Although the site and promotion were launched only three weeks before the vacation, a large number of students were accessing the site directly from the shortcut, rather than through navigating the DOS site (figure 2).
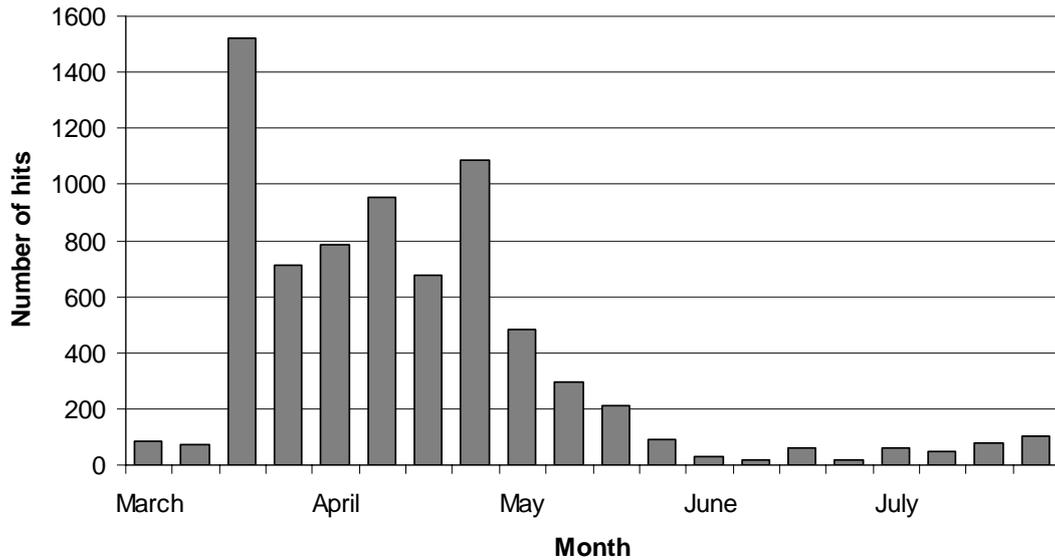
Fig. 2: hits on the website www.uea.ac.uk/dos/revision from its release to the end of the academic year.

We will expand on both the website support and the promotional strategies in the coming academic year, focussing particularly on dissertations over the summer period. We are also investigating the use of video and other media. The LET Team have been involved in the production of videos on the international student experience, and plagiarism. However, demand for tutorials and workshops have meant that progress on resource development has been slow. It is anticipated that the appointment of the Sessional Tutors will enable the LET Tutors to focus more time on resource development in the academic year 2009-2010.

2.4 Issues and Themes
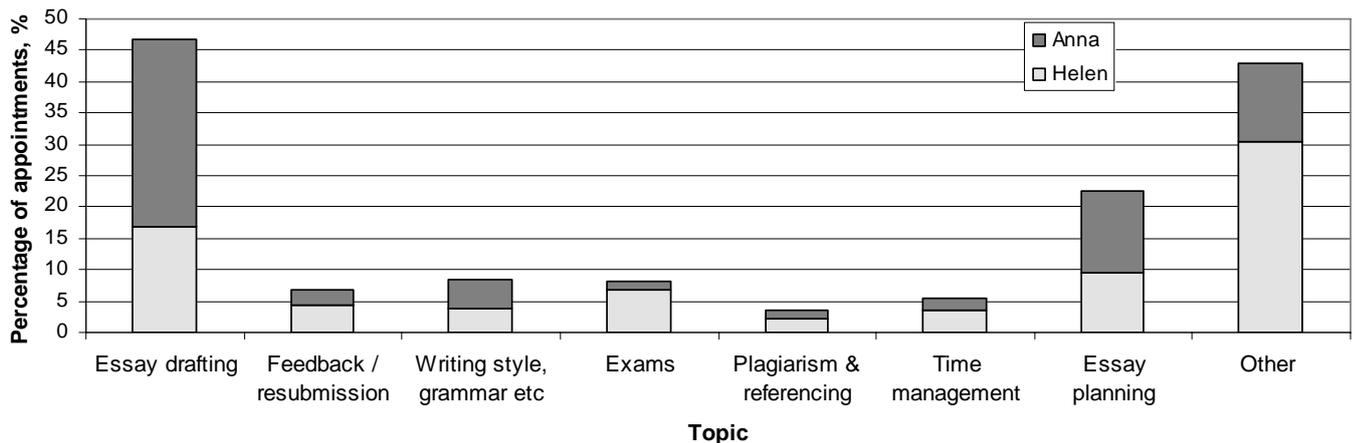
Topics raised by students

Fig. 3: breakdown of topics raised in tutorials with the Learning Enhancement Coordinator and Tutor for International Students, by percentage. "Other topics" include presentations, email tutorials, reading, researching and note-taking.

The two main issues raised by students in tutorials are essay writing and essay planning (this includes other assignments such as dissertations, reflective assignments and reports, figure 3). The two issues, although distinct, are often

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confused by students, and many approach us in the final stages of drafting an essay, when the pertinent issue actually concerns question analysis, essay planning and structuring. Many students seem to view the essay as a product, rather than as a process, and may not be aware that the skills they need to develop are not exclusively those to do with writing. This view may be encouraged by assessment which focuses mainly on the essay as a final product rather than the process of research, synthesis, analysis and critique, although the Tutors have seen several interesting examples of assessments from various Schools which do focus on these skills. It is difficult to help students with these issues at a late stage of essay writing, and it is pleasing that more students are either approaching the service at an earlier stage of the essay writing process, or are returning with the next assignment for help with developing their skills in planning and structuring. Marking criteria and feedback often highlight the need for 'better structure', but many students are not sure what is meant by this rather abstract term or indeed how to 'do' structure, and they often approach the LET Team for clarification (see also the category 'feedback and resubmission').

The work of the Tutor for International Students is particularly dominated by these two issues, possibly as many of the international students who are studying in a second language prioritise writing as their main challenge. Feedback on their performance tends to accompany and focus on their writing rather than other aspects of study as they may often be unfamiliar with the linguistic and rhetorical practices by which structure is conventionally signalled in UK academic writing. Many of them are Masters students, whose focus is on longer pieces and the dissertation and on developing writing skills all within a one year course. The Tutor for International students has raised the concern that many international students begin their courses with insufficient English Language skills to meet the demands of a Master's course. Some individuals need far more support than is currently possible and in many cases, English as a Second Language tuition, not Learning Enhancement, is needed in the first instance. However, explicit guidance from Schools regarding academic expectations and conventions can be sufficient for others to overcome the language deficit. Admissions criteria may be leading students to believe that their English language skills are sufficient, whereas feedback on their assignments contradicts this. This gap between admissions criteria and assessment criteria is an area which needs to be considered in wider discussions regarding international students.

The work of the LET Coordinator with home students tends to respond to a more diverse range of needs. One major area concerns exams and revision, although due to the seasonal nature of this type of query, this is not clearly reflected in the data above as it is largely limited to the exam period. Some students approach the service for advice before their exams, but it is far more common that students seek guidance when they have failed an exam and must resit, or because they only just achieved a pass mark. Many queries at the beginning of the academic year were from returning second years who had not performed well in their end-of-year exams. The new study guide *What to do if exams go badly* was written to meet this need, to encourage students to reflect on their performance, diagnose their problems and adapt their revision and exam techniques. The LET Coordinator has noticed that many students do not have well-developed exam and revision strategies, despite their extensive experience of exams at School or College. Many of them state that they do well in their coursework, but that there is a large discrepancy with their exam results. This suggests that their subject knowledge and understanding is not at fault, but their exam skills. This is supported by research done by the Project Officer for the Assessment Review, Eva Roberts. The LET Team would like to suggest that

students who are notified that they have failed an exam be referred at the same time to the resources and tutorials available to support them in resits.

The Tutor for Mathematics and Statistics also deals with a broad range of topics in his tutorials (figure 4).
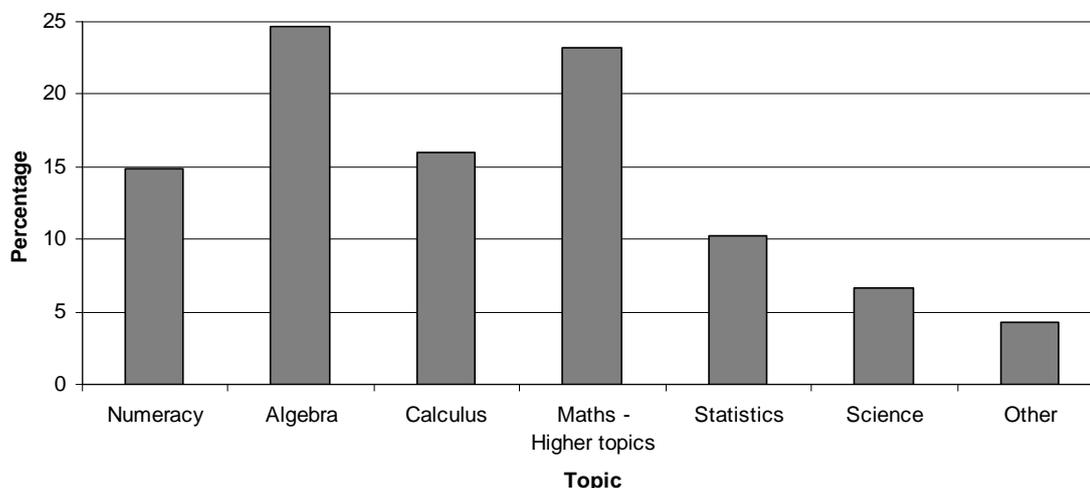

Fig. 4: breakdown of topics raised in tutorials with the Learning Enhancement Tutor for Mathematics, Statistics and Science, by percentage.

The Tutor for Mathematics and Statistics sees a wide range of students from across the faculties (apart from HUM). Many of these are students from SCI, but Schools such as ECO also have substantial mathematical components to their degrees and it is these courses, in which the mathematical component is less obvious to students. Although the Tutor does some numeracy work (mainly with students from NAM and PHA), the majority of issues dealt with lie beyond basic numeracy. Areas such as algebra and calculus form the main bulk of the provision, and higher topics are also covered which have included in this academic year double and triple integrals, line integrals, Green's Theorem, Taylor and Maclaurin Series, complex numbers, differential equations of various types, difference equations, recurrence relationships, grammar and languages, finite state automata, analysis, proof, propositional calculus, mechanics, Jacobians and Big O notation. The position also encompasses provision for students with Dyslexia, to support the impact of Dyslexia upon the mathematical or statistical components of their course; this enhances the provision offered by the Dyslexia Tutors in DOS. The service also plays a key role in supporting the transition of students into Higher Education. The down-playing of mathematical elements in A-Level Science syllabi has inevitably led to many otherwise able students encountering difficulties with the mathematical component of their course. Moreover, many students approach the service not having realised that their chosen course would involve such a large mathematical and/or statistical component (examples are CMP, ENV, DEV , ECO and SWK) and need support developing their mathematical skills in order to access course materials. This issue may be compounded by entry requirements which may be leading students to an inaccurate understanding of level of mathematics and statistics required to fully engage with their course. This may suggest a wider issue that needs to be dealt with at admissions, induction or by core course design, as it falls beyond the remit and capacity of central student services to remedy. We would welcome further discussion with Schools on this issue. At present DOS does not have the tutorial capacity to see large proportions of a cohort individually, and attempts to offer add-on workshop support have met with varying degrees of take-up. When the workshops

have been designed in close collaboration with the Schools, to specifically address the students' needs, feedback has been excellent.

2.5 Use of the Learning Enhancement Team

Faculty and School Engagement with LET

The Learning Enhancement Service is used by students from all Faculties, and the percentage of student users of the LET service from each Faculty is roughly proportionate with the percentage represented by each Faculty within the total student population (figure 5). The exception is the relatively low use of LET provision by HUM students.
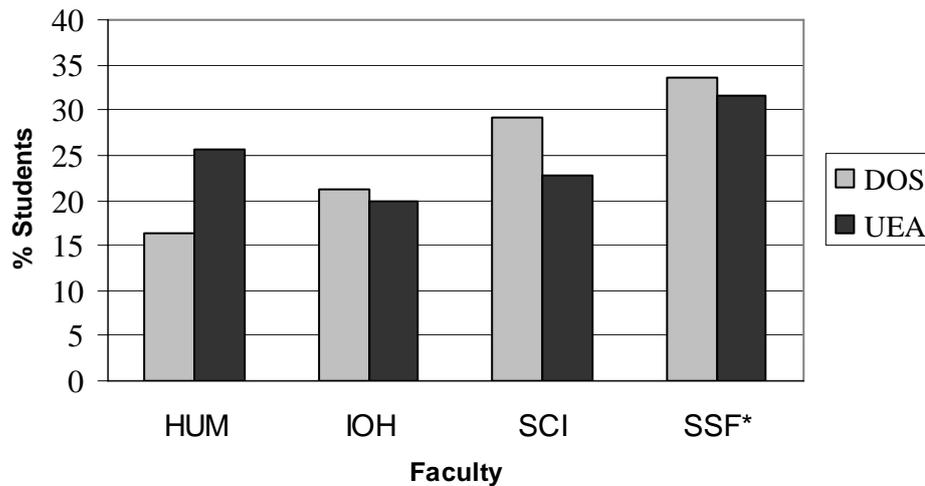

Fig. 5: percentage of students who use the LET service broken down by Faculty, compared with percentage of students in the University broken down by Faculty.

However, when this is broken down by School, it appears that use of the LET service by students is uneven; some Schools are over- or under-represented within their Faculty (figure 6).
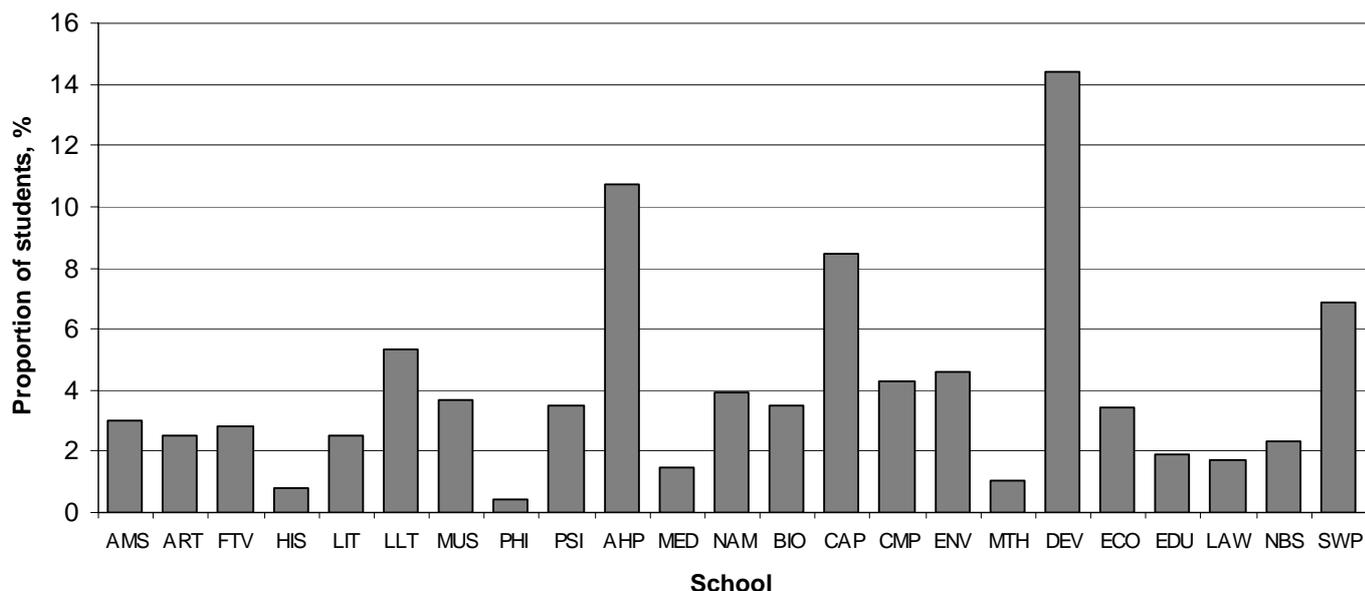
Fig. 6. Student use of LET provision by School (arranged by Faculty).

This is due to a number of reasons, such as the higher proportion of International students in Schools such as DEV and LLT, the association of CAP with the Foundation Year, but also good liaison, referral and workshop provision in some Schools, as well as study skills modules in the first year of some courses. However, the low use of LET provision by students from some Schools suggests that better referral or publicity is needed. The high use by other Schools suggests that there are difficulties in supporting students with the transition to Higher Education in those Schools, in particular the professional 'conversion' masters and higher numbers of mature students returning to study after a break.

Age
An examination of the ages of the students who approach the service reveals that a high proportion of them are Mature students (figure 7). This is partly because students in that category tend to be better at identifying their learning needs and at seeking guidance, partly because they anticipate the need for skills development after a break from education. However, a further aspect which characterises the work of both the Learning Enhancement Coordinator and the Tutor for International Students is that of Masters students. The Coordinator sees a high proportion of Masters students for individual tutorials, particularly from professional 'conversion' courses such as Social Work or Allied Health, which many students begin after a break from Higher Education, or who enter the course with a background in a very different discipline. These students find the transition very challenging, as their academic skills are either rusty or do not transfer to the new discipline. It is sometimes assumed that as these students have an undergraduate degree, they do not need as much support, but this is often not the case. Admission criteria may be a compounding factor, leading to inaccurate expectations of the transferability of previous undergraduate study, when in a very different discipline. A high proportion of the International students who approach the service are also on Taught Postgraduate courses, and find the transition to Masters level study challenging as they have only a year to master both the language and a new academic culture. The Coordinator also notes that many of the 'traditional' students who approach the service do so in the later stages of their course, as they seem not to anticipate the

demands of transition to Higher Education, and are less likely to identify their needs or seek advice in a timely fashion. Many of these students approach the service after failing or barely passing a series of exams or assignments. More timely intervention would be better, and could be much assisted by referral from the Schools.
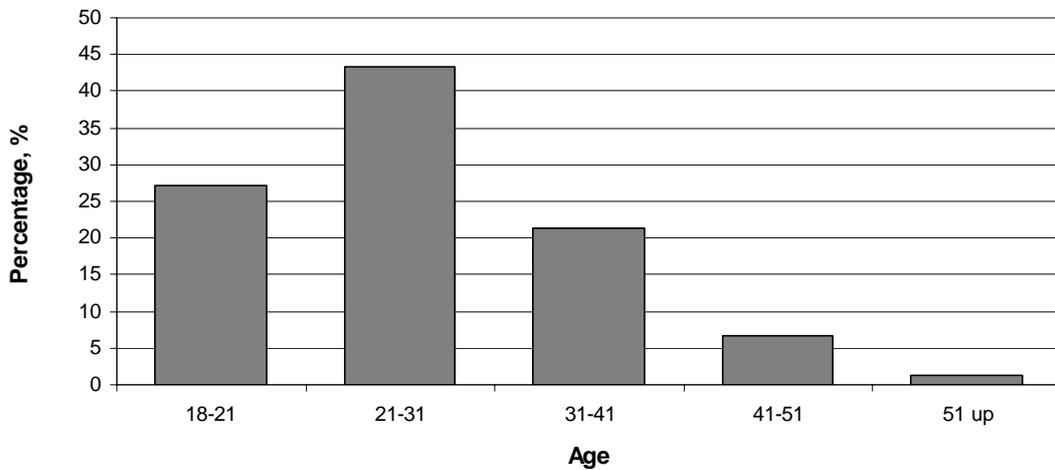

Fig. 7: breakdown of students who approached the LET service by age

Gender
When we looked at the proportion of male and female students accessing the service, compared to the proportion of male and female students in each Faculty, it is clear that females are disproportionately represented, particularly for HUM and SSF (figure 8).
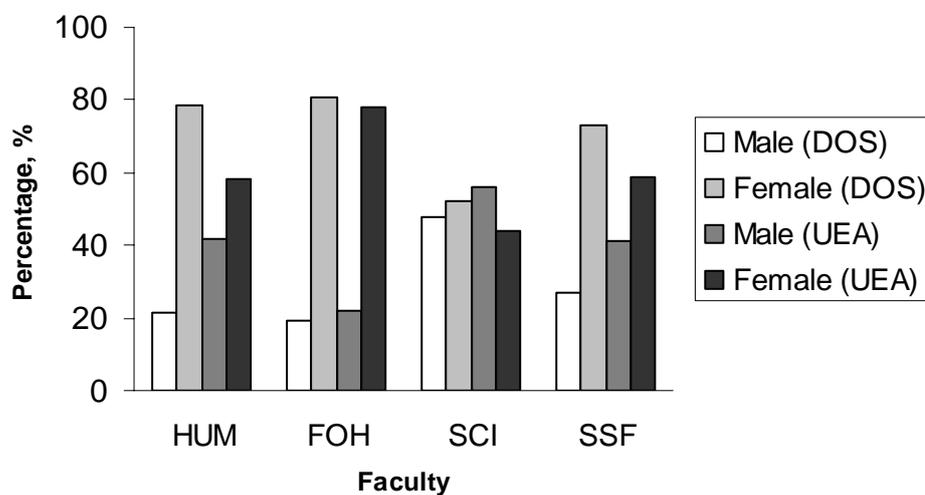

Fig. 8. Proportion of male and female students accessing the LET service, compared with proportion of male and female students in each Faculty

Female students seem better at accessing support through the individual tutorials; many male students approach the service only when they perceive that they are failing (which could be quite late in their course). This is a matter of concern. Male students may feel less inclined to access individual support and the reasons for this need to be better understood. The LET service is still working to dispel the idea that it offers only remedial support, but promotes its activities as encouraging all students to achieve their potential, to counter any reluctance to engage with guidance. Male

students may prefer to access support in a less personal way, and thus it is very important that the LET Team devotes its time to developing self-help, remote-access resources such as study guides and interactive web materials. This will benefit students who wish to access the service out of office hours, those on placement, and also those who find a face-to-face service does not initially appeal to them.

2.6 Research

Teaching Fellowships
The Tutor for International Students has been involved in one UEA Teaching Fellowships this year, and two from last year which have ongoing implications for her work this year.

1. International students and their understanding of plagiarism: a cross-cultural ethnographic study 2007-2008

The findings from this research continue to inform the group and individual work the learning enhancement tutor carries out with international students. In terms of external impact (e.g. contribution to subject pedagogic discussions/developments) the research has been presented at two conferences. It also forms the basis for an online resource (under development) to help students master attribution practices in their discipline. The original aim was to contribute to developing more culturally and context sensitive explanations of our attribution practices so that advice given to international students can be as meaningful and helpful as possible. To do this, international students from across the Social Sciences were interviewed in small groups and individually.

2. Addressing the needs of first year international research students and their supervisors: an academic literacies approach 2007-2008

This project which involved meetings and interviews with PGRs from across the university throughout their first year has resulted in three DVDs which are currently being edited. The first two concern practical issues related to preparing for and arriving at UEA. The third DVD features PGRs talking about their experience of supervision, some of the challenges they faced and what they did to overcome those challenges. It is currently being devised as a staff development resource to be used as a prompt for discussing supervision practices.

3. Enhancing the learning experiences of taught PG students: a qualitative assessment of the new PG skills module in the School of Development Studies (with Colette Harris and Daniel McAvoy from DEV). 2008-2009

A skills programme was piloted in DEV aimed at developing students' academic writing using PGR students to facilitate this development via small tutorial groups. The programme was evaluated through student surveys and through interviews with students, tutors and staff. The final report listed the following outcomes:

- regular and ongoing insights into the specific challenges students face in DEV in their day-to-day study;

- DEV specific resources for use in tutorials (e.g. identifying arguments, paraphrasing, referencing);

- a more interactive induction programme in September 2009 which allowed students to explore their expectations and the expectations of the UK Higher Education system;

- more thorough hands-on introduction to Blackboard and to the library;

- separation of the demands of studying in a second language (affecting many international students) from the need to understand the expectations and assumptions of Masters level study (affecting all students);

- a writing guide to help in DEV Masters programme assignments;

- a formatting guide so that students and academic staff are clear as to the expectations for assignments;

- more attention given to the wording of assignments and of the assignment tasks (e.g. what lecturers expect when they ask for a report, a concept note or a critical review).

An initial evaluation of the programme was presented at UEA's Teaching and Learning day 2008.

Participation in the National Learning Development Community:
The Learning Enhancement Team are members of the Association of Learning Developers in Higher Education (ALDinHE) and the Coordinator represents the Team at their annual conference. Although not part of her part-time role as Learning Enhancement Tutor, the Tutor for International Students continues to present research at national conferences such as ASKe (Assessement Standards and Knowledge Exchange) at Oxford Brookes and at the Conference of the European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing in Coventry. It is important that the work of the Learning Enhancement Team be evidence-based, and we will continue to seek opportunities for research through UEA teaching fellowships and conference participation.

2.7 Conclusions and Future Priorities

- Demand for provision (tutorials and workshops) continues to increase year on year. We aim to explore other ways of making provision available to all students over the coming academic year, including the recruitment of sessional Tutors, peer-mentoring programmes, liaising with Schools over workshops, and investing more time in developing self-help resources where possible.
- Workshops help to meet some of the demand in a resource-efficient way, and offer the additional benefits of group learning and embedded provision that is not perceived as remedial. Some workshops requested by Schools have too unfocussed a remit or take place at times of the academic year that are less than optimum; others could be better developed as a series of embedded workshops rather than add-on, isolated sessions. We will continue to liaise with Schools on these issues to ensure that workshop provision is targeted and efficient.
- Self-help web-based resources will play an increasingly important role in LET provision, and current demands on the service mean that not enough time can be devoted to them. We will examine this over the next academic year,

and seek to increase the web resources, particularly those that can be publicised at identified times of seasonal demand such as exams and dissertations. This may also help to meet the needs of students who cannot or do not wish to access individual tutorial support.

- Access to LET provision across the university is not uniform; we will continue to liaise with Schools over this issue, and refine our publicity, while attempting to avoid increasing the demand for individual tutorials.
- Some of the heavy demand on the service seems to be due to inappropriate admissions criteria or student expectations of the course. We will liaise with Schools to communicate where this is a problem, as it does not fall within the LET Team's remit or capacity to remedy these wider problems.

Helen Webster, Learning Enhancement Coordinator, 2009.

3. Disability Services

Disability Services comprises: the Disability Co-ordinator, Jane Abson; the Mental Health Co-ordinator, Beckie Davies; the Dyslexia Tutors, Ellie Baker and Anyesa Sorrentino (5 days per week, term time and reduced hours in vacation periods); the Disability Team Administrator, Marean Daniels; the Disability Adviser for Mental Health and Disability Services Luke Jefferies (Luke has a joint role: roughly half of the week each spent working with disabled students and those with mental health difficulties. He was appointed August 2009); the Administrative Assistant, Jordana Barnes (2 half days per week. She was appointed September 2009).

3.1 Who we provide services for

We provide services to students with: mobility impairments; sensory impairments; specific learning difficulties e.g. dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, AD(H)D; mental health difficulties; unseen disabilities e.g. asthma, epilepsy, heart conditions, diabetes; autism spectrum diagnoses; cancer, from the point of diagnosis; HIV/AIDS, from the point of diagnosis; Multiple Sclerosis (MS), from the point of diagnosis; Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME); Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (C.F.S.) and any other condition which "has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on [the] ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities".

3.2 Services provided by the Disability Co-ordinator

1) *For prospective applicants*

Discussion by telephone, e-mail and/or arranged visits to discuss and evaluate the accessibility of the University for the prospective applicant and their intended course of study.

This service is most often used by pupils in Years 11 and 12 who are considering their University options. Young people with needs for care assistance, blind and deaf young people and those with autism spectrum diagnoses are most often represented in this group of service users.

Although not many in number (15 in 2008/9), visits can be time-consuming, involving liaison with academic colleagues and accommodation staff prior to the visit and, on

the day, tours of the campus, a visit to accommodation, a discussion with an academic in the visitor's prospective School, and an extended discussion about support arrangements. They are however, very useful in establishing first contact with prospective students and promoting the University.

2) University admissions and services to applicants

The role of the Disability Co-ordinator in the admissions process is not to determine whether or not an applicant should be made an offer because of their disability, but

1) to be aware of applicants in order that relevant information and guidance on services can be made available to them;

2) to determine whether there is a need for an early stage discussion with the applicant and the School about 'reasonable adjustments' to determine whether these can be made to enable the applicant to potentially meet the core competency requirements of the course.

The Disability Discrimination Act says the following in relation to admissions:

> … it is unlawful for an education provider to discriminate against a disabled person:

- in the arrangements made for determining admissions to the institution
- in the terms on which it offers to admit him to the institution, or
- by refusing or deliberately omitting to accept an application for his admission to the institution. (Disability Rights Commission, 2007)

When determining whether reasonable adjustments can be made, it is incumbent upon the University to interrogate whether what is being asked of students in terms of course content and teaching, learning and assessment practices does, in fact, relate to core knowledges/practices of the subject. To enable this practice, Admissions Officers provide copies of applications where a disability has been declared for review and recommendation.

Historically, the 'turn around' of applications by Disability Services has been of concern to Admissions staff. In 2008/9, significant improvement in speed of turnaround was made and close liaison with admissions colleagues developed. This is enhanced by the Disability Co-ordinator and Dyslexia Tutors' involvement in the CSED programme, providing training to admissions staff on disability in Higher Education.

Concern to ensure that applicants to the MB/BS course with declared disabilities had the opportunity to explore 'reasonable adjustments' for study and practice resulted in the development of a multi-disciplinary Team (including the Disability Co-ordinator, Occupational Health, the MED Disability Liaison Officer, MED Clinical Skills Director) all available offer early advice to applicants. The creation of this group lead to consideration of implementation of similar opportunities for applicants to AHP courses to be provided for applicants for 2010/11.

In terms of numbers, applicants with declared disabilities for 2009/10 entry were:

782 undergraduates (+ 39 deferred entry applications)
112 postgraduates

43 PGCE students
19 visiting/exchange

Total: 956

These converted to the following entrants in 2008:

177 undergraduates
72 postgraduates
21 PGCE students
18 visiting/exchange

Total: 288

The total number of applications requiring review by the Disability Co-ordinator was 796. 1 application was rejected because the University could not support the applicant's disability in study and University life.

3) *Services for current students*

The Disability Co-ordinator undertook 373 scheduled student appointments in the academic year plus unrecorded drop-ins.

It is anticipated that the use of the Appointments Pro software in DoS will enable us to interrogate the demographic and disability data for appointments which should enable us to identify key users and non-users of the service amongst the student population and the key issues which they present. The review in 2010 should then facilitate the development of better targeted information and the opportunity to identify and reach out to those students who currently under-use Disability and Dyslexia services.

The range of advice and action for students meeting the Disability Co-ordinator has been:

- advice to students about 'reasonable adjustments': i.e. what the University can reasonably do to 'level the playing field' for disabled students together with liaison with academic and administrative colleagues to facilitate their implementation;

- advice and guidance to students on intercalation, appeals, examination arrangements and liaison with colleagues and Students' Union as appropriate;

- advice about accommodation together with arrangement for changes to accommodation and minor works to improve accessibility in close liaison with Accommodation Office and Estates colleagues;

- liaison with external agencies (Student Finance, Disabled Students' Allowance Assessment Centres, Social Services Departments, for example) to facilitate the provision of services;

- advice about assistive technologies (hardware, software and 'low-tech');

- advice about funding for disabled students (Disabled Students Allowances);

- assistance with the application process, claiming allowances, organising delivery of equipment and arranging for the provision of services;

- advice and guidance on managing University life (particularly important for students with M.E., C.F.S and other fatigue-related conditions);

- signposting to other UEA sources of assistance (e.g. Medical Centre, Chaplaincy, academic support, Counselling, Students' Union, Teaching Offices);

- advice, guidance and liaison with appropriate third parties in relation to work or study placements in the UK or overseas.

In addition to general advice giving, the Disability Co-ordinator's work has included meetings with students to mentor them as they encounter academic and personal barriers to study. Such work has been required on an on-going basis for a number of students and on an ad-hoc basis over a shorter term for others. This has been an increasingly significant part of the role.

4) *Disabled Students' Allowances (DSAs)*

Work to encourage students to apply for DSAs is vital as these are the funds which support service provision (note takers, mentors, dyslexia tuition, study skills support, assistive technologies for example) for UK students. The number of students with the allowance (below) is not likely to be equivalent to the number eligible for application who would benefit from the additional provision.

DSA awards

Year	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9
Number	126	162	137	175	207

The Disability Co-ordinator has increased contact with applicants with firm and insurance acceptances to outline the benefits of the allowance to them and to encourage them to apply; DSAs are also promoted within Disability and Dyslexia Services.

The transfer of management of DSA applications from Local Authorities to Student Finance England has been anticipated to present difficulties with the application process for 2009/10 entrants.

5) *Information on students' support requirements and 'reasonable adjustments'*

In order to improve the flow of information from Disability Services to Faculties and Schools about students' requirements for reasonable adjustments, the Disability Co-ordinator instituted a summary pro-forma identifying services to be provided by or via DoS and those which are Faculty/School responsibility. The information is taken from students' DSA study needs assessments[1] primarily: an electronic pro-forma is completed with additional necessary information from the DSA report scanned to

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[1] Information is only sent from the Office when the student has agreed that it can be shared.

accompany. The summary is them e-mailed to Faculty managers for dissemination as appropriate. This is a cumbersome system which is difficult to provide.

In order to improve speed of availability of data to appropriate staff in Faculties and Schools, the Disability Co-ordinator has approached the SIS Team to request investigation of the 'Accessibility Module' for SITS (in use in other Universities) which will allow the recording of student information more readily and make it immediately accessible to colleagues enhancing our ability to meet our legislative requirements.

6) *Disability Liaison Officers (DLOs)*

Over the course of the academic year, most Schools nominated a Disability Liaison Officer whose role it is to provide a point of contact between Disability Services and Schools, providing a two-way conduit for information on individual students and disability issues/questions. In addition, DLOs are now available in Schools to assist disabled students with academic-related concerns.

3 meetings of DLOs were held in the year and were most productive, with engaged discussion and active involvement of members. Particular issues which emerged over the meetings were:

- issues of confidentiality and disclosure;
- information on students' requirements for reasonable adjustments: dissemination and safe storage
- personal Emergency Evacuation Plans;
- risk assessment;
- meeting legislative requirements and changes to the Quality Assurance Agency Code of Practice;
- contact between DLOs.

A discussion forum for DLOs has been provided to enable information sharing and each of the above has been addressed over the year, though it is fair to say that further consolidation is required in 2009/10.

7) *CSED*

Over the course of the year, the Disability Co-ordinator, the Mental Health Co-ordinator and Dyslexia Tutors presented training courses to Post-graduate teaching assistants, admissions officers, front-line staff, placement officers and academic staff. Courses were well received and participants judged them to be illuminating and helpful in their work. In addition, ad-hoc workshops were arranged which enabled staff to focus on specific aspects of their work with disabled students.

8) *Students with Autism Spectrum Disorders*

Towards the end of the academic year, the Deputy Dean of Students commissioned research on our service provision to students with Autism Spectrum Disorders (including Asperger Syndrome). The report will inform the work of the Service from the academic year 2009/10 onwards.

3.3 Services provided by the Mental Health Co-ordinator

As does the Disability Co-ordinator, the Mental Health Co-ordinator reviews appplications for candidates with offers from the University and liaises with

colleagues over any reasonable adjustments which may be required to facilitate study. This is ongoing from mid-October each academic year.

Over the course of the year, the Mental Health Co-ordinator worked with 235 clients, predominantly home students (188) and twice as many female students (157) as male.

Of the range of mental health difficulties, stress (118 incidents), anxiety/panic (160 incidents) and depression (226 incidents) were the most frequently reported. 61 students reported an eating disorder, 17 self harm and 29 suicidal thoughts. 78 incidents of psychosis occurred.[2]

Response to students' mental health difficulties varies from guidance in self-management, reassurance and anxiety reduction to crisis intervention, including ad-hoc, one-off meetings through to planned therapeutic work over time.

Close liaison with colleagues in Schools, the Counselling Service, University Medical Centre and local voluntary and statutory agencies is essential and ongoing.

In addition to direct work with students, activities aimed towards promoting good mental health in the University Community are also a strong part of the role, with 'Well-Being Week' being the most visible event. Last year attendance was strong and a wide variety of self-help interventions and other services were represented. Of particular interest was the 'Living Library', where an individual is available to recount their own story from which others can take information and/or inspiration and potentially points of identification which can be supportive to them.

Throughout the year, the Mental Health Co-ordinator contributed to the CSED training programme with additional training for staff provided as required.

Towards the end of the year, the Mental Health Co-ordinator became a Mental Health First Aid Trainer and is aiming to role out a programme of training for staff over 2009/10. The aim is to improve knowledge of mental health issues and enable staff to respond effectively to students and peers when required.

The recent appointment of Luke Jefferies to the role of Disability Adviser for Mental Health and Disability is anticipated to enhance development of the Mental Health service for students and the University community more widely.

Jane Abson, Disability Co-ordinator, 2009

3.4 Specific Learning Difficulties: services provided by the Dyslexia Tutors and the Team Administrator

As a service to students which is not funded by the University[3], but by Disabled Students' Allowances, provision by the Dyslexia Tutors is inevitably closely focussed on providing Specialist Tuition in chargeable hours. However, making a wider contribution to the University and to prospective students are also important elements

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[2] 1 incident does not equal 1 student: students can report a number of aspects of their mental health difficulties within one appointment and over time.
[3] International and EU students are provided dyslexia tuition funded by the University. Tuition is instituted for students prior to the receipt of a DSA award with charges being retrospectively made to Local Authorities (from 2009 by the SLC).

of the role. Advice and guidance to academic staff and colleagues in other service departments is a regular part of the work as is providing information and guidance on service provision to prospective students and their families.

The total number of students seen by specialist Dyslexia Tutors increased this academic year to 395, compared with 352 last year. Between them they provided 1356 hours of dyslexia support which comprised 208 screening sessions, 162 feedback sessions and 710 tutorials. 68 students missed booked appointments.

Initial screening and preliminary testing for dyslexia by the tutors is, in the majority of cases, followed by a full assessment by an Educational Psychologist (EP). For each student who received a full EP report, 3 visits to DoS would have been entailed: initial visit to discuss issues, screening and EP appointment, making at least 600 student visits to Dyslexia Services.

If the screening indicates dyslexia, special examination arrangements are recommended so that the student is not disadvantaged and the student can also immediately book tutorials.

Subsequent to the EP report, each student is invited to attend for feedback on their Assessment Report to ensure they fully understand their strengths and weaknesses and to minimise any concerns they may have over a recent and possibly unexpected new diagnosis.

At this meeting, highlighted areas for development are discussed and the Tutor will explain the ways in which new strategies can be learned within one-to-one tutorials, in order to build on academic performance.

Tutorials are not compulsory although students are encouraged to attend as the Tutors believe that those who use them on a regular basis make the greatest progress. An Individual Learning plan is drafted and signed and the student is reminded about the examination sticker system. Also within this meeting, an application form for the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) will be completed and the process of this funding fully explained.

A range of multi-sensory teaching strategies for the development of study skills are used with students. Interventions also include teaching of handwriting, phonics and spelling. Students presenting to the service are not limited to those with dyslexia. Dysgraphic and dyspraxic students, those with AD(H)D and autism spectrum diagnoses are also supported. Close liaison with colleagues in DoS for students with a combination of disabilities and specific learning difficulties is also a significant part of the role: ensuring that students receive coherent and well-directed support.

As last year, students from NAM took up the greatest number of appointments, followed by those from AHP, CAP and MED. There was an increase in the number of students from BIO (from 12 to 21). It is unclear whether the high numbers of students seen from some Schools are a reflection of the interaction dyslexia Tutors have with each of these Schools, or whether they are a reflection of the higher number of students with Specific Learning Difficulties in these Schools.

There is now a member of staff in MED who is seen as a contact for students with dyslexia and the Disability Liaison Officer for MED is very active within the School. There are close ties between DOS and Schools of NAM and AHP. Each year group tutorials are offered to dyslexic students from AHP to help them to prepare for their final viva assessments.

In addition to these duties, Dyslexia Tutors liaise with members of teaching staff, admissions staff and the Students' Union as necessary in cases of appeal.

In an effort to reduce the numbers of final year students registering with the Dyslexia Service, all Senior Advisors were contacted at the end of April by Dyslexia Tutors who offered to give a short presentation about the Service to their new student intake. This was taken up by MED, ENV and LAW and in September, annual presentations were also given to new students in NAM and CAP.

With the current level of staffing, the Service is normally able to provide fortnightly sessions for students who make advance requests for regular tutorials. The waiting list for appointments in the Autumn Semester is between two and three weeks.

The system of coloured stickers to alert markers of examination scripts that the author has a specific learning difficulty (e.g. dyslexia or dyspraxia) was used for the second year this summer. There remains debate over whether or not this system should be applied to anonymously-marked coursework. Sticker distribution and examination arrangement coordination is undertaken by the Team Administrator.

The Disability Coordinator, Dyslexia Tutors and the Mental Health Coordinator continue to contribute to the CSED staff development programme, with dedicated Disability Awareness courses aimed at support and frontline staff, admissions staff and members of teaching staff. A session for Estates has been requested via Helen Murdoch, Equality and Diversity Officer, and will take place in the Spring Semester. Three sessions are provided annually for the Postgraduate Teaching Skills Programme. Additionally, similar sessions are provided twice-yearly for advisors within MED. Attendance at all courses is optional (other than for postgraduate teaching assistants).

The Dyslexia Tutors have contributed to the teaching programme on the BA Educational Studies for the past two years and in 2010 Ellie Baker will provide workshops about dyslexia for PGCE students training to teach in Primary Schools. In addition to this Ellie will promote Student Services and the Dyslexia Service to young people from Years 10 and 11 at the Higher Education Information Day for Students with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, students who might otherwise not consider a University application.

Ellie Baker, Dyslexia Tutor, 2009