

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

**Annual Report 2013/14**

**(1<sup>st</sup> September 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2014)**

## **About us**

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 on:

- study skills
- mathematics and statistics
- academic writing
- use of English

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

## **Contact us**

Telephone: 01603 592761

Email: [dos.help@uea.ac.uk](mailto:dos.help@uea.ac.uk)

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

Twitter: @uea\_let

## **The Learning Enhancement Team currently are:**

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

### *Tutors for Mathematics and statistics*

Dr Robert Jenkins (0.9fte)

Dr Gordon Collins (0.2fte)

### *Tutors for academic writing, study skills and international students*

Chris Bishop (1fte)

Zoe Jones (0.6fte)

Dr Nicholas Wright (0.2fte fixed term to May 2015)

### *Tutors for Specific Learning Difficulties\**

Dr Simon Andrews (0.9fte)

Calvin Hoy (0.9fte)

### *Sessional tutors (part-time temporary staff)*

Dr Luciana Davila-Smith

Dr Judith Stewart

Jacqueline Wild

### *Administrative Assistants*

Sarah Aikman (0.5fte)

Kellee Rich (0.5fte)

\*Integrated into the Learning Enhancement Team in September 2014 (see 'Future Developments' below).

## Foreword

This report clearly sets out our contribution to the University's commitment to **enhancing the student learning experience** and **improving student retention and success**. Students tell us that the service we provide plays a key role in helping them make the most of their studies and achieve their potential.

The report also reveals the **continued growth of our service** in 2013/14. In this year Learning Enhancement Tutors saw 15% of UEA's postgraduate students and 14% of UEA's undergraduate students (up from 14% and 9% respectively in 2012/13). As Figure 1 shows, we have achieved substantial growth in the number of individuals seen, take-up of appointments and workshop attendances since 2012/13.

The service has grown in usage every year since 2008/9. This has been achieved by:

- Expansion of workshop delivery which now accounts for over 50% of our engagement with students.
- A shift in the balance between delivery and resource development.
- Employment of two new part-time tutor posts in 2013/14.
- The dedication, creativity and professionalism of staff and the effectiveness of the service we provide.

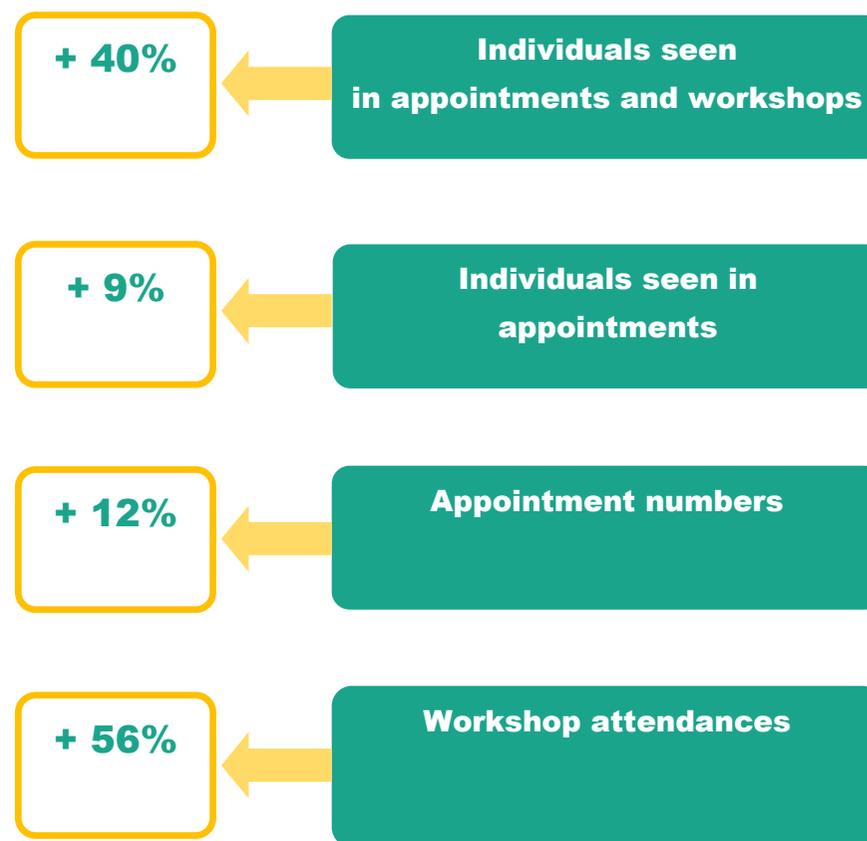


Figure 1: Percentage increases in key areas of the service since 2012/13.

### **Appointments (drop-ins and tutorials)**

It is clear that many students at all levels of ability greatly value and benefit from being able to seek one-to-one advice with Learning Enhancement Tutors as a way of developing the skills, attitudes and confidence necessary to succeed in their studies. In the period 2008/9 to 2013/14 more than two-thirds (69%) of the undergraduate students who had an appointment with a Learning Enhancement Tutor went on to achieve a First or Upper Second Class degree classification.<sup>1</sup> Drop-ins and tutorials must remain a core part of our provision if we are to continue to help the University to achieve high retention rates, good honours and research degree completion rates.

### **Student feedback**

'I got 68 on the essay I came to see you about, which is my highest mark ever! Thanks for helping me reach my potential.'  
[Undergraduate PPL]

'You really helped me gain confidence while doing these calculations. I wrote my exam last week and I got 100%.'  
[Undergraduate PHA]

'Our discussion and the advice you gave me were more than helpful. I already feel [...] more confident that I will regain control of my academic progress.' [Postgraduate researcher SSF]

'My success would not have been possible without your help [...] Those moments were the time that I nearly gave up but you have done your outmost to make me realise that I can surpass those academic challenges. Thank you all for doing your job excellently and making students like me feel welcome.' [Undergraduate HSC]

'The help the Learning Enhancement Team has given me has meant not only did I strive for the best possible grades but I found on the most part my degree experience to be a fun and enjoyable process.'  
[Undergraduate AMA]

### **What did we work on with students?**

Sixty-seven percent of appointments addressed academic writing and study skills (the writing process, writing style, feedback and resubmission 79% and academic study skills 21%).

Twenty-seven percent of appointments addressed mathematics and statistics. The proportion of mathematics appointments addressing basic numerical skills fell from 19% in 2012/13 to 8% in 2013/14. There is now an increased delivery of numeracy support in workshops, while appointments focus increasingly on calculus and higher topics (up by 9% since 2012/13).

Six percent of appointments covered general academic advice including intercalation and withdrawal.

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<sup>1</sup> This figure excludes MBBS students.

### Who was attending LET appointments?

In 2013/14 we continued to see:

- a disproportionately high number of international students (25% compared with 22% at UEA) and taught postgraduate students (32% compared with 19% at UEA).
- a relatively low proportion of men (27% compared with 42% at UEA).
- a relatively low proportion of those aged 18-21 years (44% compared with 64%<sup>2</sup> at UEA) although the proportion is increasing (up from 30% in 2012/13).

Figure 2 shows that we saw a disproportionately high number of individuals from the **Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences**. In particular, approximately 84% of these individuals were studying Health Sciences; students on these programmes accounted for approximately 56% of the student population in the Faculty. We need to work closely with HSC staff in managing this demand and to identify innovative and sustainable ways of supporting these students that do not impact on the availability of appointments for other UEA students.

Figure 2 also shows that we saw a disproportionately low number of individuals from the **Faculty of Arts and Humanities**. This may be affected by the availability of academic writing tutorials from Royal Literary Fellows, who are based in this Faculty. We have had long-standing relationships with LCS and PSI (now part of PPL) and FTM (now part of AMA) and since 2013/14 we have increased our engagement with HIS and ART (now part of AMA).

<sup>2</sup> This figure is based on UEA data from 2011/12.

Finally, we anticipate growing demand from the **Faculty of Social Sciences**, especially in light of increasing recruitment of international taught postgraduate students in, for instance, the Norwich Business School.

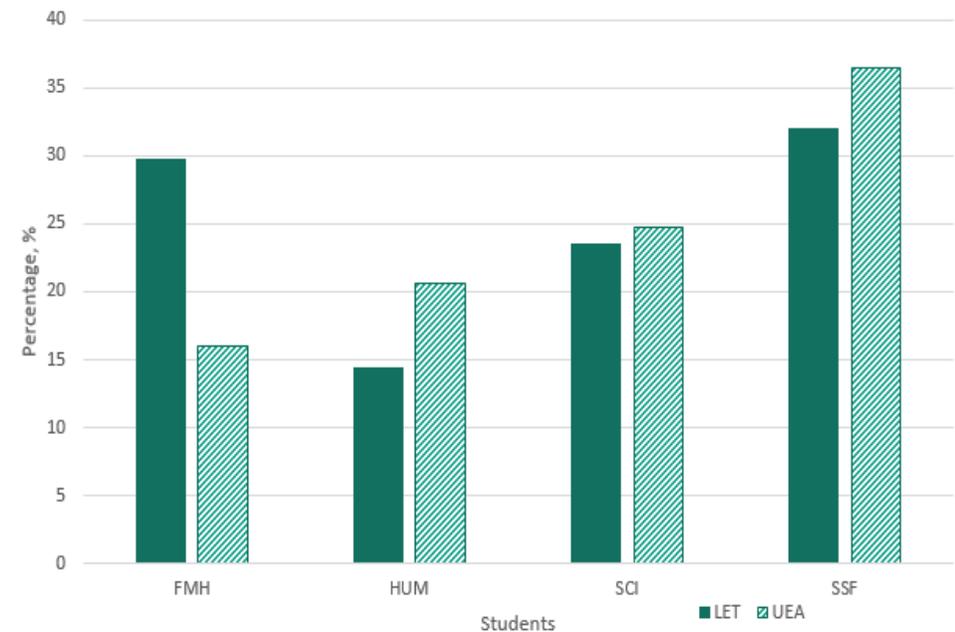


Figure 2: Proportion of individual students seen in LET appointments by Faculty, compared with proportion of UEA student population by Faculty.

## Workshops

In 2013/14 we delivered more than 450 hours of workshops and recorded around 3000 attendances from more than 1500 individual students across all four UEA Faculties. This included generic sessions and embedded sessions tailored to support particular degree courses or modules in eighteen Schools of Studies. In this period attendances at workshops accounted for 53% of our engagement with students (up from 45% in 2012/13); this figure rises to 71% for mathematics support.

In workshops we saw a higher proportion of men (36%) and those aged 18-21 (57%) compared with appointments (27% and 44% respectively). This underscores the importance of the continued expansion of workshop activity and the development of other ways of engaging with our service such as through self-help resources.

Seventy-two percent of our workshops were delivered between September and November. Research into student transition highlights the extent to which students are continuing to adjust to the expectations of Higher Education beyond their first semester. It is important that we work closely with Schools to ensure that workshop delivery is appropriately timed to support all stages of student development.

The frontloading of workshop delivery is particularly acute in the area of mathematics where 80% of workshops were delivered in the autumn semester. This has challenging resource implications.

## Resource development

In 2013/14 we continued to produce **self-help resources** covering a wide range of aspects of study skills, academic writing, mathematics and statistics. Development of these resources is an increasingly important part of our work as it helps us to meet growing demand for academic support and gives students choice over when, where and how they learn.

Engagement with our **interactive multimedia mind maps** for topic areas in mathematics continues to grow (the number of views has doubled in the past year to over 9000). In January 2015 Dr Janette Matthews from the Mathematics Education Centre (MEC) at Loughborough University visited us to find out more about this approach to organising and displaying mathematics resources. For many years the MEC has been at the forefront of offering, analysing and creating mathematics support for students.

In the summer 2014 Learning Enhancement Tutors began developing a new set of resources based on a model of questioning that students can employ to help them become more **autonomous and critical learners**. This UEA Teaching Fellowship project prioritised five key challenges for students making the transition to Higher Education: critical thinking, effective reading, time management, planning written work and preparing for lectures. The project will be completed in summer 2015.

### Current Projects

A project to create a **repository of examples of student work** began in 2014. The project aims to enhance the dialogue with students and between students around assessment requirements and marking standards. Four pilots will take place in 2015/16 (one in each Faculty) to explore different ways of storing, developing and using student work, and to gather feedback from staff and students about the impact of using student work for assessment support. Progress will be reported to the TPPG in March 2016.

A UEA Teaching Fellowship project to develop **writers' groups** for postgraduate researchers at UEA began in October 2013. It aims to help postgraduate researchers find dedicated time and space for writing regularly. Students use the groups to structure their time, manage their writing and maintain progress. Future developments include one day writing retreats.

### Professional Development

Learning Enhancement Tutors provide a range of **workshops for staff at UEA** that draw on areas of our expertise and provide an opportunity to explore and enhance

- Teaching International Students
- Supporting students with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and ADHD
- Teaching Writing
- Teaching for Critical Thinking.

Continued **engagement with wider professional communities** is also a critical element in our professional development. In 2015/16 we plan to host regional development events at UEA for the

Network for Excellence in Mathematics and Statistics Support and the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education.

### Future Developments:

- Continue to work closely with Faculties and Schools to address the **'hot spots' and 'cold spots' of student engagement**.
- Meet with Teaching Directors and lecturers to explore the challenges of **teaching mathematics to non-mathematicians** and to share good practice. Over many years we have built strong relationships with the teachers of mathematics at UEA and we have seen common issues emerge across different parts of the University. This meeting will provide an opportunity to bring together all those involved in the delivery of teaching in this important area.
- In September 2014 the existing **tutor posts for Specific Learning Difficulties** (SpLDs) in DOS were integrated into LET. This has helped enhance the delivery of academic support and faculty understanding of the work these tutors undertake. In 2013/14 SpLD tutors delivered nearly 1500 appointments and future LET reports will include a full analysis of this work. Planned changes to government funding of the Disabled Students' Allowance from 2016/17 raise questions about the long-term funding of these posts that the University will need to address.
- Secure funding to extend the **two part-time tutor posts** established in 2013/14 (one of which ends in May 2015). This is essential if we are to continue to expand our capacity to meet demand.