

Learning Enhancement Team Dean of Students' Office

Annual Report 2014/15



The Learning Enhancement Team currently are:

Head of the Team

Dr Jeremy Schildt (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 Judith Stewart (0.1fte)

Jacqueline Wild (0.1fte)

Dr Nonia Williams-Korteling (0.2fte)

Tutors for Specific Learning Difficulties

Dr Simon Andrews (0.9fte)

Calvin Hoy (0.9fte)

Administrative Assistants

Sarah Hartzler (0.5fte)

Abigail Simpson (0.5fte)

Contact us

Telephone: 01603 592761

Email: dos.help@uea.ac.uk

Web: www.uea.ac.uk/dos/let

Twitter: @uea_let

Overview

The following report sets out our contribution to the University's commitment to providing the highest quality teaching and to enhancing the student learning experience.

In 2014/15 Learning Enhancement staff were recognised by the University, the Union of UEA Students and the Higher Education Academy for their commitment to professionalism in teaching and learning and for providing exceptional support for students.¹

Who did we see?

In this year Learning Enhancement Tutors saw 18% of UEA's undergraduate and taught postgraduate students and 10% of UEA's research students.²

Attendance at appointments and workshops by:

- *Fee status* 76% Home/EU and 24% International (compared with 77% and 23% respectively at UEA)
- *Gender* 35% male and 65% female (compared with 41% and 59% respectively at UEA)

¹ Dr Robert Jenkins became a Fellow of the HEA and a University Teaching Fellow in 2015. Dr Jeremy Schildt is currently applying for Senior Fellowship of the HEA and Chris Bishop is applying to become Fellow of the HEA. Dr Robert Jenkins and Dr Jeremy Schildt were nominated for 'Best support staff' in the UEASU's Transforming Teaching Awards 2015 and Dr Jenkins received one of four awards in this category.

² In 2014/15 we recorded 6478 attendances at tutorials and workshops by 2375 individuals.

- *Age* 44% 17-21 years (compared with approximately 60% at UEA)
- *Level* 76% UG, 19% PGT and 5% PGR (compared with 74%, 18% and 8% respectively at UEA)

What did we work on with students?

- Nearly three quarters of appointments addressed academic writing and study skills.
- Just under a fifth of appointments addressed mathematics and statistics. The proportion addressing basic numerical skills remained at 8% (having fallen from 19% in 2012/13). Difficulties with numeracy remain widespread but support in this area is focused around workshop delivery, while appointments focus increasingly on calculus and higher topics (up from 36% in 2012/13 to 56% in 2014/15).

Resource development

In this year we continued to produce [self-help resources](#) covering a wide range of aspects of academic writing and study skills, and mathematics and statistics. Development of these resources is an increasingly important part of our work as it helps us to meet growing demand and gives students choice over when, where and how they learn.

Learning Enhancement at UEA

Units such as UEA's Learning Enhancement Team are recognised as an important part of the increasingly diverse HE landscape, providing a field of practice and research dedicated to supporting and enhancing learning for all students. Working with students at all levels of study, our role provides exposure to all disciplinary perspectives and contexts at UEA. Learning Enhancement Tutors work with students in the areas of academic writing and study skills, and mathematics and statistics, and have specialist expertise in supporting students from a range of educational and cultural backgrounds, and those with Specific Learning Difficulties.

Academic writing and study skills

We aim to build student confidence in their ability to reach their potential and to empower them to take responsibility for their own learning. Importantly, we demystify the University and its practices in order to be inclusive to all students, whatever their personal, cultural and educational background. Starting from where students are and what they can already do, tutorials follow an exploratory approach aimed at equipping students with strategies and tools to help them to take their work further on their own. To foster this spirit of independence, students are encouraged to reflect on what they need to do and how they learn best, and hence decide which aspects of our advice fit well with their particular programme of study and learning objectives.

Mathematics and statistics

Our approach is inclusive for tutors, lecturers and, importantly, students. New workshops are created after consultation with lecturers with the models of delivery chosen to best suit the needs of students. Existing workshops are refined after feedback from students and tutors. Resources are made in a highly collaborative way and topics are chosen due to student demand or to support new workshops. Tutorials are led by students and the work or topic areas they bring along. Giving everyone involved in mathematics support an opportunity to design, produce and deliver what is offered provides for an ongoing, active community.

Specific Learning Difficulties

Our tuition creates a supportive learning space for students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) that reflects their particular ways of working and offers strategies that are paced to build confidence and motivation. We follow a pedagogic strategy enshrined in the SpLD literature and community that pays particular attention to the areas of phonological skills, memory and processing speed. Our approach encourages self-awareness and makes use of multisensory methods to fully engage students with the materials offered.

Appointments ([drop-ins and tutorials](#))

It is clear that the opportunity to work one-to-one and in small groups with Learning Enhancement Tutors plays a key part in many students' academic development at UEA.

Students tell us that the service we provide is vital in helping them to build confidence and independence, to overcome difficulties and to achieve their academic potential.

Student feedback

I've received my essay today. 63%. I am so happy, it was worth all of the hard work. I can do it. I am able to do it. Thank you for believing in me and all of the support.

UG student, School of Social Work

Thank you again for your help which has been invaluable in enabling me to overcome the anxieties and produce a good piece of writing.

PGT student, School of Health Sciences

Thank you so much for all your help [with mathematics], I feel more confident for the first time since starting UEA.

UG student, Norwich Business School

I have been able to grow in confidence in my own ability and it's something I will take with me into life after UEA!

UG student, School of Art, Media and American Studies

Appointments by Faculty

Figure 1 (overleaf) shows that a disproportionately high number of appointments were taken up by students in the **Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences**. More specifically it is worth noting that:

- just over 90% of these appointments were for students in the School of Health Sciences (HSC)
- 38% of HSC appointments were for students with Specific Learning Difficulties (compared with 29% across all LET appointments)
- approximately 60% of HSC appointments addressed aspects of academic writing, including the writing process, writing style, feedback and resubmission.

We will continue to work closely with HSC staff in order to manage this demand more effectively and to identify innovative and sustainable ways of providing academic support. This will include:

- creating online learning resources tailored to specific assignments (see 'Repository' project below, p.7)
- raising awareness of the writing process and effective support for writing
- promoting good practice in teaching 'international students'
- exploring the possibility of coordinating the delivery of academic support across HSC and LET.

Figure 1 also shows that a disproportionately low number of appointments were taken up by students in the **Faculty of Arts and Humanities** and **Faculty of Social Sciences**. We anticipate growing demand from these Faculties in light of recent and planned increases to student recruitment.

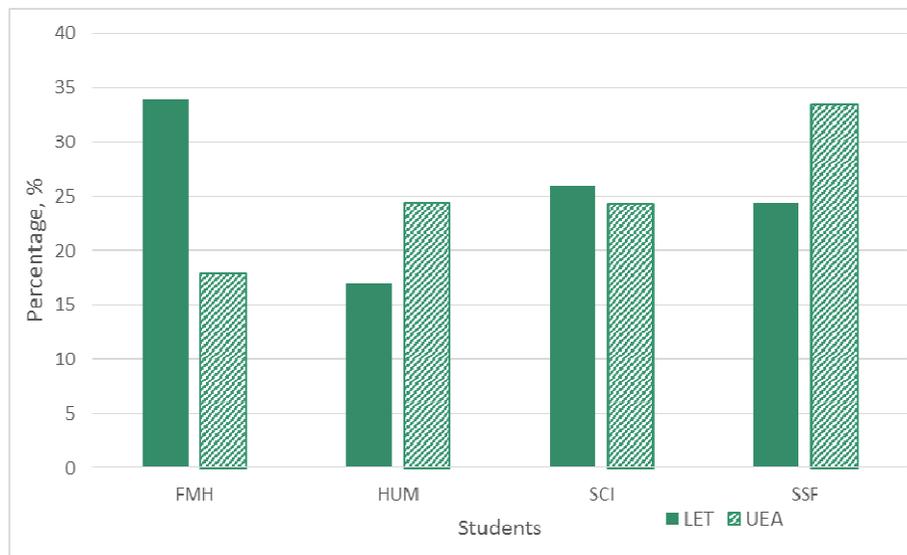


Figure 1: Proportion of LET appointments by Faculty, compared with proportion of UEA student population by Faculty.

Workshops

In 2014/15 we recorded more than 3000 attendances at workshops from more than 1500 individual students across all four UEA Faculties. In this period attendances at workshops accounted for nearly half of our engagement with students; this figure rises to 74% for mathematics support.

Most of our workshop delivery involves tailored sessions embedded in particular degree programmes across fifteen Schools of Studies. We also deliver a [programme of academic skills workshops](#) open to all students on taught programmes and contribute to personal and professional development programmes for postgraduate research students. In addition, we oversee the delivery of the [English Language Support Programme](#) by INTO UEA.

Staff development

The session gave me a rare opportunity to discuss and think about [...] the embedding of key skills, such as academic writing, into my teaching. **Workshop participant 2015**

Learning Enhancement Tutors provide a range of workshops for staff at UEA to explore and enhance areas of teaching practice:

- Teaching International Students
- Supporting students with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and ADHD
- Helping students concerned about memory difficulties
- Teaching Writing
- Teaching for Critical Thinking.

Embedding workshops in degree programmes

It is a unanimous feeling among the MA Education team that we enjoy working with the LET [and] have particularly valued the contribution made by Chris Bishop and Zoe Jones. As a result of their input, the MA students have improved their performance and have gained considerably on a number of skills and competencies, including academic writing, comprehension, organisation and assessment-related performance [...] We would very much hope this support continues well into the future as it is one of the key factors that makes UEA outstanding in terms of student satisfaction.

Dr Spyros Themelis, School of Education and Lifelong Learning

One of the great things about the LET approach is how it can be tailored to match a particular School. Rather than just teaching some vanilla 'introductory stats', Robert [Jenkins] has sat down with me to work out our needs, then gone away and designed bespoke activities which speak directly to our [undergraduate] students' interests in development – while also teaching core statistical concepts [...] The chance to bounce ideas back and forth with Robert has been another big plus of our relationship. With his extensive contacts he has also been a vital link for me to wider networks of passionate pedagogues at UEA.

Dr Robert Grant, School of International Development

Chris Bishop has been running a series of sessions for LCS MA students [...] designed to provide enhancement for international students who are adjusting to a new academic system and in particular learning how to write academic essays [...] This programme and the structured second level of dedicated support has been invaluable for our students enabling them to perform better than they would have done without it. The space these sessions afford students for individual discussions within the framework of a structured class programme is very beneficial.

Dr Roger Baines, School of Politics, Philosophy, Language and Communication Studies

The Learning Enhancement Team contribute a wide range of taught sessions to the SSF PPD training programme for PGR students [...] For LET sessions feedback has been absolutely superb [and] significantly above the average programme mark and this is really remarkable, particularly given the range and diversity of the PGR students attending these sessions and the breadth of content material the team is covering. This programme always represents difficult teaching because of its advanced and diverse audience and SSF really appreciates the contributions of the LET team. It would be very difficult to retain the high standards we are trying to set without their yearly input.

Dr Simon Watts, Faculty of Social Science

Learning and Teaching Enhancement

We lead and contribute to a range of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of teaching and at enhancing the student learning experience at UEA.

Activities in 2014/15

- A project to create a **repository of examples of student work** began in 2014. It aims to digitise examples of completed undergraduate assignments covering a variety of assessment types and grades along with supporting materials. This repository will be used to help students understand the meaning of assessment criteria, with the aim of improving their self-efficacy, engagement and success. The project is funded by UEA's Annual Fund and brings together staff from LET, Schools of Studies and the Centre for Technology Enhanced Learning.
- In 2015 we began offering full day [writing retreats](#) as part of our **Writers' Groups** project. This project aims to help postgraduate researchers find dedicated time and space for writing regularly. Students use the groups and retreats to structure their time, manage their writing and maintain progress.

My work level and productivity is excellent when attending these events.

PGR student

Writers' Groups and Retreats are warmly welcomed, providing our PGRs with a motivational and supportive place in which to write.

Dr Susan Jickells, SCI GRAD School

- In 2015 we established the **Teaching Mathematics to non-Mathematicians (TMnM)** group at UEA, which aims to bring together all those involved in the delivery of teaching in this important area to share experiences and good practice.

This initiative is very timely. Its emergence fits with the surge of international interest within the field of university mathematics education research in the teaching of mathematics to non-specialists [...] There is a wonderful opportunity here for cross-school/faculty, inter-university and international work together in an area that is becoming more and more topical as the presence of mathematics is becoming stronger in a very diverse range of disciplines.

Professor Elena Nardi, School of Education and Lifelong Learning

- In this year we contributed to the design and delivery of an FMH Study Day for practice placement educators and mentors entitled '**Supporting Students with Additional Learning Needs in the Practice Placement Environment**'.
- In this year LET staff were active members of a range of UEA **committees and working groups** including the Learning and Teaching Committee, Taught Programmes Policy Group and ISD Education Board, the organising committee for Learning and Teaching Day, the Digital Voyager Project Board, and the Supporting Academic Transitions group.

Future activities

- **Learning Technologies and Learning Difficulties: Inclusive Approach and Good Practice** This project aims to appraise teaching practices that make use of learning technologies at UEA in order to assess their impact on students with Specific Learning Difficulties and to develop guidelines for an inclusive approach to technology enhanced learning. The project is funded by UEA's Annual Fund and brings together staff from LET and the School of Economics.

- To explore the possibility of establishing more structured, regular opportunities for **dialogue with Schools of Studies** around specific learning and teaching issues arising from our work with students and staff.

- A critical element in our professional development is continued **engagement with wider professional communities** through, for instance, the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education, the Sigma network for excellence in mathematics and statistics support, the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes, the Writing Development in Higher Education network, the Professional Association of Teachers of Students with Specific Learning Difficulties.