

Learning Enhancement Team

Annual Report 2016/17

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University of East Anglia

**STUDENT SUPPORT
SERVICE**

The Learning Enhancement Team currently are:

Head of the Team

Dr Jeremy Schildt (1fte)

Tutors for Mathematics and Statistics

Dr Gordon Collins (0.2fte) Athina Thoma (0.4fte)

Dr Luciana Davila-Smith (0.6fte)

Tutors for Academic Writing and Study Skills

Chris Bishop (1fte) Dr Nonia Williams-Korteling (0.4fte)

Zoë Jones (0.6fte) Vacant (0.4fte)

Tutors for Specific Learning Difficulties

Dr Simon Andrews (0.9fte) Calvin Hoy (0.9fte)

Tutor for Peer-Led Learning

Dr Pablo Dalby (0.5fte)

Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) Administrator

Vicky Hawkes (0.5fte)

Tutor for Widening Participation

Vacant

Specific Learning Difficulties Advisor

Vacant

OVERVIEW

The Learning Enhancement Team (LET) aims to build students' confidence in their ability to achieve their potential and to empower them to take responsibility for their learning.

Study participants claimed that after using LET services they are able to plan, monitor [...] and evaluate their academic needs (Kokaia, 2017, p. 46).

Tutors work with students at all levels of study and across all disciplines in the areas of academic writing and study skills, and mathematics and statistics. We have specialist expertise in supporting students from a range of educational and cultural backgrounds, and those with Specific Learning Difficulties.

This report provides details of our service delivery to UEA students and staff through workshops, tutorials and self-help resources in 2016/17. It also highlights ongoing LET initiatives in areas of strategic priority in learning and teaching enhancement. In doing so, the report evidences (i) the efficient and effective use of LET resource, and (ii) our contribution to the University's commitment to 'provide excellent education for our students so that they can maximise their potential in their academic work' (UEA, 2016, Objective 3.1).

SERVICE DELIVERY

Who did we see & what did we work on?

In 2016/17 we saw 20% of the UEA student population in appointments and workshops (9024 attendances by 3078 individuals).

Attendance at appointments and workshops by¹:

- *Topic* Nearly two-thirds (63%) addressed academic writing and study skills and just over one quarter (27%) addressed mathematics and statistics.
- *Fee status* 81% Home/EU and 19% International (compared with 81% and 17% respectively at UEA).
- *Gender* 36% male and 64% female (compared with 40% and 60% respectively at UEA).
- *Level* 76% UG, 24% PG (Taught and Research combined) (compared with 75% and 25% respectively at UEA).
- *Faculty* (see Figure 1 below).

¹ Ethnicity data were missing for just over half of the individuals seen in this reporting year, precluding any meaningful analysis of attendance by ethnicity.



Figure 1: Proportion of LET attendances at appointments and workshops by Faculty, compared with proportion of UEA student population by Faculty 2016/17.

Increased capacity

Figure 2 below shows the increase in number of attendances and individuals seen in LET appointments and workshops since 2014/15; a period in which the Team's tutor FTE has remained stable.

This increased capacity has been achieved through the growth and development of our workshop activity. Workshop attendances increased from 2988 in 2014/15 to 5561 in 2016/17 and now account for around 60% of our engagement with students; this figure rises to 70% for mathematics and statistics.



Figure 2: Number of attendances and individuals seen in LET appointments and workshops in the academic years 2014/15, 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Workshops: an embedded model

The majority of our workshop delivery uses an embedded model that involves close collaboration (including co-design and co-teaching) with programme and module staff across seventeen Schools of Studies. These workshops are context-specific and curriculum-integrated.

One of the great things about the LET approach is how it can be tailored to match a particular School ... [using] bespoke activities which speak directly to students' interests (DEV Lecturer).

This model of delivery provides a number of significant benefits for students and the institution:

- working proactively to support students' learning development in a timely and context-specific way
- promoting positive attitudes to learning to learn effectively
- making efficient and effective use of LET resource
- developing a deeper understanding of the learning and teaching environment at UEA among staff in LET and Schools of Studies.

Workshops: Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMH)

In recent years, the implementation of this embedded model of delivery in FMH has transformed our engagement with students and staff. In 2014/15 attendances at workshops accounted for 25% of our engagement with students in this Faculty; by 2016/17 this figure had risen to 55%.

The growth in workshop activity in FMH has focused on Pre-registration BSc Nursing programmes. Through close consultation with key post holders in the School of Health Sciences we have embedded:

- workshops related to key assessed written tasks in Modules 1 and 3 that make use of exemplars to improve students' assessment literacy
- a programme of numeracy sessions with an accompanying work-book in Module 2.

Alongside other related initiatives in the School, this activity has helped to enhance the student learning experience and improve student performance.

Workshops: further provision

Our workshop provision also includes:

- a [programme of academic skills workshops](#) and a [mathematics helpdesk](#) open to all students
- workshops for research students delivered as part of Faculty PPD programmes, including sessions in the areas of writing development, critical thinking, time management and presenting, cross-cultural communication, the supervisory relationship and probationary review, and postdoctoral funding
- [writers' groups and retreats](#) for postgraduate students.

In addition, LET oversees the University's [Peer Assisted Learning \(PAL\) scheme](#) and commissions the delivery of the [English Language Support Programme \(ELSP\)](#) by INTO UEA.²

Workshops: staff development

We 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
- Teaching Writing
- Teaching for Critical Thinking.

² Attendances at PAL sessions and ELSP classes are not included in this report.

Appointments: tutorials and drop-ins

It is important to note that since 2014/15, alongside the growth in workshop delivery, we have maintained tutorial attendances at around 3500 per year. It is clear that the opportunity to work one-to-one and in small groups with Learning Enhancement Tutors plays a key role in many students' learning development at UEA:

These sessions [LET tutorials] were the turning point in my struggles ... and I eventually started getting 70+ marks for my essays (BSc student).

Students can use our drop-in service, for which no appointment is necessary, or contact us at ask.let@uea.ac.uk to find out more about what we offer and how we can help, or for quick queries. Planned increases to LET tutor FTE in the areas of academic writing and study skills from 2018, including a new tutor post for Widening Participation, will help to increase capacity and manage demand for this aspect of our service.

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 helps us to meet growing demand, supports the delivery of workshops and tutorials, and provides students with choice over when, where and how they learn.

CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We engage with professional communities through active membership of a range of national and international associations and networks. In 2016/17 LET staff delivered papers at conferences for the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education, the European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing and UEA's Learning and Teaching Day.

LEARNING & TEACHING ENHANCEMENT

We develop a range of research-informed initiatives that draw on our wide-ranging work with students and staff across the University and which are aligned with the University's plans to enhance the student learning experience and enable student success.

1. Assessment and Feedback

We will significantly improve our ranking for assessment and feedback (UEA, 2016, Objective 3.3).

Using exemplars to develop students' assessment literacy LET has developed a blended approach to the use of exemplars that has been implemented in HSC, BIO and PSY in relation to specific assessed tasks as part of a pilot study. Preliminary findings show that the combination of in-class discussion of exemplars with access to supporting videos containing tutor commentary has improved students' understanding of criteria and standards and their confidence in producing their own work. Plans are in place to expand this approach to other Schools.

'Making feedback learner-centred' is a resource we have designed to help teaching staff explore approaches to feedback, in particular the strategies that might be most helpful for facilitating students' learning and most achievable for staff.

2. Postgraduate student success

'We will provide a supportive environment that ensures successful outcomes for postgraduate students' (UEA, 2016, Objective 3.4).

Writers' groups and retreats provide a regular, structured and supportive space for postgraduate students to get writing done in the company of others and to share writing practices, as developed by Rowena Murray (2009). Engagement in writers' groups and retreats can help to improve writing wellbeing and productivity:

I was getting scared of the daunting task [of completing my doctoral thesis] and feeling disconnected from my research after a period of intercalation. [Now] I am feeling like it is possible to complete if I break down the work into chunks and tackle them regularly (UEA Writing Retreat participant).

3. Wellbeing and inclusivity

'We will deliver the strongest possible student experience that embraces both prevention and support' (UEA, 2016, Objective 3.5).

Embedding and promoting wellbeing in the curriculum During 2017/18 and 2018/19 we will develop a CPD resource to support staff in approaching curriculum design and delivery in ways that promote wellbeing. This resource will be based on consultation with UEA students and staff on the framework we have developed for situating our writing development work in the context of the New Economic Foundation's *Five ways to well-being* (Akad et al., 2008).

'Learning Technologies and Learning Difficulties' is a research project funded by the Annual Fund and led by Dr Fabio Arico (ECO) and Dr Jeremy Schildt (LET) that aims to (i) assess the impact of teaching practices that make use of learning technologies on students with Specific Learning Difficulties, and (ii) develop guidelines for an inclusive approach to Technology Enhanced Learning.

Reference list

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