

# What can we learn from the questions students bring to the Graduate Writing Centre?

UoE  
Learning and Teaching  
Conference  
June 2018



# ELE Graduate Writing Centre

- Intended for international students (L2)?
- PGT and PGR ( IAD UG)
- Pilot last year; trialled this year
- Started as ‘deficit’ approach ( worries over numbers of ‘worried well’)
- This year around George Square



# Procedure

A student or PT/ supervisor/ identifies an issue

MyEd Booking Channel (One-to-one academic writing tutorials for international students)

Bring a piece of writing ( around 350 words) ***and a question.***

25 mins, 1-to-1 tutorial with a member of staff from ELE.



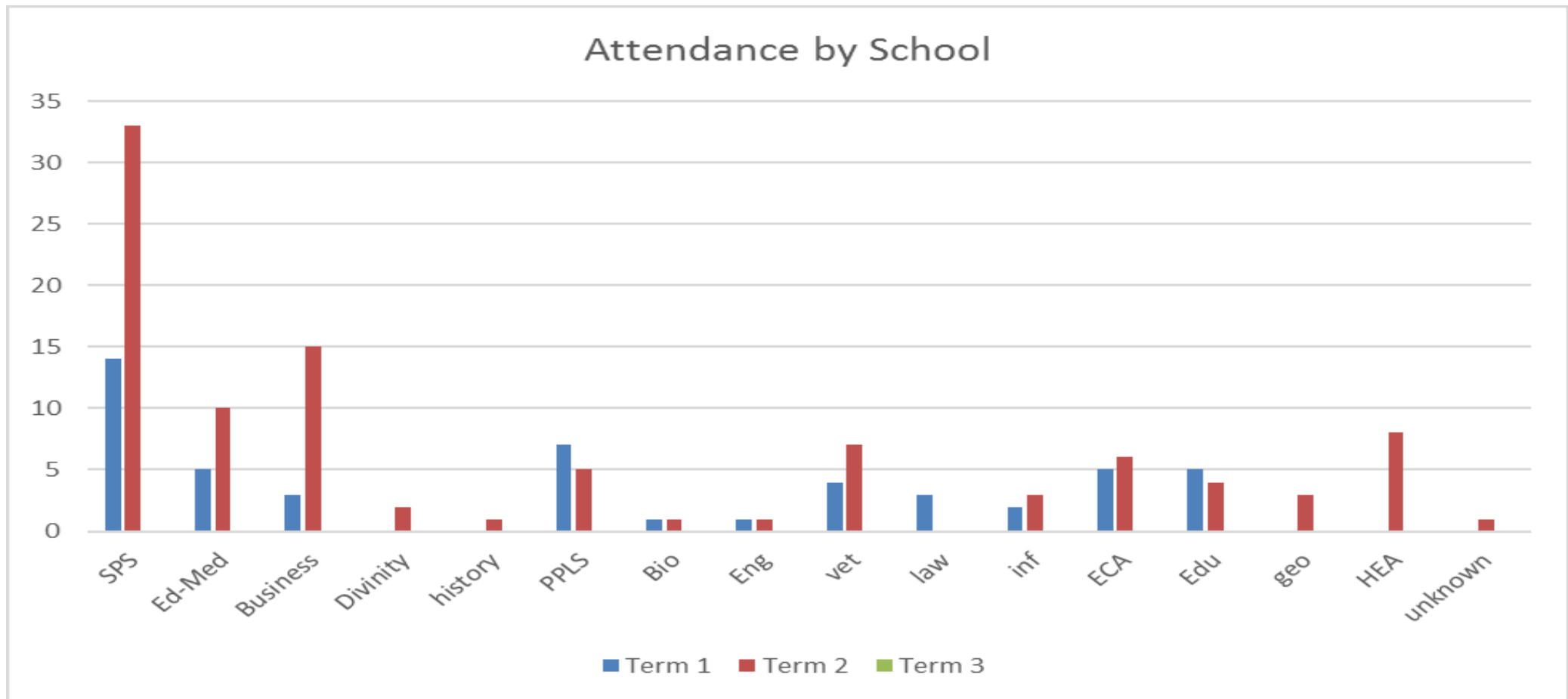
Tutors not graduate students so different to other Writing Centres.

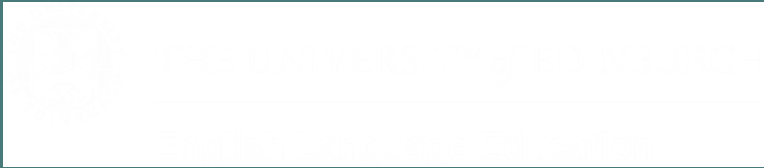
Staff have degrees in linguistics and language teaching; the vast majority have many years EAP teaching experience at unis here and abroad.

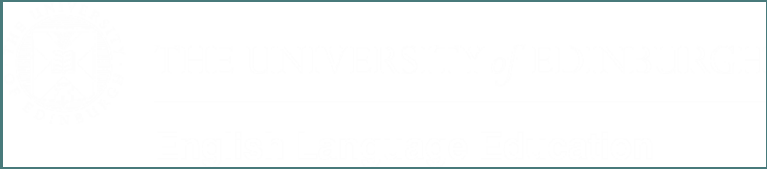
We deal with text (main difference to IAD: study skills).

The question tries to ensure that students don't ask us to proofread.

# Attendance by School



- 
- Most Frequent Student Comment
  - *Very helpful. Cleared areas of ambiguity.*
  - *Useful in understanding the structure of blog posts and how to be more specific about expressing my own opinion.*
  - *I like the suggestion of websites, and the feedback on my style of writing.*
  - *It is really useful in helping me improve my structure of writing*
  - *It was really helpful that it solved my primary confusions in terms of how to be academic and what 'academic' really means.*
  - *I highly benefitted from the materials I was given in the session. I also appreciate that the particularities of my field were taken into account.*

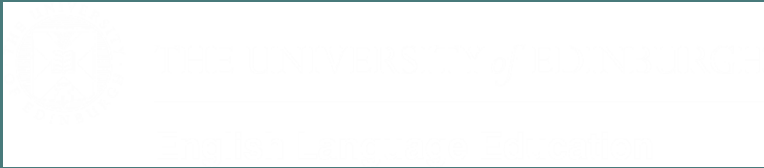
- 
- For us,
  - individual points of need,
  - at student's level of development,
  - within the context of what students are doing.
  - all feedback is relevant, timely, has face value.
  - It's hit and hit, not hit and miss.



# Watch this space

- I'm trying to find a set location (Main Library?) Working more at other sites, and with Schools.
- Not a fix-all!
- 50 minute sessions for PhD / PGR students.
- Webpages guiding students to appropriate writing support (PTAS)
- Home students?



- 
- ‘Discourse analysis reminds us that comprehension is the ability to speak the pattern, rather than merely copy the model’

(Lemke , 1989, p. 140).

## The two most common questions



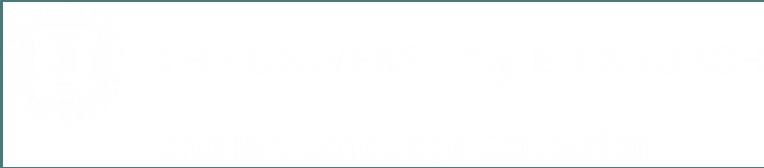
- PGR

My supervisor has rewritten my abstract/ my paragraphs. I can see it's really good, but how do I do that?



- PGT

I got this feedback on my last assignment. What should I do now?

- 
- Non-English rhetorical patterns often put the most important point last.
  - *Provide evidence*
  - *Link your ideas*
  - *Proofread!*
  - Solution: Be explicit about which point to deal with first
  - *And the classic-*
  - *I would* ( stds interpret this as nice, but what should I do?)



## **‘Threshold concepts’ ( Meyer and Land, 2003) in the GWC**

- Focus!
- Every sentence has a job to do- too many fillers, and repeating the same info.
- Join the conversation- you have a right to be there! Your Chinese/ Chilean/ Malaysian knowledge is just as valuable as western knowledge (s) construction(s),
- ARGUE!
- Use your sources to DEVELOP your argument
- Focus on the relationships as much/ more than the concepts (voice).

[ELE.writing.tutorials@ed.ac.uk](mailto:ELE.writing.tutorials@ed.ac.uk)



## References

- Lemke, J.L.(1989) *Making Text Talk*, Theory into practice, xxviii(2), p. 136-41.
- Mayer, J. and Land, R.(2003), *Threshold concepts and troublesome knowledge: linkages to ways of thinking and practising within the disciplines*, Occasional Report 4, ETL Project, Universities of Edinburgh, Coventry and Durham.