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## **PTAS Project Report (for SMALL PROJECT GRANTS)**

**Project Title: Exploring students' experiences of finding and accessing academic writing support**

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**Principal Investigator : Dr Jenna Mann**  
**School / Department : Institute for Academic Development**

**Team members : Alison Thomas English Language Education, COL.**

**For further information, please contact: Jenna Mann**

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Grant recipients are expected to submit a brief report at the conclusion of their project which outlines briefly the following : nature of work completed; outcomes; benefits to student learning/student experience; dissemination activity (where relevant – actual and planned) and how the activity could inform future work or be transferred to other subject areas in the University. The brief report will be published on the IAD web pages.

### **Brief Report (maximum 500 words)**

#### **What did you do?**

With the support of the Student Surveys unit, we emailed 3,068 PGT students (a third) at the University of Edinburgh in academic year 2017/18 asking about their experiences of finding and accessing academic writing support and development during their postgraduate studies. Once we had ethics approval, the questionnaire opened in January 2018 and will close in August 2018. This allowed us to capture data about the student experience throughout the academic year 2017/18.

#### **What did you find out?**

We had 357 respondents from across all 3 Colleges in the university, representing 4% of the total PGT cohort for the academic year 17/18. 73% of respondents are on-campus students, 55% of respondents were international students (48% of the overall PGT population are international students).

Overall, the responses showed what a mixed experience finding and making use of writing support is amongst the postgraduate population. While many who responded had been to some form of support, it was found that

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- Most students didn't know where to look for support
  - When students found support, they felt it was of good quality
  - The majority of students wanted one-to-one and subject specific support
  - There was no real support for online students
  - There is no clear distinction for students in the roles of Institute for Academic Development (IAD) and English Language Education (ELE)
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- International students were just as likely to end up utilising IAD provision as well as ELE
  - A large proportion of international students (who considered themselves bi-lingual, n= 33) had tried to access ELE support, but because of lack of space had had to access other support
  - ELE is a label that confuses students. Students either did not know the role of ELE, or assumed ELE were a proofreading service. Some students reported that 'language' obscured the fact that ELE teach academic writing to international students.
  - A few students said they used some sort of peer support for proof-reading, but none explicitly said they had used the EUSA Peer Proofreading service.
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### **How did you disseminate your findings?**

We are presenting these findings at the University of Edinburgh Learning and Teaching Conference, 2019.

### **What have been the benefits to student learning?**

This small pilot study has allowed us to begin to understand what student's experiences are of finding and accessing writing support. We intend to use the findings to develop an easier way for students to find and access timely writing support for them.

### **How could these benefits be extended to other parts of the university?**

In order to ensure a more appropriate and timely provision of writing support and development for UoE postgraduates, we hope to win a larger PTAS grant to enable us to construct dedicated university web pages, which will gather information on all the writing provision across Schools. Students and staff should be more easily able to locate the correct service at an appropriate time.

### **Who can be contacted for further details?**

**Jenna. Mann@ed.ac.uk**



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**Financial statement:**

This project has utilised the funding awarded to it by the PTAS adjudication committee and the Principal Investigator or School Administrator appropriate can provide financial statements showing the funding usage as and when required by the UoE Development Trusts who may require it for auditing purposes.

**Please send an electronic PDF copy of this report to:**

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