

# To Support Student Learning by Embedding Writing and Speaking Skills

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**Overview** The aims of the project are to enhance students' learning through writing and speaking opportunities, to support their transition into Higher Education, to develop learner autonomy and to improve retention. Tutors have worked collaboratively with SLS to introduce informal and formal writing and speaking activities with supportive feedback. These activities are designed to support students' learning while developing these skills and learner autonomy. The project is focussing on foundation engineering students in ACES and foundation year Biosciences students in HWB.

In 2007-08, only 8% of the student users of Drop-In Study Practice were ACES students (20% of population) compared to 38 % of the students users being from HWB (22% of population).

Engaging students in writing and speaking about the content of their discipline is one of the best ways to get them to learn about the discipline. This will develop the learners' autonomy through students reflecting on their learning whilst developing graduate writing and speaking skills.

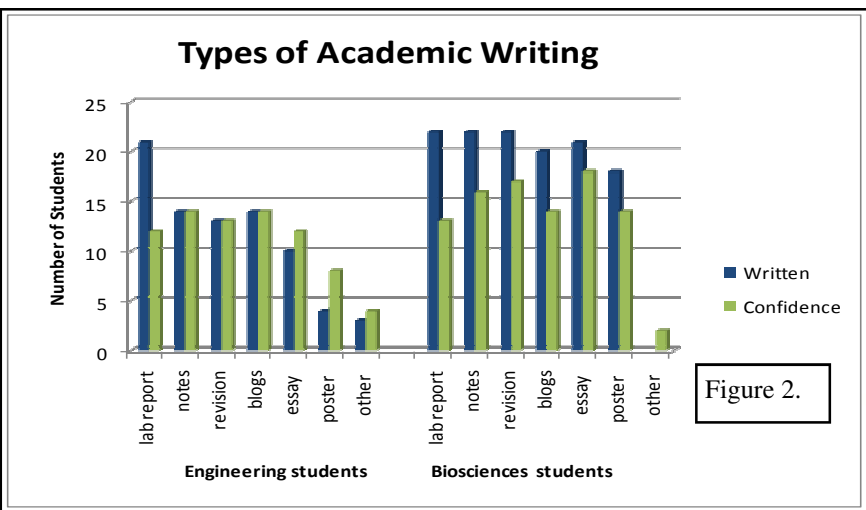
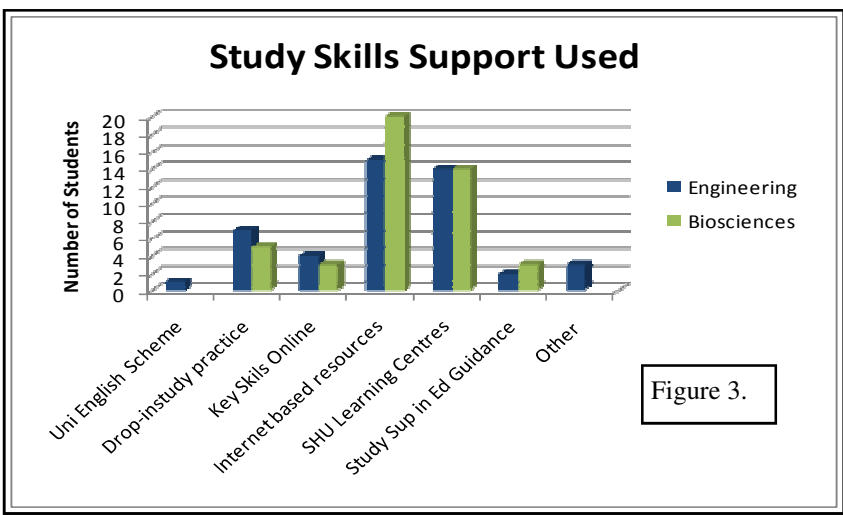
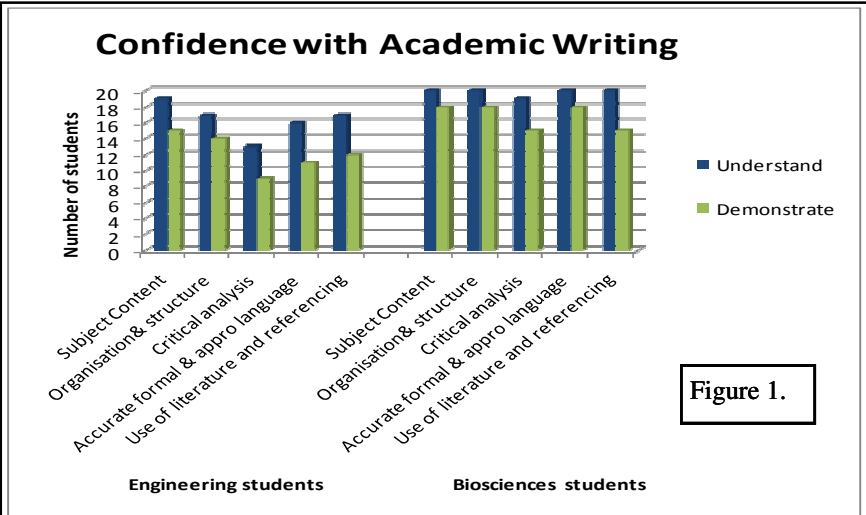
Project Aims to:	How
Increase student engagement in their subject	Weekly individual and group blogs
Increase student understanding of subject content	Groups compile glossary of terms
Increase understanding of academic expectations	Discussion of need for skills development
Develop student writing (accuracy and fluency)	Weekly individual and group blogs; essays; lab reports, posters, case studies
Develop learner autonomy	Recording, reflecting, planning, reviewing
Improve retention	Regular feedback between students and tutors

**Methodology**

23 of the 52 Biosciences students and 23 of the 90 Engineering students completed a questionnaire half way through academic year. The questionnaire asked students about:

- Their confidence with English writing and language skills;
- Their understanding and confidence with features of academic writing;
- The types of academic writing done, and confidence;
- The study skills support that they had used;
- What they enjoyed, found challenging, and views on writing.

Further analysis of student performance and participation will be undertaken once the assessment of the modules is completed.



**Headlines**

75% of both the Biosciences and Engineering students either agreed or strongly agreed that they felt confident with their writing skills, with no significant change between before the course and the time of the survey.

Approximately 80 % of the students considered their skills either excellent or good, with no significant difference between the Biosciences and Engineering students.

Bioscience students have a higher confidence in all aspects of academic writing, and feel more confident to demonstrate these features. (Fig 1)

Both groups had low confidence with writing laboratory reports, but for all other types of academic writing the Engineering students felt confident with the tasks. (Fig 2)

Both groups report internet based resources as their most use source of study skills support. (Fig 3)

**What the Biosciences Students Say about Writing**

**LIKE:** Creativity; freedom to write; writing about subject; the feedback; express thoughts in diary;

**CHALLENGING:** lab write ups and long essays; referencing; notes; keeping pace; what is needed?

**IMPROVE by:** read more x4; practice more; more lessons; do presentations;

**HELP from:** more practice x 4, feedback; English classes; peers

**IMPORTANCE of accuracy:** Very x 15; for lab reports x3; in professional jobs;

**What the Engineering Students Say about Writing**

**LIKE:** Not a lot; nothing x 2; finishing it; lab reports x3; chance to be creative; learning the material;

**CHALLENGING:** lab report and long essay x 4; finding info; what to include; pace in class; finding key words;

**IMPROVE by:** more reading and practice on reports and essays; general writing x4;

**HELP from:** English help classes x 4; more time in class; examples

**IMPORTANCE of accuracy:** not very; certain words; need to communicate clearly;

**Contact Us:**

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