

FEBRUARY 2018

TLSO Bulletin

The Bulletin of the University of Manchester's Teaching and Learning Support Office

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1. Staffing news

- The TLSO welcomed a new Higher Education Intern in February; Zainab Mahmood is working in the role of Project Assistant (Smarter Curriculum) until October. She will be working on the 'Towards a Smarter Curriculum' Project, working alongside Louise Walker and Caroline Bowsher, the academics who chair the two subgroups that contribute to this project.
- Fraser Corrywright has been appointed as Project Assistant (Differential Attainment). He will be supporting the 'Differential Attainment' Project until March 2019, working in particular on investigating patterns of attainment linked to different international entry qualifications.
- We welcome back Patricia Clift Martin who returns to her role of Teaching and Learning Manager after a period of maternity leave.
- Matt Valentine will be leaving the TLSO temporarily in March to undertake a year-long secondment in the Division of Campus Life as Student Conduct and Discipline Manager.
- Kelly Pickard-Smith recently left the TLSO to take up a post of Researcher Development Officer in the Faculty of Humanities Administration. We wish Matt and Kelly all the best in their new roles.

2. Periodic and Institutional Reviews

This month's updated review schedule for internal programmes and collaborative provision for the next six years is available below:

- o [Periodic and institutional review schedule](#)



3. TLSO Website/policy and procedure changes

- **Re-launch of Academic Advising Toolkit**

This month sees the launch of a revised Academic Advising Toolkit on the TLSO website:

- <http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/toolkits/academicadvising/>

The site has been refreshed so that it can:

- Provide a one stop shop which is structured to help you find the content you need easily. There is an [A to Z topics page](#) for all links but there are also [Academic](#), [Well-being](#) and [Employability](#) pages too
- Benefits all advisors – be it new to the role or senior advisors with refreshed [advising model page](#), self-help videos and a new staff learning and development page which links to new training being delivered
- Bring together a suite of short snappy [videos](#) to help bring the advising role to life
- Supports the student experience by providing videos of students so you can hear their perspective of the advising relationship

If you have any feedback on the site, please can you send it to M.Graham@manchester.ac.uk.



4. Blackboard upgrade and maintenance

There are short periods when Blackboard is unavailable to allow for essential maintenance. These are usually confined to Sundays between 2am and 5am.

There is also a longer period of downtime over one weekend of the year. The dates for 2017/18 have now been confirmed. Blackboard (and therefore Turnitin) will be unavailable from 8pm (BST) on Thursday 19 July until 9am (BST) on Sunday 22 July 2018.

Please consider these dates when timetabling submission dates or key course activities.

5. Differential Attainment Project

The University's Differential Attainment Project is approaching its half-way mark (March 2017 to March 2019).

This is an overview of the pilot projects it has established, which are aimed at reducing the attainment gap (measured by the number of "good degrees" i.e. 1st and 2.1 awarded) between different groups of Undergraduate students at Manchester. At present these groups include International students, Mature students, students living at home.

i) MathSoc - inclusivity, belonging and identity (School of Maths)

This project will see Maths working with an International Students Officer in MathSoc to take proactive steps to foster social interaction between International and Home students by running a programme of inclusive social events with broad appeal across the undergraduate student population.

ii) Living at Home Students Residential - impact evaluation (TLSO and UMSU)

This project aims to increase attendance at the Students' Union Living at Home Students Residential, and evaluate the impact through focus groups, online questionnaires, and tracking any impact on retention and attainment.

iii) Mapping International Qualifications for Entry to Degree Attainment (DAWG and Directorate of Planning)

This project is aimed at getting more granularity and more contextual information on how international student entry qualifications map to degree classification. The project will focus on compiling and analysing a complete data set for four target Schools:

1. Alliance Manchester Business School (AMBS)
2. School of Social Sciences (SoSS)
3. School of Materials, Aerospace and Mechanical Engineering (MACE)
4. School of Materials

iv) "Induction Booster" for new entrants coming via an International Foundation Year (School of Social Sciences)

This project will pilot a 1-week pre-Welcome Week "Induction Booster" course in 2018.

The course will be developed jointly by SoSS and the University Language Centre (ULC), and delivered by staff from the ULC with support and resources from the Library's My Learning Essentials team.

v) Improving International Student Outcomes in the School of Mechanical, Aerospace and Civil Engineering (MACE)

Approximately 1/3 of MACE's undergraduate student intake is International. MACE is working with the Differential Attainment Project to better understand the factors that contribute to student attainment in MACE. An online skills resource will be developed with staff from My Learning Essentials. Student engagement with the material will be tracked, and linked to the Academic Advising system.

5. Differential Attainment Project (continued)

vi) Pre-Sessional English Language programme - impact evaluation (University Language Centre)

The project will combine:

- A qualitative approach looking at students' opinions and attitudes to their degrees post Pre-Sessional (focus groups, 1-1s and surveys carried out by the ULC English language team).
- A quantitative approach, looking at the academic performance of UG students who were on the ULC's Pre-Sessional programmes through their course unit marks achieved by end of year assessments/exams.

vii) What can Academic Appeal cases tell us about the factors impacting undergraduate student attainment? (TLSO and Centre for Dynamics of Ethnicity)

This project will investigate formal undergraduate Academic Appeals cases handled within UoM between 2013/14 and 2016/17.

viii) Assessment methods and International attainment: an investigation (Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health and Directorate of Planning)

This project investigates patterns of differential attainment across different assessment types, examining key student cohorts based around domicile, age and entry qualifications.

Interventions are being discussed within the Faculty and will be reported in due course.

ix) Staff Awareness video (TLSO, UMSU and Learning and Development)

"Non-traditional" students are at a higher risk of dropping out than their more traditional student peers. A short video is in development that will explore how the student body is changing, and how each of us might respond to make the campus more welcoming to students from all backgrounds.

x) Placements/Industrial Experience

Internal data indicates that students on programmes "with Industrial Experience" are more likely to attain a good degree (first class or upper second class), and that fewer International students do Industrial experience programmes. A project is underway to explore the factors at play and see whether an intervention could remove any obstacles to uptake.

xi) Mature students

The DAWG is scoping out a potential project at institutional level to map and enhance the visibility of levels of support for Mature students at Manchester.



More

For more information please see the Differential Attainment Project webpages:

<http://www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/teaching-excellence/teaching-research/differential-attainment/pilot-projects/>

6. Peer Support: Continuing and promoting collaboration!

On 13th February Peer Support held our third Peer Support Network Meeting of this year. We invite our Staff and Student Coordinators to these meetings and hold discussions on key topics relating to Peer Support. This month was one of our busiest sessions, with 28 attendees representing all 3 Faculties and a mixture of Peer Mentoring and PASS (Peer Assisted Study Sessions) schemes. We facilitated discussion on a Faculty level and gathered some initial thoughts on Pre-Arrival Guides and where they might go in the future. With such a high turnout we invited representatives from a variety of schemes to come and share their experiences in Peer Support and what they are developing for the future. This included setting up higher year Peer Mentoring schemes, how to boost engagement of students with Peer Support, how Peer Mentoring can benefit international students and an example of successful scheme collaboration. More information about these events can be found in our [newsletter](#) with our next edition at the end of March focusing on this month's Peer Support Network.



Our collaboration with the Student's Union is also on the rise as our Peer Support Steering Group, now named ComPS (Committee of Peer Support) has been established by 4 keen student volunteers in Peer Support. They have taken on the responsibility of arranging socials for all those involved in Peer Support and working with colleagues within the Student's Union to support both PASS and Peer Mentoring schemes. The biggest task they will undertake this semester is helping to support and organise student activities for our 20th Celebration Evening on May 2nd.

7. Information from other areas of the University: Student Immigration Team

- **Updated guidance for Tier 4 visa holders who are adding a work placement year or a study abroad year or who have done so previously**

UKVI have amended the immigration rules regarding academic progression for students who are adding an industrial placement to their course or a study abroad year or those who have previously added a work placement or year abroad and now need more time in the UK to complete their course. Previously these students would have to return to their home country to apply for a new Tier 4 visa. However, the immigration rules now allow these students to apply for their new Tier 4 visa from inside the UK.

The [Continuer CAS](#) Guidance contains specific wording for students in these circumstances.

For details of other exemptions, please see our full academic [progression guidance](#).

Full guidance regarding programme changes and when such students must apply for new visas can be found [here](#).

7. Information from other areas of the University: Student Immigration Team (continued)

- **ATAS Clearance – Reminder**

Students who require ATAS clearance must obtain their ATAS certificate **before** they start their course otherwise they cannot start studying. **ATAS clearance must be obtained by international students in all visa categories, not just those under Tier 4, with the sole exception of those who have 'Indefinite Leave to Remain'.** It is especially important that students who have existing immigration permission (visa) to study in the UK obtain ATAS clearance before they start their new course. For example, students who previously studied a Masters programme and have immigration permission that is valid until the end of January are not permitted to start studying a PhD programme until they have obtained ATAS clearance and they have paid for their new visa application online. Students who transfer to an integrated Masters programme or MPhil students who transfer to a PhD that requires ATAS clearance must also obtain their ATAS certificate before they start the new course.



Full guidance about ATAS can be found on the Student Immigration team [intranet](#).

- **International Check-In – January starters**

Students with a course start date in January must arrive in Manchester before the latest acceptance date on their CAS. If students inform you that they intend to arrive late and you are happy to extend their latest acceptance date you need to contact the Student Immigration Team so we can add a sponsor note to the student's CAS. If the student's CAS has already been 'used' on UKVI's system we need to send a late report to UKVI instead.

If students have existing immigration permission and they are making a new visa application from the UK they must submit and pay for their visa application online before they can start the new course.

8. Contact

If you are aware of other staff members who would like to be added to the TLSO Bulletin mailing list to receive future editions of the Bulletin, please contact Miriam Graham (email m.graham@manchester.ac.uk).

If you are from a Collaborative Partner and you are having difficulties accessing any of the linked documents or web pages, please also contact Miriam Graham (m.graham@manchester.ac.uk).

